

A Final Frontier of Your Own

by John J. Terra

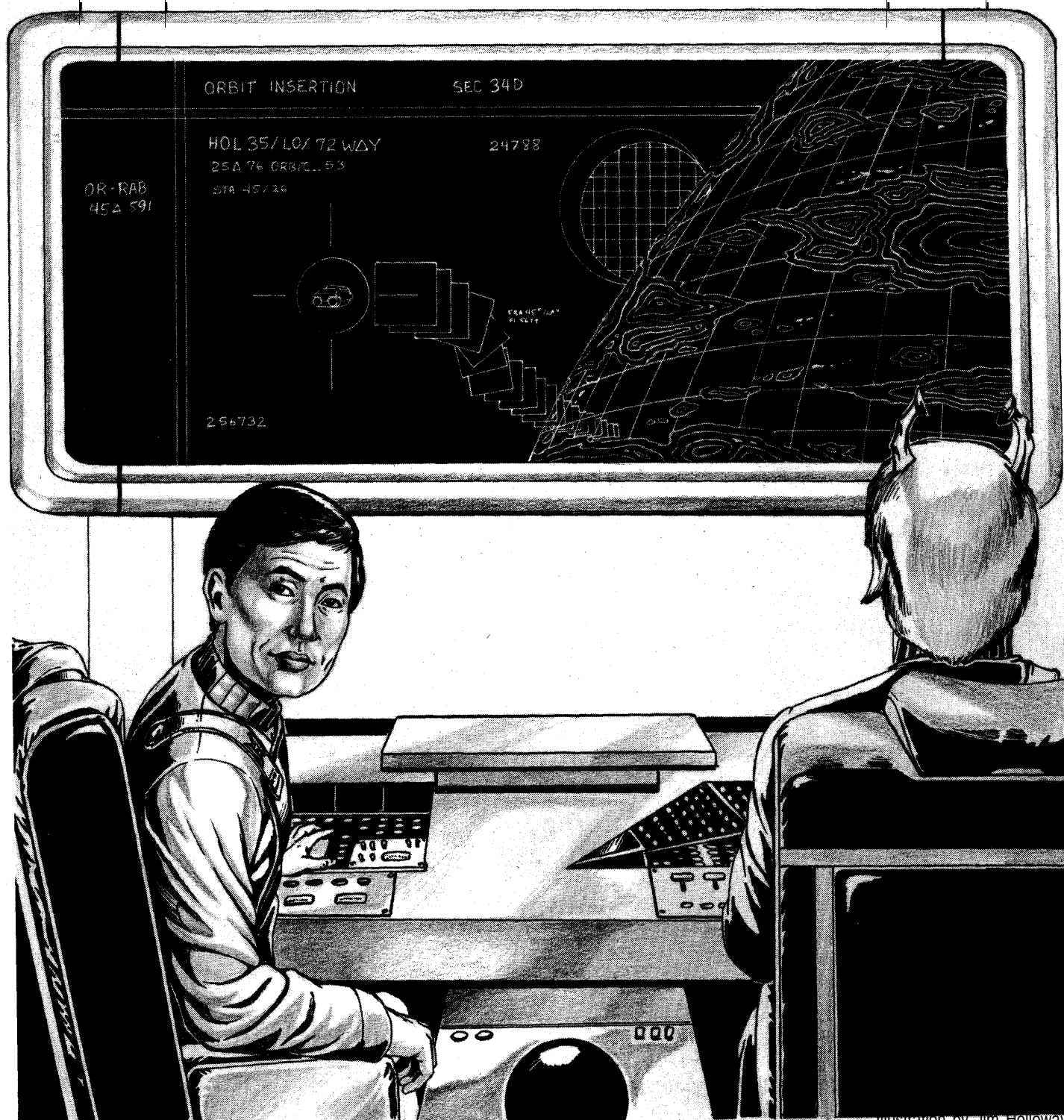


Illustration by Jim Holloway

Campaign creation for FASA's STAR TREK®: The Role Playing Game

Captain's Log, U.S.S. Valiant, Captain Koren Anastas reporting; Reference Stardate 2/2202.11: It has been 36 hours since First Officer Yoshitomo Karasuma, Chief Engineer Stephen Decataur, Chief Science Officer Kai-Jasik, and Dr. Trisha Steuben beamed down to the surface of Gamma Draconis IV. We have lost contact with them, but we face an even greater problem. The IKV Leading Sword, a Klingon D-10 heavy cruiser, has taken up an orbit trailing our position. The captain of that vessel has a personal grudge against me. I can do little about it, as Starfleet has instructed us not to initiate hostilities. I dare not lower my shields to beam down a search party, since this will leave my vessel vulnerable to the Klingons. These next few hours will sorely test my command abilities, and I pray that I will not be found wanting.

By now you must be wondering who on earth (or anywhere else in space) is Koren Anastas, and what is the U.S.S. *Valiant*? To about two dozen people, the U.S.S. *Valiant* is a ship as familiar as the legendary U.S.S. *Enterprise* is to all of Trekkdom. It is an *Enterprise*-class vessel around which a particular STAR TREK® The Role Playing Game campaign revolves. A campaign is the best way to play this game, and this article will show how to run one.

Why a campaign?

FASA Corporation has published many STAR TREK game modules that contain ready-to-play PCs and their ships. While this is certainly convenient and good for those who play only once in a while, it is not helpful to those who want a continuous campaign.

Players of other role-playing systems have enjoyed the satisfaction of creating PCs from their own imaginations and playing them. After playing one character repeatedly, the player can see the PC grow in strength and experience. A personality develops, making the PC a believable entity. It becomes a source of pride and a symbol of accomplishment.

For the STAR TREK game, this principle applies in more detail. Imagine a lieutenant PC in the Helm department who is played often enough to rise in rank to Chief Helmsman. Further into the campaign, the ship's First Officer resigns, and the Captain chooses the Chief Helmsman to replace her. Eventually, the Captain retires and our humble former lieutenant

now rises to the rank of Captain and takes command of the vessel. Can you imagine how richly developed such a PC is? Think of what this PC has been through and the stories he can tell!

It gets even better. The previously mentioned U.S.S. *Valiant* was assigned to my campaign group as a *Constitution*-class vessel. The campaign's beginning stardate was mutually agreed to be the time that Captain Kirk and the U.S.S. *Enterprise* returned from their five-year mission. Time progressed, and the ship was eventually converted to a powerful *Enterprise*-class vessel (as per *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*). For about a year, while the U.S.S. *Valiant* underwent her conversion, the crew was reassigned to a dinky transport/espionage vessel. The crew developed a quick appreciation for its old ship, and everyone was overjoyed when reunited with her. (It is easy to see why Kirk was so attached to his own ship.) But in time, the U.S.S. *Valiant* was retired because of excessive wear and tear. The campaign now centers on the Excelsior-class battleship, the U.S.S. *Excalibur*, NCC 2004. Ships, too, develop lives of their own.

In short, a campaign allows the development of PCs and events. It gives the players goals, whether to seek the head of a department or the command of a starship. The campaign approach gives a sense of consistency and continuity which makes the game resemble "real life" a bit more. Friends are made, contacts are established, and, inevitably, enemies are created. Events that help mold each PC's personality occur, helping the PC's history grow to the size of a small novel.

Getting things ready

Before starting a campaign, the game master (GM) should become as well versed in as many aspects of *Star Trek* as possible. There are several different science-fiction role-playing games on the market, but only one *Star Trek* environment. It is not enough for a GM to know science fiction; the GM must be able to capture the feel of *Star Trek*.

The sourcebooks that FASA Corporation publishes are top priority. The books most needed in addition to the game itself are the *Star Trek III* and *Star Trek IV Sourcebook Updates*, and the Klingon, Romulan, Federation, and Orion sourcebooks and ship recognition manuals. These books enable the GM to start his campaign anywhere in the Federation and at any point in history from the beginning of Kirks five-year mission to his demotion from admiral back to captain, commanding a new U.S.S. *Enterprise*.

Other sourcebook and reference materials are helpful but not essential unless your campaign is geared in these directions. These materials include: *Trader captains and Merchant Princes*, the *Triangle Sourcebook* and *Triangle Campaign Book*, and the *Star Fleet Intelligence Manual*. Note: *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes* includes a little-known but much

desired bit of information—how much a Starfleet officer gets paid!

The *Star Trek: The Next Generation Officers Manual* is only needed if you want hard data on new Starfleet vessels. From a game-mechanics standpoint, it gives little information on a campaign set in the timeline of the new television series.

If your campaign includes ship battles and you want them to be "realistically" portrayed, the *Star Trek Starship Combat Tactical Simulator* is a good investment.

Watching episodes of the old series gives you the flavor of the *Star Trek* environment and terminology. The movies are a must. As far as the dozens of *Star Trek* novels are concerned, many are not consistent with the actual *Star Trek* universe—or with each other, for that matter. Still, any *Star Trek* novels by John M. Ford, Diane Duane, or Vonda McIntyre are fairly consistent and worthwhile.

Timing is everything

The next thing you should decide on is the time period in which the campaign is taking place. Between the beginning of the old series and the end of the fourth movie, approximately 16 years have passed. During that time, Federation technology has improved and political situations have changed. New worlds have been admitted to the UFP the Organians have stopped enforcing the Organian Treaty, and Project Genesis has caused a galactic uproar.

The ship recognition manuals become valuable tools in showing the smart GM which ships were available at what points in history. It can be very embarrassing to be caught using Spacedock a full decade before its completion! The *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* shows, for instance, when each *Constitution*-class vessel was refitted to *Enterprise*-class, if ever.

The timing also dictates which Starfleet uniform is in use. It might be the old series' vintage velour shirts in red, blue or gold (nice), the pastel pajamas of the first movie (gross), or the maroon tunics used in the rest of the movies (sharp!). There are different models of phasers, communicators, and tricorders. Even environmental suits range from the old series' laughable space suits to the much better ones used in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*.

Of course, relations with *Star Trek*'s favorite race of villains, the Klingons, change slightly. It varies from the Klingons saying "I'll kill you now!" to "I'll kill you if the Organians are not looking!" to "I'll maim you now and kill you later; give me Genesis!" The lifting of the Organian Treaty becomes a very crucial point in history, enabling unrestrained ship battles among the major powers.

The only consequence of starting your campaign in the early years of the saga is that the PCs will grow old. By the time your campaign reaches the date of the fourth movie, your group will be ready to play "Geriatrics in Space." If the PCs begin at a relatively young age, this effect will not be too bad, but it also means that their

initial influence on the ship will be less. Limiting the number of tours in the PCs' histories will give the campaign a younger though less-experienced crew.

Choosing your ship

Ship selection is something that the GM and players can enjoy together. Naturally, the size of the group should affect the size of the ship. An Enterprise-class cruiser needs more department heads than does a Nelson-class scout ship.

Personally, I recommend an *Enterprise* class vessel. Not only is it a recognizable ship to even the most casual player, it is also a versatile ship that will not blow up the first time it is fired upon. Once again, the *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* is a must. It gives a full list of *Constitution-* and *Enterprise-class* vessels including hull numbers, refit dates, and special notes. The manual also addresses the *Reliant-* class research cruiser, which is another good choice for a campaign vessel. Truly nasty GMs can assign a vessel that is fated to be destroyed or scrapped at a certain date, and then create an adventure when this happens! If such a dastardly type of GM exists, it is hoped that he would be kind enough to give the PCs a fighting chance to survive, as well as ensure that the PCs do not read about their own futures beforehand.

The disadvantage of a large ship be-

comes painfully obvious to any GM whose mind is one step ahead of his players. A ship of such tremendous power needs some challenging assignments.

If your players are of the hack-and-slash variety, you could always assign them a Military Operations Command vessel such as a *Loknar* - class frigate or a Larson-class destroyer. Ships of these two classes are also listed in the *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* by hull number and name, and are all excellent ships.

Please do not initially assign the PCs something like an Excelsior-class battleship! This is the equivalent of an AD&D® game's DM assigning his players + 5 armor, weapons, and rings at 1st level, or like a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game's Administrator assigning his rookie agents Uzis, M16s, and ultra high-tech helicopters.

Reviewing the crew

The next step is to get a crew assembled. The STAR TREK game requires a command hierarchy of a Captain, First Officer, and Department Heads. There is no need to elect a party leader as in other games. The Captain is the leader, and everyone had better darn well listen to him or else consign themselves to an unglamorous fate of serving on an ore freighter.

This structure makes the Captain and First Officer the most crucial persons on the ship. The rules in the STAR TREK

game recommend that the GM select the two people for those positions, and this is a sound idea. But whom do you choose?

Some say that the best leaders are those who do not actively seek to lead. Good leaders do not chase after positions of power and glory, and they are the ones you want for command duties. The GM needs to select two people who are good at making decisions and giving orders without ego tripping. They need to elicit trust from the other PCs and be able to trust them to do their own jobs. The leaders should be team players who inspire cooperation and not chaos.

Think about the implications of commanding an *Enterprise* - class vessel. This ship has enough firepower to devastate a planet. It contains over 400 NPCs and 6-12 PCs. One wrong decision and all those people, including the PCs that the players took years to develop, become space dust. That is a big responsibility. Leaders must first be servants, and the lesson is as relevant in gaming as it is in real life. The commanders must put their personal interests behind those of their crew and the ship. The best leader is not <tin-plated, swaggering dictator with delusions of godhood.

Choosing the First Officer is just as important as choosing the Captain. Remember, if the Captain is disabled, the First Officer assumes command. The perfect

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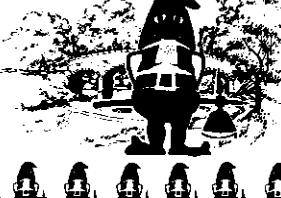
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First Officer does not interfere with his Captain's duty. Rather, he supports his commanding officer, giving advice when asked. A good First Officer also acts as a liaison to the crew, intercepting and solving minor problems while the Captain remains free to face bigger crises, such as five million tribbles in the food processors or the Klingon task force bearing down on the ship. As a rule, the First Officer has the conn if the Captain is off the bridge, and sometimes the First Officer is asked to lead a landing party. In the true Mr. Spock tradition, you can assign a department head the additional responsibility. If you have few players, this is sound strategy. Security, Engineering, or Medical department heads are not good choices for double duty, however.

After these two difficult positions are assigned, let the rest of the players divide up the departments. Each department is unique, and certain personality types seem to be better suited for certain departments. The nonviolent types may enjoy Chief Medical or Chief Communications Officer. The law-and-order or the hack-and-slash player would be perfect for Security Chief, though we all know what happens to Security personnel ("Ensign Slob, check behind that rock." "Yes, sir!" ZAP! AAGH! GROWF! POOF! "Poor Slob!").

Players who enjoy using their brains may go for Science or Engineering, while the players who like blowing things up or zooming around space at ludicrous speed will love Chief Helm. Finally, there is that position voted Most Boring by my campaigners: Chief Navigator. At best, this poor person gets to raise deflector shields during battle. Most of the time, however, the Chief Navigator says "Course laid in, Captain," then sits back. Give this position to either the most rabid Trekkie in your group who loves to play so much that he will take anything, or to someone who doesn't care what job he holds.

Be aware that Helm, Navigation, and Science supply many future command personnel, so keep your eyes on those people. They may be worth promoting.

Though the old series did not show it much, there were nonhuman crew members on the U.S.S. *Enterprise* other than Mr. Spock. Budget constraints on makeup dictated what sorts of aliens we saw. Fortunately, role-playing games are limited only by imagination. Let players choose their own races, but temper their choices with common sense. There are advantages to playing nonhumans, usually in the form of attribute modifiers. The disadvantage should be that the player must act in the manner proper to that race, and some of the races are downright bizarre.

The player whose PC weeps uncontrollably at the drop of a hat (or helm) would make a terrible Vulcan. The player whose PC is always mellow and laid back is a poor choice for a stubborn Tellarite. The Chief Medical Officer should be the same race as the majority of the crew. A Vulcan

should rarely be Chief Helm, since helmsmen fire the ship's weapons and Vulcans dislike violence. Vulcans are also not party animals, greedy, power hungry, or rowdy (and they flirt only once every seven years).

Only a fool would choose a Tellarite for Chief Communications Officer ("This is Commander Taubarrgijh of the U.S.S. *Valiant* — speak, Klingon slime!") or place an Andorian in a position that may involve hot temperatures such as an engineering area. Deltans are lovers, not fighters, and consequently would be flops as Security Chiefs (but would make good doctors). Efrosians make excellent doctors, and their warrior background means that the good doctor may justifiably get involved in a good melee or two. Andorians are a good choice for the warrior-type player, but even this race attempts to be as unemotional as the Vulcans. When they *do* get riled up, watch out!

The STAR TREK game's character-generation system is excellent because it provides the player with a PC who is already an experienced officer rather than a raw recruit. The GM may give each PC a score of 10 in his respective planet's Culture/History skill but not count it against the PC's amount of pre-Academy skills. Any civilized planet would give its children instruction in basic culture and history whether the child wants it or not. If the planet has a particularly hostile environment, the GM is also justified in

awarding a bonus of 10 in the appropriate Planetary Survival score.

Very few role-playing games show the need for teamwork as much as the STAR TREK game. Everyone must work together to accomplish a goal. Reward the players when they work together, and discourage "lone wolf" tactics where one PC goes off to do something stupid. Such a PC should be considered phaser fodder.

A cast of thousands

As mentioned earlier, the red-shirted security personnel in the old *Star Trek* series were notorious for their short life spans. Inevitably, they would be stabbed, disrupted, poisoned, dropped from great heights, changed into Styrofoam polyhedrons, or burned to death by an angry Horta. Even nonsecurity personnel got their share of death and maiming. After the GM establishes his crew, the next wise move is to create a set of NPCs to not only support the PCs but to present themselves as great targets. STAR TREK NPC crewmen are great victims for those villains who cry, "I shall give you an example of my power, puny mortals!"

Ideally, a PC in the STAR TREK game should have a long lifespan, probably the longest of any RPG. In the old series, the main characters never died. In the game, the PCs are the main characters. This does not mean that there should never be any possibility of PC death, but rather that it should be approached carefully. A game



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without risk is no fun, but the risk should be well considered. If your players deserve it, give them a "back door" to get out of the situation. Stupid actions deserve harsh consequences, while smart actions should be a good reason to spare PC lives.

Back to the NPC creation. If your campaign is centered on any good-size vessel, you have several hundred NPCs to consider. You should not create stats for all of them, but you could allow one or two assistants for each PC. Starships operate around the clock, so crew are needed to man various stations in the PC's absence. Create personnel to crew helm, navigation, communication, science, and engineering stations during the off shifts.

Give these NPCs some fleshing out! Assign them a Trivia or Gaming score. Give them some critical skills that few players chose for their PCs during generation. This is a good chance to throw in a few of your favorite races. Go ahead, give them a Vulcan science officer, a Zaranite engineer specializing in Starship Weaponry Tech, an Arkenite marine biologist, or an Efrosian navigator! My campaign's favorite NPCs include an Andorian chief nurse, a small telepathic worm, and a human communications assistant with such a loud, gregarious personality that he nearly blows out the audio circuits!

In addition, flesh out the commander of the nearest starbase, a few Starfleet Command officers, and a few ship captains from other Starfleet vessels. You need not repeat the old series' tendency to have most of Captain Kirk's friends dying or going insane. Give your NPCs some staying power. A rival officer may cause some problems, and a persistent Orion family may have a grudge against the ship. You can even create a Klingon or Romulan vessel that pops up wherever the PCs and their vessel are, threatening to throw a spanner into their plans.

Your five-year mission. . . .

After assembling all of this information, it is time to decide what sort of missions to put the players through. First, let's tackle the FASA modules.

As mentioned before, the STAR TREK game modules are not best suited for a continuous campaign using the same ship and PCs. There are, however, several notable exceptions. Bear in mind that the following modules require adaptation.

Where Has All the Glory Gone?, *Denial of Destiny*, *Demand of Honor*, and *The Strider Incident* are all good for adapting to an ongoing campaign. You can make the changes without turning the product into something unrecognizable. The latter two modules are also very well written.

The Dixie Gambit, *Decision at Midnight*, *A Conflict of Interests*, and *The Mines of Selka* are all good modules but have very limited use in a campaign. It is still possible to use them, but a GM needs to do heavy tinkering or alter the PCs' circumstances. If the PC's vessel is undergoing a refit or

repair, these adventures are good fillers.

Return to Axanar and *Old Soldiers Never Die* are dubious at best but are recommended for the wonderful sourcebooks they provide. *Return to Axanar* is a very long adventure requiring several sessions and is unfortunately very linear, taking the PCs from one encounter to the next regardless of their actions.

Since the release of *The Strider Incident* (a terrific adventure that also includes deck plans for the Regula I research station, a good investment), there have been no new STAR TREK modules. Thus, it falls on the GM's shoulders to come up with an excellent campaign.


General Order Number One—the Prime Directive—is the most powerful restraint available to the enterprising (no pun intended) GM. It is frustrating to the players to know that they run a vessel that could destroy a star system, yet they cannot unleash this power on the penny-ante barbarian village that has a couple of the ship's officers as hostages. When the GM creates an adventure, the Prime Directive must always be kept in mind. Violating it could mean discharge from the service, imprisonment, or (in extreme cases) death. The Prime Directive becomes a special burden during exploration missions.

Star Trek is about galactic exploration.

While blasting Klingons or outwitting Orions can be fun, the spirit of the series—and consequently the game—is exploration and discovery. You can have a ship battle in every game, but remember that the various spacefaring powers have a finite number of ships. Try not to let every session degenerate into a high-tech slugfest.

The finest exploration missions are the first contacts, those missions during which a new race is discovered and the PCs must deal with strange and sometimes hilarious differences in cultures. The best way to approach this is to create a new race, not necessarily humanoid. Then, throw out all customs known to the players and reinvent them, mixing them up well. One culture I created shrugged their shoulders to say "yes." Another race may greet newcomers by striking them to test their patience. Another may require that all males remain silent and let the women do the talking, while another race may laugh when sad or spit when happy.

Imagine running into a totally alien vessel. Your vessel hails it, but it fires a beam of charged photons back at you, crippling your ship. Later, you find out that it was merely sending back a friendly message. The use of physics and technology can vary from race to race. Not all extraterrestrials breathe oxygen or come




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from carbon-based life. Some races may be totally blind, have no nervous systems, or be genderless.

Confuse the players! An ugly race may fight a handsome race, with the ugly race being the good guys. Trap the players with their own preconceived notions. A race of blind quadriplegics may be powerful telepaths. A handsome, Adonis-like people may be deathly afraid of tiny wounds.

A hilarious example of this occurred when the U.S.S. *Valiant* made first contact with a race called the Igresh, who were horrendously ugly and smelled ten times worse than they looked. Contact teams met to talk, and the Igresh offered the crew a favorite Igresh drink that refreshed the body. One brave soul, Chief Navigator Nat Zar, drank it for the sake of galactic friendship. Suddenly, every gland, duct, and organ that produced any sort of fluid began operating at an accelerated rate. The liquid was cleaning out all impurities from his system. The poor fellow was in terrible straights, much to the horror of his ship mates and to the innocent delight of the Igresh. Commander Zar survived and, after changing his uniform, was in perfect shape.

During the old television series, money was saved by using old props from movies. The U.S.S. *Enterprise* ran into cultures that resembled different terrestrial historical periods. Ancient Rome, Nazi Germany,

the Roaring 20s, and American Indians were all represented in the series. Though the GM does not have to worry about budget problems, no campaign would be complete without running into a dozen different human races placed on various planets by the Preservers. Imagine running into cultures descended from the Vikings, feudal Japan, ancient Egypt, 17th-century America, the Incas, or even an exact counterpart of Earth, complete with World War II raging. If the players know what's good for them, they'll remember the Prime Directive and not attempt to tamper. Alternate histories could provide a nice twist—but what about a civilization where the Nazis won World War II? Would it be considered tampering to try to do something about that?

The restraints imposed on the crew by Starfleet Command should present the players with ethical dilemmas. A planet with technology similar to 1988 Earth is about to launch a thermonuclear war. Should you stop it? How about a planet where one race is enslaved to another?

To make matters tougher, throw in some unprincipled Klingons. The Klingons and the PCs might both try to get a planet to join their sides. A classic scenario to be sure, but it can hold enough variation to make each encounter exciting. Avoid predictability. In the previously mentioned Igresh contact, the Klingons were involved

in local politics, as were two other new races. At one point, the crew of the U.S.S. *Valiant* and some Klingons had to team up for survival!

Starfleet officers should consider violence only as a last resort, fighting only when there is no other alternative. To some gamers, this is boring, because it reduces the "action." But the spirit of *Star Trek* is the challenge of exploring the unknown. The enemy may be a hostile virus that the PCs must learn to cure, or an abnormality in space that traps vessels and warps time. There should be action—firing phasers and photons, or landing parties fighting with Klingons—but this shouldn't be commonplace.

Above all, try to maintain continuity with the series and movies. Starfleet does not send out vessels to blow up Klingon outposts, and Vulcans do not advocate war with the Orions. Certainly, you can set up bizarre situations like a dozen Spacedocks, vessels that travel at Warp 16, and plaid Romulans, but the campaign rapidly loses its *Star Trek* flavor. The GM becomes obligated to outdo himself until the crew saves the universe every gaming session and the game becomes an unrecognizable mutation of the original product.

If you have unruly PCs, Starfleet Command does an admirable job of keeping the crew in place. When crew members start breaking laws, court-martials can

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remedy this. Does the Captain pretty much do what he pleases? One Board of Inquiry later, the First Officer may be in command while the ex-Captain mines borite. Sure, Captain Kirk got away with a lot, but Kirk is also a Starfleet legend, and the fourth movie showed that even a legend can be put on trial.

Another great tactic is to have a stable PC play Chief Medical Officer, and if he sees the Captain behaving erratically, have the Captain declared incompetent. Of course, the GM could always kill a PC, but that is hardly sporting. Infecting him with a horribly contagious disease for the duration of the adventure may be a good warning, though.

Just how dangerous should an adventure be? Obviously, you don't want to pit your PCs' Nelson-class scout against a Klingon L-24 battleship, but a mission to Deneb to deliver some flowers to a Deltan ambassador seems a bit tame. Find the middle ground. An element of the unusual can throw the players off guard and make for a rewarding session. The aforementioned mission to deliver flowers is quite boring, but what if the flowers were sentient, 9' tall, and telepathic? Furthermore, what if another race in the Federation wanted the flowers badly enough that it tried to steal them?

Each adventure should have an element of risk or it ceases to be fun. Present the problem clearly, and throw in some twists to the plot. Provide more than one solution, but make the crew work to find them. Should a PC's life be threatened, give him a Luck roll; only if the roll is failed does the PC die. Even in fatal situations, make sure the threat is logical. A squad of Klingon marines is not going to overlook the Starfleet security men in battle armor in favor of killing the wimpy communications officer 45 meters from the melee!

NPC crew should generally be the first targets in a firefight. If there are more enemy NPCs than friendly NPCs, then the PCs, too, should be counted as legitimate targets. Players who try to hide behind the NPCs may be charged with conduct unbecoming to officers and should be zapped on principle. A Klingon may bypass an NPC as a target if the PC is more of a threat. In short, treat combat situations with fairness and logic.

Inevitably, a PC may die. Any self-respecting player will accept such a fate if there was at least a fighting chance to avoid it. There should rarely be *Kobayashi Maru* scenarios in the game—don't stack the deck so that the PCs cannot win or escape.

If you really need ideas, here are the two most off-the-wall gaming suggestions that I have ever created. The first one has been used; the other will not be used as long as my players behave.

First, imagine finding an Earthlike planet where the Preservers have placed a group of humans whose technology level is simi-

lar to 11th century Britain. The Preservers performed gene-splicing experiments and created beasts that were half man and half horse, as well as winged horses, eagle-headed winged lions, etc. They also genetically created short humans with lots of facial hair and a talent for mining, and another human type with slim build, fair hair, and a 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells. Sound familiar?

Second, imagine having the PCs find a planet where a certain bloated, octopoid-headed, insane deity and his flying fungus friends reside. Your players will go insane over this one.

How to hassle heroes

If an adventure involves conflict with another starfaring race, there are certain rules of thumb that should be followed, depending on which race is encountered; these helpful generalizations follow. Bear in mind that just because someone is a Klingon, his behavior is not completely predictable. To automatically assume that a Romulan will be honorable or that a Klingon will be violent is a deadly mistake. Encourage the players to regard each NPC individually rather than to make assumptions based on race. In fact, this is not a bad philosophy for real life, and there have been many instances when *Star Trek* episodes told a story with a moral.

First, guidelines on Klingons. As seen in the old series and in the movies, Klingons are indeed a brutal, violent race. But please bear in mind that they are not stupid! No race achieves warp capability and an empire by being morons. Klingons are honorable, but usually only to fellow Klingons or, at the very best, to people who are clearly brave warriors.

There are rivalries between different Klingon family lines, but such conflicts are put aside when the families are faced with a common threat. There have even been incidents where Klingons and humans have cooperated. As the Klingons say: "Only a fool fights in a burning house."

As a rule, Klingon vessels travel in groups of three. If the Klingons are in orbit around a planet before PCs arrive,

two vessels will be on the opposite side of the planet, in a "sensor shadow." The PCs will only detect one vessel, while the other two lurk behind, waiting for the moment to strike. Remember, Klingons love negotiating from a position of strength!

The Romulans are a different case altogether. They are a proud, honorable people who seem to have more integrity than the Klingons do. They fight not because they wish to, but because of the necessity for them to expand. Their systems are poor in resources, and they need to survive. With Romulans, conflict is less personal. Nevertheless, they are tough, violent opponents who would rather die than surrender. They might even be described as noble. Their use of the cloaking device is a bit less noble, but to the Romulans it does the job. Romulans are the perfect race to use for a secret incursion into Federation space. Their tactics have more finesse than those of the Klingons. Few things are more disturbing than having three Romulan Stormbirds materialize with weapons charged around the campaign vessel.

Orions are accomplished merchants, pirates, rogues, entrepreneurs, and troublemakers. They walk a fine line between the UFP and the Klingons. They are materialists but, again, are not stupid. In fact, they are downright devious. If any opponent should be allowed to escape to fight another day, it should be the Orions. Then there are those green Orion women. . . .

The Gorn are big, lizardlike brutes who hiss a lot and look very mean (with good reason, since they *are* mean). Gorn are divided into clans, and currently some clans are in rebellion against the Gorn Alliance. Some of the rebellion is due to the Gorn stance on the UFP. The rebels favor war and the Alliance favors negotiation. Therefore, the possibility of running into rebel Gorn vessels always exists. Gorn also have a code of honor, since they are a warrior race, but they lack finesse and subtlety. Their tactics are blunt and involve much violence, as witnessed in the *Star Trek* episode, "The Arena." Their engineering theory seems to be "If it's

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stuck, push it. If it fails to move, get a bigger hammer. If it breaks, it needed to be fixed anyway." Like the Klingons, they are by no means idiots, or they would not have developed warp drive.

As for homemade races, the limits are those of your own imagination. Make sure that there are logical reasons for certain behavior or standards. For example, a race that is recovering from a technologically inspired global war may harbor a strong hatred toward technology and those who use it.

When designing adventures, remember that the PCs have great resources at their disposal. A nemesis can't sneak up on a group that always carries tricorders. A transporter breakdown still leaves shuttlecraft. Medicine is so advanced that even somebody who has a current operational endurance of -45 can still pull through if a Federation-style sick bay is handy. The computers on a starship contain more information than the Library of Congress and are at the PCs' fingertips. Some far-sighted parties equip themselves with subcutaneous transponders so the ship can always find them.

Avoid using the same plot devices for limiting the PCs options. How many ion storms can "just happen" to be in the area, rendering transporters inoperative? How many lifeforms are so radically different that they do not show up on sensors? Know your players and how they think. Look for weaknesses, and play those weaknesses against the group. Learn what buttons to push with specific players. Do you have a player with an inflated ego? Have an NPC push him around. Does another player get nervous around Klingons? Bring 'em on! Players who are terrified of command should find themselves suddenly left in command because of unusual circumstances.

Engineering department

No, this has nothing to do with playing Mr. Scott. There are certain rules-related odds and ends that need addressing before you start a STAR TREK campaign.

First, there are Action Points, or APs. According to the rules, the GM is supposed to track each PC's APs, since there's often the chance the PC can perform certain actions during another PC's turn. Such actions are called opportunity **actions**.

I advise you to throw out most of the AP system. Have you ever tried to keep track of a dozen Klingon Marines and a dozen PCs in a melee? There's far too much accounting involved. Instead, make everything more abstract. Let the PC or NPC with the highest Small Unit Tactics score go first, as per the rules. Discard the opportunity actions, but allow PCs to do extra things that may be logical. Let each combatant have one (and only one) chance to attack each turn. Logic should dictate what someone can or cannot do, but it

would be wise to keep the AP charts around as a guideline and a final arbiter.

The thing I find most irritating about the STAR TREK game rules is the lack of explanation for how long certain skills take to implement. Here's how we do it: When a skill roll is needed, say in Warp Drive Technology, the roll is made. This represents a "quick fix," a la Mr. Scott. Should the roll succeed, all is well. If it fails, then the PC can try again, but the results will not be certain for 2d10 minutes.

The same principle follows for looking up information or treating someone's wounds. When looking up information, roll the average of the PC's scores in Computer Operations and the respective subject. If Commander Markell is looking up all incidences of Starfleet starship disappearances in Federation history, his Computer Operations and Federation Culture/History would be averaged to find the chance for him to locate the right entry in a timely fashion.

The rules for using a tricorder seem a bit vague. In one instance, the rules tell you to use Computer Operations; but tricorders are also referred to under Small Equipment Systems Operation. I suggest averaging the above two scores with the skill in the subject with which the PC is concerned. Thus, if Commander Decataur is scanning some ancient ruins, he would roll the average of his Computer Operations, Small Equipment Systems Operations, and Archaeology. Remember, the tricorder or sensor records information accurately. The player is rolling for his PC's ability to **understand** what is being recorded.

Some game systems that use skills have outstanding successes and critical failures. This, too, is an excellent idea. If the PC makes his roll by less than 5% of the skill, make it an outstanding success. If Commander Decataur's Warp Drive Technology skill is 80 and he rolls a 3, not only did he get the port warp engine working, he also coaxed two extra power units out of it for an hour. On the other hand, if the PC rolls 96-00, something terrible has happened. The degree of trouble escalates with the higher rolls. If someone has a skill of 99 and he rolls 00, he has failed and must roll again, this time with a -20 penalty. If he passes, there are no repercussions. If he fails again, it is a critical failure. The actions needed to correct a roll like this could be an adventure unto itself!

Finally, have you ever tried to resolve a 3-D chess game? Nowhere do the rules cover this. We've ad-libbed a nice little system where both opponents must roll lower than the average of their intelligences and their skill ratings, with the winner being the first one who makes it. If both make it, the winner is the person who rolled proportionately lower. If Dr. Voris, who has a score of 40, rolls 10, and Captain Anastas, who has a score of 20, rolls 8, Dr. Voris would win because 10 is 25% of 40, while 8 is 40% of 20, a consid-

erably higher proportion. If someone rolls a critical failure at 3-D chess, feel free to ignore the consequences. After all, how can losing the game be deadly, unless the PC gets a pawn lodged up his nose by an angry loser? Now, if the PC is playing zero-g lacrosse, a critical failure could mean a broken arm or a concussion. Incidentally, for resolving a sports contest, average the PC's skill and his dexterity. For resolving card games, average the game skill with his luck score.

Miscellany

The STAR TREK game is not limited to a Starfleet-based campaign. There are sourcebooks for playing merchants and traders, or Starfleet Intelligence agents. Other sourcebooks are available that can allow a Klingon, Romulan, or Orion campaign. A Klingon campaign is definitely not like running a chaotic-evil or all-orc campaign in the AD&D® game! It seems to be a mixture of FASA's STAR TREK, West End Games' PARANOIA®, and TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I. game.

Be careful not to allow your STAR TREK campaign to lose its unique flavor so that the scenarios you design could be mistaken for something involving different RPGs (i.e., "generic module blandness"). Use STAR TREK terminology and historical references, and above all, keep the spirit of exploring strange new worlds and seeking out new life and new civilizations alive. Many episodes were morality plays. While these may be hard to incorporate in the game, simple lessons like "violence is not always necessary," "machines cannot and must not replace man," and "don't judge by outward appearances" can be woven into scenarios.

Finally, avoid repetition. Just how many corrupt Starfleet Admirals are running around? How many times can the existence of the entire galaxy be threatened, only to be saved by the same group of heroes time and time again? Keep your players guessing as to what sort of adventure is coming next. Will it be a delicate diplomatic mission or an undercover assignment? Adventures could even happen during shore leave, when the players least expect it. "Where no one has gone before" leaves a lot of territory to cover.

This article is dedicated to the following people, who stump me at every turn so that I have to come up with better and trickier adventures: Sophia Biedel, Beth Bigelow, Kim Calabrese, Joel and Judd Emery, Jamie Hale, Kevin McBride, Milton McGorill, John Rennie, Nick Rowe, Anthony Scappichio, Ellen Terra, Bryan Villarreal, Kevin Wells, Colleen and Dave Wetzel, and Bow Worsham. Live long and prosper!

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