AETHERDARK
QUICKSTART GUIDE
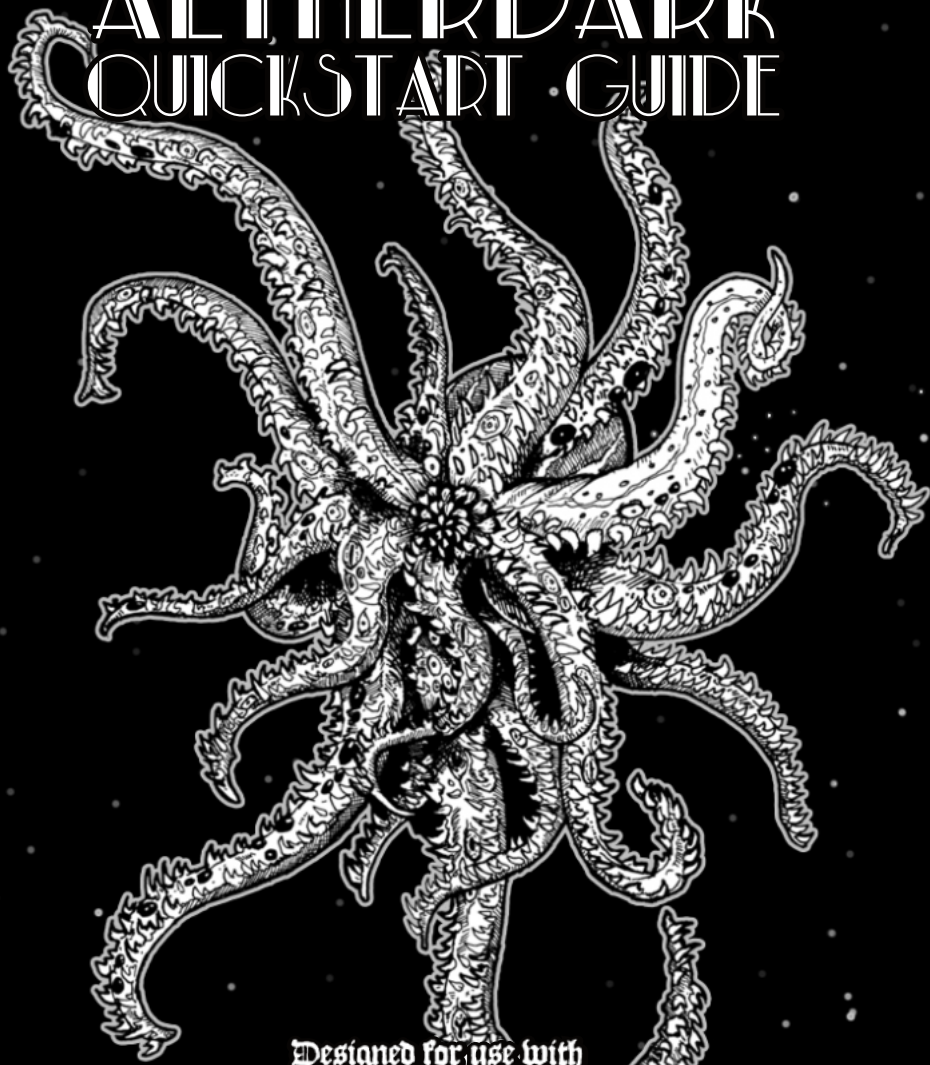
Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG

Ship Class	Hull	Spd	Mvr	Size	ATK	Crew
Dinghy	5	0	0	1 (0)	—	1 / 10
Pinnace	8	2	2	1	—	3 / 12
Striker				1 (0)	1	6 / 12
Sloop	15	2	1	3	—	5 / 20
Corvette				3 (2)	1	8 / 20
Barque	35	0	0	5	—	10 / 50
Frigate				5 (3)	2	18 / 50
Galleon	100	-2	-1	8	—	20 / 100
Battleship				8 (5)	4	40 / 100

Arcane Jet		Crystal Sails		Incantation	
Prv Rating	**4 × size**	Prv Rating	**1 × size**	Prv Rating	**1 × size**
Spd Stat	**INT**	Spd Stat	**INT**	Spd Stat	**STR**
Mvr Stat	**DEX**	Mvr Stat	**STR**	Mvr Stat	**CHA**
Dinghy	2,000 gp	Dinghy	5,000 gp	Dinghy	500 gp
Pinnace	6,000 gp	Pinnace	20,000 gp	Pinnace	3,000 gp
Sloop	15,000 gp	Sloop	40,000 gp	Sloop	7,500 gp
Barque	35,000 gp	Barque	80,000 gp	Barque	20,000 gp
Galleon	100,000 gp	Galleon	160,000 gp	Galleon	50,000 gp

Ship Armor	Armor	Spd	Mvr	Cost
Unarmored	8 AC + MVR	—	—	—
Inscribed bronze	12 AC + MVR	-1	—	500 × size
Lacquered wood	10 AC + MVR	—	—	500 × size
Runic copper plates	13 AC + MVR	-1	—	1,500 × size
Steel plating	16 AC	-2	-1	1,000 × size

Rams	Siege	Injuries	Cost
Blade ram	size · d20	size · d2	1,500 × size
Hammer ram	size · d12	size · d3	1,000 × size
No ram	size · d4	size	—

Ship Modifications	Cost
Add ballistae, hurlers, or bottle-braces	2,000 × size
Change ship's landing method	500 × size

Ballista Ammo	Damage	Effects	Cost
Ballista bolts	d4	—	1
Flame-lances	d10	fire	50
Heavy steel bolts	d8	—	10

Bottled Ammo	Damage	Effects	Cost
Arcane ampule	d12	—	15
Dust storm canisters	—	stinging sands	50
Firepots	d10	injuries, fire	75
Lightning bottles	d20	conductivity	75

Hurler Ammo	Damage	Effects	Cost
Barnacles	—	barnacle	100
Caustic globules	d4	acid	50
Frost nets	—	slow	35
Grapeshot	d4	injuries	10
Large rocks	d8	—	5

Deck Upgrades	Cost
Barracks	200 × size
Cabins	300 × size
Cargo bay	100 × size
Custom cargo bay	100 × size
Entertainment area	1,000 × size
Livestock pens	250 × size
Luxury cabins	1,000 × size
Magazine	400 × size
Smuggler's hold	400 × size
Workshop	400 × size

Naval Equipment	Cost
Astral map	50+ gp
Blank guideway	1,000 gp
Guidestone	150+ gp
Provisions (1 cargo)	10 gp
Supplies (1 cargo)	50 gp

What is Aetherdark?

Sail between the stars and visit strange worlds. Be an explorer, a pirate, a bounty-hunter, explore the Aetherdark.

Shadowdark

The Aetherdark is a third-party rules expansion to add fast-playing naval exploration and combat to Shadowdark.

The Setting

Aetherdark can be played in many settings, but it supposes a particular way the universe makes sailing a ship between stars a sensible endeavor.

If you have a different concept of how wooden ships sail between worlds, these rules will still work, but the random tables for the aether will make less sense.
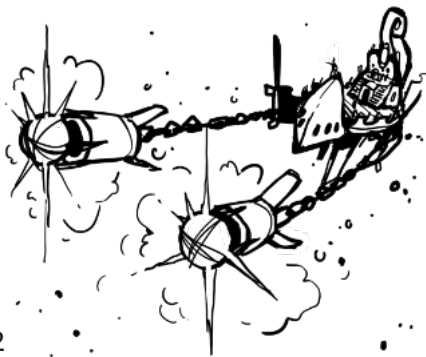
New Rules

Aetherdark adds three major elements to your game:

The Crew. It takes a crew to manage a ship.

Aetherdark adds rules to level that group up alongside the player-characters and to manage mass-combat between crews and against leviathans.

The Ship. The ship is an upgradeable, mobile base for players to operate from.

Aetherdark adds rules for buying and upgrading ships, as well as maneuvering in naval combat and sailing vast distances.

Siege Weapons. A fireball might be effective against a warship, but most other attacks won't be.

Aetherdark includes rules for firing siege weaponry, whether at other ships or at groups of helpless fools far below.

CREW & SHIPS

Crew

No one runs a ship alone. You need a crew of loyal sailors to cross the starry sea. They are your friends and allies, and if you aren't careful, they could become your enemies.

Crew Stats

When the crew as a whole takes an action, crew stats are used. Likewise, if an individual member of the crew is needed, they use that same stat block.

CRW

The CRW stat is equal to the total number of people in the crew, not counting PCs. It functions much like HP for the crew as a whole.

Current CRW is the count of active crewmembers, not counting any who are injured, killed, or otherwise incapacitated.

Crew Morale

The crew always fails morale checks. After their morale breaks, the crew cannot act and may panic or flee, depending on the circumstance.

You can restore your crew's morale with a DC 15 CHA check.

Common morale checks include: half of the crew is eliminated, the ship is reduced to half **hull**, a dragon breathes fire at them.

Crew Recovery

While the ship stops in a safe place, injured crewmembers recover over the span of 2d6 days or one downtime period.

Crew Replacement

Depending on the setting and location, there may be volunteers eager for adventure that can be recruited freely. PCs can try to recruit crewmembers with specific skills as a downtime action.

Crew Actions

During each round, the crew can either assist you or take a single crew action.

Assistance. The crew can assist any number of actions if the number of people needed to perform all of those actions at once doesn't exceed the CRW.

If you direct the crew in an action, you make the roll using your stats, not the crew's, but can attempt tasks that need extra hands. You can still only perform 1 action per round.

Crew Actions. If no one has the crew assist their actions, the crew can take a single action of its own. Crew actions always come last in the initiative.

Close combat. There are special rules for crew actions in close combat on 34.

Crew Attacks

During a boarding action, your crew as attacks the rival crew once, dealing its damage as injuries. At 100 members, gains a second attack. At 300, a third.

Commanding the Crew

The crew does as you direct. If you can't give orders due to the circumstances, the GM decides what the crew does.

Injuries

Many attacks deal injuries, meaning that each point of damage injures one crewmember.

When siege attacks strike a crew not protected by a ship, they deal injuries. Ram deal siege and injuries and note specific dice for both.

If a regular attack hits the crew as a whole, it injures 1 crewmember for each full multiple of the HP stat that the attack does.

Which injuries result in death is at the GM's discretion.

Gear

You can outfit your crew by buying enough gear for every crewmember, gaining all the usual effects of that gear.

Crew Advancement

As they sail the aether together, a group becomes a crew. Key tasks are mastered, fresh faces become veterans, and new members are met with training and confidence.

Crew Experience

Your crew gains XP whenever you gain XP.

New Characters Come from the Crew

When your character stops adventuring, whether due to death or retirement, you can immediately start playing as a character from the crew.

This is the same as any other new character, except that you may be able to start play at level 2, 3 or 4, depending on your crew's level.

HP

The crewmembers have HP equal to level + 2, up to 12 HP at level 10.

Crew Stat Advancement

Your crew starts with 8 in every stat. At every level, randomly select a stat to increase by 1 (do this 14 times at first level). Reroll if a stat would exceed 18.

Specialists

Functioning identically to talents during character advancement, specialists grant various benefits to the crew as a whole. When the crew suffers losses, specialist roles are refilled.

Reputations

Some crew abilities come from the reputation your crew has. Whenever you gain a new reputation, you can select any reputation you do not already have.

Past Level 10

After level 10, every time the crew gains another 50 XP, you may replace 1 randomly gained stat point or specialist with a re-roll, or change 1 reputation.

Level	Crew Improvements by Level
1	+1 to random stats fourteen times, +1 specialist, 3 HP
2	+1 to a random stat, select 1st reputation, 4HP
3	+1 to a random stat, +1 specialist, 5 HP
4	+1 to a random stat, PCs start at level 2, 6 HP
5	+1 to a random stat, +1 specialist, 7 HP
6	+1 to a random stat, select 2nd reputation, 8 HP
7	+1 to a random stat, +1 specialist, 9 HP
8	+1 to a random stat, PCs start at level 3, 10 HP
9	+1 to a random stat, +1 specialist, 11 HP
10	+1 to a random stat, select 3rd reputation, PCs start at level 4, 12 HP
+50 XP	Re-roll 1 random stat point, re-roll 1 specialist, or change 1 reputation

2d6	Specialist
2	**Quartermaster.** Your ship can fit additional crew on-board equal to **size** × 5.
3-4	**Bosun.** Once per day, re-roll a MVR check.
5-6	**Carpenter.** When performing repairs, each set of supplies used repairs 1 additional damage.
7-8	**Chef.** Your provisions usage (39) is treated as though your crew was 1 tier smaller (min of 1 per 10 days).
9-11	**Engineer.** Once per day, re-roll a SPD check
12	**Chirurgeon.** After any event that injured a crewmember, heal 1d3 freshly-injured crewmembers.

Crew Reputations

Artillerists

Whether it's a barrage of ballista bolts or rapid salvos of caustic globules, the assault of skilled artillerists is devastating.

Fire in the Hole! One round per day, your roll your siege attack damage at advantage.

Explorers

Explorers constantly seek the undiscovered, some to pillage or rule, others to uplift and aid, but most simply to see new worlds.

First Impressions. When arriving on a world you haven't visited before, your first reaction check is rolled at advantage.

Marauders

Not simply a well-run ship, but a vessel laden with warriors, ready to battle on-deck or planetside.

Hot-Bunking. Your ship can fit additional crew equal to **size** × 5.

Pilots

In the heat of combat, a steady eye and deft hand at the wheel can be more valuable than a dozen ballistae.

Ride the Wind. For one round per day, add your MVR to your ship's AC an additional time.

Pirates

Fearsome raiders, navies of freed men, rebels against the ruling powers, pirates are feared by the common folk and immortalized in stunning adventure stories.

Inspire Fear. When enemies attempt to rally their crew during ship-to-ship combat, they do so at disadvantage.

Swashbucklers

Surprising their prey in stunning leaps through open aether.

Swing Into Action. When performing a boarding action from near, automatically succeed the check to swim the aether.

Crew Events

When?

Run through one or more crew events while the PCs are returning from an adventure or other excursion, but before their return, or if they linger for an extended period in one place.

What Event?

Use the table below in port, a table from Shadowdark (SD 142-185) in the wilderness, or a specific event from the current adventure if one is available.

How Many?

During a normal adventure, a single event is appropriate, but if the players are gone for longer, or if they leave the ship in a dangerous area, consider rolling multiple events.

If the extra rolls are due to danger, treat all of the events as one overlapping event, either happening at once or in swift enough succession that the crew cannot rest and recover.

d12	Crew Events at Port
1	Stowaways are found in the hold
2	Locals went missing and suspicion falls on the crew
3	A tavern brawl got out of hand and three crew were jailed
4	Rats infest the ship's provisions
5	A decadal festival fills the streets with revelry and drink
6	Harbormaster's daughter wants to run away with the crew
7	A fire starts on the pier while half the crew is on-shore
8	Adventurers attempt to seize the ship
9	Local leader riled up a mob, claiming the crew are cultists
10	A group of thieves sneak aboard, trying to steal the ship
11	A wealthy merchant is trying to hire away the crew
12	The city seals its gates due to rumors of treason

Ship Stats

Sailing on her every day, the ship becomes a friend, the creak of her boards comforting and familiar, the gashes of enemy strikes on her hull as painful as your own wounds.

AC

Base AC is 8 + MVR. Functions the same as a creature's AC.

Spd & Spd Stat

A modifier to the check when trying to move more quickly, paired with the stat used when you make that check (29).

Mvr & Mvr Stat

A modifier to the check when trying to maneuver, paired with the stat used when you attempt to maneuver the ship (29).

Attacks (ATK)

Armed ships have a set number of attacks, the damage of which is determined by the ammunition used. A character can direct 1 attack each round (32).

Hull

A ship's hull points are similar to a creature's hit points.

Siege damage. Siege damage is dealt normally to hull-points. Regular damage deals 1 damage for each 10 damage dealt, rounded down (32).

Damaged ships. If a ship is reduced to 0 **hull**, it is badly damaged. SPD and MVR checks are made at disadvantage, siege is dealt to the crew as injuries, and decks are damaged by additional hits.

Repair. Hull points must be repaired. One week of work and one supplies repairs 5 hull points.

Morale and hull points. If a ship is reduced to half **hull**, or as the GM deems necessary, the crew's morale fails until a character on that ship can rally them (31).

Size

A ship's size affects how many provisions the ship needs and how many upgrades it can have.

A ship's upgrades and empty decks determine how much capacity the ship has for cargo and crew.

If a ship is armed, the number of upgrades it can have is reduced.

Required Crew

The number of people a ship needs to operate normally, including player characters.

When operating normally, a ship can perform any amount of distinct actions, provided it has the other necessary resources.

At less than the required crew, a ship cannot move or make attacks.

Max Crew

The number of people that a ship can fit without additional upgrades, although it can get cramped if you fill every nook with a hammock.

Provisions Rating (Prv)

Based on the type of propulsion, this represents the fuel and supplies needed to keep a ship running, increasing the provisions requirement of the ship.

Prv × size is added to the crew count when determining provisions used (39).

Cargo Slots

Without upgrades, a ship can fit cargo equal to **5 × size**.

Trade goods, provisions, supplies, and ammunition are measured in cargo-slots. As cargo, they are designed to be packed tightly, allowing more to fit.

Gear not designed to be packed as cargo, such as loot from a dungeon, is less dense. One cargo slot can fit 20 gear slots of regular items.

Landing Methods

Standard ships will slowly sink in water. Seaworthy ships land at disadvantage on solid ground. Ships designed for both have only **4 × size** cargo space.

Deck Space

Basic Deckspace

Regardless of what upgrades are added, every ship has:

- **Steering.** Wheels, levers, and various other controls, usually on a raised platform with good visibility. Where MVR checks are made.
- **Propulsion.** The system that pushes against aether to allow flight, along with controls, often in a small room with an arcanist or engineer. Where SPD checks are made.
- **Crew Space.** All ship classes have a max-crew stat that, before upgrades, is how many personnel can be aboard. This is usually hammocks that stow overhead for the crew, occasionally with cabins for key personnel.
- **Cargo Space.** All ships have **5 × size** cargo slots available. These are usually crates and barrels crammed into corners or lashed to the open deck.

Upgrade Slots

A ship can have 1 upgrade per size (less if armed).

The size of each upgrade is the same as the ship's size. A cargo deck on a galleon is larger than a cargo deck on a sloop.

Non-upgrade Improvements

In addition to deck upgrades, ships can add one type of armor, a single ram, and any amount of rare upgrades.

Misusing Space

Any upgrade slot can be used to store **size × 2** people or **size × 2** cargo, but doing so disables the upgrade.

Ship's Boats

Dinghies and pinnaces can be fit in any cargo space on-board another ship. A dinghy fills 4 cargo slots and a pinnace fills 8.

Ship Types & Activities

Type Descriptions

For each type of ship a few key differences are described. These do not affect gameplay, but can help the world feel real.

Maneuver describes how that type of ship is steered.

Speed explains how that propulsion method sends a ship through the aether.

Provisions suggests some of the unique needs that are counted in the ship's provisions rating.

Shipboard Activities

For a random activities on a ship, you can roll a d12, combining the below table for results 5-10 with results 1-4 from each specific ship. For an unarmed ship, only roll a d10, as results 10-12 only apply to armed ships.

d12	Standard Shipboard Activities
5	**Swab the deck.** Sweep, mop, and possibly even chisel away blood, muck, and aetherdust accretions.
6	**Keep watch.** Look fore and aft, port and starboard, above and below, vigilant for the many threats of the astral sea.
7	**Prepare a meal.** Chopping veggies, kneading dough, tending the fire, stirring the pot, a meal takes many hands.
8	**Take some rack time.** Everyone needs to sleep, or at least take a break, usually for a full watch each day.
9	**Mending.** Hammocks tear, ropes fray, clothes wear through, tools break, the hull gets nicked. It all needs to be repaired.
10	**Check and rotate the stores.** Cargo left to sit too long risks rot and infestation.
11	**Disassemble, clean, grease, and reassemble siege weaponry.**
12	**Drill!** Go through the motions of battle, so that you're ready when it's not just a drill.

Arcane Jet

Enchanted conduit funnels raw aether to a complex runic array.

Spd Stat: INT, **Mvr Stat:** DEX, **Provisions Rating:** 4 × size

Juicing A Jet. Cast an arcane spell as normal. Instead of the spell's effect, grant +2 SPD for 1 round per tier of the spell.

Overload. DC 15 INT to trigger, exploding after **size** rounds. DC 18 INT to disable early. Explodes for **size** · d12 siege and **size** injuries.

Speed

An arcanist adjusts the runic flows, opening up as much throughput without overheating.

Maneuver

A collection of levers alter the angle of various rune groups. Steering requires swiftly manipulating the levers. No one lever is a simple directional control as the position of each rune affects every other rune.

Provisions

An arcane jet needs lots of oil or grease to keep the aether running smoothly, as well as sheet metal for patching conduit and shimming mis-alignments.

Nothing compares to uyanleth ichor, but whale and olive oils are fine. In a pinch, even tallow or lard will do.

d12	Arcane Jet Shipboard Activities
1	**Check the feeds.** Inlets along the hull draw aether into the jet. Check that they're clear, chiseling away crystals.
2	**Adjust runes.** Switch which runes are enabled, so that they don't wear out from the constant flow of power.
3	**Patch conduit.** The aether is not gentle. Conduit running along the hull can be easily patched, if its caught early.
4	**Drain arcane effluvia.** Runoff pools in the bilge, congealed arcane toxicity. Glove up, hold your breath, and pumping hard.

Crystal Sails

Woven from the shards of novae or the remnants of broken worlds, crystal sails billow in the currents of the astral sea.

Spd Stat: INT, **Mvr Stat:** STR, **Provisions Rating:** Size

Catching the Aether. Gain advantage on SPD checks in the astral sea, but suffer disadvantage on SPD checks inside a normal world.

Speed

The many ropes attached to the masts, spars, and sails must be adjusted, angling the sails to better catch aether-currents.

Maneuver

Twin wheels adjust a complex pair of rudders, tilting side to side, but also angling to allow the ship to rise and fall. They are easy to understand, but turning the wheel against a strong current is not trivial.

Provisions

There are a vast amount of ropes used to keep the sails working, but little else is needed, the sails themselves being almost as impervious to damage as the stars they originated from.

d12	Crystal Sails Shipboard Activities
1	**Adjust the rigging.** A single sail requires as many as a dozen lines to control its position, each adjusted regularly.
2	**Treat and coil ropes.** The hundreds of feet of rope must be treated to prevent aether crystals cutting the fibers.
3	**Scour the masts.** Easily removed from the deck, cleaning aetherdust from the masts is a more involved procedure.
4	**Clean the sails.** Crystal sails may bend like fabric, but they are hard surfaces that accumulate aetherdust like any other.

Incantation

Rows of pirates line the deck, chanting in unison, focused on the race towards their prey.

Spd Stat: CHA, **Mvr Stat:** STR, **Provisions Rating:** None

Hard work. After 3 consecutive SPD checks, SPD checks are at disadvantage for the day. Critical failures on SPD checks cause **size** · d3 injuries.

More voicesv. For each multiple of the required crew chanting, gain +1 SPD (+8 max).

Extra space. A ship with no other propulsion system can fit **size ×** 10 additional crew.

Maneuver

A bronzed, four-part tiller, heavy and difficult to adjust, controls the ship. Twisting and angling the tiller can aim the ship in any direction.

Speed

To get proper speed, the entire crew must maintain the incantations in perfect time, requiring a skilled leader keeping them focused.

Provisions

the primary resource for incantation is people. There is a little paint and lacquer to fix runes, but not enough to take much space in a cargo hold.

d12	Incantation Shipboard Activities
1	**Trace the runes.** Runes where incanters stand get scuffed and need to be carefully inked over.
2	**Laundry.** With people directly channeling the aether, it infiltrates clothing, the sharp crystals a pernicious threat.
3-4	**Carry the tune.** The vast majority of the work on an incantation-powered ship is simply maintaining the incantations that power the vessel. If too few sing, the ship will drift, aimless.

Ship's Boat

Cost: 500
Spd: CHA + 0   **Mvr:** STR + 0
AC: 8 + Mvr   **Hull:** 5
Size: 1   **Prv:** 1
Req Crew: 1   **Max Crew:** 15
Cargo: 2   **Upgrades:** 0
Traits: Incantation, Hard work, More voices, Seaworthy

Cargo Skiff

Cost: 3,000
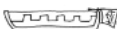**Spd:** CHA + 2   **Mvr:** STR + 2
AC: 8 + Mvr   **Hull:** 8
Size: 1   **Prv:** 1
Req Crew: 3   **Max Crew:** 22
Cargo: 9   **Upgrades:** 0
Traits: Incantation, Hard work, More voices, Seaworthy

d2	Random Deck
1	Cargo well
2	Incanting seats

Longship

Cost: 8,100
Spd: CHA + 1   **Mvr:** STR + 1
AC: 12 + Mvr (bronze)
Hull: 15   **ATK:** 1 ballista
Size: 3   **Prv:** 3
Req Crew: 8   **Max Crew:** 20
Cargo: 12   **Upgrades:** 2
Blade Ram: 3d20 siege, 3d2 inj
Traits: Incantation, Hard work, More voices, Seaworthy

d6	Random Deck
1	*Empty deck*
2	*Empty deck*
3	Incanting seats
4	*Empty deck*
5	Coordination drum
6	Underdeck storage

Crystal-Rigged Frigate

Cost: 92,500
Spd: INT - 1   **Mvr:** STR + 0
AC: 12 + Mvr (bronze)
Hull: 35   **ATK:** 2 ballistae
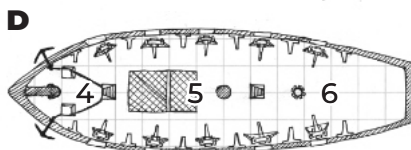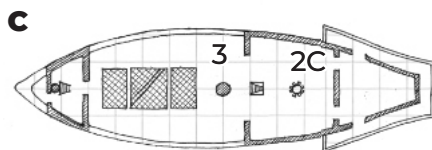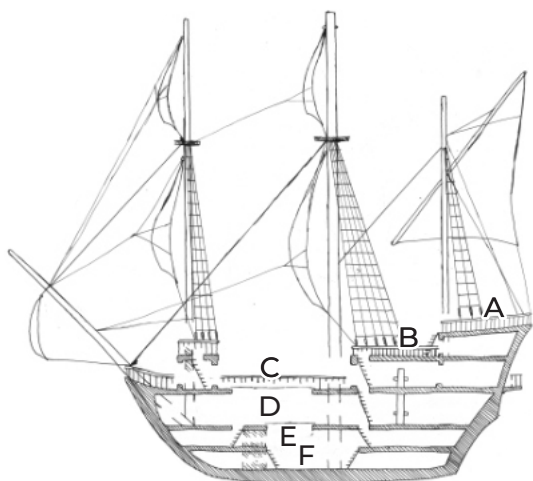**Size:** 5   **Prv:** 5
Req Crew: 18   **Max Crew:** 50
Cargo: 25   **Upgrades:** 3
Traits: Crystal sails, Catching the aether, Seaworthy

d8	Decks
1	Steering & rigging
2	Capstan & cabins
3	*Empty deck*
4	Forward ballista battery
5	*Empty deck*
6	Aft ballista battery
7	*Empty deck*
8	Cargo hold & galley
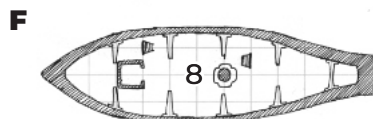
Arcane Battleship

Cost: 124,000
Spd: INT - 2   **Mvr:** DEX - 1
AC: 16 (steel)
Hull: 100   **ATK:** 4 bottles
Size: 8   **Prv:** 32
Req Crew: 40   **Max Crew:** 100
Cargo: 40   **Upgrades:** 3
Traits: Arcane jet, Juicing a jet, Overload

d12	Random Deck
1	Cabins
2	*Empty deck*
3	Main deck & cargo lift
4	Steering & watchtowers
5	Cargo hold & galley
6	*Empty deck*
7	*Empty deck*
8	Arcane jet
9	Fore bottle battery
10	Fore spell-bottle magazine
11	Aft spell-bottle magazine
12	Aft bottle battery
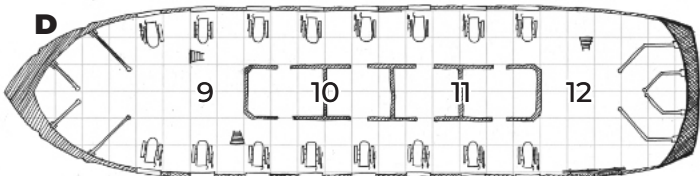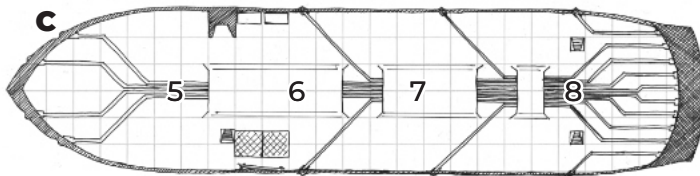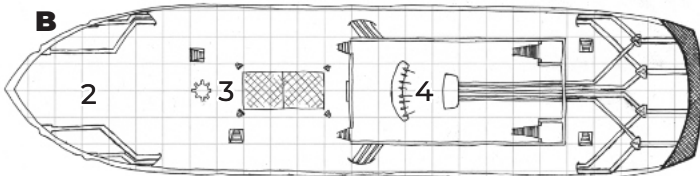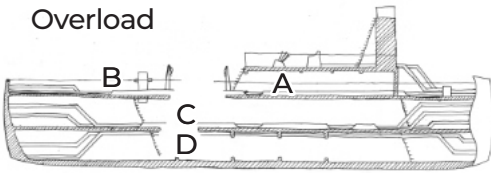
Ship Sizes

Dinghy

Hull 5, **Spd** 0, **Mvr** 0, **Size** 1, **Required / Max Crew** 1 / 10, **Upgrades** 0

Tiny. Although the dinghy is size 1, it has no space for deck upgrades. It can be fit into 4 cargo slots on another ship.

Pinnace

Hull 8, **Spd** 2, **Mvr** 2, **Size** 1, **Required / Max Crew** 3 / 12

Striker. **ATK** 1, **Required Crew** 6, **Upgrades** 0

Small. A pinnace can be fit into 8 cargo slots on another ship

Sloop

Hull 15, **Spd** 2, **Mvr** 1, **Size** 3, **Required / Max Crew** 5 / 20

Corvette. **ATK** 1, **Required Crew** 8, **Upgrades** 2

A sloop is a light ship designed for speed rather than capacity or durability.

Barque

Hull 35, **Spd** 0, **Mvr** 0, **Size** 5, **Required / Max Crew** 10 / 50

Frigate. **ATK** 2, **Required Crew** 18, **Upgrades** 3

The barquentine—long for barque—is the mainstay of the starry sea. They are large enough to make major cargo runs but small enough to not overwhelm investors.

Galleon

Hull 70, **Spd** -2, **Mvr** -1, **Size** 8, **Required / Max Crew** 20 / 100

Ship of the Line. **ATK** 4, **Required Crew** 40, **Upgrades** 5

The galleon is the primary merchant- and passenger-liner in modern regions of the astral sea, as well as the mainstay of most navies. Away from protected lanes, these are less popular for merchants, they are so slow that they make easy targets.

Deck Upgrades

Whatever You Want

This is in no way an exclusive list. Anything that makes sense on a ship can be added to that ship.

Barracks

Living space for **size × 8 people**.

Cabins

Comfortable living space for **size × 4 people**.

Cargo Bay

Dedicated storage space for **size × 4 cargo**. Includes a crane or a side-door for superior loading and unloading.

Custom Cargo Bay

Storage space for **size × 6 cargo** for one type of raw material only.

Empty Deck

Unimproved space, suitable for **size × 3 cargo** or **people**.

Entertainment Area

Suitable for putting on a show.

Livestock Pens

Provides space for **size × 4 cargo** of live animals.

Luxury Cabins

Exceptional living spaces for **size × 2 people**. The cost of **1000 × size** is the lower end of luxury.

Magazine

Safely store **size × 4 cargo** of ammunition bottles.

Direct hits won't shatter any of the delicate spell-bottles within.

Smuggler's Hold

Provides **size × 3 cargo**, and **size cargo** which cannot be found without a thorough search.

Workshop

A place to do work of some specific sort, designed to stay stable and secure.

Armor Plating

As wars raged across the aether, the art of armoring ships grew to match the weapons that had proliferated.

Fortunately for those armorers, a flying ship can carry several inches of metal with ease, not the sort of thin barrier a person can wear, although the weight does slow ships down.

Inscribed Bronze

More durable than copper but easier to imbue than steel, bronze plating is the mainstay of aethership armor.

AC. 12 + MVR

Spd. -1

Lacquered Wood

Basically just a coating on the exterior of the hull, but it does offer some protection.

AC. 10 + MVR

Runic Copper Plates

One of the easiest materials to imbue, mildly-enchanted copper sheets are popular armor for ships, although of late copper is in short supply.

AC. 13 + MVR

Spd. -1

Steel Plating

Although it offers excellent protection against physical attacks, steel plating is difficult to imbue, meaning it requires far more metal to be useful armor, the cost making it an unpopular choice.

AC. 16

Mvr. -1

Spd. -2

Unarmored

AC. 8 + MVR

Siege Batteries

An armed ship has siege batteries equal to its number of attacks.

Each siege battery has multiple weapons, but is fired as a single action.

Ballista Battery

Large crossbows that fire spear-like objects are common. They're easy to make, easy to aim, and easy to get ammunition for.

Ammunition. Fires ballista bolts, flame-lances, and heavy steel bolts.

Hurler Battery

Trebuchets, catapults, bombards, or similar devices that fling large, generally round objects.

Ammunition. Launches barnacles, caustic globules, frost nets, grapeshot, and large rocks.

Spell-Bottle Battery

Large metal cauldrons, or more rarely complex wirework structures with open sides, hold ampules of 3 to 5 feet long in place so the head can be struck away, releasing the contained energies towards the enemy.

The ammunition varies, from glass ampules to clay pots or tin cannisters, all designed magical energies ready until the container is broken.

Ammunition. Suitable for arcane ampules, duststorm cannisters, firepots and lightning bottles.

Magazine Needed. If a deck (other than a magazine) storing spell-bottle ammunition is struck, chamber explodes, automatically hitting the ship.

Deals damage as though all of the ships attacks had been made on itself at once.

Ammunition

Tracking Ammunition

Ammunition costs are for firing multiple siege weapons in a single attack.

One cargo of ammunition is sufficient for four ship attacks.

A single round of ammunition for a hurler or bottle-brace fills 4 gear slots, while the spears for a ballista fill 1 gear slot each.

Arcane Ampule

Distillate of arcane effluvia, sealed inside a glass tube.

Fired from a **bottle-brace**. Range of **far**. d12 siege.

Ballista Bolt

It's basically a spear.

Launched by a **ballista**. Range of **far**. 1d4 siege.

Barnacle

An angry, live dire barnacles.

Launched by a **hurler**. Range of **far**.

Barnacle. No damage. Angry barnacle latches on. Stats on 49.

Caustic Globule

Bladder of pulsing green acid.

Launched by a **hurler**. Range of **far**.

Soft projectile. Deals no damage on impact.

Acid. The struck deck is coated with acid for 5 rounds or until cleaned up, dealing 1d4 siege each round, including on impact. DC 15 CON or WIS to clean up.

Dust Storm Canister

Tin of captured desert winds.

Fired from a **bottle-brace**. Range of **far**.

Stinging sands. DC 12 WIS or CON to perform any action on next round.

Firepot

When broken, spews flame.

Fired from a **bottle-brace**. Range of **near**. d10 injuries.

Collateral. Deals injuries instead of siege. Also deals siege on a crit. Deals doubled injuries against groups.

Fires. Fires cause 1 siege per round until put out.

Flame-Lance

Bursts into flame on impact.

Launched by a **ballista**. Range of **far**. d8 siege.

Fires. Fires cause 1 siege per round until put out.

Frost Net

Unfolds as a snowflake, chilling and slowing its target.

Launched by a **hurler**. Range of **far**.

Frozen engines. Applies -3 SPD and -3 MVR for 1d3 rounds.

Against creatures. Reduces MV from near to close, or by near if MV is double-near or higher, for 1d3 rounds.

Grapeshot

A spray of small metal spheres.

Launched by a **hurler**. Range of **near**. d4 injuries

Collateral. Deals injuries instead of siege. Also deals siege on a crit. Deals doubled injuries against groups.

Heavy Steel Bolt

Solid steel, to pierce armor.

Launched by a **ballista**. Range of **far**. d8 siege.

Large Rock

Being a big rock, it tends to damage what it hits.

Launched by a **hurler**. Range of **far**. d8 siege.

Lightning Bottle

A roiling thunderstorm, trapped.

Fired from a **bottle-brace**. Range of **far**. d20 siege.

Conductivity. When attacking ships with metal armor plating, attack rolls are made at advantage. Cannot attack past a large metal object.

Rams

Sure, launching a barrage of lightning bolts is effective, but have you tried just crashing into something? (Ramming is not recommended for ships that are not designed for it.)

Limited Space

Only one ram can be mounted on a ship. Mounting a ram fills **size** cargo slots.

Blade Ram

A massive blade affixed to the prow of a ship, ready to split its foes apart.

Damage. Deals the **size** · d20 siege and **size** · d2 injuries.

Blade dulling. 1:6 chance when when ramming to blunt edge, reducing ramming to **size** · d8 siege and **size** injuries until the repaired for half the original cost.

Hammer Ram

A heavy, reinforced nose, designed to crack a ship's keel.

Damage. Deals the **size** · d12 siege and **size** · d3 injuries.

No Ram

A regular ship, not designed for it, can still crash into something.

Damage. Deals **size** · d3 siege.

Not reinforced. Suffer the same siege you dealt.

GAMEPLAY

Distance in the Aether

Combat Rounds

Distance

Close. 5 feet.
Near. Up to 30 feet.
Far. Within range of some weapons and spells.
Sight. Beyond the range of any weapon, but still within sight.

Relative Distance

In naval combat, track distance, not their exact locations.

At **near** or **far**, ships maneuver to affect the odds of hitting and being hit.

At **close**, maneuver for position.

Leaving **sight** ends the encounter.

Range Applies to the Whole Ship

Outside of **close**, a ship is entirely inside the same range, even though it might be too large to fit into that distance category.

In close, only one side of each ship is in close, the rest of the ship in near or far.

Crew Actions and Ship Movement Happen Last

Naval combat round sequence:

1. Regular actions
2. Crew actions
3. SPD checks
4. MVR checks

Actions to steer and move a ship are taken during the round (at most once per ship), but the results of the action take effect at the end of that round.

In-Ship Movement

While still at a distance, before any boarding action starts, characters are assumed to be able to move to any point on their ship to perform an action unless there is a specific reason, such as a raging fire in the way, preventing them from doing so.

Naval Movement

SPD Checks

Attempt to move more quickly. Check Spd Stat + Ship SPD. The stat used depends on propulsion.

Pursuit. Opposed check, winner decides if distance will increase/decrease/stay-the-same (30).

Regular Movement. Roll against a set DC to move faster.

Uncontrolled Flight. A SPD check with no one steering has a 50% chance of veering aside.

MVR Checks

Explain the maneuver, then check Mvr Stat + Ship MVR. The stat depends on propulsion.

Maneuver Comes Last

SPD is rolled first, so players know how close they will end up before they maneuver.

Severely Damaged

A ship at 0 **hull** can still move, but it fails any SPD or MVR checks and does no ramming damage.

Custom Maneuver

Taking advantage of the terrain or otherwise improvising is usually the best maneuver.

Maneuver for Advantage

At near or far, two ships make opposed MVR checks. (A result of less than 9 always fails.)

The GM decides on a result or the winner decides from:

- **Neutral.** Attacks are normal.
- **Chase.** At disadvantage.
- **Broadside.** At advantage.

Entering close, the options are:

- **Close.** Both ships are in **close**.
- **Flyby.** In **close**, advantage to move away next round.
- **Lock.** Ship are **locked** side-by-side. Both deal **size**-of-the-smaller damage.
- **Ram.** Deal ramming damage (33). Ships are **locked**.

Pursuit

As ships speed through the aether, pursuing each other through the endless void, they swiftly cover vast stretches of unreality.

Pursuit Events

If one ship is trying to flee while being pursued, use the following procedure:

1. At the start of a pursuit round, if no astral phenomena is in sight, select one from the map or randomly generate one based on the terrain type.

2. Perform a round of actions.

3. During ship movement, the lead ship acts first and either goes **towards** or **away from** the astral phenomena.

4. Seeing what the lead ship is doing, the chasing ship decides to **follow** or **turn away**.

If the pursuer does not follow the same route as the prey, they lose one distance category.

A ship in the astral phenomenon that decides to leave before making it all the way through loses one distance category.

A ship suffers the effects of an astral phenomenon on any round that it starts inside that phenomenon.

Time

Ships in a chase are going as fast as they possibly can, and only rarely having a chance at a good shot at each other. Each pursuit round represents a longer period of. It can take hours, perhaps even crossing an entire regional hex, just to go from far to near, but that still only allows one attack during that period.

Shipboard Actions

Regular Actions

All of the standard Shadowdark rules apply. Just improvising what your character would do is often the best course.

Rally the Crew

If your crew had their morale break, or just needs to get psyched up for an important crew action, a DC 15 CHA check can recover their morale.

If they recover their morale, they can act in that same round.

Direct The Crew

Many ship-board actions require many hands (such as firing a siege-battery).

If there are sufficient crew, a PC can manage a task, in which case the player rolls using their PC's stats, not the crew's stats.

If no PC takes the lead, the crew can perform the action with their own stats.

Study The Enemy

Spend a round getting a count of the enemy crew, their siege weapons, the exact actions they're taking, or whatever you're looking for. Automatically succeeds on a ship in **near** or **close**, DC 12 in **far**, impossible if just in **sight**.

Without study, if the ship is within **far** you know the enemy ship's type without a check. In **sight**, a DC 15 check gives this information.

Swim

Adrift in the aether, there's nothing to push against. Fortunately, the unformed reality of aether tends to serve real things that exist, and you are such a thing.

Take a swim action to roll a DC 12 CON check to move **near** through the aether.

Siege Attacks

Siege-Battery Attacks

One ship attack involves firing all the weapons in a siege battery.

A crawler can direct one attack with their modifiers, while other attacks use the crew's stats and cannot critically hit.

On a critical failure, the siege weapon is fouled until repairs are done.

Attacking Ships & Leviathans

Against ships and structures, roll an attack (INT or DEX) against the target's AC and deal siege to the hull.

Against leviathans, roll an attack (INT or DEX) against the target's AC and deal injuries to its crew-equivalent, or to its HP if that is eliminated.

On a critical hit or against a ship at 0 hull, also deal injuries to the crew and damage a random deck.

Attacking Groups

Against groups of creatures not on ships, make a DC 12 DEX or INT check to deal injuries to the crew, or the minor creatures if a non-crew group.

If no minor creatures remain, instead deal regular damage in a near-size cube.

On a critical hit, roll additional damage dice as in a critical hit with a normal weapon.

Slow-Loading

With a full crew on a ship, siege weapons can be both loaded and fired each round.

Without a full crew, a round spent loading is required between each attack.

For a single character, loading a single siege weapon requires their movement and action.

Ramming

Hulls grind together, armor screeching, wood splintering, crew gripping tight as the deck bucks.

Ramming

When one ship rams another, it deals its ram's damage and suffers siege equal to the **size** of the smaller of the two ships. Most rams cause siege and injuries at once.

Ramming leaves ships **locked** together.

Locked

A **locked** ship cannot move until the lock is broken. How you dislodge your ship from a lock will depend on how the lock happened.

Bracing to Ram

Any character that's surprised or that moved during the round isn't braced. When ships collide or lock, unbraced characters make a DC 15 DEX or suffer 1d3 damage. Unbraced crews suffer **size** · (d2 - 1) injuries.
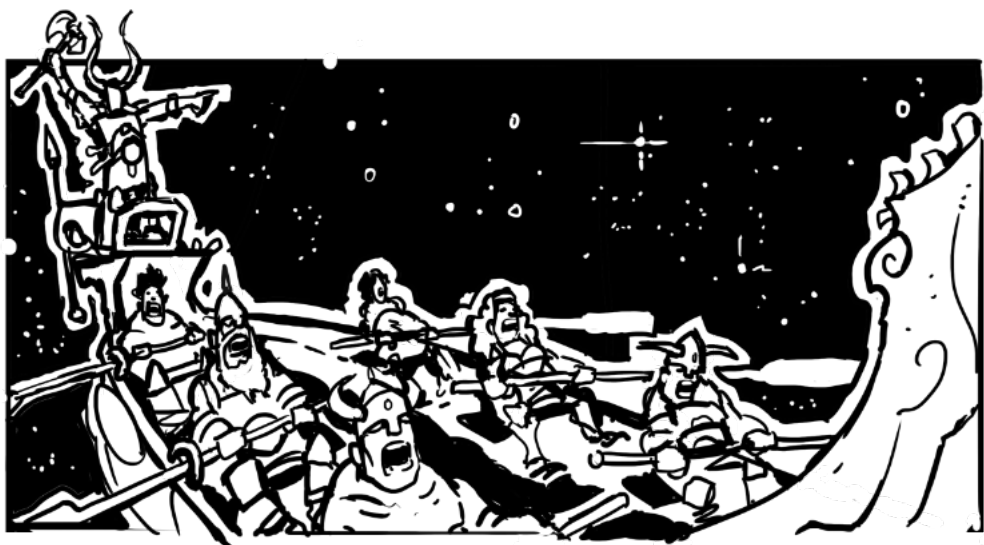
Boarding Actions

Getting Aboard

If two ships are in **close**, no check is needed to cross the gap.

If two ships are **near**, a DC 12 CON check can swim across.

Gravity

Gravity on each ship remains oriented towards the bottom of that ship. If they intersect at an odd angle, characters need to transition gravity planes when switching decks. (Planetside, the planet's gravity overrides others.)

Split Combat

The two crews fight as part of the environment around the PCs, who are fighting the enemy crew's key members.

The Key-Fight

The players fight a subset of the ship's crew, defined as the Key Crew in the ship's stat block.

The Crew-Fight

At the end of each round, before ship movement, each crew acts.

Custom orders. The crew will follow orders using standard rules, if any are given.

Player-crew attacks. Roll to attack against the rival-crew's AC, dealing the damage die in injuries to the rival-crew on a hit. If there is no rival crew, automatically hit and deal damage to all enemies.

Rival-crew attacks. The rival-crew rolls its attacks against the player-crew's AC. If it succeeds, it deals injuries to the player crew.

Without a crew. If the players have no crew, the rival-crew successfully strikes twice a round.

Morale. If a crew's morale fails, they don't act until rallied (DC 15 CHA).

Bonus Crew Attacks

If the player-crew has over 100 members, it gains a second attack. Over 300, it gains a third.

Enemies list their number of attacks in their CRW stat block.

Event Tables

Each round, a random event occurs. Each rival crew has its own random event table, generally similar to this:

d4	Boarding Events
1	Nothing happens.
2	Shifting decks. DC 14 DEX or PCs fall over.
3	Stray siege shot. 1d6 damage to all PCs and 1d6 injuries.
4	One crewmember joins the key-fight.

Ending the Fight

When the fight ends is up to the GM, but generally a fight ends when either side of the key-fight is eliminated.

When crews are fighting each other, they will usually surrender, as massacring helpless enemies is rare.

Targeted Attacks into Mass-Combat

Attacks that hit specific targets are rolled against the rival-crew's AC. If you hit, roll damage as normal, injuring enemy crewmembers equal to how many multiples of their HP stat were dealt.

Area Attacks into Mass-Combat

Effects that cause damage in an area risk injuring friendly and enemy crewmembers, equally.

Depending on the situation, the GM improvises exactly what happens. The following is only a loose guide:

If an effect hits a **near-sized cube**, roll damage as normal, counting the lower half of the dice as injuries to your crew and the higher as injuries to the rival crew.

If an effect hits a **smaller area**, such as a close-radius or a straight-line effect, roll half the dice for injuries to the rival-crew, then roll a single die for injuries to your crew.

Planetside Flight

Generally, the ground is easy to avoid, but an awareness of such a dangerous object should be maintained while planetside.

Crash Landing

If a ship flies into the ground at a high speed, it suffers **size** · d6 siege, or **size** · d3 siege if moving slowly or falling from near. When crashing in rough terrain, damage increases to **size** · d12 or **size** · d6 siege.

Naval Combat

When purely chasing other ships or large beasts, continue to use the rules for naval flight on 31, with the exception that checks trying to increase elevation are at disadvantage.

Note that creatures that can fly generally do not have the same difficulty gaining elevation.

Mixed Combat

Sometimes, ships will be maneuvering over other creatures, making the purely-relative measurements of naval combat insufficient.

Regular movement. Without a check, or in the case of a failed check, a ship continues to move near in whatever direction it was already headed. If gaining elevation, still move near, but only gain close elevation.

Rushing. Roll a DC 15 SPD check (depending on circumstance) to move triple-near. If gaining elevation, only 1 near movement can gain elevation.

Critical success. Move quadruple near.

Critical failure. Move near towards the ground, possibly crashing.

Landing & Takeoff

The most dangerous time for a ship is take-off and landing.

Water landings. You can land in open water without looking for a good spot or making a check.

Ground landings. Make a DC 12 maneuver check to land in a single round on safe ground. No check is required to land over 2d6 rounds. On rough terrain, DC 9 to land over 2d6 rounds, or DC 15 to land in 1 round.

Safe landing spots. Over solid ground, make a WIS check to spot safe ground with a single action against a DC determined by the terrain.

If the players have the time to simply fly around and look, a failed check means they spend 1d3 hours searching before they find a good spot.

Finding a Safe Landing	DC
Open, flat ground	9
Hills or sparse forests	12
Jungle or mountains	15
Inside a cave or buildings	18

Taking off. From water or an aetherport, launching takes 1d6 rounds.

From land, launching in 1d6 rounds requires a DC 12 maneuver check. On a failure, suffer **size** · d3 siege, but still launch successfully.

From land, 3d6 rounds can be spent to launch without a check.

Take-off is risky. Launching from a standstill is meant to be dangerous. Once a ship begins lift-off, it must finish launching. If not everyone is on-board, the ship will have to circle back and land again.

Ship Landing Types

Standard. Will sink over a span of 30 minutes if landing in water.

Seaworthy. Suffers disadvantage when landing on solid ground.

Lands Anywhere. Can land on solid ground normally and floats in water, but has less space due to the additional structure. Has only **4 × size** cargo space without upgrades.

Visibility in the Aether

There's starlight everywhere, yet somehow the aether remains dark.

Deck Lighting

Provisions include the cost of oil to keep the ship lit, allowing regular activity.

Dim Starlight

The expanse of stars lights everything, just not very well.

Aboard an unlit deck, or in other dimly-lit spaces, the layout of an area and the locations of objects and creatures can be seen, but actions are still at disadvantage as they would be in total darkness.

Obvious Ships

Ships leave a faintly glowing trail while flying in the void, as it's impossible to push off the aether without the aether reacting, so keeping lit lamps does not make a ship more visible.

A ship that is stationary with its deck dark is practically invisible.

If the players encounter a ship that is not moving with no lights, it will usually be noticed at **near**.

If it is moving normally or has deck-lights, a ship is likely to be noticed at the edge of **sight** in clear aether, or at **far** in a nebula.

Provisions

A ship doesn't run on magic alone, nor can a crew. Any long journey requires sufficient supplies to keep the crew off the float and the ship's engine rumbling.

Provisions Use

Based on ship size, propulsion type, and total crew, determine how many provisions are needed each day.

Provisions represent everything necessary, including food for the crew, oil for lanterns, incidentals for minor repairs, and materials to maintain the propulsion system.

Only update this number during downtime. Too much precision will just slow the game down.

CRW + PRV Less Than	Provisions Needed
10	1 per 5 days
15	1 per 3 days
25	1 per 2 days
35	1 per day
50	2 per 3 days
75	2 per day
100	3 per day
125	4 per day
150	5 per day
175	6 per day
200	7 per day
225	8 per day
250	9 per day
275	10 per day
300	11 per day
325	12 per day
350	13 per day
375	14 per day
400	15 per day
+25	+1 per day

Travel

The basic hexcrawl rules (SD 90) can be used with the following tweaks.

Encounters

In a **worldspace-void** or the **astral sea**, encounters are rolled as normal.

Planetside, encounters that happen on the ground will not affect a flying ship and, depending on the terrain how carefully the players keep watch, may not even be noticed.

Navigation

Planetside and in most **worldspace voids**, the view from an aethership makes navigation trivial and no navigation checks are needed.

In the **astral sea**, the only guides are constellations from varying angles, requiring navigation checks as normal.

Shifts

A ship doesn't get tired from work (unless an oil-slick heart powers it). As such, by working in shifts, a crew can keep flying endlessly.

How long the crew can work to keep the ship moving is measured in 8-hour shifts.

A ship's required-crew normally works one shift in a day. They can be convinced to work an additional shift with a DC 6 CHA check. Each extra shift worked between ports increases the CHA check DC by +1.

Stopping

Planetside, a ship that stops must land. Because it is so visible while flying, roll an additional chance at a random encounter when a ship lands.

Any creatures in the encounter have seen and prepared for the ship.

Crew Size

For each multiple of the required crew, a ship can work one additional shift without a CHA check.

Speed

A ship travels at regular speed, or at full speed with a DC 12 SPD check.

If the ship has less than the required crew, or if it splits the crew to work multiple shifts, it travels at a lazy speed.

Weather

In general, aetherships fly above inclement weather, but if they have to pass through a storm, a DC 9 (rough weather) or DC 15 (severe storm) maneuver check is required to a avoid a crash.

Keeping Watch Planetside

Flying at speed above a planet, it's not easy to notice events and terrain far below.

In general, if nobody is tasked with keeping watch below, planetside events are missed.

The DC to notice an event will depend on the circumstance and GM discretion.

Provisions

In the astral sea, players cannot forage, they only have what they brought, and they have much less leeway with provisions, risking float-madness each week they are without provisions (39).

Speed	6 mile (10 km) Hexes per hour	mph	kph
Lazy	½	3	5
Regular	1	6	10
Full	2	12	20

Aethereal Mechanics

Most of us are familiar with life in a world. We know which direction down is, that fire burns and that water quenches. Reality exists. The gap between worlds, the endless aether, is not so reliable.

Aether

Reality is built from aether, but raw aether is just disorganized potential. It clings like dust to bits of reality, taking on aspects of reality for a time, then returning to dust.

Aether is generally thought of as silver or white, and that is the dominant shade, but it can acquire any hue. Some claim it all has rich undertones, but most only see colorful aether in nebulae.

People think of aether being in the astral sea, but it's actually everywhere. Even in the densest world, there's a hint of loose, potential reality always adrift, hidden by the reality all about.

Crystalline Stars

A massive silver-white crystal, a star is a hunk of crystallized aether.

Stars are generally thought of as immovable and indestructible, but modern arcanistry has disproven both claims.

Stars drift, but too slowly to be easily noticed, steadily leaking aether into the astral sea. Occasionally, they shed off nova pulses, sending forth a layer of crystal and aether.

Stars will, rarely, appear or disappear, making mapping difficult.

Nebulae

Dense clouds of aether, nebulae have begun to acquire magical and physical hints of proto-reality. From a distance, they are rich jewel-tones, although from within they are more like a hazy mist, tinting everything with their dominant color.

Worlds

In the astral sea, the endless aether is deep, a bottomless expanse of unreality. Reality flattens that out, potential depth becoming actualized breadth.

Looking like a star from a distance, as a ship closes in, a world begins to fuzz at the edges, rather than sharpening into the razor edges of a star.

Once you are within a dozen or so miles, the world grows, becoming a vast expanse of aethereal mist, hundreds of miles across. As you slide through this veil, you enter a vast world, though it looked the size of a star in the void.

In this stretched reality, the distant stars seem impossibly far apart, when in truth they're quite close to one another. This shifting continues on a smaller scale within the world. On arrival, planets seem like large orbs, all close to one another, but as you approach the atmosphere they grow, and the view back seems impossibly distant.

Worlds Vary

Slightly over half of all worlds have planets. Others may be flat worlds, strangely sculpted earth, or even wandering world-beasts. The ways reality can form are endless.

Dim Starlight

Stars provide the only light in the astral sea, making it as bright as a moonless night. At a distance, ships and large beasts stand out, but the deck of a ship is still drenched in black.

Aether tends to have a faint glow, enough that its obvious in the void, but the light only reaches about a millimeter away.

There is No Certain Truth

Nobody actually knows how aether works. Modern arcanistry has many theories, but these are regularly disproven as more strange elements of the astral sea are discovered.

These descriptions of what aether seems like are an approximation at best.

Clear Aether Terrain

Terrain "Rules"

The rules given here are solely meant to inspire gameplay. Specific DCs are not included, to allow these phenomena to be used at multiple intensities and with more diverse level ranges, and elements such as damage are at best a suggestion.

1-3. Naught but empty aether

A vast expanse of clearly visible stars stretching out to eternity. A few stars closer, ahead and behind. Beyond about ten miles, all stars look alike, just points of light in the endless black.

No effect.

4. A silvery Wave of aether, rolling out from a distant nova.

The slow-moving shockwave of a nova pushes a sphere of brilliant silver aether-dust.

Within, *the pulsing waves of aether roll one after another, tossing vessels about.*

Effects. Constant waves of force rock the ship and impose disadvantage on all SPD, MVR, and DEX checks.

d8	Clear Aether Terrain Events
1-3	Naught but empty aether
4	A silvery wave of aether, rolling out from a distant nova
5	Clustered stars, so dense they jostle together
6	Starlets and crystals drifting as an old nova fades
7	A cloud of thick, clumping dust
8	A wall of dark-aether, hiding even the stars

5. Clustered stars, so dense they jostle together

A bright spot, stars so close you can't properly count them.

In close, stars grind together, shedding blinding crystal sparks. Other stars drift closer, risking further collisions.

Effect. SPD checks require MVR or suffer **size** · d6 siege, but moving slowly is safe.

6. Starlets and crystals drifting as an old nova fades

A scattering of fractured starlets and lumps of crystallized aether is spread across a vast expanse.

Sailing through, starlets five or six feet across drift, fractures clear where they broke from a star, their once-sharp edges dull.

Effect. MVR or hit a starlet and have it shatter into starshards across the deck, dealing 1d6 injuries.

7. A cloud of thick, clumping dust

Like a silvery mud-puddle, aether clumps together, for some reason not crystallizing.

Sailing through the muck, aether clings to everything, but it's not too bad as long as the dense pockets are avoided.

Effect. MVR check or be dragged to a stop until 5 × **size** points of damage are dealt to the aether-gunk hardened onto the ship.

8. A wall of dark-aether, hiding even the stars

Like a gap in reality, the vast dead-spot hides all.

Entering the dark, all light fails, whether from stars without or magic within.

Effect. No light can be generated by any means.

A failed MVR check steers towards the center, leaving the ship 1 round further from getting out and eventual exit is in a random direction.

Nebula Terrain

Deadly Clouds

The dark forests of the astral sea, nebulae are infinitely diverse, but always dangerous. The dense clouds reduce **sight** to **far**, dangers coming swiftly.

1. Phlogiston, burning in twisting crimson arcs

Pale pink clouds drift, fiery arcs forming where they collide.

Up close, *the fat clusters of pink dust drift like rose petals all about, following complex currents. Where they tangle, the dense phlogiston sends waves of fire rolling forth.*

Effect. MVR check or suffer **size ·** d6 siege and **size** injuries.

2. Ice-white clouds, thick with icebergs

A thick mist of dense white looms ahead, vast shadows moving within.

Within, *the soupy-white fog faints the deck with frost, the chill causing shivers. The shadows are massive, but hard to see. The first shadow as a glacier nears gives only moments of warning.*

Effect. MVR check or strike a glacier when making a SPD check, suffering **size ·** d3 damage and losing a range category relative to other ships.

d6	Nebula Terrain Events
1	Phlogiston, burning in twisting crimson arcs
2	Ice-white clouds, thick with icebergs
3	A blue-green cloud of toxic gas
4	A roiling cloud of buffeting winds
5	Clouds Burbling with Pre-lingual Chatter
6	Vibrant purple dust, echoing with psychic babble

3. A blue-green cloud of toxic gas

Slow-shifting blue clouds have a sickly green tinge.

Within, *the ugly mist tinges everything aquamarine. Aether clings to the skin, itching horribly.*

Effect. Anyone taking an action must make a CON check or be at disadvantage. If inside the cloud for long-distance travel, crew makes a CON check every hour or suffers 1 injury.

4. A roiling cloud of buffeting winds

Dense, silvery mists race in swift currents. Traces of pale blue illuminate the flowing patterns.

Within, *there are moments of perfectly clarity, then walls of driven dust race through, a bluish front on a wave of rich silver that rocks the ship.*

Effect. SPD checks, MVR checks, and ranged attacks are at disadvantage. Movement requires a DEX check to not fall prone halfway through.

5. Clouds Burbling with Pre-lingual Chatter

Silvery clouds writhe ahead, pulsing and flickering. A faint echo can be heard.

Within the cloud, *voices give a suggestion of words, something that teases at understanding.*

Effect. Choose to listen to the voices and gain advantage on a SPD or MVR check, then make a check to resist the float (48).

6. Vibrant purple dust, echoing with psychic babble

A rich purple expanse, speckles of shining white scattered across it. Distant voices, or perhaps song, can be heard.

Sailing through, *a rich purple haze seems infinitely thick in the periphery of sight, something alluring in that heavy glow.*

Effect. CHA check or attempt to leap off of the ship (**size** crewmembers on a crew failure). Leaders can rally the crew (31) to stop them leaping off.

The Float

In the corner of the tavern, a floater mumbles to himself, occasionally remembering that the things before him are food.

Aether Makes Your Reality

Aether doesn't react to the mind or the soul or the will, it reacts to the body, because the body is a piece of reality.

When that body becomes desperate, usually because of starvation or dehydration, the aether helps. It starts making a bit of reality for the body, sustaining it where food and water do not.

"On the Float"

When a ship gets wrecked, people end up floating through the astral sea, minds trapped in a false world, bodies still healthy.

Ships who find floaters usually fish them out and try to help, but many never recover.

Float Rules

Each day you are without provisions in the astral sea, make a DC 6 CHA check or become listless.

If the crew fails its save, **size** · d3 go on the float, becoming incapacitated but not dying.

With care and food, PCs make a DC 12 CHA recovery check each week.

For the crew, make a DC 9 CHA recovery check once only for each person on the float; the failures never recover.

Optional: Starvation

If it fits your game better, ignore float rules and use starvation rules (SD 90) for characters.

For the crew, instead of suffering CON damage, **size** · d2 random crew are affected. The first time a crewmember is rolled, they are starving, the second they are incapacitated, the third they die.

ENEMIES

Ships

CRW and Key Crew

The ship stat blocks in this section are followed by a crew block which lists the members of the crew.

The CRW is the default group fighting against the players' crew, and the Key Crew is what the players end up fighting, but the case in play will rarely be exactly the default.

The exact mix involved in combat should reflect the events as they happen, rather than precisely following the CRW section.

Targeting Decks

Although the rules rarely request a random deck, noting where an attack strikes is useful for narration, so every ship includes a table of random decks to select from.

Adjusting Ship Style

This quickstart offers a relatively generic set of ships, but your game will have specific navies and origins.

Not only should ships have flags and layouts that represent the navy they are a part of, their style of weapons and armor should shift, and their crews should change.

Loot

If randomly generating loot for a defeated ship, it should have rewards equal to its size on the table of its captain or strongest crew-member's LV.
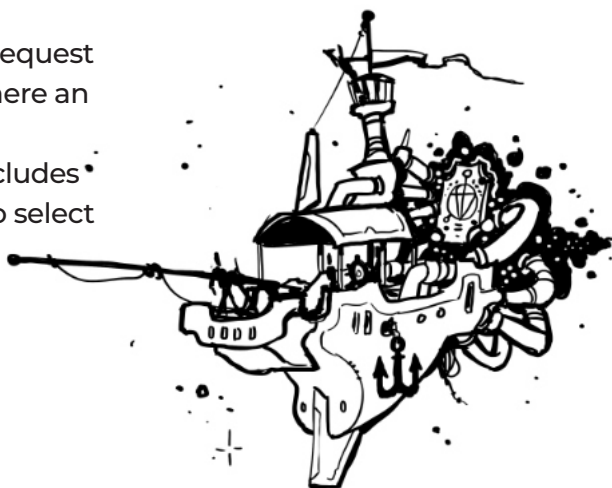
Pirates

What they lack in training, pirates make up for in fury. All know they can keep a portion of the take, and that if they don't win the day they'll be hanged for their crimes, making them fiercer than any military crew.

d4	Pirate Crew Events
1	Arguments and infighting. Do nothing.
2	Terrifying assault. Break the morale of the rival crew.
3	Sheer chaos. Roll 2d6. Deal the higher as injuries and suffer the lower as injuries.
4	One pirate joins key-fight

Pirate

Criminals living free in the wilds of aetherspace, willing to use violence to take what they want.

AC 12 (leather), **HP** 4, **ATK** 1 cutlass +1 (1d6) or 1 javelin (far) +1 (1d4) **MV** near, **S** +1, **D** +1, **C** +0, **I** +0, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** C, **LV** 1

Pirate Captain

A fierce-enough and clever-enough leader to keep an entire crew of pirates loyal.

AC 14 (chainmail), **HP** 23, **ATK** 3 saber +4 (1d8) or 3 crossbow +4 (1d6) **MV** near, **S** +3, **D** +1, **C** +1, **I** +1, **W** +1, **Ch** +3, **AL** C, **LV** 5

Brutal Order. In place of one attack, cause one injury to the pirate captain's own crew to rally them.

Seasoned Pirate

Missing a limb, but with a lot of experience in exchange.

AC 12 (leather), **HP** 9, **ATK** 2 cutlass +2 (1d6) or 2 crossbow (far) +2 (1d6) **MV** near, **S** +2, **D** +1, **C** +0, **I** +0, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** C, **LV** 2

Peg Leg. Cannot use an action to increase movement past **near**.

False Merchant

Towering sails billow before the aether, pulling through the aether a ship that looks safe, right up until its ballistae loose.

AC 8, **Hull** 35, **Spd** +1 (captain), **Mvr** +0, **Size** 5, **Ram** none (5d4 siege, 5 injuries)

**Catching the Aether.** Advantage on SPD checks in the astral sea; disadvantage on SPD checks inside a world.

False Paneling. Noticing the ship's ballistae before it begins firing requires a DC 15 WIS check, or DC 18 at **far**.

CRW 10 pirates, **AC** 12, **ATK** +1 (1d6), **Key Crew** 5 seasoned pirates, 1 pirate captain, **LV** 3
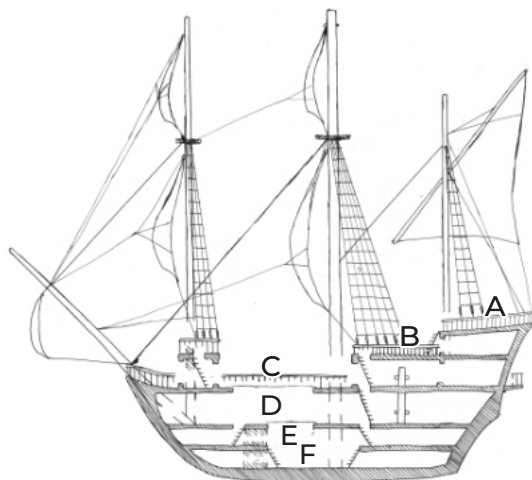
d12	Random Deck
1	Steering & rigging
2	Capstan & cabin
3	Main deck & dinghy
4	Fore ballista battery
5	Ammunition storage
6	Aft ballista battery
7	Orlop cargo hold
8	Main cargo hold
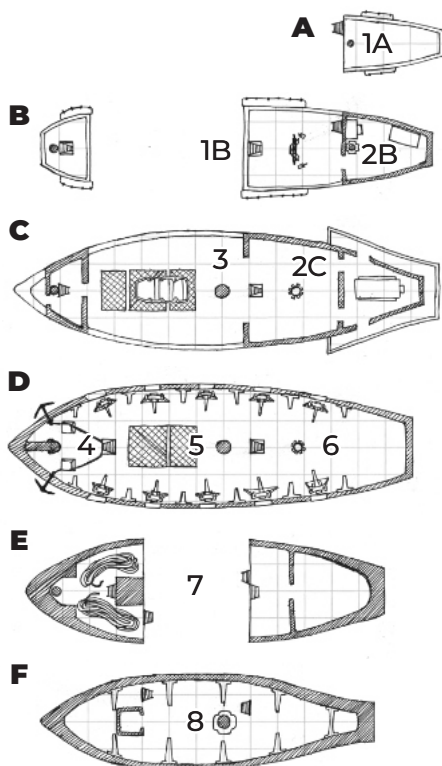
Pirate Kakam

Swift, well armed, and ready for battle.

AC 14 (bronze), **Hull** 15, **Spd** +1, **Mvr** +1, **Size** 3, **Ram** none (3d4 siege, 3 injuries), **ATK** 1 incendiary sphere (far) +6 (1d4 siege + fires)

Fires. Deals 1 siege per round until extinguished.

CRW 12 aethermutant pirates, **AC** 13, **ATK** +3 (2, 1d8), **Key Crew** 4 aethermutants (1 brute, 1 devourer, 1 lasher, 1 captain), **LV** 5

Terrifying Assault. Break enemy crew morale when boarding.

d6	Decks
1	Catapult battery
2	Rack space
3	Open cargo storage
4	Tiller
5	Galley & magazine
6	Cabin & cargo hold
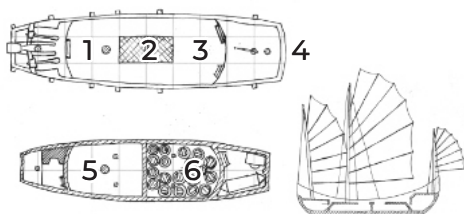
Raiding Longship

Rows of warriors, chanting in time to speed their bladed prow.

AC 13 (bronze), **Hull** 15, **Spd** +8, **Mvr** +3 (captain), **Size** 3, **Ram** none (3d20 siege, 3d2 injuries), **ATK** 1 ballista (far) +4 (1d4 siege)

Exhaustion. After 3 consecutive SPD checks, SPD checks are at disadvantage for the day.

CRW 60 pirates, **AC** 12, **ATK** +1 (2, 1d6), **Key Crew** 6 seasoned pirates and 1 pirate captain, **LV** 3

d6	Random Deck
1	Ballista battery
2	Fore incanting seats
3	Mid incanting seats
4	Aft incanting seats
5	Coordination drum
6	Underdeck storage
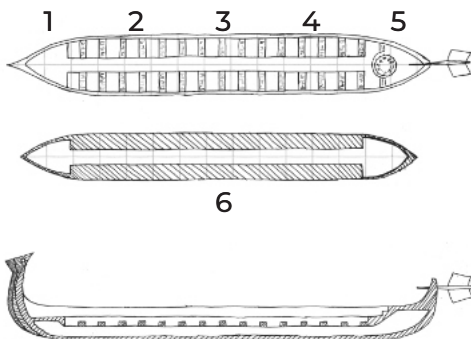
Repurposed Merchanter

Sheets of metal are bolted across the surface, a cheap effort at armor that mostly functions.

AC 15 (poor steel), **Hull** 100, **Spd** -4, **Mvr** -3, **Size** 8, **Ram** none (8d4 siege, 8 injuries), **ATK** 4 heavy steel bolts (far) +8 (1d8 siege)

**Acidic Fluids.** When critically hit, suffer 1d3 additional injuries.

1 Cargo Skiff. **AC** 10, **Hull** 8, **Spd** 3, **Mvr** 2, **Size** 1, **Ram** none (1d4 siege, 1 injury), **Crew** 3 to 22

CRW 150 pirates, **AC** 12, **ATK** +1 (2, 1d6), **Key Crew** 15 pirates, 1 pirate captain, **LV** 1

d12	Random Deck
1	Cabins & galley
2	Port watch deck
3	Control valves
4	Cargo skiff & watch deck
5	Port ballista battery
6	Cargo lifts & provisions
7	Starboard ballista battery
8	Cargo hold A
9	Cargo hold B
10	Starboard barracks
11	Port barracks
12*	Barnacle agglomerations

* Roll again for leak location

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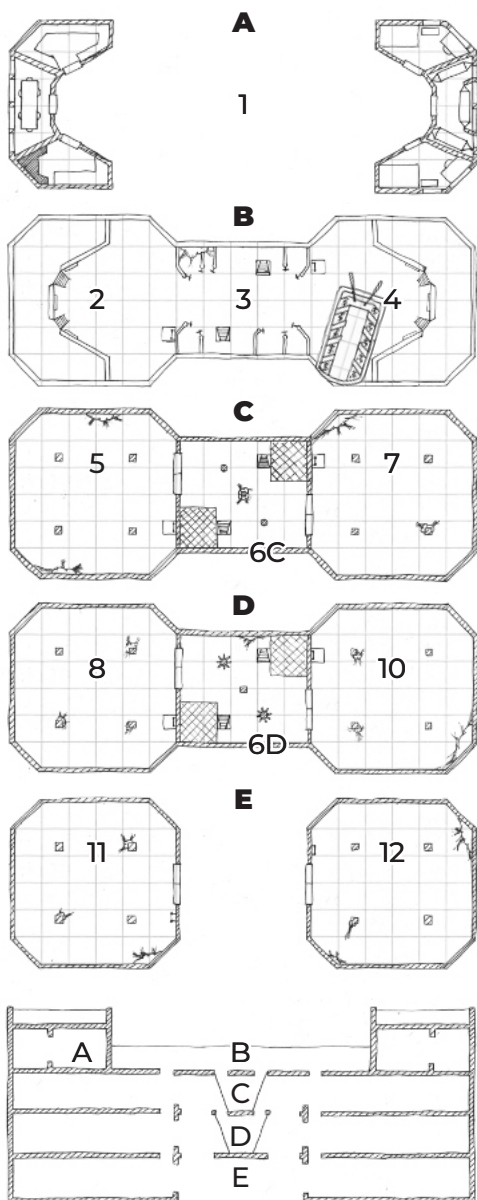
Stolen Warship

Armor patched repeatedly with improvised repairs, a rough imitation of what it once was. Accompanied by swift-sailing incantation rams.

AC 16 (steel), **Hull** 100, **Spd** +0 (arcanist), **Mvr** 0 (captain), **Size** 8, **Ram** hammer (8d12 siege, 8d3 injuries), **ATK** 4 arcane ampules (far) +8 (1d12 siege)

2 Crashers. **AC** 16 (steel), **Hull** 8, **Spd** +6 (with 15 crew), **Mvr** +2, **Size** 1, **Ram** hammer (1d12 siege, 1d3 injuries), **Crew** 1 to 15

CRW 150 pirates, **AC** 12, **ATK** +1 (2, 1d6), **Key Crew** 10 seasoned pirates and 1 pirate captain, **LV** 2

d12	Random Deck
1	Cabins
2	Crasher launches
3	Main deck & cargo lift
4	Steering & watchtowers
5	Fore cargo hold & galley
6	Additional bunk space
7	Aft cargo hold
8	Arcane jet
9	Fore bottle battery
10	Fore spell-bottle magazine
11	Aft spell-bottle magazine
12	Aft bottle battery
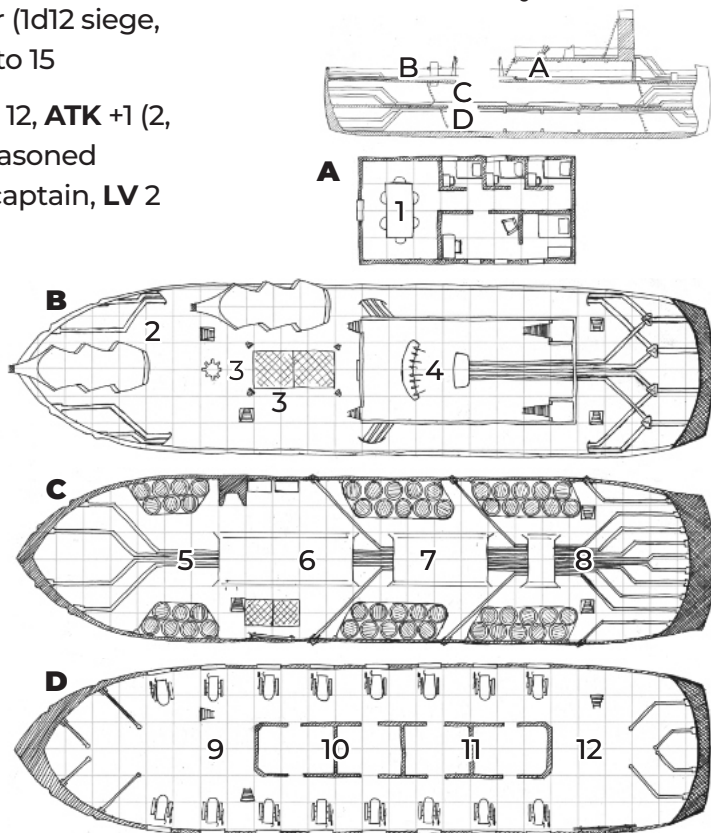
Echoes

Gaps in the hull shimmer silver, a shredded remnant of a ship made whole by the aether. Former sailors have aether bubbling in the gaps left by their wounds as they stumble through a memory of life.

Where chunks of reality drift, the aether fills in the gaps to rebuild them, creating revenant beasts out of slain crews and shattered ships.

d4	Echo Crew Events
1	Stare blankly. Nothing happens.
2	Terrifying assault. Break morale of the rival crew.
3	Aethereal wave. 1d6 injuries and 1d3 damage to all enemies in key fight.
4	One echo joins key-fight

Full Echo

With some spark of remaining intellect, its aethereal blade swings with cruel intent.

AC 13, **HP** 15, **ATK** 2 saber +3 (1d8), **MV** near, **S** +3, **D** +1, **C** +2, **I** +0, **W** +1, **Ch** +1, **AL** C, **LV** 4

Aethereal Echo. 50% chance to reduce damage taken to 0.

Aetherplague. Any person killed becomes a shambling echo, or a full echo if LV 3+.

Shambling Echo

Like a person living in a trance, but for the silvery aether puddling where wounds surely slew the original.

AC 8, **HP** 11, **ATK** 1 slam +2 (1d6), **MV** near, **S** +2, **D** -2, **C** +2, **I** -2, **W** -2, **Ch** -3, **AL** C, **LV** 3

Aethereal Echo. 50% chance to reduce damage taken to 0.

Aetherplague. Any person killed becomes a shambling echo, or a full echo if LV 3+.

Kakam Echo

Holes gape wide across the stern of the ship, and its mainsail is naught but aether.

AC 13 (bronze), **Hull** 15, **Spd** +1, **Mvr** +0, **Size** 3, **Ram** none (3d4 siege, 3 injuries), **ATK** 1 aethereal blast (far) +6 (1d8 siege)

CRW 12 shambling echoes, **AC** 8, **ATK** +2 (1d6), **Key Crew** 3 full echoes, 1 deadly echo, **LV** 4

Missing Pieces. Any attack striking an echo has a 50% chance to only hit aether and do no damage.

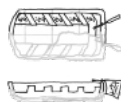| d6	Decks
1	Catapult battery
2	Rack space
3	Open cargo storage
4	Tiller
5	Galley & magazine
6	Cabin & cargo hold

Skiff Echo

Crammed tight with confused, reanimated corpses, this was likely a lifeboat carrying the survivors of some far larger ship.

AC 10, **Hull** 8, **Spd** +3, **Mvr** +2, **Size** 1, **Ram** none (1d4 siege, 1 injury)

Key Crew 21 shambling echoes, **LV** 3

Missing Pieces. Any attack striking an echo has a 50% chance to only hit aether and do no damage.
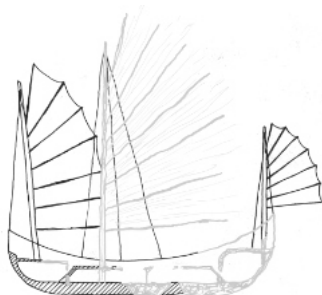
Leviathans

Leviathans

A leviathan is a creature of the astral sea that is so large that it can fight the players, the crew, and the entire ship at once.

SPD, MVR, & CRW

Leviathans have SPD and MVR stats for use during naval combat.

A leviathan's CRW stat is similar to that of a ship, with the details of how it behaves in combat included below the leviathan's main stat block.

At Range

In **near**, **far**, or **sight**, fighting a leviathan is similar to fighting a ship.

Siege attacks deal injuries to the leviathan's CRW, as though striking a ship with 0 hull.

Regular attacks damage the leviathan's CRW based on multiples of the CRW HP, as with normal mass-combat.

Close Combat

Once a leviathan locks a ship, it operates the same as an entire rival crew and its leaders.

Unless noted otherwise, the leviathan's CRW uses the same stats as the leviathan in close combat, with successful CRW attacks causing random events just like a rival crew does.

Subtle

For all their size, leviathans are difficult to find. Most do not glow, so they are nearly impossible to see at a distance in the astral sea. PCs are unlikely to spot a leviathan if it has not already spotted them and decided to attack.

Tactics

Most leviathans are instinctive hunters and, as with most predators, will not attack something larger than them. As they do not eat ships, they will often leave without killing everyone off

Astral Kraken

Tentacles as Crew

The CRW stat for a kraken is the number of tentacles it has that are not in the key-fight.

Injuries caused by the crew are dealt to severed tentacles first and attached tentacles second.

If an attached tentacle is injured, it becomes a severed tentacle. If a severed tentacle is injured, count is reduced by one.

Attached Tentacle

AC 12, **HP** 6, **ATK** 1 tentacle (double near) +2 (1d4 + grab), **MV** —, **S** +2, **D** +1, **C** +1, **I** -1, **W** +1, Ch +1, **AL** N, **LV** 1

Grab. Character is hit for 1d4 each round until severed.

Severed tentacles. If reduced to 0 HP, becomes severed tentacle.

Severed Tentacle

AC 12, **HP** 6, **ATK** 1 slap +2 (1d4), **MV** near (climb), **S** +2, **D** +1, **C** +1, **I** -1, **W** +1, **Ch** +1, **AL** N, **LV** 1

d3	Astral Kraken Events
1	Tentacles fling the crew. 1d6 crew are hurled to 1d3 near from the kraken.
2	Tentacles squeeze the hull, dealing 2d6 siege.
3	Unseen tentacle snatches at a random target in the key-fight. DC 15 DEX check or be thrown to 1d3 near from the kraken.

Adult Kraken

AC 16, **HP** 62, **ATK** 1 bite +6 (2d8 + devour or 2d8 siege), **MV** double near (fly), **S** +5, **D** +3, **C** +3, **I** +0, **W** +2, **Ch** +1, **AL** N, **LV** 13

Spd +6, **Mvr** +3, **Ram** shell (6d12 siege, 2d6 injuries)

CRW 24 tentacles, **AC** 13, **ATK** +3 (2, 1d8), **Key Crew** kraken and 5 tentacles

Devour. DC 12 STR or DEX check or be swallowed, suffering 1d8 damage each round. DC 12 STR or DEX action to escape.

**Shell.** 20 AC while approaching.

Astral Beasts

Buwakara

Puffy orbs, a bit like the tufts of a seeding dandelions, buwakara schools drift through the aether. They seek dense nebulae, feeding on aether until they've grown enough to divide into even more buwakara. Generally harmless, these only attack when threatened.

AC 12, **HP** 6, **ATK** 1 ram +1 (1d4 + ploof), **MV** near, **S** -3, **D** +1, **C** +0, **I** +0, **W** +2, **Ch** +1, **AL** N, **LV** 1

Ploof. The buwakara splurts spores on the target, causing a severe reaction. DC 12 CON or spend your next action coughing and sneezing.
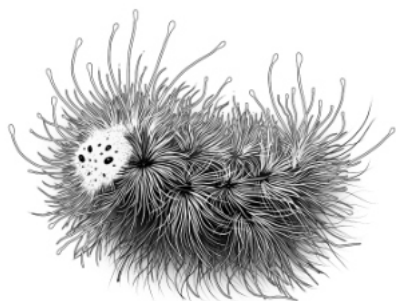
Dire Barnacle

A four-foot blob with skin that feels like stone, stellar barnacles latch onto anything they bump into, slowly digesting it.

AC 15, **HP** 12, **ATK** 1 latch on +3, **MV** close (drift), **S** +1, **D** -2, **C** +4, **I** -2, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 1

Latch On. Attaches to the target. STR 18 to remove. Deals 1 damage per round.

Acidic Blood. When attacked, deals 1d3 damage to the attacker if in close or a random person or object in close otherwise.

Drift. Unless within **near** of a target, move towards largest object in **far**.

Camouflage. Requires a check to be noticed.
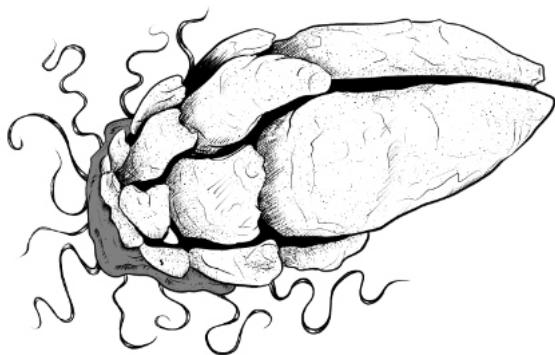
Rodentia Aetherica

Generations of mutation have left these many-limbed beasties at home in the aether, surviving as any native beast.

AC 12, **HP** 8, **ATK** 1 claw +3 (1d6 + warping), **MV** near (aether-swim, climb), **S** +0, **D** +3, **C** -1, **I** +0, **W** +1, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 2

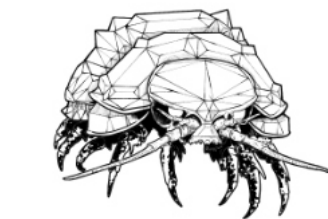**Warping.** DC 12 CHA or 1d4 CHA damage.

Stoneclaw, Medium

A huge claw and rickety body, stitched together from wrecked ships and ruined worlds, always seeking more debris to build its body ever-larger.

AC 15, **HP** 25, **ATK** 1 claw +4 (3d6), **MV** near (aether-swim), **S** +4, **D** -1, **C** +3, **I** -2, **W** +1, **Ch** -2, **AL** N, **LV** 5

Consume. If dealing damage to an inanimate object, regains HP equal to the damage deal.

Star Mite

A pest to the krakens and uyanleth they feed on, star mites are dangerous beasts to anything as small as a person. Their star-crystal shell makes them difficult to kill, and being only 3 inches long, they tend to go unnoticed until they're already biting you.

AC 22, **HP** 1, **ATK** 1 bite +5 (1d3), **MV** close (hop), near (aether-swim), **S** +0, **D** -1, **C** +4, **I** -2, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 1

Magic resistant. 50% chance to not suffer damage from a spell.

Aether-Dependent. Dies 1d3 rounds after entering a world.

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SAR SILVERCLOAK On the Writhing Earth

SAR SILVERCLOAK — AT THE ROOTS OF CORRUPTION

SAR SILVERCLOAK — AND THE GRAND RACE

LAVIN LIGHTNING-EYES — Atop the World Eater

LAVIN LIGHTNING-EYES — BATTLES THE PIRATE KING