



THE DEFENCE OF PROCYON III

MELD RULEBOOK

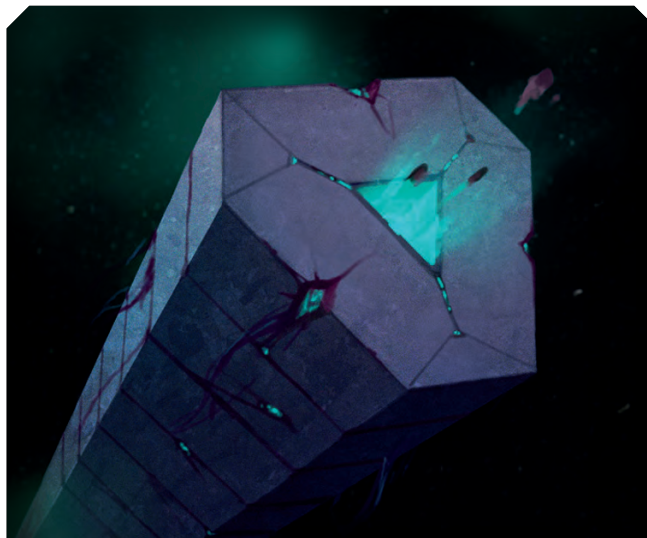


THE MELD

THE AETHYN SPACE FORCE

Our homeship was still fully stocked from the last engagement of the Aethyn-Naharan War. When the call came, the Meld followed. The strange, metal-wrapped aliens encased the Naharan war-portal they found on the surface in a powerful protective dome, so we cannot destroy it from orbit. We must cover our Mother and Fathers on the ground; we must face the creatures encroaching on our last safe haven. The dome must fall, and their dreadful machines must die. So little is left that we must attack, before we're pushed back again. Never again.

As the Meld, you wield a fleet of flexible ships blockading the Procyon system. In addition to providing support to the Principal (the Aethyn ground force), your and your goals are to attempt to stop the Armada (the Human space force) from providing relief to the Expedition (the Human ground force), destroy their capital ships and fleeing Scientists, and cut off their supply of Promethium coming both from the ground and their Lunar Refinery. If you can control the skies, victory can be yours.



UNITS

12 FANGS



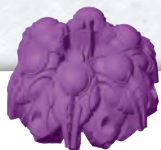
As your primary attack ships, their task is to create Spore Clouds to weaken the massive shields of the Armada ships, allowing you to torpedo them. Each Fang has 2 Hit Points.

10 RATTLES



Being highly mobile support ships, Rattles are capable of extra movement, towing other ships, and possibly enhancing Spore Clouds. The Principal may land them on the planet to act as support artillery for additional damage. Each Rattle has 2 Hit Points.

10 HOODS

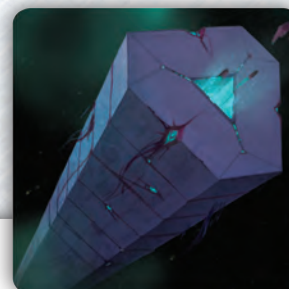


As your primary defence ships, they increase the shields of Aethyn ships in adjacent zones, can torpedo Armada ships, and allow some advanced effects, like short-range teleportation and preventing Armada ships sharing a zone with them from attacking long-range. Each Hood has 3 Hit Points.

Fangs, Rattles, and Hoods are together known as **small ships**. Placing them on the board is called **constructing**.

As a general rule, any Meld unit removed from the board is **returned to your reserve** and is available to be constructed or created again.

MOTHERSHIP TILE



This is your command hub for the sector. It acts as an immobile Cobra - still able to construct small ships, create Spore Clouds, and torpedo - but it cannot move at sub-light speeds and is, therefore, immobile. Your opponent's biggest goal is to destroy your Mothership, which has 5 Hit Points.

After the last portals closed and the Naharan withdrew to sections of the Void that our Mother could not sense, they left us some spoils of the war. A hollow, Naharan asteroid-ship was left unattended, floating in the Void without aim or purpose. The Aethyn found a new Home within it. Our essence filled out every empty corner, and thus, it provided the Aethyn with a safe space in the Void to multiply and a way to reach new worlds more swiftly than we could ever imagine. Our new Homeship could also resonate with Naharan communication, and it told us of the war portal unearthed on this world too...

3 COBRAS



A Cobra is your ultimate weapon, being a powerful battleship created from a Rattle, a Fang, and a Hood joining together. As a mobile ship factory and a command centre, it can deploy Spore Clouds even at long range. You can construct small ships only at Cobras. Each Cobra has 4 Hit points.

DICE

6 NEURON DICE



These dice represent the Meld's current specialisation. Each die shows 5 icons: some are **Function** **icons** and some are **Sensory** **icons**. Dice with a higher number of usually allow you to activate more ships, while dice with a higher number of allow you to perform stronger special effects, such as construction, bombardment, or dropping ground reinforcements. If you ever start your turn with no Neuron dice in your reserve, the Aethyn lose **2 Victory Points**.

We listen to our Mother's command and achieve the Focus she desires us to have. But our ships are fast and so distant. We cannot hold it all in our minds. As we speed farther apart, we must focus on our ability to function independently, which causes our sensory inputs to be inefficient.

CARDS AND BOARD

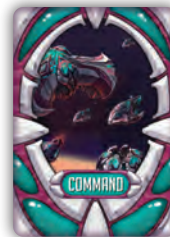


MELD BOARD

From left to right, this board has Evolved Cards slots for the 4 Evolved Command Cards that you are able to upgrade to and use during the course of a game; a Neuron Dice Pool area, where you keep your available Neuron dice; a Commands Discard area for your discard pile; and, off to the side of the board, a labelled area where you keep your discarded Neuron dice.

8 COMMAND CARDS

On each turn, you play two of these cards, manipulating your own options and limitations. While your hand of Command cards is secret from your opponents, your discard pile is public knowledge.



8 EVOLVED COMMAND CARDS

During the course of the game, you are able to upgrade some of your Command cards to these more-powerful Evolved options.



TOKENS AND CUBES

SPORE CLOUDS



These clouds of microscopic machines establish energy fields that disrupt your opponents' defences and weaken their shields, allowing you to attack. Spore Cloud tokens are not meant to be limited.

10 FUNCTION CUBES



These are purple cubes that match the Function  icon in appearance. You place a number of these (based on your Neuron dice) on the board and use them to activate your ships. Function cubes are limited to 10.

Note: most of your components are intended to be limited. For example, if you already have 3 Cobras on the board, you cannot create another, and if you have all 10 Function cubes placed, you cannot place more.

Spore Clouds are the primary exception. If you run out of these Spore Cloud tokens, you may use any suitable substitute. Spore Cloud tokens have denominations representing 1 or 3 Clouds. You may make change as needed at any time. Whenever an effect instructs you to add/remove a Spore Cloud, that means increase/decrease the total value of tokens, so a "3 Spore Cloud" token requires three such effects to place/remove, not one.

10 SHIELD/HIT TOKENS



These are reminder tokens that can be used to mark zones where Meld ships have their Hit Points boosted by adjacent Hood ships (see page 11). Alternatively, their flipside marks Meld ships that are partially damaged during an Armada attack. Shield/Hit tokens are not meant to be limited, so if you need more, use any proxy as necessary.

SETUP

THE SPACE BOARD

Place the following ships into the indicated, arrival zones:

- **Meld Zone:** 2 Hoods, 2 Fangs, 2 Rattles, 1 Cobra (1).

- **Meld Zone:** 3 Hoods, 3 Fangs, 3 Rattles (2)
- **Meld Zone:** 2 Hoods, 2 Fangs, 1 Rattle (3)
- **Meld Mothership:** Place the Mothership tile with the operational side up here (4).

PLAYER SETUP

Place your player board in front of you (5).

Reserve & Neuron Dice

After setting up the board, you should have 2 Cobras, 5 Fangs, 3 Hoods, and 4 Rattles in reserve (6). Roll all 6 Neuron dice, and place them on your player board in the Neuron Dice Pool area (7), available to you. Place all Spore Cloud tokens, Shield/Hit tokens, and Function cubes in a reserve (8).

Command Cards

Shuffle all 8 Evolved Command cards, and lay 4 of them face up in the Evolved Commands area

on your player board (9). These are the available Evolved Command cards for you to potentially use this game. Return the remaining 4 Evolved cards to the box. Then, find the two Command cards (*Planned Construction* and *Surprise Bombardment*) with the  icon. Place these two cards in the "Commands Discard" area (10) on your player board. Take the remaining 6 cards into your hand (11); this is the hand available to you at the start of the game.

If this is not your first game playing the Meld, and you don't mind a bit more unusual start, shuffle all your 8 Commands together and discard two of them randomly instead.



Zones, Adjacency of Zones

The space board is separated into zones. Two zones are adjacent to each other if they share a border marked with a white line. Zones separated by debris and a red line are **not** adjacent. Zones marked with green lines are called "in orbit".

Two zones are special: the sub-orbit zones shown on the planet, one of them marked "Eastern Hemisphere" (1), the other one marked "Western Hemisphere" (2). Your ships and the Armada's ships cannot enter sub-orbit zones - only the freshly launched Scientist Transports (see page 18) will be placed here. Zones adjacent to a sub-orbit zone are considered to be in orbit (3) (and they're above one of the Hemispheres). Non-orbital zones are said to be "above Eastern/Western orbit", depending on which orbital zone is closest to them.

Adjacency to the Ground Board

Each Eastern location on the ground board is adjacent to both orbit zones above the Eastern Hemisphere on the space map. Each Western location on the ground board is adjacent to both orbit zones above the Western Hemisphere on the space map. Each Central location on the ground board is adjacent to all four orbit zones on the space map.



OBJECTIVES

You are trying to accomplish the following objectives. Note that the Aethyn team starts the game with 0 Victory Points, and the Human team starts with 10.

DESTROY A DREADNOUGHT



The Armada fields two heavily shielded Dreadnoughts. Destroying one is a huge accomplishment.

9vp per Dreadnought

DESTROY A FRIGATE



Frigates are the workhorses of your enemy's fleet. Destroying one can greatly hinder their strength.

3vp per Frigate

DESTROY THE ARMADA'S SHIPS



If you can coordinate your attacks to destroy two or more ships (Frigates, Dreadnoughts, and Interceptors) it might make the Humans think twice about pushing forth. Consider attacking their Interceptors for this effect, as though they are fast and dangerous, they are easy to kill.

1vp for every 2nd Armada ship destroyed in the same round

DESTROY THE ARTEFACT



If you deal at least one damage to any Human unit in the City location on the ground board via bombardment or deal at least one damage to the City location itself, you also destroy the Naharan Artefact that the Humans are unknowingly protecting. (It is not possible to bombard the City until both Pylons have been destroyed by you and/or the Principal.)

8vp and immediately trigger the end of the game

DESTROY THE LUNAR REFINERY



The Humans have a base on the planet's moon, providing them with a steady income of a resource called Promethium. Destroy it, and take their raw material.

6vp and may immediately construct up to 4 small ships.

EVOLVE A COMMAND CARD

One of your Commands (*Evolving Meld*) allows you to bring your Evolved Command cards in play, and it scores Victory Points while doing so.



VARIABLE

DESTROY A SCIENTIST TRANSPORT/KILL A SCIENTIST

The Humans value their precious Scientists working on utilising the resources of this planet. Killing them reduces the Humans' morale and might lead to their capitulation.



DECREASE MORALE 10 total Scientists killed = **immediate Aethyn victory**

Additionally, you can help the Principal achieve some of their objectives, primarily via bombardment. Any of their objectives (knocking out Heroes, destroying Pylons or Buildings, etc.) accomplished on your turn score points normally.

There are two ways that your team can **immediately end the game**:

- Whenever **Scientists are killed** (in any way on either board), they are placed on the Morale track, and the Humans lose the **(variable) Victory Points** shown on the space(s) just covered. If the last space is covered (i.e. if 10 out of the 14 Scientists are killed), the Humans' morale plummets, and **they lose the game**.
- Part of your goal is to destroy their Pylons (which earns the Aethyn **5 Victory Points per destroyed Pylon**). If both Pylons fall, this allows you to successfully bombard the City, thus destroying the Artefact. In addition to the Aethyn scoring **8 Victory Points** for **destroying the Artefact**, you immediately **trigger the end of the game** (even if neither team has yet achieved 42 points).

While your tactics are mainly to distract the Armada from participating on the ground board and jumping Scientist Transports (for which the Humans score **3 Victory Points per jumped Transport**), be sure to protect your ships well, as the Humans score **6 Victory Points** for **destroying your Mothership**, **3 Victory Points** for **destroying a Cobra**, and **2 Victory Points** for **every second Meld ship that they destroy**.

YOUR TURN

You play last in every round. At the end of your turn, you should move the marker to indicate it is the beginning of a new round.

0. If there are any partial damage tokens on the board (due to the Armada/Expedition attacking you), remove them now. If the Armada kept any of your destroyed ships (to count points), put those back in your supply now.

1. At the beginning of your turn, check your Neuron dice:

- If you have no Neuron dice in your reserve, re-roll all your Neuron dice and make them all available. In this case, the Aethyn team loses **2 Victory Points** (if possible), and the Humans gain 1 Echo Drone.
- Otherwise, you may immediately construct one Fang, Hood, or Rattle (at a Cobra or the Mothership), see below.

Constructing Ships

Small ships (Fangs, Hoods, and Rattles) can be constructed only in a Cobra's zone (or the Mothership, which behaves as a Cobra in this regard while its tile is showing the intact side). Place the chosen ship piece in the same zone as the constructing Cobra.

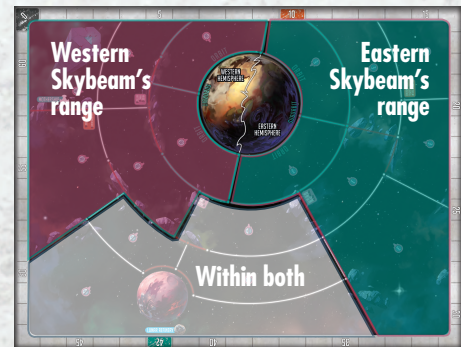
If there is no Cobra on the board (and the Mothership has been destroyed), you may construct in the zone that contains the most Meld ships (your choice if tied). In the extremely unlikely case of your ships being completely wiped from the space board, you may construct in any zone except in orbit.

Creating Cobras

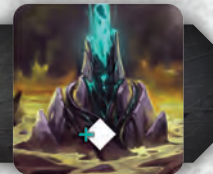
Cobras, on the other hand, are created by merging a Fang, a Hood, and a Rattle. When an effect allows you to create a Cobra, select the 3 different small ships present in one zone, return them to your reserve, and place a Cobra in their place in the same zone.

2. For each **Skybeam** on the ground map, you may place 1 Function cube on the space board following these rules:

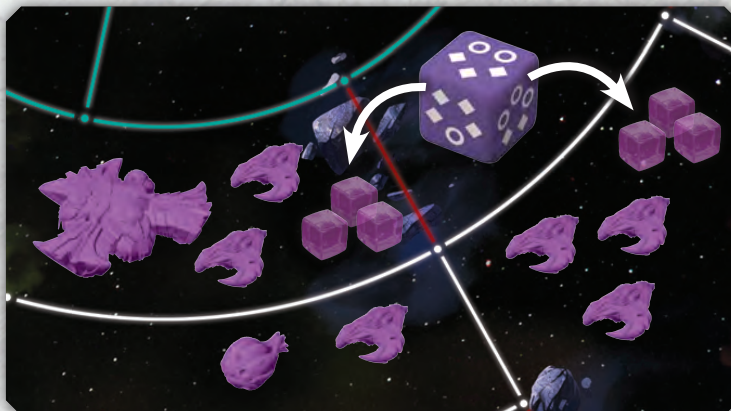
- The Function cube must be placed in a zone containing at least one Meld ship.
- The cube must be placed in a zone either adjacent to the ground location with the Skybeam (in orbit) or above such an orbit zone.



Skybeams are Principal structures created when a Human ground Building is destroyed - either by the Principal's attacks or by your bombardment. Their bonus Function cubes can greatly increase your flexibility, as they allow you to activate ships in more than two zones.



3. Select one available Neuron die in your reserve, putting it in front of you, and select two zones with at least one Meld ship in each of them. For each  icon on the selected die, place one Function cube in both of the zones. (The Function cubes possibly placed in the previous step have no effect on this; however, you are limited to 10 cubes total.)



Using a Neuron die with 3  icons, you may place 3 Function cubes each in two zones that already contain Meld ships.

4. Then, select exactly two Command cards from your hand, and play them in front of you.
 - a. First, resolve the **top effect** of **one** of the two cards, then discard that card. Top effects usually require you to spend Function cubes from the board to activate ships. This is detailed in the next section. **Important:** each ship may only be activated once during this step - use the common Activation tokens, which are an unlimited component, to track this.
 - b. Then, resolve the **bottom effect** of the **other** card, then discard that card. Bottom effects give you special effects that get stronger the more ☉ icons there are on the die you selected in the previous step. (Keywords common to these effects are explained on pages 13-15.)
5. Remove any leftover Function cubes and all Activation tokens from the board. Place the played Neuron die in your discard area. If at this point you have no Command cards in your hand, retrieve every Command card (but not the Neuron dice!) from your discard area to your hand.

ACTIVATING SHIPS

Most top effects instruct you to “spend ♦ to activate” certain ship types. To do so, perform the following:

1. Remove a Function cube from the board.
2. Select a ship in the same zone, matching one of the allowed ship types shown on the played card,, that hasn't yet been activated this turn (marked with an Activation token).
3. Perform that ship's activation - see below for the explanation of each ship type's activation.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 as long as Function cubes remain on the board and there are valid ships to be chosen in step 2.

Important: each ship can only be activated once.

You played a Neuron die with 3 Function cubes and placed 3 cubes in these two zones. Then, playing the indicated top effect, you can remove these cubes - in any order - to activate a Rattle or a Fang. Observe the following:

- The first zone (1) has 4 ships that can be activated; you'll have to pick three.
- The Hoods in either zone cannot be activated, since the card doesn't allow it.
- The second zone (2) only has 2 ships that can be activated, so the third cube would be wasted.
- A Fang in a different zone (3) cannot be activated, since it has no Function cubes next to it to remove.



Spore Clouds, Shields, and Torpedoes

Your Fangs, Hoods, and Cobras carry torpedoes which can destroy the enemy. Unfortunately, the enemy's ships are heavily shielded. You must use Spore Clouds (placed by Fangs and Cobras and enhanced by Rattles) to exhaust the enemy's shields. Each Armada ship type has a Shield value. If it is in a zone with an equal or greater amount of Spore Clouds than its Shield value, its shields are said to be **exhausted**, and the ship can be torpedoed. A torpedoed Armada ship is immediately destroyed and removed, along with exactly 1 Spore Cloud from its zone. Some cards mention "remaining Shields". An Armada ship's remaining Shields are equal to the number of additional Spore Clouds it would take to exhaust its shields.

ACTIVATING RATTLES

When you activate a Rattle, choose one of the two options:

- Move it to an adjacent zone, then optionally move it to another zone adjacent to this one. (Essentially, move up to twice.)
- Move it to an adjacent zone, and move one other small ship along with it. The other ship may already have been activated, and this does not count as activating it.

Rattles have two abilities to be considered when moving them:

- Each unique Rattle + Spore Cloud pair in a zone counts as **two** Spore Clouds. This effect is said to be the Rattle **enhancing** the Spore Cloud.
- Rattles left in orbit may be **landed** by the Principal, significantly boosting the Principal's attack strength in that particular ground location. Note: landed Rattles can never be destroyed or returned to the space board. Each landing essentially reduces the maximum number of Rattles you may have on the space board.



ACTIVATING FANGS

When you activate a Fang, choose one of the two options:

- You may move the Fang into an adjacent zone. Then (regardless of whether it moved or not), place one Spore Cloud in its current zone.
- You may move the Fang into an adjacent zone. Then (regardless of whether it moved or not), torpedo an Armada ship with exhausted shields in its current zone.

Fangs are your primary attack craft. Place Spore Clouds, place lots of them, place them often, and place them together.



ACTIVATING HOODS

When you activate a Hood, you may move it to an adjacent zone. Then (regardless of whether it moved or not), you may torpedo an Armada ship with exhausted shields in its current zone.

The main reason to move your Hoods around is that they provide an additional Hit Point to all Meld ships in **adjacent** zones. To remind you and your opponents of this, you should use the "+1 Hit Point" side of the Shield/Hit tokens in zones that contain your ships that have a



Hood adjacent to them. **Important:** this effect stacks. A zone that has multiple Hoods adjacent to it (across one or more adjacent zones) has all its Meld ships' Hit Points increased once for **each adjacent Hood**. Note: Hoods do not increase the Hit Points of ships in their own zone, but two Hoods in zones adjacent to each other do mutually increase each other's zone's Hit Points.



The 3 Fangs each have one additional Hit Point. Your opponent might want to target the Hood defending them, but they cannot, since the Hood has an astounding +5 Hit Points (for a total of 8)! However, if the Armada gets ships behind the Hoods on the left, they might be able to destroy the Hoods there more easily, as they only have 4 Hit Points each. (Note the red line that indicates that the Hoods in the non-orbital zones are not adjacent and, therefore, do not provide additional Hit Points to each other.)

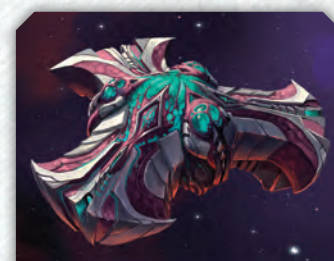
A secondary reason to carefully position your Hoods is that they **block Ranged Combat**. Armada Frigates and Dreadnoughts are normally allowed to attack zones adjacent to their position, but they cannot if they share a zone with at least one Hood. A careful net of Hoods allows you to exploit a combination of both abilities, maximising your defences.

A tertiary reason is their ability to "anchor" zones; this is explained amongst the Secondary Effects on page 14.

ACTIVATING COBRAS

When you activate a Cobra, it may perform **three options** from the following list. You may choose them in any order, **including picking the same option multiple times**:

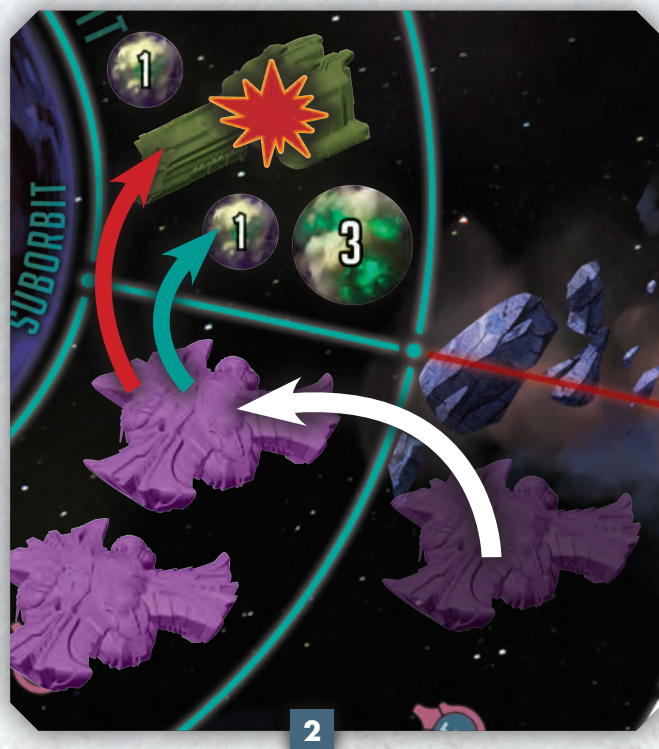
- Move the Cobra into an adjacent zone.
- Place one Spore Cloud either in its current zone OR in an adjacent zone.
- Torpedo an Armada ship with exhausted shields in its current zone OR in an adjacent zone.



Our joint ships were our last stand against the Naharan. We held our own against the Naharan. How could we fail now?

Still, activating one Cobra is **one action**, and you must always complete an action before starting another one; thus, you cannot activate different ships between two options of a Cobra activation. Some Command cards increase the number of options you may perform on a single Cobra activation, and some Human effects will decrease it.

The Mothership counts as a Cobra and can be activated as such, **except it may not move!**



The first Cobra places 3 Spore Clouds in an adjacent zone that has a Frigate and 1 Spore Cloud already present (1). The second Cobra moves into orbit and places a Spore Cloud in the adjacent zone, exhausting the Frigate's shields; finally, with its third option, the second Cobra torpedoes and destroys the Frigate (2), removing it and exactly 1 Spore Cloud from that zone. You score 3 Victory Points. 4 Spore Clouds remain in the destroyed Frigate's zone.

SECONDARY EFFECTS OF COMMAND CARDS

Most non-activation effects are found on the bottom of the Command cards, but the tops of some Evolved Command cards also contain special effects. If an effect allows you to **move** ships, you may move a ship that has already been activated this turn. However, if an additional effect allows you to **activate** a ship (even without spending Function cubes), the rule of each ship only activating **once** still applies.

BOMBARDMENT

Some cards allow your ships in orbit to deal damage directly to ground units in adjacent zones on the planet's surface. The number of damage dealt depends on the card and the number of your units present in orbit.

The Naharan war-portal must be closed at all costs. Mother can't fail. Mother won't fail.

The following considerations and restrictions apply:

- On a single turn, you can only deal damage to Eastern or Western locations - **not** both. Central locations count as either.
- A maximum of **one** Scientist can be targeted by the bombardment.
- You choose which units get damaged, but a Scientist may **only** be targeted if every non-Scientist in their location has already been targeted by the bombardment. Consult your teammate for advice on maximising results.
- The only unit you can damage on a protected location (a still-functional Pylon's location, or the City if **either** Pylon is still functional) is the Pylon itself protecting it. However, if the Pylon is

destroyed during bombardment, you may target any now-unprotected units for further damage.

- Each bombardment card's wording reinforces this, but to clarify: you are never able to damage a **single unit more than once** during a single bombardment. You are never able to damage **both Pylons** in the same bombardment, either.
- You can bombard the Human Buildings (i.e. the Comms Array, Hospital, Jammer, and Railgun), but Absorption Fields and Deflector Shields are **not** valid targets.
- Heroes have an ability to absorb one point of damage per turn against the Principal's attacks. This does not apply against your bombardments. You can wound and even knock out Heroes using bombardment.
- If you deal at least one damage to any Human unit - including a Scientist - in the (unprotected) City location, you also **destroy the Artefact**, which triggers the end of the game. If there are no units in the unprotected City location to damage during a bombardment, then it is automatically assumed that you destroyed the Artefact.

Cards with bottom effects that allow you to bombard have a  icon on them for ease of quickly identifying them.

CONSTRUCTION

Besides the one ship you construct in the first step of your turn, you may wish to build more as the Armada destroys your ships. Certain card effects allow you to construct Fangs, Rattles, and Hoods - sometimes with specific restrictions. These are constructed the same way as the one ship you build at the start of your turn and must be placed as described on page 9. When constructing multiple ships with an effect, you may place them with the same or different Cobras, in any combination. You may never place more ships than what you have available in your reserves.

CREATING A COBRA

Some cards allow you to create Cobras, as explained earlier: by removing 1 Fang, 1 Hood, and 1 Rattle from a zone and replacing them with a Cobra from your reserve. You are limited to 3 Cobras plus the Mothership, and you may never rebuild the destroyed Mothership. Cards with bottom effects that allow you to create a Cobra have a  icon on them for ease of quickly identifying them.

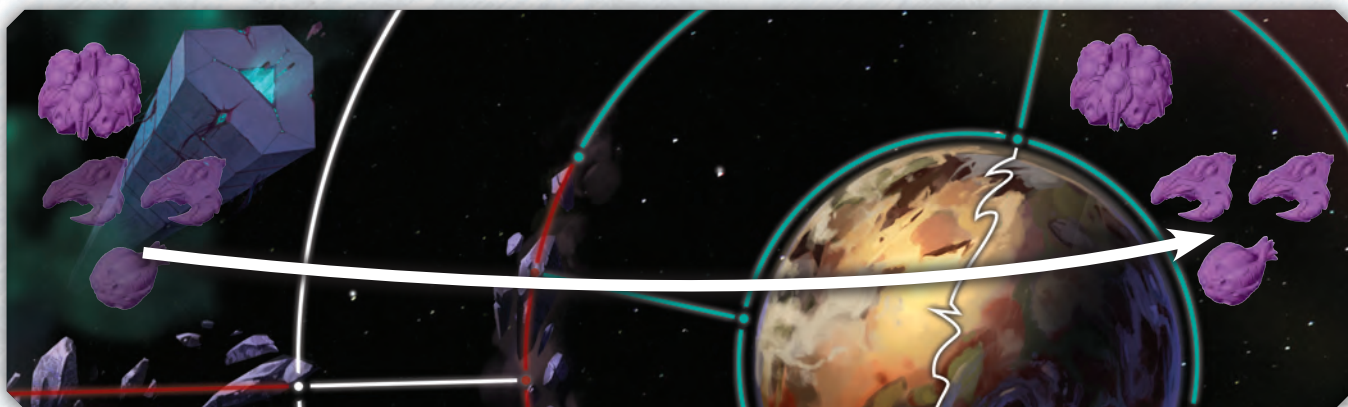
INTERACTING WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Some cards allow you to add Focus cubes to or remove Discord cubes from your teammate's Combat bag (which increases their chances of achieving hits when attacking), add Principal units to the ground board (which increases their combat strength and therefore their chances to hit a Human unit), or allow your teammate to attack. These are all great ways to help your teammate do more on the ground board, where decisive victory can be truly achieved. Strategise with your teammate as to where and when might be best for you to play these cards.

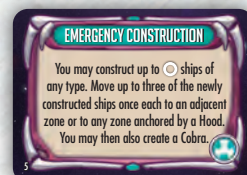
Mother, we can hear you. Mother, we can feel you. Mother, embrace your children!

MOVING BETWEEN ZONES ANCHORED BY HOODS

A few of your Evolved Command cards allow you to move ships between zones anchored by Hoods. This is essentially **teleportation** (allowed by the Hood's protective shield generators further warping the space-time continuum). For the purposes of these movements, any zone containing at least one Hood is adjacent to every other zone containing at least one Hood.



Emergency Construction together with a die of 4 ☉ will allow you to build any 4 ships: for example a Hood, 2 Fangs, and a Rattle, all at the Mothership's location. Then, using the anchor ability, you can instantly move the 2 Fangs and the Rattle from the newly placed Hood to any other Hood on the board, for example the one on the far side of the planet.



RETRIEVAL AND MANIPULATION OF NEURON DICE

Normally, you use 1 Neuron die per turn. Additionally, the Humans and your teammate have some abilities that discard some of your Neuron dice. If you run out of them, you gain them all back at a cost of 2 Victory Points - as explained in the first step of your turn structure.



The key card to keep an eye out for is *Retrieval*, which allows you to retrieve 3 to 6 of your spent dice, re-rolling them and moving them back to your reserve from your discard area. You are allowed to re-roll available dice with it, too, but you would only do this if you have more re-rolls than discarded dice.

Small strategic note

Playing *Retrieval* is not a must. You rotate your cards every 4 turns, but you have 6 dice, so if no additional Neuron dice are discarded by the other players, you may go a full cycle without having to retrieve dice. Additionally, your teammate has one card which allows you to regain 3 spent dice and set them to any face you wish (as opposed to re-rolling them via *Retrieval*). Careful coordination of this ability and the ones that spend your dice can go a long way towards planning your turns efficiently.

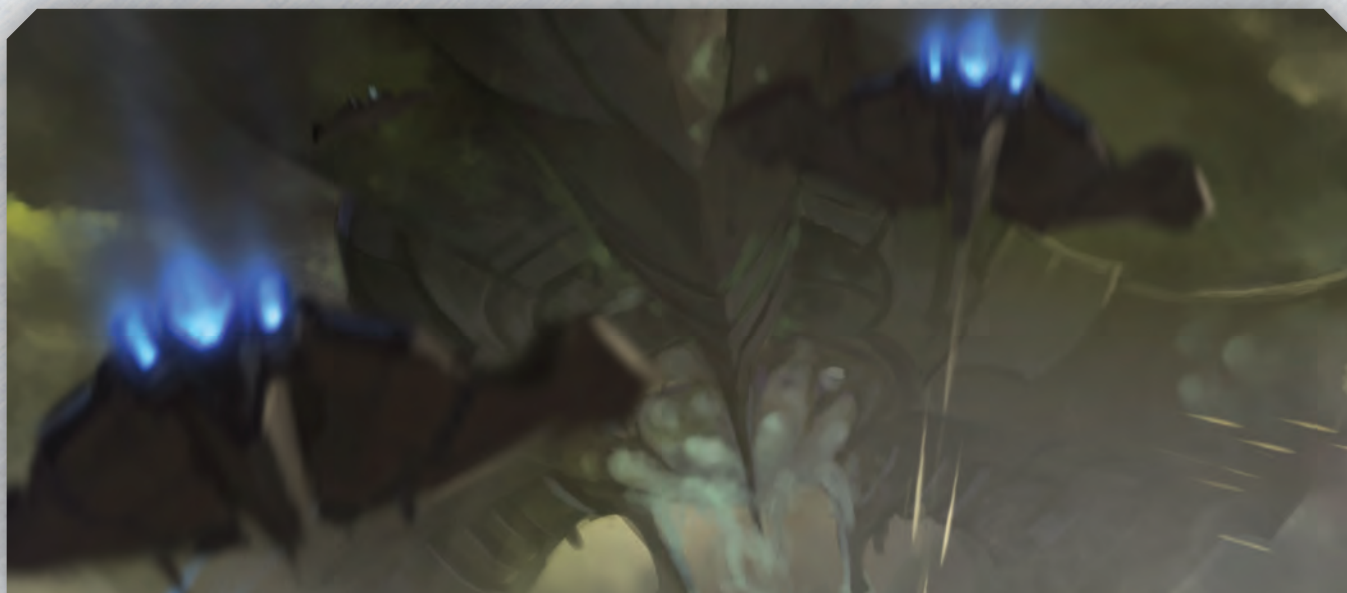
EVOLVING A COMMAND CARD

One of the cards, *Evolving Meld*, lets you specialise your hand of Command cards - called evolving. Pay the cost of the card (removing 2 small Meld ships of different types from the board), then select one of the (initially) 4 face-up Evolved Command cards in front of you. Next, select one of your basic Command cards. (You may not select *Retrieval* or *Evolving Meld* itself.) Swap the two cards: if the basic card was in your hand, take the Evolved card into your hand; if the basic card was in your discard area, place the Evolved card there. Turn the card you swapped with face down on your player board, it is no longer available. Finally, score 1 VP per ☉ icon on your chosen dice, as indicated on the card.

The scars left by the Naharan never really healed. But it made us strive harder to evolve our essence and fine-tune our control.

Small strategic note

While you should always aim to evolve at least one or maybe two cards throughout each game, paying the cost of this effect sometimes might help the Armada too much, and you may be better off doing something directly useful each turn instead. The trick is the careful balancing of options. If you do evolve a card, make sure to build your strategy around the new card gained, and try to use that card at least twice in the remainder of the game.



COMBAT

DESTROYING ARMADA SHIPS

As explained earlier, you do not directly damage Armada ships; instead, you place Spore Clouds to exhaust their shields. Each Armada ship has a shield value, and only when the number of Spore Clouds in its zone meets or exceeds that number can you use a Meld ship to torpedo it.



You can only torpedo a Scientist Transport if there are no Interceptors, Frigates, or Dreadnoughts in its current zone.

When torpedoing an Armada ship, also remove 1 Spore Cloud (as collateral damage from the explosion) from its zone.

Removed ships are **removed** from the game (one Armada Technology, *Hidden Defences*, allows them to return 1 destroyed Frigate), usually scoring points for the Aethyn team (1 Victory Point for every second ship destroyed, 3 for a Frigate, and 9 for a Dreadnought). Meanwhile, removed Scientist Transports are placed on the rightmost empty space of the Morale track. The Human team loses Victory Points shown on the Morale track space thus covered, or if it was the leftmost space of the Morale track, the Aethyn immediately wins the game instead. If you destroy the Lunar Refinery, score 6 Victory Points and immediately construct up to four small ships of any type (in the same zone as your Cobras, as usual).

ARMADA ATTACKS AND REGENERATION

Each of your ships has a number of Hit Points (depending on its type), which is further increased by 1 for each Hood in an adjacent zone. Important: Hoods do not increase the Hit Points of ships they share a zone with!

Use the numbered side of the Shield/Hit tokens if either you or the Armada player needs a reminder of this.



If an Armada attack deals damage equal to or greater than one of your ship's Hit Points, the ship is immediately destroyed. Destroyed ships are kept by the Armada player until the end of the Expedition player's turn (to track how many Victory Points to score) then returned to your reserve (except the Mothership token, which is just flipped to its destroyed side.)

If an attack deals less damage than necessary, use the other side of the Shield/Hit tokens to keep track of damage dealt. Later attacks only have to deal hits equal to the difference between the hits already dealt and the total Hit Points needed to destroy the target ship. A ship can also be destroyed if its Hit Points reach or decrease below the number of hits dealt this turn (this is possible if an adjacent Hood gets destroyed).

Partial damage dealt to your ships is fully reset at the beginning of your turn, so any ship not destroyed on the Humans' turns is back at full strength immediately.

CONSIDERING YOUR OPPONENT

The Armada player's primary job is to break through your blockade. You can score plenty of points by picking off their Frigates and Dreadnoughts. Be sure to never lose sight of the primary agenda: win the ground battle for the Artefact, either by helping the Principal get the Empress into the City or by bringing down the Pylons so you can bombard the City. So, any chance you get to damage the Expedition, it might be wise to take it.

The biggest danger from the Armada is their firepower. They can often attack 3 to 6 times on a turn, with each attack dealing 2 to 4 damage (with the occasional failed shot) depending on the balance the Armada player keeps between Technologies and a high Combat deck. If they significantly rely on their Technologies, it might be wise to threaten to cut off their steady supply of Promethium by putting pressure on the Lunar Refinery and minimising the number of Scientists that make it to orbit and then escape.

The Technologies to be most scared of are the *Ion Cannon Capacitors* (which allows them to deal a one-off devastating, 10-to-12 damage attack with one of their Dreadnoughts) and *Decoy Projector* (which allows them to essentially take two turns back to back). Besides these, a couple of Technologies take effect on your turn, limiting your options (*Ablative Armour*, *Neural Hub Disruptor*, *Harmonic Decoupler*, and *Viral Adapters*), but the Armada player will notify you of these when they are active. Regardless, since Technologies take effect when they are on the top of the Armada discard pile, you always have a **one-turn warning** of what the Armada might be planning - as long as you keep an eye on it.

Also be mindful of their ships' capabilities:

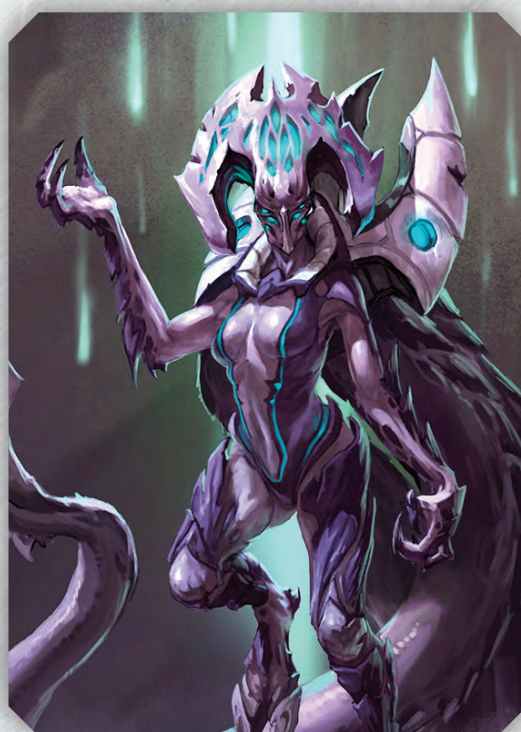
- A Dreadnought can move up to one zone and launch an Interceptor. If it does not move, it might attack its own zone or an adjacent zone with a damage bonus. Additionally, if parked in orbit, it might use a combination of Promethium and Echo Drones to strike the Principal's adjacent ground units.
- A Frigate can move and attack (in its own or in an adjacent zone) on the same turn or do one of the two twice. The only thing it cannot do is attack twice into adjacent zone(s). If parked in orbit, the Expedition can spend Echo Drones to place additional Marines on the ground board, potentially turning the tide of the ground battle.
- An Interceptor can move once before or after attacking and has a bonus against your Hoods.
- Scientist Transports are removed from the board the moment they leave orbit, but you have a one-turn warning while they ascend via the sub-orbit zone. They also carry Promethium to the Armada, helping them power Technologies.



CONSIDERING YOUR TEAMMATE

Keep an eye on your teammate. They occasionally need to take one of your Neuron dice but might be able to give you some back too. Destroying ground Buildings grants you Skybeams - i.e. extra Function cubes each round - and you can even help keep them alive by the occasional bombardment, as Skybeams are never in protected locations. Also, a reminder about the Pylons: you can always bombard them, and since they can only be attacked once per your turn and once per the Principal's turn each round, don't pass up a perfectly good opportunity to damage or destroy them.

Your cards, too, can help the Principal. Certain cards allow you to place Legions or Centurions on the ground board or manipulate their Combat bag to make their attacks more likely to succeed in dealing damage. You should also coordinate landing your Rattles to aid in their attacks, boosting their combat strength.





MELD QUICK REFERENCE

(starts with the 2 Command cards in discard pile)

TURN OVERVIEW

- 1. If 1+ Neuron dice:** Construct one ship.
Else: lose 2 VP + re-roll and re-gain all spent dice. Humans gain 1 Echo Drone.
- For each Skybeam on the ground board, place 1 Function cube  on one zone **above the corresponding hemisphere** with at least one Meld ship present.
- Play a Neuron die and select two zones (with at least one Meld ship present in each): For each  on the die, place 1 Function cube  in **both** selected zones.
- Play two Command cards from hand, then discard them once resolved.
 - First, resolve the top of one: spend Function cube(s) to activate the denoted ship types.
 - Then, resolve the bottom of the other: strength of the action depends on the number of  on the die played.
- Remove Activation markers. Discard Neuron die. If no Command cards are left in hand, retrieve them all from the discard pile.

ARMADA UNITS

INTERCEPTOR	3 Shields	+1 damage vs Hood
FRIGATE	5 Shields	Enables Marine Drops
DREADNOUGHT	9 Shields	Enables Ground Strike
SCIENTIST TRANSPORT	1 Shield	Can jump once out of orbit Must be attacked last!
LUNAR REFINERY	6 Shields	Cannot move, generates Promethium tokens

YOUR OBJECTIVES

Destroy a Dreadnought	9 VP
Destroy the Artefact by bombardment	8 VP + trigger end of the game
Destroy a Frigate	3 VP
For every 2nd enemy ship killed in one round	1 VP
Destroy the Lunar Refinery	6 VP + Build 4 ships
Destroy Scientist Transport	Decrease morale (10th = instant victory)
Evolve a Command card	Variable

MELD UNITS



HOOD 3 Hit Points

Activation

Move once and torpedo (both optional)

Special rule: Armada ships in same zone cannot perform Ranged Combat.

+1 HP to all Meld ships in adjacent zones.

Can "anchor" for evolved teleportation effects.



RATTLE 2 Hit Points

Activation

Move up to twice

OR Move once, drag 1 small ship along.

Special rule: Doubles one Spore Cloud.

Principal can land it from orbit.



FANG 2 Hit Points

Activation

Move once (optional), then create a Spore Cloud

OR Move once (optional) then torpedo.



COBRA 4 Hit Points

Activation

3 times: Move once OR Create a Spore Cloud at or adjacent OR torpedo at or adjacent

Special rule: Created from merging 1 of each small ship (not constructed).

Small ships can be constructed by it.



MOTHERSHIP 5 Hit Points

Activation

3 times: Create a Spore Cloud at or adjacent OR torpedo at or adjacent (behaves like immobile Cobra)

Special rule: Small ships can be constructed by it.

ACTIVATION: Each ship can only be activated once (usually for 1 Function cube  each).

BOMBARDMENT: Ground targets must be in the same hemisphere (or Central), either unprotected or a Pylon. Heroes do not absorb a point of bombardment damage. A single Scientist may be targeted if no other valid target in their location remains.

YOUR OPPONENT'S OBJECTIVES

Kill a Cobra	3 VP
Destroy the Mothership	6 VP
Jump a Scientist Transport	3 VP
For every 2nd enemy ship killed in one round	2 VP