GETTING STARTED WITH TRAVELLER
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Traveller is available in something like a dozen different versions, from 1977's Classic to the current edition from Mongoose. This document is meant to help the new referee who is uncertain about where to start. This advice is compiled from posts to Traveller General threads at 4chan--thank you Anons.

ONLINE RESOURCES

wiki.travellerrpg.com/Main_Page

4chan "Library Data: Master Archive" trove by Traveller Librarian: rebrand.ly/Traveller

Support Far Future Enterprises and the other Traveller creators: if you use books from the trove, buy them either directly (farfuture.net) or from an appropriate seller.

HOMEBREWING RULES/CLASSIC AND RECENT VERSIONS

Traveller referees have always extensively homebrewed and modified the game--Classic was almost designed for that. Think of CT as an OSR game published decades before the term was coined. So, do what Traveller players have been doing for 40 years: ignore what you don't like while adding bits and pieces from all over.

Classic had several editions. CT77 was the pre-Star Wars original, with a small-ship implied universe. It's a little rough around the edges, but very cool.

Later, CT81 came with some fixes and changes, notably big ships and a bigger universe. THE TRAVELLER BOOK is CT81 collected, more or less.

STARTER TRAVELLER was intended as a lightweight introductory version, stripping some things down to reduce complexity. The ship combat system here is worth stealing, since it makes that work a lot like man-to-man combat does.

In general, THE TRAVELLER BOOK is probably the best go-to for a CT core rule book. Use it with the simpler ship combat from STARTER TRAVELLER, and grab RULE 68A, which explains the task system CT used but never explicitly described. Throw in CITIZENS OF THE IMPERIUM for a dozen more character careers, and you're good.

Other good books for CT are TRADERS AND GUNBOATS for the ships you're most likely to run into, the two LIBRARY DATA books if you're keen on using any of the official setting, and 76 PATRONS for drop-in NPCs and plot hooks.

MONGOOSE TRAVELLER--1e then 2e--is the most current version from a "real" publisher and as such has more of what current players think an RPG should have--things like more detailed character background generation, a boon/bane system, and more skills and rules to cover more situations.

The open source CEPHEUS ENGINE rules are a combination of CT and MgT1, being an update of the former and a clean-up of the latter.

Both CE or MgT1 core can be good places to start for newer players, but later MgT books are criticized for splat-bloat and poor editing. (See the MgT2 folder in the archive noted above for a document listing the changes from MgT1 to MgT2.)

Other versions, like MegaTraveller, TNE, or T4, are not often recommended. T5 is not recommended for beginners--it's an RPG construction kit more than a play-out-of-the-box set of RPG rules. See the wiki at the top of this document for descriptions of all of the versions of the game and the various changes they made to the rules and the official setting.

SETTING/CANON

A caution about Traveller canon: there is TOO MUCH Traveller canon. There is 40 years of material from scores of writers, dozens of publishers, multiple versions, many magazines, and several milieus and settings. Even the people who get paid to deal with it can barely keep track of canon.

There's so much canon you can't use it all. There's so much canon that, if you try to play the official Third Imperium setting straight, you, your group, and your game will drown in it. It's like drinking from a firehose.

Read canon, don't memorize it. Get a feel for canon, don't study the trivia. Use only what you specifically need to get your game up and running, ignore the rest, and only add more when you must.

Make the game your game. If a player comes to you with some long-forgotten supplement--and of course they will--complaining that X was really Y when A did B to C, tell him the group is playing YOUR setting and none of that other stuff matters.

That said, good starts include the MgT1 version of the Spinward Marches, MegaTraveller's IMPERIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA (which doubles as one of the better equipment books,) and Classic has the two LIBRARY DATA books mentioned above.

If you want to build your own setting or your own elements for use with the official setting, the game STARS WITHOUT NUMBER is often praised for its GM tools chapters.

PLAYER EXPECTATIONS

It is important that players new to the game understand that their characters start play as competent, experienced adults--a skill-1 represents significant, professional ability. As a referee of new players you probably cannot stress enough that this is unlike D&D, where characters start as novices and players think a lot about "leveling-up."