

Stars, Inc.

Rulebook v4.2 (June 2018)

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Introduction

You have mastered time and space to control the natural processes that create and destroy stars. You are able to collapse giant gas clouds to **form stars**, which even for a civilization as advanced as yours is the only viable way to **harvest elements** heavier than Hydrogen, since stars do all that messy and complicated fusion for you.

You can **earn points** by renting out your “space heaters:” either by forming white dwarfs which cool radiatively, or by forming gas giant planets that cool through gravitational contraction. You can also sell massive space diamonds for some quick points on the side or make rocky planets to mine for extra elements.

As you travel through the galaxy looking for good places to form your stars, you will encounter different **environments** that might change your strategy or help your opponent’s plan! Whoever has the most points at the end of your journey is victorious

Components List

- 1 Game Board (currently 18" x 18")
- 4 Player Boards with Resource Tracks and Reference Information
- 18 Environment Cards
- 16 Resources Cubes (4 each in white, orange, black, and purple)
- 20 Player Pawns (5 each in red, yellow, green, and blue)
- 50 Planet Rings (25 each in orange and black)
- 1 First Player Token
- This Rulebook!

Setup

Environment Deck

Stars, Inc. comes with 18 environment cards, two each of nine distinct astronomical environments. There are two ways to play Stars, Inc.: **STANDARD** and **ADVANCED** rules will be denoted throughout the rulebook whenever they differ.

In the **STANDARD** setup, shuffle one of each environment together to form the deck. However, we encourage house rules that replace environments with duplicates of others to better ensure the particular group playing has an enjoyable experience.

In the **ADVANCED** setup, shuffle together all 18 environment cards. When the deck runs out, you will just reshuffle the deck and continue the game.

Player Boards

Each player should collect their five matching pawns, and take one cube for each of the four resources in the game. Each player should put one of their five player pawns on the starting zero space of the score area and put the other four pawns next to their player boards.

Set your resource tracks to the following quantities, which represent the chemical composition of the galaxy when it formed:

- Hydrogen - set to 6
- Helium - set to 2
- Carbon - set to 0
- Iron - set to 0

Tanks can never be filled above the maximum printed value, but the fusion conversions can be used at any time to turn 4 hydrogen into 1 helium (this is called the proton-proton chain for low mass stars), to turn 3 helium into 1 carbon (this is the triple-alpha process), or to turn 2 carbon into 1 victory point (you're selling giant space diamonds, of course).

During the Game

Start of Round

To begin the game, determine start player using your standard method. If you need help with this, we enjoy using who can name the most moons (natural satellites) in the solar system to determine start player.

Give the First Player Token to the start player. The player with the First Player Token flips the next environment card to begin the new round. The token will rotate to the next person clockwise at the end of each round.

Harvest Phase

Once the round begins, the harvest phase is first. Players simultaneously gather elements based on the environment and their played pawns as follows:

- The environment card will list between 2 H and 4 H, all players gather that amount on their Hydrogen resource track.
- A player harvests 1 H for each of their own pawns not yet played on the game board.
- Each star provides elements based on its active fusion process in the core.
 - A **Blue Giant** provides 3 Helium while on the main sequence, or 1 Helium and 1 Carbon when it is a hypergiant. A supernova will provide 2 iron when it occurs during play and the pawn is removed from the board back to the player.
 - A **Sunlike Star** provides 2 Helium while on the main sequence, 1 Carbon if it is a red giant, or 1 Point if it is a white dwarf. Creating a white dwarf during play immediately gives a one-time bonus of 1 Point.
 - A **Red Dwarf** will provide 1 Helium for its entire evolution. *Red dwarfs live for so long, their expected lifetimes are longer than the current age of the universe!*
- Each planet, regardless of what type of star it orbits, will earn its owner the following:
 - During harvest, a **Rocky Planet** provides any two elements (Hydrogen, Helium, Carbon, Iron) of the player's choice. These can be the same or different and may vary from round to round.
 - During harvest, a **Gas Planet** provides 1 Point.

When harvesting points, when a player scores more than 10 points, add a planet ring (of either color) to the score pawn to indicate 10 points. This means the score track marks the "ones" place and the rings mark the "tens" place. *For example, if Alex had 18 points, their pawn would be on the number 8 and would have one planet ring on it. If Brianna had 23 points, her pawn would be on the number 3 and would have two planet rings on it.*

Action Phase

Beginning with the player who has the First Player Token and going clockwise, each player takes up to the number of actions listed on the environment card. A player can always choose to do fewer actions without penalty.

Available actions include MAKE, MOVE, and MERGE. They are described in this section.

Important: **each space on a track can only hold up to N stars**, where N is the number of players. The exception to this is the red dwarf track, which can hold any number of stars. *Red dwarfs are by far the most common type of star in any galaxy.*

MAKE

- a) Make a star! Pay the Hydrogen cost to place your pawn as a star at the beginning of its track. Newly formed stars must be placed on the starting spot of each track. Blue Giants cost 7 Hydrogen, Sunlike Stars cost 3 Hydrogen, and Red Dwarfs cost 1 Hydrogen.
- b) Make a planet! Pay the element cost to place a planet ring around a pawn that is already on the board. To make a rocky planet (which provides elements during harvest), pay 2 Hydrogen, 2 Carbon, and 2 Iron. To make a gas planet (which provides a point during harvest), pay 4 Hydrogen, 6 Helium, and 2 Iron.

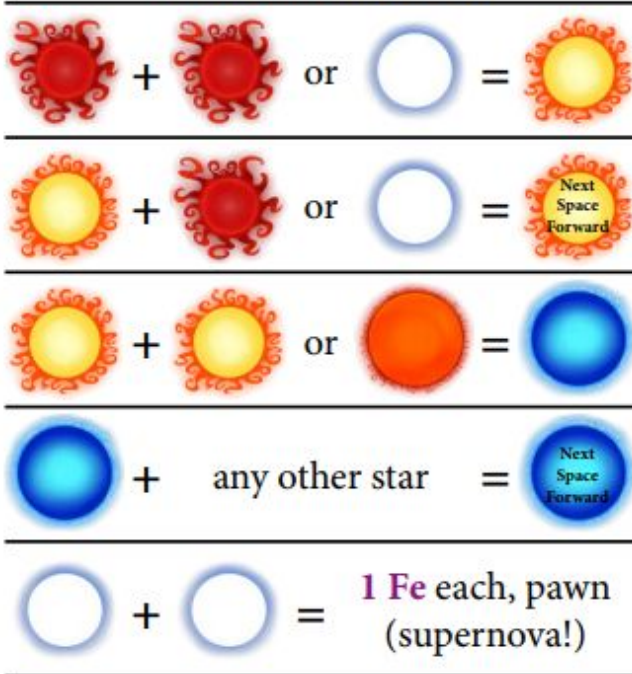
MOVE

- a) Move your own star! This move action has no cost. You can move a single star forward a single space along its evolutionary path as one action. If this action causes a star to leave the main sequence, all planets around the star are destroyed. If this action creates a supernova, owner of pawn gains 2 Iron immediately and receives the pawn back. If this action creates a white dwarf, owner of pawn gain 1 Point immediately and moves the pawn to the white dwarf spot.
- b) Move someone else's star! This move action costs 1 Helium to move a pawn that you do not own, but the action functions the same as moving your own pawn, described above.

MERGE

- a) Merge your own stars! This merge action costs 2 Helium. Choose any two of your own pawns anywhere on the board and merge them, according to the merger chart on the next page.
- b) Merge two stars from the same opponent! This merge action costs 6 Helium. Choose any two pawns belonging to a single player and merge them according to the merger chart on the next page.
- c) Merge any two white dwarfs! This merge action costs 8 Helium. Merging two white dwarfs creates a Type 1a Supernova: both white dwarfs are destroyed, each providing 1 Iron to the owner of the pawn and the pawn is returned to the player board.

MERGER RULES



Notes on mergers:

Two stars on the same track will merge to make a new star on the next track up. Two stars from different tracks merging will cause the more massive star to “eat up” the less massive one, pushing it forward one space.

White dwarfs, although they came from the Sunlike Star track, have lost so much mass that they act like they are a red dwarf for merger mass rules.

The **most important** factor in a merger is that when two stars merge, **exactly one planet is destroyed** in the process (unless neither star had a planetary system, of course). The remaining planets form one larger system.

A merger action cannot be used if the destination space is already full (i.e. if it already contains N pawns where N is the number of players). The advancement of a star forward due to some mergers does not count as a MOVE action for the purposes of environment card effects.

Anytime During Round

Element Conversion

During Harvest or during their turn, players can mimic the fusion processes of the stars. This means that you can turn 4 Hydrogen into 1 Helium, 3 Helium into 1 Carbon, or 2 Carbon into 1 Point without spending any actions.

Blocking

Iron is used for the cores of both types of planets, but it also is used for blocking actions. A player may spend 1 Iron to block an action for which they are the target, such as MOVE or MERGE. A block is not itself an action, so you cannot block a block. If an action has been blocked, the action itself is wasted but the player receives half of the committed resources (rounded down when necessary). The same action cannot be attempted that turn.

In the case of the merger of two white dwarfs, only 1 Iron is needed but if players cannot decide who will spend it, they must simultaneously vote thumbs up they are spending an iron or thumbs down they are not spending an iron. This can result in 2 Iron being used to block the action or in the action being successful (if both parties voted thumbs down).

End of Game

When the final round completes (determined by the win conditions below), there is a final single harvest. This means players receive another point from any white dwarfs and gas planets, and can gain elements (for example, two carbon) from their rocky planets. It also allows players to do any element conversions of Hydrogen to Helium to Carbon to Points, emptying their resource tanks in a last glittering hurrah. ***Whoever has the most points wins!***

STANDARD GAME

The game enters its final round when the **final environment card** is flipped up. At the end of the environment deck (nine rounds), whoever has collected the most points along their journey wins. If there is a tie, whoever still has the most existing planets is the winner. If there is still a tie, tied players share the victory.

ADVANCED GAME

The game enters its final round when a player has reached a certain **target score**, agreed upon at the start of the game. We suggest 30 points as an initial goal. However, as you develop different strategies, you may want to try a longer or shorter game. When a player reaches the set score, the round is played through to completion. If there is a tie, play another full round. If there is still a tie, continue rounds until a victor is determined or agree to share the victory.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What environments are good for new players?

A: When we demo the game, we use Giant Molecular Cloud, Superluminous Supernova, Overdensity, and Stroemgren Sphere. We have found that those are simple to use in strategies.

Q: What is the extent of action prevention after a block?

A: If a MOVE is blocked, only the movement of the same star that turn is prevented. If a MERGE is blocked, the two stars in the blocked merger are the only combo prevented for the turn.

Q: What happens if I push a star into a full space?

A: No move can force a star into a destination space that is full (N stars, where N is the number of players). You will have to choose a different action to take.

Q: What happens when I merge two Blue Giants?

A: The merged star would be so unstable that it would likely core collapse, resulting in a supernova. Take both pawns off the board, and the player who owns the pawns gets 2 Iron.

Q: Does [example merger] work in the "Time Stasis" or "Time Vortex" environments?

A: Mergers of two different-size stars will still push stars forward, so the larger star is pushed forward according to normal MERGE rules.

Q: What if a space is already filled when the Overcrowding environment card is flipped?

A: Nothing. Overcrowding only prevents movement into a space.