

Deckbuilding Game Analysis

Star Realms

Game Overview

Star Realms is a Sci-Fi space combat deck building game where players compete with each other in a fight for dominance over the entire galaxy by steadily improving their deck till it becomes powerful enough to overpower the opponent's deck.

In Star Realms, each player starts with a deck of ten cards composed of Space Ships. Each turn, players play cards from their hand in order to gain resources as shown below:

- **Trade:** Used to acquire powerful Ships and Bases from the Trade Row to add to the player's deck.
- **Combat:** Used to attack opponens and and their bases.
- **Authority:** This is the player's health. Each player starts the game with 50 Authority and the first player to reduce their opponent's health to zero wins the game.



Trade



Combat



Authority

Beginning the Game



Each player begins the game with a personal deck containing 8 Scout cards(1 Trade Each) and 2 viper cards(1 Combat Each). The Trade Deck is shuffled and placed on the 'Trade Row'. Explorer cards are placed right next to the trade row. The player playing first is randomly decided and 3 cards are drawn from their personal deck while the player that plays second draws 5 cards. This is done with the aim of nullifying the 'first- turn advantage' that most turn-based games have issues with.

Building the Deck

Star Realms processes two types of cards,i.e. **The Ships** and **The Bases**. Ships provide players with abilities and resources such as Trade, Combat and Authority that assist them in winning games. Bases also give players access to said abilities and resources, but each Base, once played, stays in play until destroyed by the opponent and unlike Ships, are not sent to the discard pile at the end of each turn. As long as a Base is in play, it provides its benefits to players every turn.

As players acquire Ships and Bases from the Trade Row, they are placed into their discard pile and when their personal decks run out of cards, the discard pile gets shuffled to form a new Personal Deck. This enables players to strategize and steer their Personal Decks in the right direction for them to be able to defeat their opponents.

Faction Overview



The Trade Federation's primarily provides the players with Authority and is, in general a very defensive faction. Most of the Trade Federation Ships provide the player with Authority and Trade. Even though there are a few exceptions where some Bases let you scrap the card for Combat or pick between Combat or Authority, this faction's primary aim is to bulk up the Authority resource for the player and allow them to pick up cards faster from the Trade Row with Trade.

Strengths

- Gains massive amounts of Authority continually making the opponent harder to defeat.
- A large amount of Trade gain in the mid game allows players to purchase most/the best cards from the Trade Row.

Weaknesses

- Slow to build up and deal any substantial damage.
- Weak against scrappers (allows players to completely remove cards from their hand or discard pile) as players can easily scrap out all their unnecessary cards and do massive damage while The Trade Federation Deck slowly builds up.
- Cards/Factions that can remove cards off the Trade Row heavily cripple a Trade Federation deck by denying them of their 6+ Trade cost cards and wasting their ability to buy big.



The Blobs

The Blobs excel at generating large amount of Combat and hence essential for damage rush strategies. Their high damage at relatively cheap Trade cost cards such as the Bob Fighter, Battle Pod, Ram etc make them easily available to players during the earlier parts of the game. Allying Blob cards also provides a massive boost in Combat.

Their ability to remove certain cards from the Trade Row at low Trade costs also adds to their merit. For example, cards like the Battle Pod adds 4 Combat while at the same time allowing the player to Scrap a card from the Trade Row at the same time and only costs 2 Trade to Purchase.

Strengths

- High amounts of Combat.
- Allying this faction gives it a tremendous boost in Combat enabling it to shred through bases with ease.
- Their card draws, trade row manipulation and base removal abilities combined with their high damage output make them a huge threat.

Weaknesses

- Can be very weak if unable to ally with other cards of the same faction.
- Have no Outposts to slow down incoming damage from the opponents thus making Blob decks them highly susceptible to damage.



Star Empire

The Star Empire is quite similar to The Blobs in terms of them being focused on combat but their dissimilarity arises in the technique they use to go about it. Unlike The Blobs, the Star Empire do not provide large amounts of Combat as an immediate effect. Rather, they specialize in allowing the player to draw a lot of cards and making the opponent discard a lot of theirs.

This provides the player with opportunity to gather the right cards while at the same time disrupting the opponents progress. Also unlike the Blobs, The Star Empire takes a while to build up and is probably not as viable in the earlier parts of the game for Combat.

Strengths

- Enables players to do multiple tasks with it. Deals damage, discards enemy cards and allows players to draw more cards.
- A lot of the cards belonging to this faction are scrapable and is quite useful if players wish to switch strategies and focus on developing other factions instead. This makes them quite useful both in the early and late game.

Weaknesses

- Star Empire decks do not produce much Trade resource. Thus they may face issues with purchasing from the Trade Row later in the game.
- Does not deal as much damage as the Blobs.
- Any deck that produces a large amount of trade can essentially destroy a Star Empire deck by monopolizing the Trade Row and keeping them from purchasing their bases leaving them susceptible to damage. The Star Empire's already weak Trade resources enables players to make use of this further.



The Machine Faction gains most of its power from its ability to allow players to remove undesirable cards to from their hand or discard pile. Most of their Ship cards also provide some amounts of Combat and/or Trade. Their Bases or more specifically, Outposts (needs to be destroyed before Authority can be reduced) are the best in the game with most of them requiring at least six Combat to be destroyed. Thus The Machine Cult provides the players with both offensive and defensive capabilities while at the same time allowing them remove unwanted cards.

Strengths

- Has the strongest Outposts in the game thus providing great defense systems.
- Machine Cult decks can be generally built up quite fast because of their ability to scrap out cards that are less useful and at the same time providing some amounts of Trade to the player.

Weaknesses

- Even though they build up rather quick, The Machine Cult is highly vulnerable to damage before they can build their Outposts or high value Ships. Thus playing a Blob deck and/or a Star Empire deck could easily beat a Machine Cult deck early on.

Favourite Faction

As seen above, each faction has its own strengths, weaknesses and conditions that excel in. I believe that no one faction on its own can consistently win a player games. In fact they have to adapt their strategies and faction focus depending on their opponents approach to the game. I also do not believe that a single faction can be termed as a 'best' faction.

Having said that, my favourite faction that i've had the most fun playing with has been the **Star Empire Faction**. This is my favourite faction because because it offers you value both during the earlier and later parts of the game. It has the ability to deal heavy damage and also have extreme utility at the later parts of the game by providing lots of sacrifice/draw card options.

I feel like The Star Empire Faction provides the most utility to the players as it provides amazing amounts of damage without the need to form as many allies as the Blobs and unlike other factions, players can start with this faction, but if they need to switch factions, they can do so simply by scrapping cards like Space Station, Imperial Frigate etc and then focus on another faction. I also believe, for the same reasons, that this faction is one of the hardest to directly counter since it constantly keeps discarding opponent cards and drawing cards for yourself.

And besides who doesn't love to watch the life drain out of their opponents eyes as they slowly lose their Authority, not being able to do anything about it because they're constantly having cards discarded out of their hand.

Best and Worst Cards

I do not believe that we can objectively claim that certain cards are better than others since the use and value of the cards varies upon the situation and the phase of the game.i.e, some cards are very strong earlier on in the game but fall off late or vice versa. The value of each card is also dependent upon opponent strategy and do not always remain constant. However, for the sake of the assignment, I have included cards which I think have most value throughout all phases of the game as a general trend in the 'best' section and the opposite in the 'worst' section.

Best Cards

Imperial Frigate

Type: Ship

Imperial Frigate is a ship card that is useful both in the early parts of the game as well as later into the game. It provides a high amount of Combat(4) for a price of only 3 Trade thus making it viable for the early parts of the game. Adding to this it also forces the opponent to discard one card from their hand. It can also be allied for for 2 bonus Combat which means that if an Imperial Frigate card is allied with another one, then both these cards together provide a whopping 12 points to Combat and also forces the opponent to discard two cards from their deck.

War World

Type: Outpost

The War World is an amazing addition to the players arsenal. Not only does it provide 3 Combat points every turn until it is destroyed, but provides an additional 4 Combat points when allied,i.e provides a total of 7 Combat points when paired with any card of the same faction. It is also an Outpost hence it also offers some amount protection against enemy fire and requires 4 Combat points to be taken down. It acts as a great tool helping both in a offensive and defensive capacity. Costing only 5 Trade points to purchase, it is also relatively easy to obtain.

Recycling Station

Type: Outpost

The Recycling station allows players to either add one Trade point or discard up to two cards and then draw as many cards every turn. This alone gives it huge value at all/most stages in the game. On top of this, the Recycling station is also an outpost which means that it also provides some amount of Shields (4) to the players Authority. For its value, it is purchasable at the meagre cost of 4 Trade points.

Worst Cards

Fleet HQ

Type: Base

Since the price of the Fleet HQ card is so high, it almost exclusively becomes a mid-late game purchase. Even though providing all your ships with 1 Combat point is pretty cool, this requires the player to have a large number of cards in hand for it to be highly impactful. More value

could possibly be attained by simply allying a few cards at a lower/similar Trade cost. This card isn't even a Outpost hence doesn't really provide any protection and at that stage of the game eight shields could possibly be broken rather quickly. This cards is highly situational and hence has been places on the 'Worst Cards' list.

Space Station

Type: Outpost

Similar to the Fleet HQ, this card is quite situational, only provides average amounts of damage and the Outpost with 4 Shields can usually be destroyed rather easily. The card can be scrapped for 4 Trade but again, this is highly situational and cannot work every time.

Survey Ships

Type: Ship

Survey ships provide 1 Trade, the ability to draw a card and make the opponent destroy a card when scrapped. The card costs 3 Trade to purchase. Even though the ability to draw additional cards are quite useful, if one is running a Star Empire deck, these will not be hard to come by and the cost might be a little too much for what it provides. Cheaper cards can possibly provide more overall value.

Custom Cards

The Swapper

Ship - 4 Trade Cost

- Adds 3 Trade
- Draw a card and then discard one.
- Scrap: 4 Combat

The Swapper's aim is to slightly improve the Trade economic condition for the for the Star Empire Faction but at the same time stay true to the factions abilities to manipulate card draws and its combat abilities.

Imperial Destroyer

Ship - 8 Trade Cost

- Adds 7 Combat

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- Draw two cards.
 - Ally: Target opponent discards a card.

The intention with the Imperial Destroyer is to give the Star Empire faction a really strong late game Ship card that it currently lacks. Not only does this card provide 7 Combat but also allows players to draw two cards. If a player went for a Star Empire deck, they should probably already possess allied cards which forces their opponents to discard a card.

Dead World

Outpost - 3 Trade Cost

- Shield 3
- Draw a card and then discard one
- Scrap: 3 Combat

A cheaper Outpost that can provide some early-mid game protection while at the same time allowing players to switch out one card for another each turn. This should be able to boost the Star Empire's early game progression slightly but at the same time, since the outpost only has 3 shields, players might be able to destroy it quite easily. If players suspect this, that can scrap the card to gain 3 Combat.