

INPUT GUIDE

Of all ADB, Inc.'s publications, *Captain's Log* has the highest percentage of articles that come from our players. Many of these highlight clever strategies, under-utilized tactics, and exciting games that people have discovered or played. A well-written article will clearly explain the tactic and highlight your favorite game in the *Star Fleet Universe*, drawing in new players.

CREATIVE WRITING

Here is an example of bad writing (from Shakespeare):

"Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious spring by this son of York".

This is confusing. If you read the first seven words, you think that the winter of our discontent is something happening right now, when in fact, it is something that just ended. The Bard did this to make people who didn't have television *think* — forcing them to mentally go back over what had been said. It's better, in the 21st century, to avoid making people double-think.

ENGLISH vs. JARGON

I have fought for years to keep "jargon" out of our articles. What I mean by jargon is code words, non-words, contractions, abbreviations, slang, gamer-speak, and other such things that are (a) not good English, (b) unintelligible to anyone outside of the sub-club that uses the jargon, and (c) cause extra work for the people trying to edit and publish your writing.

Partly this is just proper, formal writing. It's just better to write "points of internal damage" than "internals". It's just better to write "directed damage" than "DirDam". It's common in our fast-paced society to shorten everything and replace complex terms with shorthand notations. That's fine for passing a note in the hall at Origins; *Captain's Log* deserves a higher standard.

Some of it is just awkward English. Try this sentence from a recent *F&E* Tactical Note: "You can, thus, save from pursuit a ship you were forced to resolve on." Do you really think anyone who doesn't play *F&E* will understand what you mean? It gets worse. Most of the *F&E* players don't habitually haunt the BBS and they won't understand it either. Is it really that hard to type "...you were forced to cripple"? And the phrase "the mauler that you shocked" is hard for anyone who wasn't there to grasp, while "the mauler that suffered a breakdown due to shock" is fairly clear.

Some of it is just personal bad habits. One player insists on writing "Y171 Spring" instead of the "Spring Y171" that every other player uses. This same player makes up his own ship designations such as X-FRD, X-SB, and X-CC, designations which may or may not convey the meaning intended, but which are not anywhere in the Ship Information Tables.

Here are some other examples from *F&E*:

- The phrase "shifting the attacker" could be more formally stated as "forcing the attacker to fire into a die roll shift caused by electronic warfare" (or whatever rule is creating the shift).
- The phrase "two shift an attacker" could be more formally stated as "force the attacker to fire into a -2 die roll shift caused by electronic warfare" (or whatever rule is creating the shift).
- The phrase "react out a fleet" could be better stated as "move a fleet by Reaction Movement" or "intercept the moving enemy by moving a fleet with Reaction Movement".
- The phrase "react ships" could be better said as "use Reaction Movement to move ships during the enemy turn".

Some of it is gamer code that applies only to a tiny subset of gamers. *SFBOL* people are constantly writing things like "He

launched B30 at me". The problem is that absolutely nobody outside of *SFBOL* knows what a B30 is (although some think it's an airplane from WWII). The article is not *just* for *SFBOL* players; at least it should not be. It should be written for *all SFB* players, as it might entice *SFB* players to become *SFBOL* players. It might even allow another player (who reads the article in the bathroom after he read all of the articles about games he actually plays) to see what fun you are having and maybe try your game!

The PBEM players don't get off any easier. I don't want to see any more battle reports about GS3 (Green Fleet Ship #3). I want to see "the ISC light cruiser". I don't want to see ATU; I want to see "fighter" or "attrition unit".

Even *Prime Directive* players get their slap on the wrist. "Hold-out phaser" is a *GURPS* term unknown to most readers. Use "compact phaser" unless you're actually writing a *GURPS* book.

The term "turtle" means different things to people playing different games. In *SFB*, it means "go slow, reinforce shields" and in *F&E* it means "stick around the fixed defenses" or sometimes it means "just stay there and don't be suckered into using Reaction Movement that gets you into combat." In either case, don't use "turtle" but spell out what you do mean.

While I am on my rant, allow me to call an end, for all time, to citing other people's names and papers when writing Term Papers and Tactical Notes. Sometimes this makes sense, but most of the ones I have seen come across as personal attacks. Rather than saying "John Doe said in his term paper that..." write "Conventional wisdom says that..." and this will, indeed, be a kinder, gentler, and more civil galaxy.

Most Term Papers, Tactical Notes, and Command Notes show up via the BBS, where using italics is inconvenient and requires some strange and awkward codes. If you need to emphasize a word, go ahead and use all caps but include a note, please, for the editor to change ALL CAPS to *lower case italic*.

FILE NAMES

Please make sure that when you send an attached file, the file name is in readable English, for example, "ThoShtl.jpg" as opposed to "DSCN123.jpg" as this makes it easier to find and recognize. We get thousands of spam Emails in a given week, and many of these (even those stopped by the filters) deposit mysterious JPEGs (with cryptic titles) in our inboxes. It is incredibly annoying to have to go through 300 pieces of unrequested porn just to find that drawing you sent of your new ship.

RANDOM NOTES

These notes were compiled while reviewing stories and talking with their authors. It's better to use the proper term.

The term is "battlecruiser" not "battle cruiser" so add it to your spell-checker's dictionary.

Don't use "screens" when you mean "shields".

Various people use "I fired a standard" to mean a phaser-1, a type-I drone, and a non-overloaded heavy weapon. Spell out which one you mean.

The Klingon Empire is full of people who serve the Empire but are not Klingons. They include such species as Dunkars, Slirdarians, Cromargs, Zoolies, and Hilidarians. Any scene with a Klingon ship would expect to see a few of these around, although not necessarily on the bridge.

Jean Sexton has decided that the usage in *Federation Commander* needs to permeate to *Star Fleet Battles*. So, all future SSDs are to use "REAR HULL" and "R HULL" instead of "AFT HULL" and "A HULL". Also, she wants the term "race" replaced by the no more precise but nicer sounding "empire". Ok, the Federation is not an empire, but it's not a race either.

I'd love to switch all references to PF and fast patrol ship to gunboat, but *Omega 5* had so many of these I let them go. Non-combat variants can be grouped into the term "patrol boat" and civilian types into the category "workboat". —*Stephen V. Cole*