

NOTES FOR JUDGES: NON-AGGRESSION

Perhaps nothing is more complicated or controversial than a judge ruling that a player has not fought aggressively and will lose the game. Even more frustrating is when a player, exhausted by six hours of following a cloaked opponent, gets tired and fires an alpha strike into limbo and is then destroyed. A panel of top SFB judges offer these guidelines. First, what actually is "non-aggression".

This is defined as any of the following:

- **STARCASTLE** (i.e., parking) to use the energy that would have gone into movement for shield reinforcement, forcing the enemy to use power to get into range and then exchange weapons fire at a disadvantage.
- **RETROGRADE**, i.e., backing away from the enemy with your weapons pointing toward him, forcing the enemy to chase you through a wall of seeking weapons while his own seeking weapons are useless. (Note: this comes into play even if neither ship has seeking weapons beyond suicide shuttles.)
- **CLOAKING** is by definition non-aggressive, but (like the above) is ok to reload and conduct a few repairs and, within limits, get into a firing position. It is not legal to cruise around, cloaked and holding plasmas or overloads, and refuse to uncloak until the enemy tried to shoot at your cloaked ship and missed.

Note that moving in reverse toward the enemy is not a problem, and note that just plain running away (forward) isn't illegal as you will get run down and shot. Parking and moving in retrograde are non-aggressive even if that ship is firing weapons at the enemy. All forms of non-aggression are interchangeable and changing from Starcastle to Retrograde does not "start the clock" over again; the count of non-aggression continues.

No one is required to engage a ship using non-aggressive tactics, since that player is, unfairly and with bad sportsmanship, refusing to play unless you hand him a major tactical advantage. If the enemy starcastles or retrogrades, you are not obliged to attack him. If the enemy stays cloaked, you are not obliged to fire at him (although many players use the "subhunt" tactic of firing a phaser-1 now and then just to rattle the cloaked ship, and do so to good effect).

Two problems can result from non-aggression. One is that the other player will simply do nothing for several hours and then insist that the judge summarily execute his opponent for him (rather than him having to work for the win). The other is when a judge doesn't understand the mechanics of non-aggression and allows it to go on and on. While a couple of turns of non-aggression can allow a ship that is hurt to reload and get back in the game, there must be some limits. Here is the procedure:

1. A player who notes that his opponent has been non-aggressive for one entire turn should verbally warn him.
2. After two consecutive turns of non-aggression, the other player may summon a judge who (if he agrees the above conditions were met) will issue a formal "advisory of non-aggression".
3. At the end of a third consecutive turn of non-aggression, the judge (if the conditions have been met) will issue the formal (and final) "warning of imminent judgement".
4. At the end of the fourth consecutive turn of non-aggression, the judge must (if the conditions have been met for most of that turn) rule against the non-aggressive player, ending the game and giving the victory to the other player.

The other player can never be penalized for refusing to take the "sucker bet" offered by the non-aggressive player. Anything that happened more than two turns before the judge was called does not count. It is up to the judge to rule if the conditions have been met or, in some way, avoided. PBEM and SFBOL may use a slightly modified system due to the nature of those venues. If done right, it will never come up as both players know the penalties.