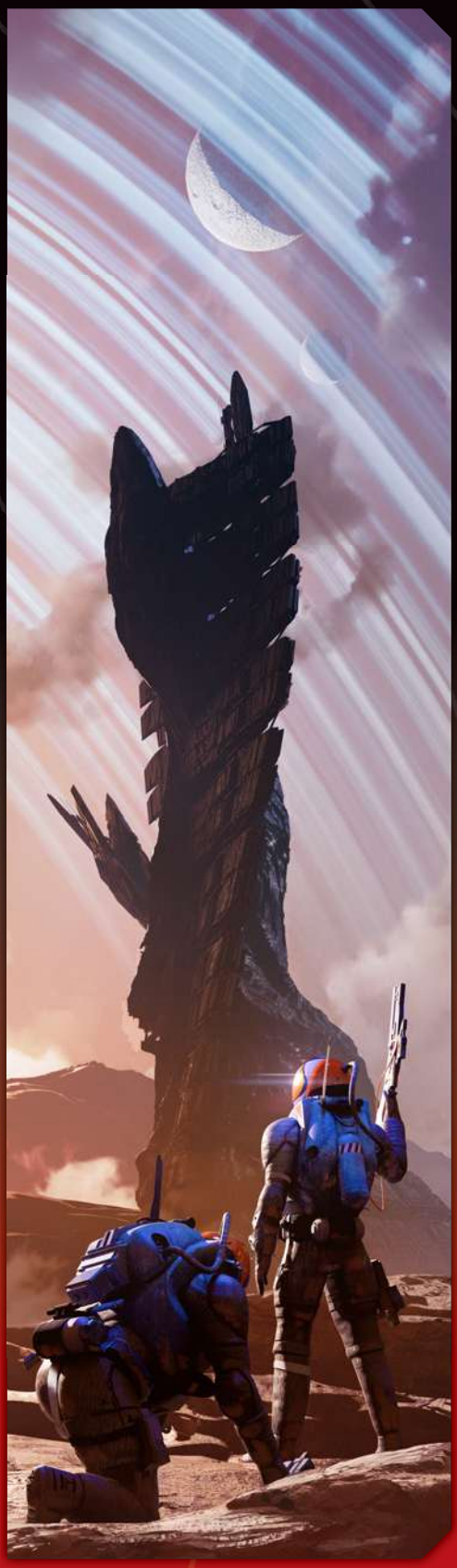
THE EXPANSE RPG

TRANSPORT UNION EDITION

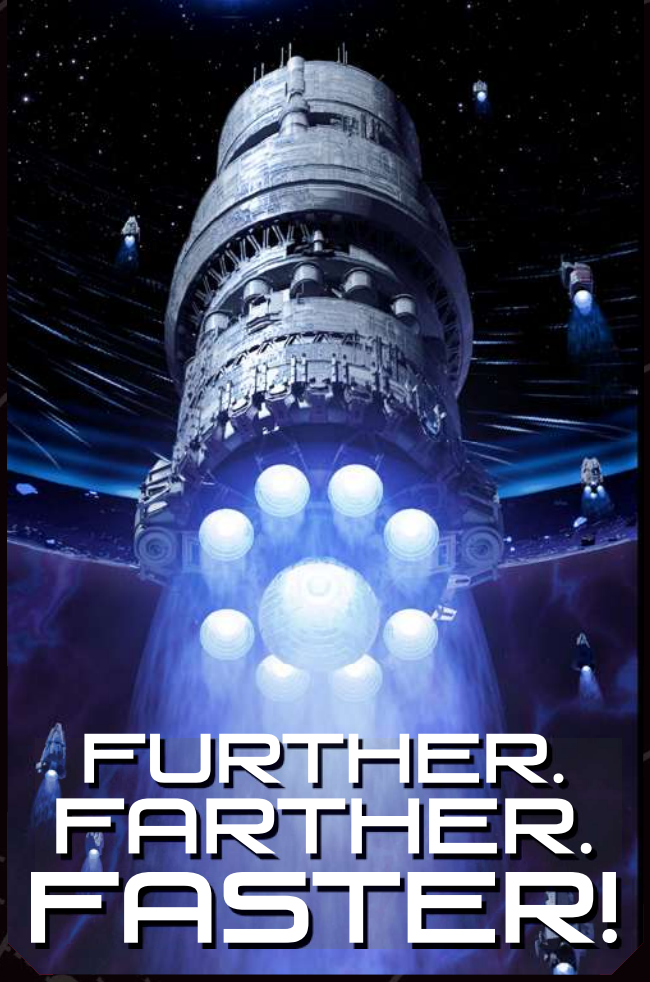






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THE EXPANSE RPG

TRANSPORT UNION EDITION



CORE RULEBOOK

The Expanse Created by James S.A. Corey

Writing and Design: Steve Kenson & Ian Lemke

Additional Writing: Brandon Crilly, Keith Garrett, Seth Johnson (1E), Jason Mical, Zack Walters (1E), Pete Woodworth

Development: Ian Lemke **Editing:** Skylar Mannen **Proofreading:** Steve Jones, Evan Sass, Malcolm Sheppard

Interior Art: Dmitri Bielak, Madeline Boni, Matheus Calza, Javier Charro, Biagio D'Alessandro, Vincent Delafontaine Stanislav Dikolenko, Tony Foti, Mark Graham, Isaac Hannaford, Jack Hoyle, Lukasz Jaskolski, Ferdinand Ladera, Aga Marlon, Dimitris Miliotis, Victor Leza Moreno, Mirco Paganessi, Marko Radulovik, Max Roche, Andrey Vasilchenko, Damon Westenhofer, Pawandeo Yadav, Ben Zweifel

Cartography: Chris West **Cover Art:** Isaac Hannaford **Art Direction and Graphic Design:** Hal Mangold

The Expanse Roleplaying Game designed by Steve Kenson Adventure Game Engine (AGE) Created by Chris Pramas

Publisher: Chris Pramas

Team Ronin: Kara Hamilton, Troy Hewitt, Steve Kenson, Ian Lemke, Steve Jones, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Chris Pramas, Evan Sass, Malcolm Sheppard, Dylan Templar, and Alexander Thomas

Special Thanks: Audun G. Løvlie, founder of *The Expanse RPG* Fan Community, *Abraxas' Precipice* (featuring John Bultena, Scott Mitchell, Michael C. Hsiung, Donna Prior, Marcy Brown, and Claire Lewis), *Hellbreakers* (featuring Meric Moir, Jen Moir, Patrick McGean, Catie Kjorlien, and Tyler Kjorlien), and all of the other amazing folks who have helped to make *The Expanse* RPG a success!

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GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING

3815 S. Othello St.
Suite 100 #311
Seattle, WA 98118
Email: custserv@greenronin.com
Web Site: www.greenronin.com

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Expanse*! Humanity has spread out into the solar system, and the discovery of the ring gates has opened up over 1300 new worlds to explore. This new edition of *The Expanse RPG* extends the timeline, expanding play to encompass books 1 through 6 of *The Expanse* series by James S. A. Corey. It also includes details on the 30-year gap between *Babylon's Ashes* and *Persepolis Rising* and the rise of the Transport Union. You can start from the beginning, contending with the fraught relations between Earth, Mars, and the Belt when an independent Mars vies with old Earth for political power and influence while the Belters who settled the asteroid belt and the moon systems of Jupiter and Saturn struggle to survive. Or you can forge a new path during the unexplored decades of the Transport Union era: explore distant new worlds, fight off pirates and the remnants of the Free Navy, or engage in the political machinations of the nascent Transport Union. The full universe of *The Expanse* is now in your hands.

The Expanse Roleplaying Game is a tabletop roleplaying game (or "RPG" for short). It is a game of the imagination, where you and your friends take on the roles of characters in a solar system on the verge of an exciting—and dangerous—new era. It is a moment when people in the right place at the right time willing to do the right thing can potentially change the course of history and the future of humanity, and you can be those people. You may have played other tabletop roleplaying games before, or this may be your introduction to new worlds of storytelling and adventure. Either way, welcome to *The Expanse*.

> "It was a real book—onionskin pages bound in what might have been actual leather. Miller had seen pictures of them before; the idea of that much weight for a single megabyte of data struck him as decadent."
>
> — *Leviathan Wakes*

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

If *The Expanse RPG* is your introduction to the world of tabletop roleplaying games, then you might be wondering, "What is all this 'roleplaying' stuff about?"

Essentially, in a roleplaying game, you and a group of friends (the **players**) take on the roles of fictional characters in a world fueled by your imagination. One player in the group is the **Game Master**, or "GM" for short, who acts like the narrator of a story or the director of a play or movie. The Game Master sets the scene and describes what happens in the world around your characters. Then the other players decide what their characters do in response. The GM describes the outcome of those actions, and on you go, creating your own story.

Roleplaying is much like cooperative fan fiction or simulation gaming, where a group of people work together to build a fun and exciting story. Although it's the Game Master's job to portray the various antagonists in the story, as well as the heroes' allies, the GM isn't playing *against* everyone else. In fact, it's the Game Master's job to help ensure everyone has fun and that the group tells an interesting, enjoyable story.

Think of a roleplaying game like an extended version of various games of make-believe we all played as children, only with rules to help guide the story and a central narrator and manager to set the stage and help keep things moving along smoothly—"next stage make-believe," if you like.

WHAT IS THE EXPANSE?

The Expanse is a science fiction universe created by James S.A. Corey (the pen name of Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck) starting with the novel *Leviathan Wakes* in 2011 and progressing through eight other novels and various novellas and short stories (see ***The Expanse* Fiction** sidebar). In the future, humanity has spread throughout the solar system using the energy-efficient Epstein Drive, colonizing Mars, the asteroid belt, and the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. An unsteady peace exists between the United Nations of Earth and the Martian Congressional Republic, a balance upset by the events of the first novel.

The Expanse novel series focuses on the lives and adventures of the crew of the *Rocinante,* a repurposed military ship, as they become entangled with significant events in human history. It also takes in the sweep of events on a larger scale from the points of view of other characters in the solar system. Although *The Expanse* is "hard" science fiction in terms of extrapolating technology and dealing with the realities of orbital mechanics, space travel, and living in non-terrestrial environments, it also features epic science fiction speculation in terms of ancient alien artifacts which change the course of human history.

THE EXPANSE FICTION

The following are the various published stories of *The Expanse* universe, in order of publication.

NOVELS

Leviathan Wakes (2011)
Caliban's War (2012)
Abaddon's Gate (2013)
Cibola Burn (2014)
Nemesis Games (2015)
Babylon's Ashes (2016)
Persepolis Rising (2017)
Tiamat's Wrath (2019)
Leviathan Falls (2021)

NOVELLAS

"Gods of Risk" (2012): Set between *Caliban's War* and *Abaddon's Gate*.
"The Churn" (2014): Set before *Leviathan Wakes*.
"The Vital Abyss" (2015): Set before *Leviathan Wakes* to *Cibola Burn*.
"Strange Dogs" (2017): Set between *Babylon's Ashes* and *Persepolis Rising*.
"Auberon" (2019): Set between *Persepolis Rising* and *Tiamat's Wrath*.
The Sins of Our Fathers (2022): Set after *Leviathan Falls*.

SHORT STORIES

"The Butcher of Anderson Station" (2011): Set before *Leviathan Wakes*.
"Drive" (2012): Set before *Leviathan Wakes*.

SPOILER WARNINGS

The Expanse Roleplaying Game: Transport Union Edition focuses on the period between the first and seventh novels in the series (*Leviathan Wakes* and *Persepolis Rising)* and contains information about the events, some of which may be considered "spoilers" for its plot. If this book is your introduction to *The Expanse,* you may wish to read the novels first to ensure nothing here spoils your enjoyment of the story. While future *Expanse RPG* products will detail events and information related to the later books, there shouldn't be any significant spoilers for them in this book.

GETTING STARTED

The first thing you need for an *Expanse* game is a group of friends to play with, with one of you willing to take on the role of Game Master. While you can play with as small a group as one player and a GM, the game works best with a GM and three to six players. It is possible to play with more players, but that can slow down the pace of the game. The Game Master has a key role, so try to make sure they really want the job! Running a game is fun, but it's a different experience from participating as a normal player. **Chapter 12** explains the Game Master's role in detail.

Once you've settled on a GM, everyone else needs to create characters, also known as player characters (PCs) since they are controlled by the players. Your character is your primary responsibility as a player in a roleplaying game. This is your alter ego in the universe of *The Expanse*. Over the course of many adventures, your character will grow and change, but every story needs a beginning. That is exactly what **Chapter 2: Character Creation** provides, giving you not only game stats—the abilities and corresponding numbers that tell you what your character is good at—but also a character concept, starting goals, and relationships with other characters. Once play begins, the portrayal and development of your character is all up to you. Playing your character, achieving goals, and navigating the challenges and perils of a fantastic universe—this is the fun of taking part in a roleplaying game.

PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

When playing a roleplaying game, ask yourself "What would my character do?" The Game Master describes a situation, setting the scene for the players. It is then up to you to decide what your character does and why. You tell the GM what you want to do, as do the other players in turn, and then you all work out what happens. Sometimes you use dice and the rules of the game to

THE ADVENTURE GAME ENGINE

The rules system for *The Expanse Roleplaying Game* is known as the *Adventure Game Engine* (or *AGE*) *System*. It was originally designed by Chris Pramas for the *Dragon Age RPG*, also by Green Ronin Publishing. It was later published in standalone books, the *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook* and *Modern AGE Rulebook,* as well as being used to create the *Titansgrave: Ashes of Valkana* setting and adventures and the *Blue Rose Romantic Fantasy Roleplaying* game. If you learn to play *The Expanse*, you can easily pick up other *AGE System* games. Although they are not identical, their basic structure and rules are, and you should find the others easy to learn. If you enjoy playing in the universe of *The Expanse* with the *AGE System*, you may want to explore the family of other worlds and games from Green Ronin Publishing based on it.



resolve actions in a specific order. At other times, you simply interact with the other players and the characters portrayed by the GM, who are known as non-player characters, or NPCs, to differentiate them from the player characters.

When you create your *Expanse* character, you choose things like their goals and strong and weak personality traits. You can then flesh your character out further. There are two basic approaches to this: The first is to paint your character in a few broad strokes before jumping right in. The intention here is to come up with the finer details about your character during the game, often using the springboard of the current story to create connections to their past. This is a common storytelling technique and a perfectly valid approach if you don't want to spend a lot of time working on your character's backstory before starting play. The second approach is to come up with a lot of details and roleplaying ideas before the first game session. If you can come to the table with a good idea of who your character is before the first dice are even rolled, that can help get the game going.

However you approach your character, playing the game will help you refine your ideas. After you have played for a while, you should have a strong sense of your character's personality and an intuitive sense of what they would do in a particular situation. Of course, not all situations present easy choices, and it is from those difficult decisions that tension and drama emerge.

ADVENTURE AND SERIES

An **adventure** is a discrete story in a roleplaying game. Think of it as a single short story, chapter of a novel, or an episode of a TV show. There may be several plot threads, but in the end, it tells one tale. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that *you* have authorship. The decisions taken by you and your fellow players help drive the story to its conclusion.



A **series** is made up of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a chapter or episode, a series is a novel or season of a show, or a series of novels or seasons. Some adventures may have self-contained plots, while others tie together to tell a larger story, what is sometimes referred to as an **arc**. During a series, the characters advance, improve, and change. Over time, they gain more abilities, influence, and resources, face greater challenges, and perhaps even gain renown for their deeds. A full *Expanse* series can take characters from levels 1 through 20 and provide hundreds of hours of entertainment.

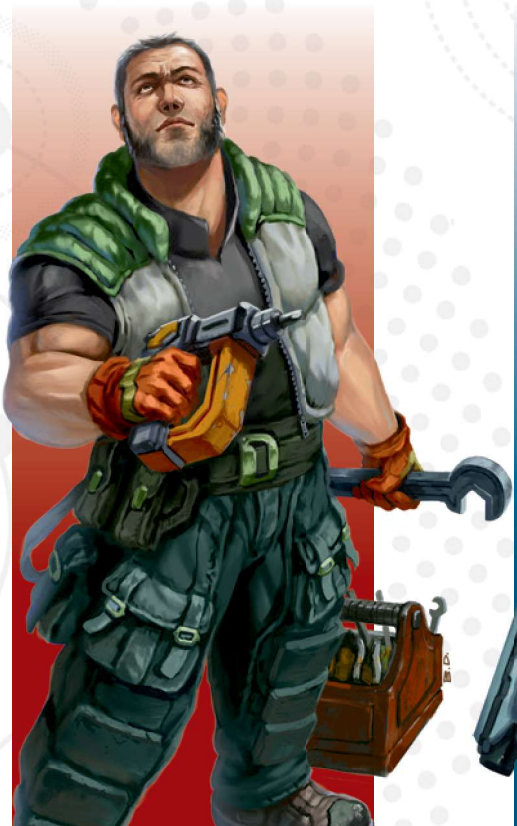
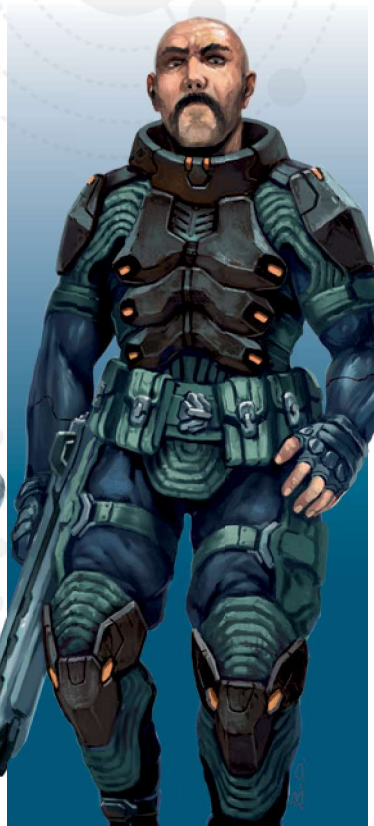
> A hundred and fifty years before, when the parochial disagreements between Earth and Mars had been on the verge of war, the Belt had been a far horizon of tremendous mineral wealth beyond viable economic reach, and the outer planets had been beyond even the most unrealistic corporate dream. Then Epstein had built his little modified fusion drive, popped it on the back of his three-man yacht, and turned it on. With a good scope, you could still see his ship going at a marginal percentage of the speed of light, heading out into the big empty. The best, longest funeral in the history of mankind. Fortunately, he'd left the plans on his home computer. The Epstein Drive hadn't given humanity the star, but it had delivered the planets.
>
> —*Leviathan's Wake*

THE GROUP DYNAMIC

Much of this book is focused on teaching you the rules of the game and how to create a character. It is important to remember, however, that roleplaying is a social activity. There are two aspects to this: the character group and the player group.

Your character is one member of a group of characters, often referred to in this book as the **crew**, since *Expanse* characters are often part of the crew of the same ship or station. Each character in the crew has individual goals, but there should also be larger shared goals. The characters may have their disagreements and even conflicts, but for the game to go on, they must remain together. The adventures themselves often assure this by their plot and structure, but a good group dynamic can help. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea, for example, to make sure you have characters with diverse backgrounds, focuses, and talents. When working out things like goals and relationships, you can build in reasons for the characters in the crew to work together. *The Expanse* is often about human relationships and families, both those we choose and those chosen for us by circumstance.

The people gaming with you make up the player group, and that, too, has a dynamic. You and your fellow players are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who fundamentally get along. Roleplaying is meant to be fun for everyone, so be aware of any tensions around the table. Some players try to make the game all about them, hogging the spotlight and attempting to insert themselves into every scene. Don't act that way—it just makes the other players frustrated and less engaged. Everyone likewise deserves a chance to shine, so be ready to take a step back when someone has a good idea or is pursuing something important for their character. Some players may make others uncomfortable with inappropriate behavior. When this happens, it is important for the group as a whole to make it clear such behavior won't be tolerated—the game is about everyone having fun, and that can't happen unless everyone also feels comfortable and at ease.


If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone just goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions so it doesn't happen again. If players have concerns, encourage them to bring them up for discussion. **Chapter 12** offers some advice about handling problems that might crop up in the player group dynamic.

BASIC GAME CONCEPTS

Before you dive into the rest of the book, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about all of these things in greater detail as you read on.

DICE

The Expanse uses six-sided dice, abbreviated as "d6." This is the most common type of die, and they can be found in many classic boardgames if you need to scrounge for some. In general, dice are rolled four different ways in the game:

1D3 Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1–3. In this case you roll a d6 but halve the result, rounding up, so a roll of 1–2 = 1, a roll of 3–4 = 2, and a roll of 5–6 = 3.

1D6 You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, such as 1d6+3 or 1d6–1. In that case, just add or subtract the modifier from the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of +3 to get a result of 5, or subtract the modifier of −1 to get a result of 1.

2D6 As above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.

3D6 As above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an **ability test**, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color or otherwise differentiated in some way. That third die is known as the **Drama Die**, and it's quite important. The result of the Drama Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.

CHARACTERS

To play *The Expanse*, you must first create a character. You choose your character's origin (Earth, Mars, or one of the many colonies of the Belt or outer planets), as well as background, profession, and what drives your character. Your character begins at level 1 as a novice. By surviving encounters and overcoming challenges, characters gradually gain experience and increase in level (commonly called "leveling up"). With repeated play, your character may eventually make it to level 20 and become one of the most capable and important people in known space!

TESTS

Your character has nine **abilities**, such as Intelligence and Strength, and each with a numeric rating from −2 to 4, with 1 being average. When your character wants to do something, the Narrator may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, you roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and then add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

TEST RESULT = 3D6 + ABILITY

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of expertise. Once you determine your test result, the Game Master lets you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens as a result.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you are a player, then the first two sections of this book, **Chapters 1–6** and **Chapters 7–11**, are for you. They provide the key information you need to know about how to play the game and about the setting of *The Expanse*. When you are ready to make a character, go to **Chapter 2: Character Creation**.

If you are the Narrator, you, too, should familiarize yourself with **Chapters 1–11**, as they contain the core of the game and the setting. Then move on to **Chapters 12–15**. They explain your important role in a tabletop roleplaying game as well as giving you valuable advice and resources.