SPELLJAMMER 5E "THEATER OF THE MIND" SHIP COMBAT RULES

CREATED FOR THE TALES FROM THE GLASS-GUARDED WORLD PODCAST

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Ship-to-ship combat in fantasy space with no map needed for the world's most popular roleplaying game

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What is this for?

Fifth Edition Dungeons and Dragons has rules for personal combat that are well-tested. *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* includes rules for ship-to-ship combat, but they tend to turn ship combat into something very much like ordinary D&D combat, but more tedious due to the many things that must be tracked.

Other game systems—Starfinder and Esper Genesis in particular—have created more interesting systems for ship-to-ship combat. Like the original Second Edition AD&D Spelljammer rules, however, they work best with a map or a virtual tabletop.

This document lays out "theater of the mind" ship combat rules for spelljammers, using a combination of ship characteristics from the original Spelljammer, weapon characteristics and action economy rules from Fifth Edition D&D, and tactical combat options inspired by Starfinder and Esper Genesis.

Crew Roles

The following combat-relevant positions may be taken on an ordinary Spelljammer ship.

Bosun (Boatswain): Responsible for technical work, including upgrades and repairs, an ideal bosun is trained in carpentry tools or has magic that can assist in repairs. It is a good idea to have the bosun allocate deckhands to their various tasks, but you may optionally have the captain do this.

Captain/First Mate: The captain (or first mate) can act once at any point during each round, using their action to encourage or challenge the crew to improve their performance. Alternatively, the captain can join a part of the crew and assist them with their action.

Gunner: These crewmen operate ship-to-ship weapons such as ballistae, bombards, and catapults. Most ship-to-ship weapons require more than one crew member to operate, with some reloading and aiming and (usually) one firing.

Helmsperson: Effectively the pilot of the ship, the helmsperson rolls initiative and decides what maneuvers to undertake. The helmsperson is usually responsible for piloting the ship outside of combat as well. Usually this is a sorcerer or a wizard, but any spellcaster can operate a spelljamming helm.

Crew member roles can be fluid; a gunner can stop firing weapons and help with ship repairs. Some crew may not have specific roles, being general **deckhands** available for a variety of tasks, such as reloading and aiming weapons, repairing hull damage, and working with the rigging to help with maneuvers. Any character filling another role can choose deckhand actions instead.

There are other positions on some spelljammers—quarter master, cook, navigator, surgeon (healer)—but they are not essential to combat. Refer to *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* for more explanation of these roles.

How does combat work?

Every round of Spelljammer combat proceeds in the same order (with the captain acting at any time):

1) Initiative: The spelljammer helmspersons (the people operating the spelljamming helm, pool helm, or other motivating device) roll initiative. The winning helmsperson (the character with the higher number) *chooses* whether to go first or second, giving that character a chance to respond optimally to the loser's choice of action. Note that this initiative roll is repeated every round!

If more than two ships are in combat, the helmsperson with the lowest initiative roll acts first, then the helmsperson with the second lowest, and so on.

2) Helms: The helmspersons act in the order determined in the Initiative phase. Their actions are resolved, using rolls when necessary.

3) Support: Support crew (bosun and deckhands) take their actions. This could be repairing the ship, acting as a spotter or lookout, preparing to help with maneuvers for the next round, loading or aiming a weapon, casting a spell, or any of a variety of other actions.

4) Attack: Gunners on both ships attack with their weapons, assuming they were loaded and aimed in the previous step. Attacks from both sides are treated as simultaneous in effect, but it might be more dramatic to have the player characters roll second.

5) Effect Resolution: Damage is calculated, critical hit targets are determined, and both take effect (which could affect performance in future rounds).

There is an important exception to this rigid order: Single-person ships are designed to allow their crew to act in an extremely efficient manner. If a spelljammer has only one crew member, that crew member may act as the helmsperson in one stage and may use a bonus action to act in one other stage. For example, they could perform a maneuver as helmsperson and repair the ship, or they could repair the ship and reload a weapon. The solo crew member may take actions as per the roles gunner, helmsperson, or deckhand (but not captain or bosun).

Many of the actions available to crew provide advantage to other crew members if a skill check is successful. For this reason, these Spelljammer combat rules have an important exception to the standard Fifth Edition Dungeons and Dragons combat rules: *You cannot use the Help action to give advantage on crew actions.* You must use the relevant crew action to give another crew member advantage on a crew action. You may still use the Help action for standard actions, such as attacking with a long bow or making a stealth check.

Range Categories

Speed, facing, and other movement and positioning characteristics are not tracked in these rules. Instead, every ship has one of three range categories relative to every other ship: Extreme, Long, and Short.

- Extreme Range: Ships at Extreme range have just become visible or are about to escape. Few weapons can hit a target at this range, and attack rolls have disadvantage.
- Long Range: Ships at long range are within striking distance of most ranged weapons, but attack rolls have disadvantage.
- Short range: Attacks made against ships at short range are rolled normally (unless the helmsperson uses a maneuver to impose disadvantage), and ramming and grappling are possible. Grappled ships (i.e., ships connected by grappling hooks or a grappling ram) can be boarded, resulting in standard melee combat. Ranged attack spells can also be cast at enemy ships at short range (and *only* at short range).

These range categories should work fine for small combats (one player character ship versus one to three enemy ships), but will quickly become unworkable for large numbers of ships without some handwaving by the DM. Consider having groups of ships assigned a group range category for simplicity, with a representative helmsperson making checks to move closer or farther away. If there are other ships allied with the player character ship, it is probably best to describe action occurring with them narratively, rather than resolving actions using these rules.

Ship Characteristics

Different ships have different strengths and weaknesses. These come down to a few important characteristics. You can find a list of these for a variety of ships on Page 16.

Crew (Min/Max): The number of people operating the ship. Larger crews allow more weapons to be operated and allow a greater variety of crew actions. The "Min" number is the minimum needed to operate the ship while performing at its listed characteristics (particularly maneuverability). "Max" is the maximum number of crew that can travel on the ship without putting excess stress on its limited atmospheric envelope when operating in a void ("Wildspace") or in the phlogiston ("The Flow" or "the Rainbow Ocean").

A Spelljammer that loses crew members will lose maneuverability class according to the following table:

CREW AND MANEUVERABILITY LOSS TABLE

Crew remaining	Maneuverability Class loss
100%	Full rating
>50% to 100%	1 class
>25% to 50%	2 classes
1 to 25%	3 classes

Fractions should be rounded down as always. For example, suppose a Wasp with a minimum crew of 8 suffers a loss of two crew members. It is now at 75% of its minimum crew requirement, so its maneuverability class drops from D to E. If its crew is further reduced to 2 or 25%, its maneuverability class would drop by three, but it cannot go lower than F.

Damage Threshold: Like ships in *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, spelljammers have a damage threshold that allows them to resist damage from insignificant attacks. Typically this is between 10 and 20. An attack that inflicts damage greater than or equal to the threshold deals damage normally. Attacks that would deal damage less than the threshold inflict no damage.

Hull Points: The ship's hit points. You should take the original Second Edition Spelljammer ship hull points and multiply them by 10 to get hull points that roughly line up with ships in *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*. Spelljammers are a bit tougher ton-for-ton than seagoing ships, due to superior technology and a need to survive a variety of stressful conditions. A ship that reaches zero hull points has been destroyed and can no longer be moved using a spelljammer helm.

Maneuverability Class: Large ships are tough, but they are also difficult to turn. Small ships are weak, but they maneuver easily. Ship maneuverability is rated A through F, with A being the best, and F being the worst. These are taken straight from the original Second Edition AD&D Spelljammer rules. Maneuverability class affects the selection of maneuvers available to the helmsperson.
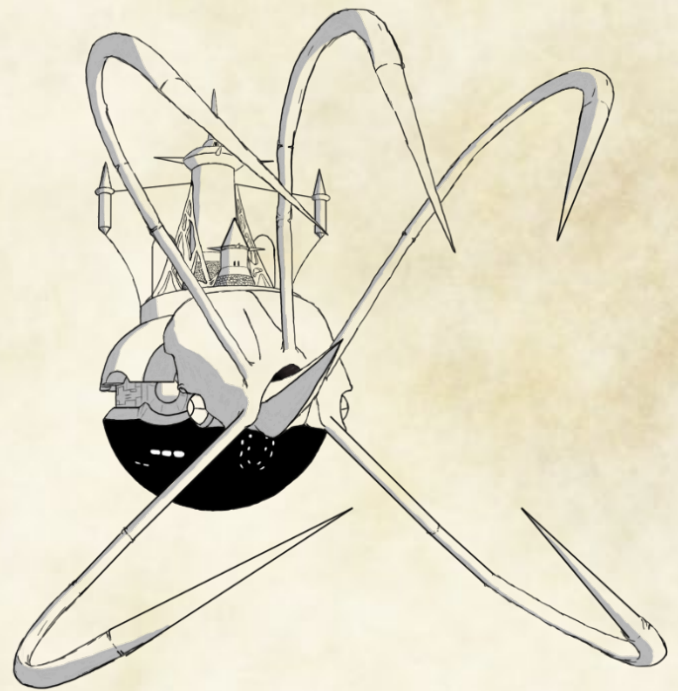
Armor Class: Ships have Armor Class (AC) just like characters, and these are based on Armor Ratings from the original Spelljammer campaign setting. An adjustment must be made to account for the fact that in Second Edition AD&D a lower AC was better. Calculate a ship's AC by subtracting the value listed in the original Spelljammer rules from 22. For example, a Tradesman's Armor Rating was 5 in the original Spelljammer rules, so its AC becomes 17 in these rules. As in standard 5E D&D, AC reflects a ship's ability to deflect a hit *and* its ability to avoid being hit altogether.

Ship's Rating (or Helm Rating): A Ship's Rating determines its maximum speed and has other effects during combat. In particular, a Ship's Rating modifies the helmsperson's chance of success when attempting maneuvers. To determine a Ship's Rating, you must combine:

1) the helmsperson's levels in bard, cleric, druid, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard, plus

2) half the helmsperson's levels in Artificer, Monk, Paladin, or Ranger, plus

3) a third of the helmsperson's levels in fighter or rogue if they have the eldritch knight or arcane trickster subtypes.

Be sure to round down, as always.

The Ship's Rating Table provides the resulting Ship's Rating and flight speed while in a planet's atmosphere, based on the helmsperson's calculated caster level. This is primarily derived from the original 2nd Edition Spelljammer rules.

SHIP'S RATING TABLE

Effective Spellcasting Level	Minor Helm		Major Helm	
	Speed (mph)	Ship's Rating	Speed (mph)	Ship's Rating
1	17	1	17	1
2	17	1	17	1
3	17	1	34	2
4	34	2	34	2
5	34	2	51	3
6	34	2	51	3
7	51	3	68	4
8	51	3	68	4
9	51	3	85	5
10	68	4	85	5
11	68	4	102	6
12	68	4	102	6
13	85	5	119	7
14	85	5	119	7
15	85	5	136	8
16	102	6	136	8
17	102	6	153	9
18	102	6	153	9
19	119	7	170	10
20	119	7	170	10

Weapons: Spelljammers, like water-based ships, are armed with a variety of weapons. Ship weapon damage is taken from the Dungeon Master's Guide, Chapter 8: Siege Equipment, with modifications where necessary (for example, to create a "heavy ballista", which is not defined in the DMG). All weapons are classified as either light or heavy (with medium weapons from the original Spelljammer removed for simplicity).

Actions Available to Each Role

Bosun:

A good bosun can help the crew repair the ship more quickly, or help the riggers position the sails.

Await Helmsperson's Orders: The bosun delays, waiting for the helmsperson to give a signal. At a cue from the helm, the bosun and the riggers jump into action, allowing the helmsperson to act more quickly. If the Bosun succeeds on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, the helmsperson gains advantage on their next initiative roll. This also consumes the actions of some deckhands. This bosun action needs deckhands equal to one-fourth of the ship's minimum crew, rounded up.

Brace for impact: The bosun can direct riggers to quickly react to an attack. *As a reaction*, if the bosun passes the DC 19 Wisdom (Survival) check, the sails are repositioned to quickly move the ship and cargo, minimizing the damage from a hit. The attack on the spelljammer inflicts half damage. This bosun action needs deckhands equal to one-fourth of the ship's minimum crew, rounded up.

Coordinate Repairs: As an action, a bosun can lead a repair crew to make it more effective. The bosun rolls a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If they succeed, each crew member devoted to repairs restores an extra 1d4 hull points. For example, one person conducting repairs only restores 1d4 hull points, but with a Bosun's help that becomes 2d4. With four deckhands repairing a spelljammer 8d4 hull points would be restored. A bosun does not increase the effectiveness of magical repairs.

Coordinate Riggers: Sea shanties and rhythmic chants are often used to help sailors act synchronously. As an action, the bosun helps the riggers work more effectively and attempts a Charisma (Performance) check, DC 15. If this is successful, the helmsperson gains advantage on their next skill check roll to maneuver. This also consumes the actions of some deckhands. This bosun action needs deckhands equal to one-fourth of the ship's minimum crew, rounded up.

Riggers cannot assist the helmsperson when they are not in an atmosphere or the phlogiston (i.e., when they are in the void). This means Sharp Turn and Coordinate Riggers are not possible in the void.

Repair Critical Effect: The Bosun can use an action to reverse the effect of a critical hit. This requires succeeding at a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The bosun gains advantage on this roll if they have access to carpenter's tools and proficiency with them. If successful the effect ends (so a fire is put out, helm power is restored, a weapon is restored, sails are raised, etc.). If the rigging or a ship-to-ship weapon suffers a critical hit twice, the damage is so severe that it cannot be repaired until the combat ends.
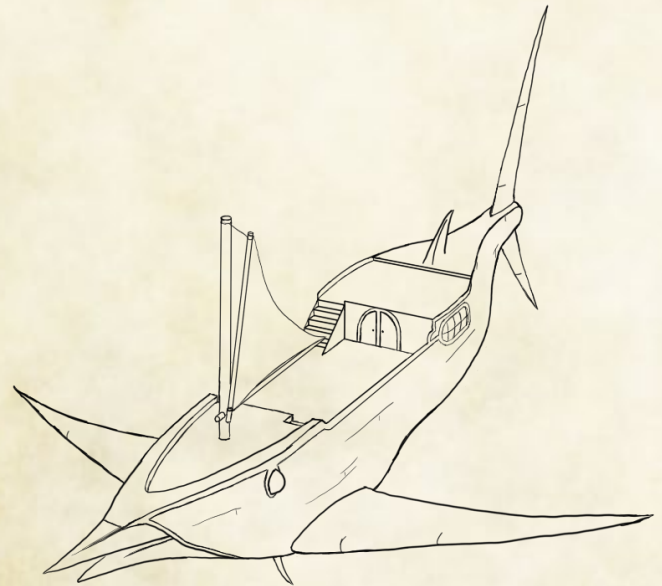
Sharp Turn: Ropes and sails can be used more effectively (in phlogiston or in an atmosphere, but not in the void) when the bosun uses an action to lend a hand and oversee rope work. As an action, the bosun rolls a DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check. If it is successful, the spelljammer maneuverability class improves by 1 rating for the following round. C becomes B, B becomes A, etc., giving the helmsperson more options. Maneuverability cannot be improved beyond A. This also consumes the actions of some deckhands. This bosun action needs deckhands equal to one-fourth of the ship's minimum crew, rounded up.

Captain:

With an encouraging speech or a deadly look, a captain or first mate can improve the performance of the crew. Make sure you have the player role-play the character's action!

Calm: When a ship is in extreme danger, the unflappable calm of a captain can distract a panicking crew member from the threat and allow them to focus on their work. The captain attempts a Charisma (Deception) check, and if they succeed the targeted crew member's next roll for damage or ship repair can roll one extra die. For example, a weapon that normally does 3d10 damage does 4d10, or a spell that repairs 1d4 hull points repairs 2d4. The DC is 15 for a ship with 50 to 100% of its hull points remaining, 20 for a ship with 25% to 50% of its hull points remaining, and 25 for a ship with less than 25% of its hull points remaining.

Command: The captain can attempt a Charisma (Intimidation) check to frighten or redirect a non-helmsperson crew member to act more quickly, granting them an extra action. The DC is 12 plus the crew member's level (more powerful crew members are more difficult to intimidate).

Inspire: With an inspiring speech, the captain uses Charisma (Persuasion) to influence a crew member to perform better. The crew member gains advantage on their next crew action roll. The DC is 15 for a ship with 50 to 100% of its hull points remaining, 20 for a ship with 25% to 50% of its hull points remaining, and 25 for a ship with less than 25% of its hull points remaining.

Deckhands:

Crew members not occupying one of the four primary roles are deckhands. Deckhands are allocated by the bosun (unless your group has decided to give someone else—perhaps the captain—that responsibility). For example, a bosun with ten deckhands might decide to have one deckhand act as lookout, one act as spotter, four load and aim a weapon, and have the remaining four repair the ship. This can be changed every round.

Deckhands can use their turns to take their usual actions as defined by their class, race, and level.

Remember that spells can only be cast across ships at short range. *Any* crew member can also take the crew actions explained below. Note that most deckhands will be allocated to rigging, reloading, and aiming, which do not require any checks or careful tracking.

Inspect: As an action, a Deckhand can roll an Intelligence (Investigation) check to determine the condition of an enemy ship. The information revealed depends on the result:

Check result	Information revealed
10	Crew (number)
15	Crew and weapons (number and type)
20	Crew, weapons, and Helmsperson Maneuver bonus
35	Crew, weapons, Helmsperson Maneuver bonus, and hull points
30	Other (player request/DM's discretion)

Lookout: As an action, a Deckhand can keep an eye out for incoming missile weapons. When an enemy gunner makes an attack roll against the ship the lookout rolls a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If successful, the lookout shouts a warning to the helmsperson in time for the helmsperson to use a reaction to maneuver the ship, raising its AC by 5 against this attack. This can only be done once per round (because this consumes the helmsperson's reaction). Multiple lookouts may be employed against multiple attacks, but the helmsperson can only react to one of them and must decide based only on the type of ammunition incoming (bolt, boulder, cannonball, etc.).

Reload and Aim Weapons: Deckhands can assist gunners. Most ship-to-ship weapons require multiple actions: Reload, Aim, and Fire. Gunners Fire, but other crew members can use their actions to Reload and Aim. Some heavy weapons require crews of 3 or more people to reload and aim. Do not worry about keeping track of individual deckhand actions for reloading and aiming. You need only make sure there are enough available deckhands for each weapon to be fully crewed.

Repair: Crew members can attempt a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to repair damage to the spelljammer. Success repairs 1d4 hull points. Crew members equipped with carpenter's tools (or other

relevant tools) succeed automatically. It is recommended that you roll one time for the entire repair crew, having them succeed or fail as a group, to minimize rolling and micromanagement. Alternatively, support crew can assist the bosun in repairing damage from a critical effect (see the bosun's actions above).

Rigging: Deckhands can use ropes to manipulate the spelljammer's sails to carry out the bosun's Sharp Turn and Coordinate Riggers actions. Do not worry about keeping track of individual deckhand actions; you need only make sure that there are enough deckhands devoted to rigging to work the sails. The number required is one-fourth of the minimum crew, rounded up. For example, a ship with a minimum crew of 14 would need 4 crew members devoted to rigging for deckhands to assist the helmsperson with maneuvers.

Spotter: A crew member assists a gunner by looking for vulnerable spots on an enemy ship. As an action, the spotter can roll a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If successful, the spotter may urge the gunner to fire immediately, rather than at a time of the gunner's choosing. The gunner then makes their next attack roll with a -5 to hit and a +10 to damage.

Gunners

A gunner has a single important task: firing weapons. There are three options for doing this.

Fire ship-to-ship weapon: As an action, an attack roll is made with a ship-to-ship weapon against the target's armor class. If a natural 20 is rolled, consult the critical hit section below for the result. Attacks at short range are resolved normally. Attack rolls at long and extreme range have disadvantage. Most weapons cannot attack at extreme range.

Note that ship-to-ship weapons would be classified as "siege weapons" in the Dungeon Master's Guide. As per those rules, they would have a fixed bonus to hit, with no proficiency necessary. We recommend against doing this, as it means attack bonuses will not scale with the players' levels. Instead, treat ship-to-ship weapons as martial weapons, with an attack bonus equal to the gunner's Dexterity bonus plus their proficiency bonus.

Take Careful Aim: Once a weapon is loaded and ready to fire the gunner spends their action for the round assisting with taking aim. The rest of the weapon crew (i.e., those deck hands who would normally reload and aim the weapon) spend their actions for the next round also assisting with taking aim. In the second round the gunner fires the weapon. This increases the critical hit range of the weapon by 2. A critical hit now occurs on 18 to 20, or 16 to 20 if the helmsperson has chosen the Broadside action for this round. Roll on the Spelljammer Critical Hit Table to determine the outcome. A gunner that has chosen to Take Careful Aim can modify the result on the Spelljammer Critical Hit Table by one row up or down.

Lead the Target: A gunner and weapon crew spend their first round of actions loading and aiming, and then a second round to aim well ahead of the target vessel. At the end of the second round the gunner makes an attack roll. If successful, the enemy helmsperson must choose to either suffer the hit or veer off course. The hit inflicts an additional 3d10 damage as the spelljammer slams into the projectile. Veering off course causes the helmsperson to have disadvantage on the next maneuver check.

Helmsperson

The helmsperson has the most complex set of options. The options available to the helmsperson depend on the maneuverability rating of the spelljammer. Larger, less maneuverable ships are tougher but have fewer options available, while smaller ships are nimble but cannot sustain as much damage. All maneuvers require making a Helmsperson Maneuver check. The helmsperson's bonus to the Helmsperson Maneuver check is:

Primary spellcasting ability bonus + proficiency bonus (if proficient in Arcana) + Ship's Rating

Failure on any maneuver attempt simply means nothing happens.

A helmsperson may increase their bonus to this Helmsperson Maneuver check by using a higher-level spell slot to power the ship. Each spell slot above first level adds 1 to the Ship's Rating. See the spell *Operate Spelljammer Helm* on page 15 for duration and other details.

For example, Zartok is a 7th level wizard. Consulting the Ship's Rating Table, we see that the Ship's Rating for a 7th level caster with a major helm is 4. A wizard's primary spellcasting attribute is Intelligence, and Zartok's Intelligence is 16. This gives him a +3 to his Helmsperson Maneuver check. He is also proficient in Arcana, which allows him to add his +3 proficiency bonus. He uses a 3rd level spell slot to power the spelljammer helm, boosting the Ship's Rating by 2. His total bonus to Helmsman Maneuver check is now 3 + 3 + 4 + 2 = 12. This makes some maneuvers (such as Fleeing and Close the Distance) highly likely to succeed.

HELMSPERSON MANEUVER TABLE

| Maneuverability Class | | | | | | Helmsman |
A	B	C	D	E	F	Maneuver DC
Bow-to-stern						27
Broadside	Broadside	Broadside	Broadside	Broadside		22
Circle Strafe	Circle Strafe					23
Close the Distance	Close the Distance	Close the Distance	Close the Distance	Close the Distance	Close the Distance	17
Dodge	Dodge	Dodge	Dodge			21
Flee	Flee	Flee	Flee	Flee	Flee	17
Hold Steady	Hold Steady	Hold Steady	Hold Steady	Hold Steady	Hold Steady	19
Parting Shot	Parting Shot	Parting Shot	Parting Shot			20
Ram	Ram	Ram	Ram	Ram	Ram	20
Serpentine	Serpentine	Serpentine				25
Strafe	Strafe	Strafe				22

Bow-to-stern: As an action, the helmsperson attempts a DC 27 Helmsperson Maneuver check, with the Ship Rating added as a bonus. If this is successful, the spelljammer flips about unpredictably on its longest axis, making it harder to deliver a solid hit. Attack rolls against the spelljammer have disadvantage and inflict only half damage on a hit.

Broadside: If the helmsperson passes the Helmsperson Maneuver check, all shots fired by gunners hit approximately the same area, increasing the critical range by 2. For example, if gunners have taken careful aim, and the helmsperson takes the broadside action, the critical range becomes 16 to 20 (instead of 20 with no special actions, or 18 to 20 with just careful aim).

Circle Strafe: If the helmsperson passes the Helmsperson Maneuver check, the helmsperson nimbly moves the pilot around the enemy craft while keeping the spelljammer's weapons pointed at the enemy. Gunners receive advantage on attack rolls and enemies have disadvantage on attack rolls.

Close the Distance: The helmsperson attempts to move the spelljammer closer to the enemy. If successful, the ships move one range category closer (Extreme becomes Long, Long becomes Short). If used against a ship attempting to Flee, this becomes an opposed roll against the other helmsperson's Helmsperson Maneuver check. If both helmspersons succeed in their checks, the helmsperson with the high roll achieves their objective (reducing, increasing, or maintaining the range).

Dodge: The spelljammer moves unpredictably to dodge enemy fire. If the Helmsperson Maneuver check is successful, attack rolls against the spelljammer have disadvantage.

Flee: The helmsperson moves the spelljammer away from the enemy at maximum speed. If

successful, the ships move one range category farther apart. Short becomes Long, Long becomes Extreme, and if the spelljammer was already at extreme range, it has escaped from the enemy.

Hold Steady: The helmsperson attempts to make the ship's path as predictable as possible, giving the gunners advantage on attacks rolls, but also giving enemies advantage on attack rolls.

Parting Shot: The helmsperson attempts to Flee while also holding the ship steady for the benefit of gunners. It is resolved as Flee, but also grants gunners advantage on attacks.

Ram: If a ship is at short range with an enemy ship, the helmsperson may attempt the Ram action. This results in a crash, as described in the *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* rules, except that Spelljammer ships do not have size categories. Instead, a ship does 1d10 points of hull damage for every 10 tons of ship weight. A ship equipped with a naval ram does 3d10 additional points of damage and has advantage on its saving throw rolls when crashing. Any damage suffered by the ramming ship is allocated first to the ram, rather than the hull. A ram typically has 100 hit points. A ship struck by a grappling ram is also grappled; see the "Crashing and Ramming" section.

Serpentine: A helmsperson can attempt to move closer to or farther away from an enemy ship while zig-zagging erratically to dodge attacks. If the Helmsperson Maneuver check is successful, attack rolls against the zig-zagging spelljammer have disadvantage, and the spelljammer moves one range category closer or farther away. If the enemy helmsperson tries to counter this with Close the Distance, Serpentine, Parting Shot, or Flee, this turns into an opposed roll. If the enemy helmsperson has a higher Helmsperson Maneuver check, the ship that initiated serpentine motion is unable to change its range category. Attack rolls against the zig-zagging spelljammer still have disadvantage it if the helmsperson exceeded the DC 23 check.

Strafe: The spelljammer helmsperson attempts to maintain a fixed range from the enemy while providing a steady firing platform for gunners. Enemy helmspersons may attempt to counter this

with Close the Distance, Serpentine, Parting Shot, or Flee, turning this into an opposed check. If the Helmsperson Maneuver check is successful versus the standard DC gunners have advantage on attack rolls. If the helmsperson initiating the Strafe maneuver has the higher Helmsperson Maneuver check, the range category does not change. If the enemy helmsperson succeeds on their Helmsperson Maneuver check *and* has the higher total, the range category rises or falls by one.

Damage to Ships

A ship that loses hull points suffers no consequences until they reach zero. At zero hull points the ship begins to break apart. Roll 1d6 per 10 tons of the spelljammer to determine the number of remaining pieces large enough to retain an atmosphere. Crew members must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity Saving Throw to cling to one of these atmosphere-preserving pieces of debris. Of course, if the breakup occurs within a planet's atmosphere, the crew's primary concern will be avoiding a deadly fall to the planet below.

Critical Hits

When a natural 20 is rolled on an attack (or possibly a lower number if gunners are taking careful aim and the helmsperson has taken the broadside action), the targeted spelljammer suffers a critical hit. Roll the damage dice twice as usual, then roll 1d10 and consult the Spelljammer Critical Hit Table below.

Spelljammer Critical Hit Table

Roll on 1d10	Result
1	Ammunition Hit
2	Fire
3	Hull Holed
4	Knocked Off Course
5	Morale Shaken
6	Rigging Damaged
7	Rigging Tangled
8	Ship Shaken
9	Spelljammer Shock
10	Weapon Damaged

Each effect, and its solution, is explained below.

Ammunition Hit: The stockpile of ammunition for the ship's weapons has been hit, scattering it across the deck. Two crew members must spend their actions collecting the ammunition before weapons can be reloaded again. Alternatively, one crew member could spend their actions for two rounds collecting the ammunition.

Fire: The attack penetrates the hull and ignites something flammable inside the ship (lamp or cooking oil, torches, etc.). The fire causes 1d6 hull points of damage per round for the first and second rounds, 2d6 points of damage for the third and fourth rounds, 4d6 points of damage for the fifth and sixth rounds, and so on until the fire is extinguished. The bosun can put out 6d6 per round of fire damage using the Repair Critical Effect action, if they can succeed at a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Other crew members can put out 6d6 fire damage per round using water, sand, or other standard methods if they can succeed at a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Magical means to extinguish fire (for example, the spell *Create or Destroy Water*) should usually succeed automatically. This means that if the fire damage increases to, say, 10d6 per round, it will take the actions of two characters (or one character acting over two rounds) to put it out.

Hull Holed: The attack punches a large hole in the hull. The loss of integrity causes the Ship's Rating to drop by 4. A second critical hit to this location reduces the Ship Rating by another 4 points, for a total of 8 points lost. A third critical hit of this kind has no additional effect. A Ship's Rating cannot be reduced below zero. The Bosun can repair a single critical hit to the hull using the Repair Critical Effect action. Repairing a second hole requires taking another Repair Critical Effect action.

Knocked Off Course: The ship is hit so hard that the helmsperson must give up complex maneuvers and regain control. Maneuverability class is reduced to E for one round. This has no effect on ships with Maneuverability class E or F.

Morale Shaken: The attack hits close to crew members, frightening them. The captain has disadvantage on all Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion) skill rolls until they succeed, or until a critical hit is struck upon the enemy vessel.

Rigging Damaged: The ropes and sails that assist with ship movement are damaged. The Bosun cannot take actions that use the riggers, the ropes, and the sails until this system is repaired by the bosun. A second critical hit to this location renders the rigging unusable until it can be repaired outside of combat. The Bosun can repair a single critical hit to the rigging (but not two hits) using the Repair Critical Effect action. Alternatively, a crew member with access to the cantrip *mending* can cast it to reverse the effects of this critical by repairing the damaged section of rope and sail.

Rigging Tangled: The ropes that riggers use to manipulate the sails have become tangled by the attack. The spelljammer's maneuverability class drops by 2 classes (so A becomes C, C becomes E, E becomes F, and so on). A second critical hit of this kind renders the ship less maneuverable until it can be untangled outside of combat. The Bosun can repair a single critical hit to the rigging (but not two hits) using the Repair Critical Effect action.

Ship Shaken: The ship is rocked by the impact of the attack. All crew members not seated must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. The bosun and deckhands will not be able to take rigging actions on the next turn, as standing up consumes too much of their movement. A second critical hit of this type simply requires another Dexterity saving throw.

Spelljammer Shock: The damage inflicted by the weapon surprises the helmsperson, who must attempt a Constitution saving throw to maintain their concentration. The DC of this check is 10 or half the damage inflicted on the ship (whichever is higher). If the helmsperson succeeds there is no effect. If they fail the helmsperson falls into a coma for 1d4 days (or until Lesser Restoration is cast upon the comatose helmsperson). Ships powered by a series helm or orbus suffer a different effect: All creatures involved must succeed on a Constitution saving throw saving throw, or else the ship loses 1 Ship's Rating point per failure. The DC is 10 or half the damage inflicted on the ship (whichever is higher) Forges,

Furnaces, and Artifurnaces are nonfunctional until 1d4 days of repairs are undertaken.

Weapon Damaged: A ship-to-ship weapon is damaged. Roll damage as per normal and apply it to the weapon's hit points (see the ship-to-ship weapon table for hit points). The weapon cannot be operated until repaired by the bosun. If a ship has more than one weapon, the weapon struck is randomly determined. A weapon reduced to zero hit points cannot be repaired during combat. The Bosun can repair a single critical hit to a weapon using the Repair Critical Effect action.

Crashing and Ramming

When a Spelljammer crashes or is struck by a Blunt or Piercing Ram it takes 1d10 damage for every 10 tons of the object or ship that strikes it (in addition to the ram damage). This is reduced by half if, as a reaction, the struck vessel's helmsperson succeeds on an Intelligence (arcana) + Ship's Rating check, with the DC equal to 10 or half the damage inflicted, whichever is higher.

A spelljammer helmsperson may take the Bow to Stern action, or the bosun may take the Brace for Impact action, to take half damage from a successful Ram action.

If a spelljammer successfully strikes with a grappling ram the target ship is grappled. In this context "grappled" means that the target ship's helmsperson cannot execute any maneuvers without first escaping. To escape, the grappled ship's helmsperson succeed at an opposed Helmsperson Maneuver check.

If two ships are joined by grappling hooks, ropes, or cables, the targeted ship cannot escape until the grappling hooks are removed or the ropes or cables are severed. This is when boarding actions usually occur, and combat reverts to standard Fifth Edition Dungeons and Dragons rules.
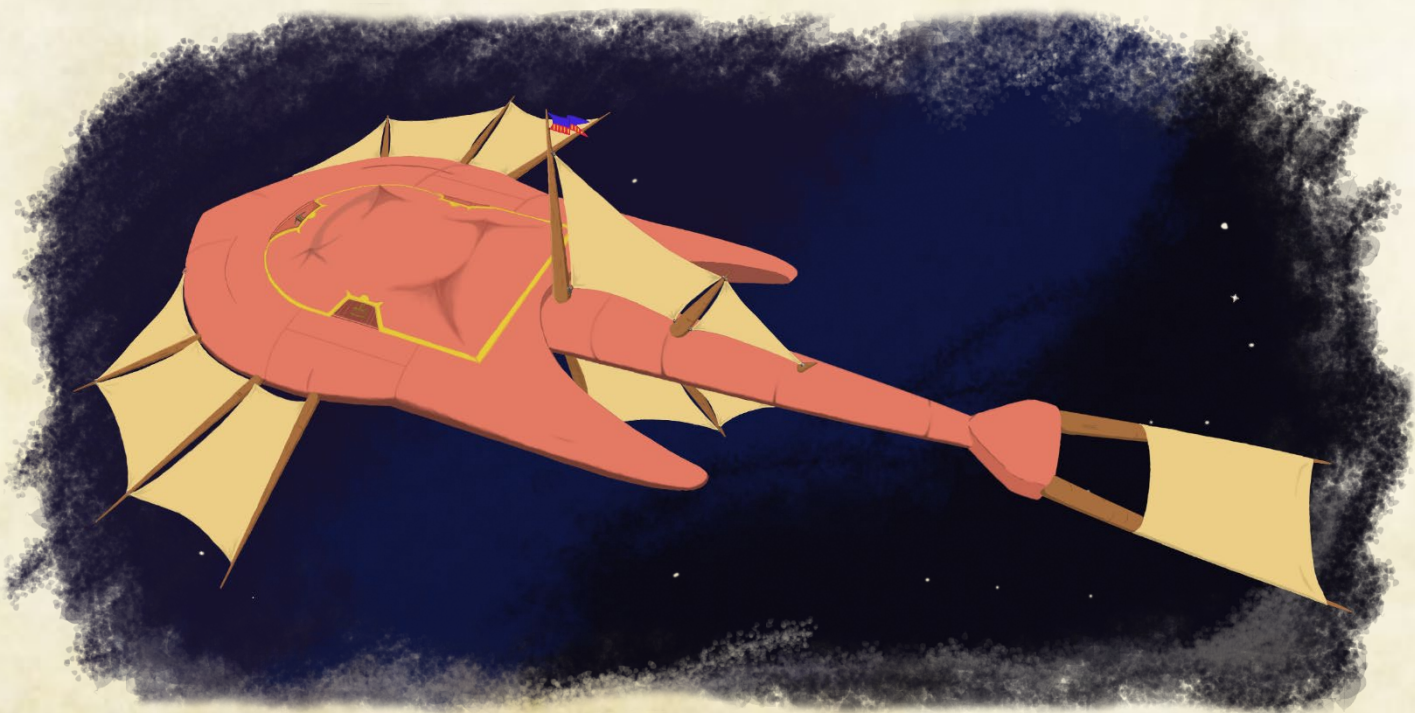
Spells

The following spells are available to all spellcasters. They must be prepared as normal spells, except for *Operate Spelljamming Helm*, which can be cast without preparation. Wizards must learn these spells by inscribing them in their spell books as usual. Other classes must use the same method of learning spells as usual, except for *Operate Spelljamming Helm*, which is available to all spellcasters at all times as a first level spell.

Chill Fire
3rd-level divination

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A calming sphere of energy emanates from the spellcaster, rendering phlogiston non-flammable within a 120-foot radius. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you increase the duration by an additional minute for each level above 3rd.
*-(a sliver of glass or ice)

Contact Home Power
2nd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Unlimited
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: One week

When you cast this spell (also available as a ritual) within a crystal sphere other than your own, you establish a link with your patron or deity, even if your patron or deity is not present in your current Crystal Sphere. Clerics and Warlocks use this spell to renew their spells and abilities. Leaving the crystal sphere causes the spell to end early. The spell does not function in the phlogiston.
*-(a small horn that is blown loudly)

Create or Destroy Air
1st-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 90 feet
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Instantaneous

You create or destroy air.
Create Air. You create a bubble of fresh air around a medium creature that lasts 10 minutes, also removing the effects of Stinking Cloud and Cloudkill. This provides only personal protection; if cast inside the air envelope of a ship, the fresh air will disperse and slightly improve the air quality of the entire envelope, but provide no benefits to the targeted creature.

Destroy Air. You target a creature within range and immediately cause its air bubble to become foul. The creature must make a Constitution saving throw or become *poisoned*. This save must be repeated as long as the air stays fouled. If this spell is cast again on a target with foul air, the air bubble disappears, and the target begins to suffocate. A creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + its constitution modifier (with a minimum of 30 seconds). See the Drowning rules for details. If you attempt to destroy air for a creature within a ship's air envelope, you have no affect on the creature, and only slightly foul the ship's air.

*-(a small stoppered flask)

CREATE PORTAL
5th-level alteration

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 300 feet
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Concentration, 1 minute

You extend your finger, pointing toward a crystal sphere within range, causing the sphere to become shadowy and insubstantial in a 300-foot radius. This will allow anything, including a spelljammer, to pass through. If the portal is dispelled or concentration is broken while a ship passes through the portal, the spelljammer helmsperson must roll an Intelligence Saving Throw. If this exceeds 15, the spelljammer just manages to get through before the portal closes. If it fails, the portal closes before the ship can make it through the portal. If the helmsperson rolls a natural 1, the spelljammer is cut in half by the sphere and destroyed, breaking into smaller pieces.
*-(a piece of wire wrapped around a bit of amber)

ENHANCE/DECREASE RATING
3rd-level alteration

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Choose a creature operating a spelljammer helm you can see within range. Until the spell ends, you cause the target to gain or lose some control over the spelljammer, increasing or reducing its Ship's Rating by 2. If the target is unwilling it can make a Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the spell has no effect. The target may repeat its saving throw at the end of its turn. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the target gains or loses an additional Ship's Rating point for each level above 3rd.
*-(a small ivory arrow)

LOCATE PORTAL
2nd-level divination

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: 1 round

When cast within 300 feet of a crystal sphere, this spell allows the caster to instantly know the direction and distance of the nearest portal through the nearest crystal sphere. The DM can (optionally) roll 2d10 to determine the number days of travel required to reach the portal.
*-(a conch shell)

OPERATE SPELLJAMMER HELM
1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Concentration, up to 12 hours

This spell allows the you to move a ship using a spelljammer helm. You form a magical connection with the ship, which feels like an extension of the your body. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you increase the Ship's Rating by 1 for each slot level above 1st. Consult the Ship's Rating table for the resulting tactical speed.
*-(the spelljammer helm)

REPAIR SPELLJAMMER
1st-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

A spelljammer you touch regains hull points equal to 1d8 + your spellcasting ability modifier.
At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the repair increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 1st.

Ships

Type/Name	Crew Min/Max	AC	Hull Points	Damage Threshold	Keel Length	Beam Length	Standard Weapons	Tonnage	Helm Type	Maneuverability Class	Landing
Angel Ship	8/33	17	330	15	130	135	3 Light & Blunt Ram	33	Minor	C	Land
Beholder Tyrant Ship	15/23	22	230	20	100	100	Special	23	Orbus	C	None
Caravel	8/10	13	100	10	70	20	1 Light	10	Major or Minor	F	Water
Cog	10/20	13	90	10	90	20	none	20	Major or Minor	F	Water
Damselfly	2/10	18	100	10	100	20	1 Heavy	10	Major or Minor	D	Land
Deathspider	30/100	17	1000	30	175	50	6 Heavy	100	Major	E	None
Dragonfly	3/10	14	100	10	100	20	1 Light	10	Major or Minor	C	
Dragonship	20/45	17	450	20	150	20	2 Heavy	45	Major	D	Water
Dwarven Citadel	100/300	22	3000	30	300	200	12 Light & 8 Heavy	300	Artiforge	E	Land
Elven Armada	40/100	17	600	30	300	30	14 Heavy	100	Major	D	
Elven Flitter	1/1	14	10	None	20	5	None	1	Major or Minor	B	Land, Water
Elven Man-o-war	10/60	15	600	25	200	20	4 Heavy	60	Major	C	None
Galleon	20/40	15	400	15	130	30	1 Light & 2 Heavy	40	Major or Minor	E	Water
Gnomish Sidewheeler	20/30	15	300	15	120	25	Gnomish Sweeper	30	Gnomish	E	50% chance of land or water
Hammership	24/60	16	600	20	250	25	3 Heavy	60	Major	D	Water
Lamprey Ship (Striker)	9/26	18	260	15	115	25	4 light & blunt ram	26	Furnace or Major or Minor	B	None
Mindspider	3/40	18	400	15	40	15	3 Heavy	40	Lifejammer	C	
Mosquito	1/6	17	60	None	100	15	None	5	Major or Minor	B	Land, Water
Mind Flayer Nautiloid	10/35	18	350	15	180	30	5 Heavy	35	Series Helm or Pool Helm	D	Water
Squid Ship	12/45	17	450	15	250	25	3 Heavy	45	Major or Minor	D	Water
Tradesman	10/25	17	250	15	120	30	1 Light & 1 Heavy	25	Major or Minor	D	None
Wasp	8/18	16	180	15	80	20	1 Heavy	18	Major or Minor	D	Land

Ship-to-Ship Weapons

Note that all ship-to-ship weapons require multiple actions to fire due to the difficult of positioning large equipment. This is done under the supervision of the gunner, so the gunner makes the attack roll. Weapon hit points may be useful if actions are taken specifically against weapons, perhaps in a boarding action.

As explained in the section on gunner actions, we recommend treating these as martial weapons, with an attack bonus equal to the gunner's Dexterity bonus plus their proficiency bonus. For example, a barbarian with a Dexterity bonus of +2 and a proficiency bonus of +3 would add +5 to their attack rolls.

Weapon	Hit Points	Ammunition	Range	Damage	Damage Type	Weapon Class	Actions Needed	Minimum Crew
Alchemist's Fire Projector	200	Alchemist's Fire	Short	5d10	Fire	Heavy	2 load, 1 aim, 1 fire	3
Ballista, light	50	Bolt	Short and Long	3d10	Piercing	Light	1 load, 1 aim, 1 fire	3
Ballista, heavy	70	Bolt	Short and Long	6d10	Piercing	Heavy	2 load, 2 aim, 1 fire	5
Cannon, light	75	Cannonball	Short, Long, and Extreme	8d10	Bludgeoning	Light	1 load, 1 aim, 1 fire	3
Cannon, heavy	150	Cannonball	Short, Long, and Extreme	12d10	Bludgeoning	Heavy	2 load, 2 aim, 1 fire	5
Gnomish Sweeper	60	Bolt and chain	Short and Long	2d10 to crew in 10ft radius	Bludgeoning, DC 13 Dexterity save or fall prone and grappled	Heavy	2 load, 2 aim, 1 fire	5
Grappling Hook	10 (rope)	Rope and hook	Short	0	None, Grapple	Light	1 load, 1 fire	2
Mangonel	100	Stone	Short and Long	5d10	Bludgeoning	Heavy	2 load, 2 aim, 1 fire	5
Ram, Blunt	100	NA	Short	3d10 + crash	Bludgeoning	Heavy	Ram (helmsperson)	1
Ram, Grappling	50	NA	Short	2d10 + Grapple	Bludgeoning, Grapple	Heavy	Ram (helmsperson)	1
Ram, Piercing	50	NA	Short	4d10 + crash	Piercing	Light	Ram (helmsperson)	1
Trebuchet, light	150	Stone	Short and Long	8d10	Bludgeoning	Light	2 load, 2 aim, 1 fire	5
Trebuchet, heavy	200	Stone	Short and Long	12d10	Bludgeoning	Heavy	3 load, 3 aim, 1 fire	7

Pregenerated Crews

These tables provides the number of crew members in each ship role, their skill bonuses, and the Ship's Rating to use for enemy spelljammer crews. Larger ships have a backup helmsperson who may have a slightly lower Helmsperson Maneuver bonus than the primary helmsperson. Deckhands assigned to "Other" are usually reloading and aiming weapons, but they might repair the ship or take other actions as needed. These numbers are inappropriate for ships with wildly different propulsion and weapons, such as beholder ships.

Low skill crews (levels 1 to 2)

Ship's Rating: 2 for minor helm, 2 for major helm

Role	Bonuses	DEX save
Deckhand	+2 (Athletics, Perception, Investigation)	+1
Bosun	+3 (Investigation, Performance, Perception)	+3
Captain	+3 (Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion)	+2
Gunners	+3 (Attack)	+2
Helmsperson	+3 + Ship's Rating (Helmsperson Maneuver)	+1

Medium skill crews (levels 5 to 7)

Ship's Rating: 3 for minor helm, 4 for major helm

Role	Bonuses	DEX save
Deckhand	+4 (Athletics, Perception, Investigation)	+2
Bosun	+6 (Investigation, Performance, Perception)	+4
Captain	+6 (Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion)	+3
Gunners	+5 (Attack)	+3
Helmsperson	+6 + Ship's Rating (Helmsperson Maneuver)	+1

High skill crews (levels 14 to 15)

Ship's Rating: 5 for minor helm, 7 for major helm

Role	Bonuses	DEX save
Deckhand	+8 (Athletics, Perception, Investigation)	+3
Bosun	+9 (Investigation, Performance, Perception)	+6
Captain	+9 (Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion)	+5
Gunners	+9 (Attack)	+5
Helmsperson	+8 + Ship's Rating (Helmsperson Maneuver)	+2

Elite skill crews (level 20)

Ship's Rating: 7 for minor helm, 10 for major helm

Role	Bonuses	DEX save
Deckhand	+10 (Athletics, Perception, Investigation)	+5
Bosun	+12 (Investigation, Performance, Perception)	+8
Captain	+12 (Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion)	+6
Gunners	+11 (Attack)	+6
Helmsperson	+10 + Ship's Rating (Helmsperson Maneuver)	+3

Numbers of crew in each role

Role	Solo	Small crew (9)	Medium crew (20)	Large crew (30)
Bosun	None	1	1	1
Captain	None	1	1	1
Gunners	None	1	3	7
Helmsperson	1	1	2	2
Deckhands:				
-Riggers	NA	3	5	8
-Other	NA	2	8	11

Crew Action Quick Reference

Crew member	Action	Action Type	Effect	DC and type of check
Bosun	Await Helmsperson's Orders	Action	Advantage on helmsperson's next initiative	15 Strength (Athletics)
	Brace for Impact	Reaction	Half damage from a hit	19 Wisdom (Survival)
	Coordinate Repairs	Action	2d4 hull points repaired per deckhand	15 Wisdom (Perception)
	Coordinate Riggers	Action	Advantage on helmsperson's next maneuver	15 Charisma (Performance)
	Repair Critical Effect	Action	Critical effect ends	20 Intelligence (Investigation)
	Sharp Turn	Action	Maneuverability rating improves for 1 round	18 Wisdom (Survival)
Captain	Calm	Action	One extra die on next damage roll	Varies (see description)
	Command	Action	One extra action for a non-helmsperson	12 Charisma (Intimidation)
	Inspire	Action	Advantage on crew member's next check	Varies (see description)
Deckhand	Inspect	Action	Information gained	Varies (see description)
	Lookout	Action	Helm uses reaction, ship AC increases by 5	15 Wisdom (Perception)
	Reload and Aim Weapons	Action	Weapons armed and ready to fire	None
	Repair	Action	1d4 hull points repaired per deckhand	12 Strength (Athletics)
	Rigging	Action	Makes Coordinate Riggers possible	None
	Spotter	Action	-5 to hit, +10 to damage on an attack	15 Intelligence (Investigation)
Gunner	Fire ship-to-ship weapon	Action	Attack with a ship-to-ship weapon	Attack Roll
	Take Careful Aim	Action (two rounds)	+2 to critical range, +1 or -1 on Critical Table	Attack Roll
	Lead the Target	Action (two rounds)	+3d10 damage or disadvantage to next enemy helmsperson maneuver	Attack Roll
Helmsperson	Bow-to-stern	Action	Disadvantage on enemy attacks, half damage on enemy hits	27 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Broadside	Action	+2 to critical range	22 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Circle Strafe	Action	Advantage on attacks, disadvantage for enemy attacks	23 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Close the Distance	Action (opposed)	Range category decreases by 1	17 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Dodge	Action	Disadvantage for enemy attacks	21 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Flee	Action (opposed)	Range category increases by 1	17 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Hold Steady	Action	Advantage on attacks (friendly and enemy)	19 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Parting Shot	Action	Range category increases by 1 and advantage on attacks	20 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Ram	Action	Crash damage and possible grapple	20 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Serpentine	Action	Range category increases by 1 and disadvantage on enemy attacks	25 Helmsperson Maneuver
	Strafe	Action	Range category unchanged and advantage on attacks	22 Helmsperson Maneuver

Concepts, ship and weapon statistics, and other ideas were taken from or inspired by the following:

Esper Genesis by Rich Lescouflair, Tracy Bovee, and Kristoffer Giere

Starfinder by Paizo Inc.

Spelljammer Companion, Sword and Sorcery in Space by Ubiquity

Spelljammer 5E D&D Adventures in Space by Robert Lyons and Nicholas Pavlinksy

Spelljammer: Adventures in Space (the original AD&D 2nd edition campaign setting) by TSR.

Jorphdan has been doing a YouTube series on Spelljammer, including a video on how to run a 5E Spelljammer campaign.