

Galac-Tac: Turn Processing Sequence

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When players submit their turns for Galac-Tac (a game of space conquest) and it's time to process them, what really happens under the covers? I'd like to present a technical overview of the way in which Galac-Tac turns are processed to shed some light on the mysteries behind the scenes. Understanding this sequence can help explain more about how you should put your turn together, and why.

First, all the submitted turn sheets are collected and placed in a random order for their initial processing. As mentioned in the Galac-Tac rulebook, actions fall into one of three categories: Before Movement, Movement, and After Movement. Other activities (such as combat) also occur after movement is complete. (Strictly speaking, an "action" is the game command that you enter on your turn sheet and an "order" is the behavior that a ship is expected to perform.)

The Before Movement Phase

In this phase of processing, each player's turn is examined one action at a time, strictly in the order they were submitted. The action is first checked for errors of both syntax and context. For instance, you can't load a battleship into a carrier's hangar bay, and you can't load cargo into a ship that's already at full capacity, even if the actions are typed correctly. All actions will be listed on the first page of your turn report, and any error messages will be shown here alongside the offending action.

If the action is a "Before" type, then it is executed as soon as it has been validated. For instance, a LOAD action immediately places cargo in a cargo bay, and an ASSIGN action links fighters to their supporting hangar bays. A JOIN action can be used to assemble ships into logical fleets which can then be given orders as a single unit, and the CLASSIFY action creates a new ship design so a later BUILD

action can request the construction of a ship of that type.

Some "Before" actions simply take immediate effect, such as CLASSIFY or LOAD. But a number of them (along with all the "Movement" actions) are used to give "orders" to a ship or fleet, such as DEFEND or PATROL. (Giving orders to the flagship of a fleet applies those orders to every ship in the fleet.)

If the action is a "Movement" action, the ship's destination is recorded at this time, though the movement itself does not occur yet. If the action is an "After" action, then the game position simply gets a notation of what needs to be done after movement and any resulting combat have been handled.

After all the actions have been reviewed, their initial processing will be complete, but the final results of many of these actions are yet to be determined.

The Movement Phase

Once all the turn sheets have been dealt with, it is time to actually move the ships to their listed destinations. While moving, ships do not actually occupy any space in between the starting point and destination. They simply "jump" from one to the other, and thus there is no concept of "passing" anything else (empty space, star systems, or other ships). All the ships are moved effectively at once, since the movements themselves do not affect one another.

However, there is a special case here. Each ship has a maximum speed (the distance which its engines can move it in one turn). If you have requested that a ship move farther than it can go, it will move in a straight line exactly to its maximum distance and there it will stop for the turn. Be careful when making long voyages that one of these "stop over"

points does not leave your ship somewhere (such as a hostile star system location) that might be dangerous or otherwise undesirable. If such a ship is not given other orders to the contrary next turn, then it will continue on its journey at that time.

The Combat Phase

After ship movement and before anything else happens, we have the potential for conflict. If ships from two or more empires end the turn in the same coordinate location (whether there's a star system there or not) then there will be some sort of disagreement.

If ANY ship at the location has combative orders (e.g. Attack or Defend) then combat will ensue and all ships present will be drawn into the conflict, even those on peaceful missions and those without weapons.

If ALL ships (even if they have weapons) are on peaceful missions (e.g. Chart or Colonize), then a "cease fire" will occur instead. A cease fire will cause most ships' orders (with a few exceptions) to be cancelled and those ships will not perform their orders this turn.

There is no formal alliance system in Galac-Tac so there is never a completely peaceful coexistence for multiple empires in the same place. If combat begins, every empire shoots equally at every other empire in a blazing free-for-all.

After any combat is resolved, if a single empire claims total victory (no ships remain of any other empire), then the remaining ships may continue to perform any orders they have.

Combats have a time limit in any given turn, so it is possible for well-matched combats to end with ships still alive from more than one empire. In that case, non-combat orders from all ships are cancelled and will not be performed this turn.

Any damaged fighters that live through the combat will automatically return to their assigned hangar

bays, and will be repaired automatically by their support teams – a great reason to use fighters!

Any empire with ships remaining after a combat will receive a combat report detailing all the ships in the system (including enemy ships) and what became of them (how damaged they were, which were destroyed, etc.). If an empire had no ships survive to send back such a report, the ships simply get labeled as "missing in action" and no other information is available.

Ships remaining after combat may be given new orders next turn, of course. Leaving the system should be a serious consideration for any empire that wasn't clearly victorious.

The After Movement Phase

After movement and combat have taken place, ships will then perform any orders they have been given. Chart orders will chart a system, Colonize orders will begin colonization, Refit orders will update the ship to the latest tech level, etc.

In addition to ship orders being handled, changes to star systems and the empire as a whole are also dealt with at this time. Star systems may turn into colonies or production centers when their development is complete, enemy systems may be destroyed, missiles (ammunition) may be manufactured, scientific research is performed, etc. Importantly, this is also the time when new ship construction actually occurs.

Many tasks cannot be performed at a star system if enemy ships remain there after combat is concluded. This is particularly important for building new ships, so don't fail to win any battles in your own production systems or your ships there won't have any construction work done on them.

If any enemy ships are left in one of your colonies or production centers (whether combat occurred there or not), your system will automatically send you a frantic report how big of a fleet (and whose) has encroached upon your territory, hoping for

some immediate assistance. This is in addition to any combat report that any of your surviving ships may send.

Reporting

Following turn processing is the generation of formatted reports for each empire. In the old days, these would simply be printed and mailed, but of course now the reports are available immediately on the web site mere seconds after the turns are processed. So now the “suspense” is just waiting for the turn deadline to pass so that you can begin the “decision” process for your next turn!