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GETTING STARTED

Installing Descent: FreeSpace The Great War

Please see the Installation Instructions insert found in your Descent: FreeSpace box.

If you have installation problems with Descent: FreeSpace, please consult the Troubleshooting section in the README.TXT file. If there is no solution to your problem, please contact Interplay Technical Support for assistance at (949) 553-6678.

PLAYING DESCENT: FREESPACE THE GREAT WAR

This section will get you playing Descent: FreeSpace quickly.

Launching

The first thing you'll see when you run Descent: FreeSpace is the Launcher program. The Launcher allows you to change hardware options, among other things.

If you have a 3D hardware accelerator, click the "Setup" button. Under the Video tab, click the "Detect Available Cards" button. The drop-down list will now contain your rendering options. Choose the one corresponding to your 3D accelerator and press or click the "Ok" button.

On the Descent: FreeSpace Launcher menu, click the "Play FreeSpace," button and the game will start.

Creating a Pilot

The first screen you'll see is the Pilot Selection screen. Since this is the first time Descent: FreeSpace has been played, you will start by being prompted for your pilot's Callsign. This is the nickname of your pilot. When you have typed in your pilot's Callsign, press ⌈Return⌋ and click the "Select" button.

> **NOTE:** If this is the first pilot you are creating, you will automatically be taken to the main hall after pressing return.

Once in the game, you may also manage your pilots from the Barracks room.

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The Main Hall

The Main Hall screen serves as the Main Menu for Descent: FreeSpace. From here, you can access the Ready Room, Barracks, Campaign Room, Tech Room, Options screen, or Exit (to Windows). Pressing the right mouse button repeatedly will cycle through the various "hotspots" found in the Main Hall.

Hitting [F1] will bring up a Help Overlay, outlining the locations of the various rooms of the Main Hall. Hitting [F1] anywhere else in the Descent: FreeSpace interface will bring up similar Help Overlays.

For now, use the mouse to click on the Ready Room to begin your first Training mission.

> **NOTE:** It is strongly recommended that you play the three training missions found at the start of the FreeSpace Campaign. They will teach you the basics of flight control, targeting, weapons management, and communication in the FreeSpace universe.

The Great War™

Briefing

After entering the Ready Room, you will be placed in the first Training mission's briefing.
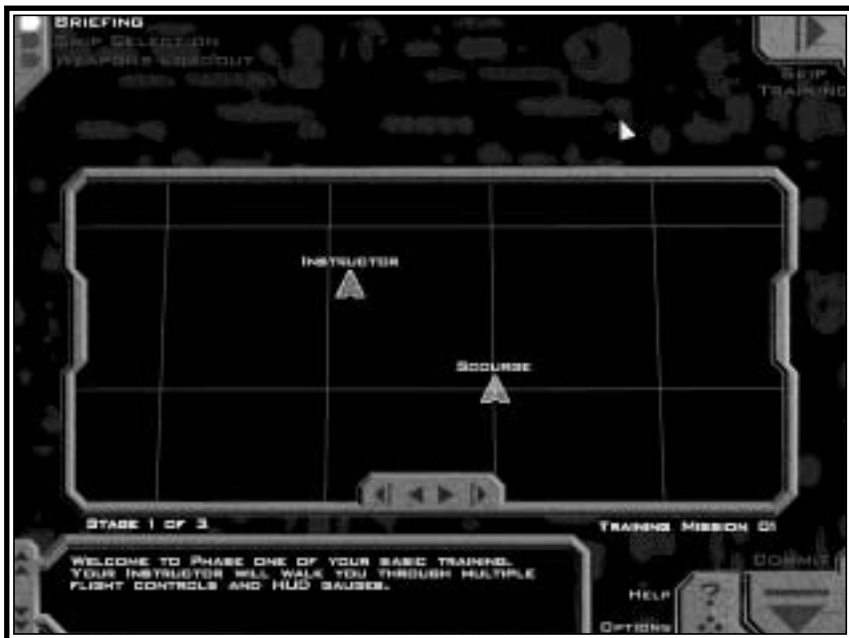
This screen is where you will receive the overview of your upcoming mission, including instructions on what your objectives are, and how you might go about meeting them.

In the upper left you'll see choices for Briefing, Ship Selection, and Weapons Loadout. Later, you will use these buttons to move to the different pre-mission screens. For now, Briefing is all you need.

In the lower right, you'll see buttons for Options, Help, and Commit. Help is the same as hitting [F1], and will bring up a screen-specific overlay, briefly explaining the onscreen options.

In the center of the screen is a computer-generated mission map. This icon-based display will show you a graphical overview of what you can expect in this mission, including wing names (wings are groups of ships), ship names, installations, and other objects. You may use the mouse to click on any map icon to see a real-time view of how it will appear in the mission.

Descent: FreeSpace

Below the mission map is the actual briefing text. If you have voice enabled, the briefings will be read to you, one "stage" at a time. To navigate through the briefing stages, use the arrow buttons on the bottom edge of the mission map.
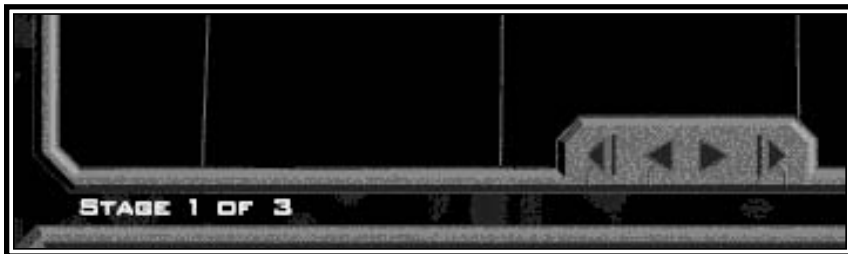
Stage indicator and stage arrows in Briefing.

Commit!

Once you have reviewed the briefing for this training mission, click the "Commit" button in the lower right corner. Clicking Commit will accept your mission orders and put you into the actual game.

For help regarding the flight and combat controls, press ⌨ while in a mission. Screens detailing the current key controls will appear. You may also use the Reference Card found in your Descent: FreeSpace box for a list of the default control keys.

For the training missions, follow the instructions given to you by your instructor. He will outline the basics of Descent: FreeSpace fighter control and combat. Watch the onscreen messages to see the keys needed to follow his orders.

Your instructions will also appear in the Directives Display found on the left side of your HUD (heads-up display).

Debriefing

Following each mission, you will be shown the Debriefing Screen.

Your commanding officer will give you a breakdown of the mission, and evaluate your performance. You may also view your Pilot's mission statistics from here.

If you perform exceedingly well in combat situations, you may be granted a medal or promotion during Debriefing. If you did not perform well enough, and failed one or more of your Primary Objectives, you may be forced to Replay the mission.

By clicking the "Recommendations" button, you maybe given specific tips on how to correctly meet all outlined objectives.

In the upper left, you'll see that you can view Statistics for the mission you've just flown. Viewing flight statistics is a good way to measure your performance.

```
SCOURGE                              1 OF 4

MISSION TIME                         4:48

MISSION STATS

TOTAL KILLS                          6
PRIMARY WEAPON SHOTS                 676
PRIMARY WEAPON HITS                  324
PRIMARY FRIENDLY HITS                0
PRIMARY HIT %                        47 %
PRIMARY FRIENDLY HIT %               0 %

SECONDARY WEAPON SHOTS               60
SECONDARY WEAPON HITS                48
SECONDARY FRIENDLY HITS              0
SECONDARY HIT %                      80 %
SECONDARY FRIENDLY HIT %             0 %

ASSISTS                              1
```

If you have followed your training instructions, you should now be ready for your remaining Training missions. Click Accept to advance to the next mission.

Combat Ready!

Once your Training missions are complete, you will begin your tour of duty aboard the GTD Galatea by flying your first combat mission. Fly well, Pilot!
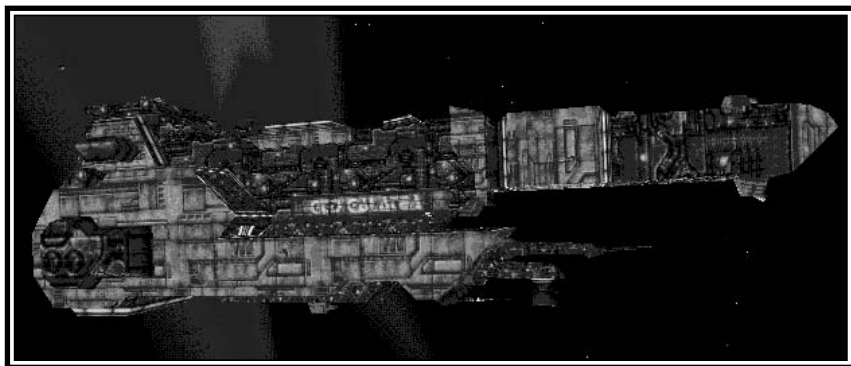
MULTIPLAYER DESCENT: FREESPACE THE GREAT WAR

Descent: FreeSpace allows you to play with up to 12 other people over any network which supports TCP/IP.

Volition provides a free Internet game tracking and statistic keeping service called Parallax Online. This service will allow players all over the world to meet and play Descent: FreeSpace games together. On top of providing a place to meet, Parallax Online will track statistics for all registered players.

Multiplayer Basics

There are several different multiplayer modes in Descent: FreeSpace: cooperative, team vs. team, and dogfight. In cooperative games, all players fly on the same team working together to achieve similar objectives. In team vs. team mode, up to 4 players on a side fly against each other, each team having their own set of objectives to achieve. In dogfight mode, it is every pilot for himself in an attempt to rack up the highest number of kills.

Multiplayer games can take place as a single mission or a campaign. A multiplayer campaign has all the same characteristics of a single player campaign, including multiple missions and mission branching.

Descent: FreeSpace multiplayer games always have one server, and one or more clients. The server of a multiplayer game is the machine which runs the game simulation for all other clients in the game. Additionally, there is always one host of the game. In general, the host and the server of the game are the same. See the section on "Dedicated Servers" in the README.TXT file found in your Freespace directory, for more information on running a server which doesn't require a host.

The speed of your network game is mostly dependent on the speed of your connection to the server of the game. Because the server of the game sends almost all game related information to clients, this connection speed dictates how fast a client's machine will update the game state. The connection speed is measured by the ping time. The lower the ping time, the faster your connection to the server.

> **SPECIAL NOTE:** In order to serve a multiplayer game on the internet, you must have a fast connection to the Internet. It is recommended that you have at least a 56k Modem Connection in order to run a game server.

Creating a Pilot

You must first create a multiplayer pilot from the Pilot Selection screen or from the Barracks room. See the Barracks section on page 34 for the different ways in which you may manage your multiplayer pilot.

Join a Game!

Once you have created and selected a multiplayer pilot, you can enter the Ready Room to join a game.

This screen will list all active games that your computer can find. Each line in the join window will contain the name of a game, the type of game being played (cooperative, team vs. team, dogfight), the status of the game (forming, briefing, in mission, etc), number of players, and ping time to the server.

The type of game is represented by the following icons:

 Cooperative

 Dogfight

 Team vs. Team

The status of the game may be one of the following:

- **Forming** – The game has not yet started. Depending on game options, a player may join during this stage.

- **Briefing** – The game has entered the briefing stage where players get their objectives and select their ships and weapons. A player may not join a game when it is in this state.

- **In Game** – The mission is currently being flown. Depending on game options, a player may join during this state.

- **Paused** – The mission is currently paused. Players may not join during this state.

- **Debriefing** – All players are in the debriefing stage. Players may be able to join the game during this state.

Once you find a game that you wish to join, double click on the game title, or highlight the game title and click the join button.   If you try to join a game that is not accepting players, or is in a state in which players cannot join, you will receive a dialog indicating why you could not join the game. Once you have joined a game, you are placed in the following screen:

This screen shows the other players currently in the game, a name and description of the mission that the host of the game has selected, and a large chat window.

When the selected mission is a team vs. team mission, all players will have red or green team icons to the left of their name. Any client may choose their own team by highlighting their pilot name, and selecting one of the two team buttons on the pilot listing. However, the server may choose to reassign that client to another team. If the server changes the client to a new team, the client may no longer select their own team.

Once the host has decided to start the game, all clients are automatically moved into the briefing stage.

Starting a New Game

If you wish to start your own game, click on the "Create Game" button in the join screen. Once you click this button, you are shown the following screen:

You may pick a name for your game. You also have several options about restricting who can join your game and when they can join. The following is a list of options that you can choose:

* **Open Game** – In an open multiplayer game, any client may join your game at anytime during which joining is allowed (i.e. the forming, in-mission, and debriefing states).

* **Closed Game** – In a closed multiplayer game, clients may only join during the forming state. Any client attempting to join during the in-mission or debriefing state will be unable to join.

* **Restricted Game** – A restricted game allows the host to accept or reject any client wishing to join when the client tries to join in mission. When a client does try to join in mission, the host must accept or reject that join request by pressing Ⓨ or Ⓝ.

* **Password Protected** – You can assign a password to your game. A client may only join your game if they know the password. The password is always required to join the game, regardless of the state.

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* **Rank Allowances** – You can further restrict the above four types of games, by allowing only players above or below a certain rank. Any player who tries to join and does not meet the rank criteria is rejected.

Once you have selected your name, and what join methods you wish to allow, click on the "Accept" button.

Host Setup

You are now in the host setup screen. From here, you may select which mission or campaign to play, choose teams for team vs. team missions, and select the game options for the game which you are starting.

The mission/campaign selection area allows you to choose what mission or campaign you wish to fly. Click the 'Missions' button to display which multiplayer missions are available, and click the 'Campaigns' button to display all available multiplayer campaigns. Additionally, you can use the filter buttons (All, Coop, Team, Dogfight) along the top of this display to narrow down your choices to a particular type of multiplayer game that you wish to play.

The player list area shows what clients have currently joined your game. You may use the buttons on this box as follows:

*   **Kick** – Clicking this button will kick the selected player from the game.

*   **Close** – When this button is active, no other clients may join your game. Once you leave the host setup screen, clients may once again join if the restrictions allow.

*   **Team 1 / 2** – When a team vs. team mission or campaign is selected, you may use these buttons to place players on the team you desire.

There is also a chatbox in this screen which you can use to communicate with other players in the game. Notice the dropdown button on the chatbox which allows you to expand the box downward allowing you to see more of the previous chat lines. Clicking this button again allows you to compress the chatbox to its original size.

Host Options

There are a number of options which can be set for a multiplayer game by the host. The options screen is reached by clicking the "Host Options" button on the host setup screen.

Host Options Cont.

   AI Orders: Determines which players can use the Comm menu system to order AI (artificial intelligence) ships.

   Observers: This specifies the number of permanent observers allowed in the mission, 0 - 4. This number applies only to the number of people who initially join a mission as an observer. It has no bearing on players who become observers after running out of respawns.

   End Mission: Determines who can end the mission by jumping out (default `Alt` - `J`).

   Time Limit: Specifies the maximum duration of a mission (in minutes). After this time has expired, all players are automatically warped out of a mission. A setting of 0 means no time limit.

   Respawn Limit: The number of respawns available to a player in a mission. This value may be between 0 and the maximum number specified in the mission file.

   Kill Limit: When any players kill count reaches this limit, the mission is automatically marked as over and all players are warped out. Applicable only in multiplayer missions.

   Skill Level: Specifies the skill level that the selected multiplayer mission will be played at. This option is distinct from the skill level slider in the Global Options menu.

   Voice Transmission: Determines whether or not real-time voice transmission is allowed during the multiplayer game.

   Voice Quality: Sets the quality of voice for real-time voice transmission (if enabled). The higher the setting, the higher the CPU usage for compression and decompression. 5 is a good balance between compression and CPU usage.

   Message Duration: Specifies the number of seconds allowed for a real-time voice message.

   Per Player Voice Wait: This setting is used to specify how long a player must wait after sending a real-time voice message before he can send a new message. For instance, if this option is set to 15 seconds, a player will not be allowed to send real-time voice messages more than once per 15 seconds.

Briefing

The multiplayer briefing gives each player their orders and instructions for their mission. In cooperative missions, this briefing is the same for all players in the game. For team vs. team missions, each team will receive separate briefings.

Ship and Weapon Selection

Ship selection for multiplayer is different than for single player. It also varies slightly depending on the mode of play. First, all players must be assigned to a ship, then ships and weapons may be selected. All players are initially assigned a random ship which may be changed by the host (or team captain in a team vs. team game).
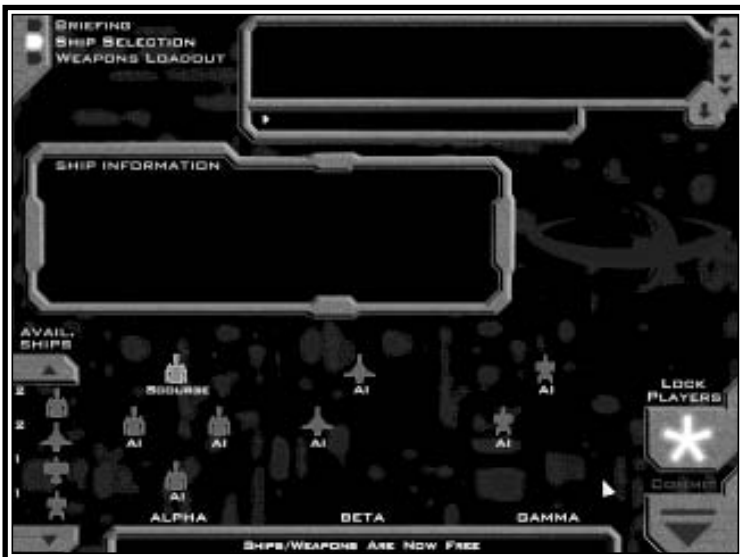

In cooperative missions, the host of the game must assign all players to ships before players can choose their own ship and weapons. The host is free to drag and drop player names from one ship to another. For example, some players of the game may wish to fly in a particular wing which contains only bombers. The host can move those players into that wing by dragging and dropping a player into the desired wing position. Once all players have been placed, the host clicks on the "Lock" button. Once players have been locked, they are free to start making ship/weapon selections.

(Note: once players have been locked, they cannot be unlocked). Any ships which are not being flown by a player will be flown by the AI.

In team vs. team missions, the "team captains" of each team must assign players to ships before the ship selection process can begin. The "team captain" is designated by the host when the teams are initially formed before the briefing stage begins. Once each team captain assigns players, the captain must click on the "lock" button after which all members of his team may select their ship and weapons if desired.

After players have been locked, all clients in the game may be free to select a different ship and weapons for themselves. Ship and weapon selection for clients happens in the exact same manner as for single player, with the only difference being that clients can only outfit their own ships. The host has the ability to outfit his ship, and any AI ships.
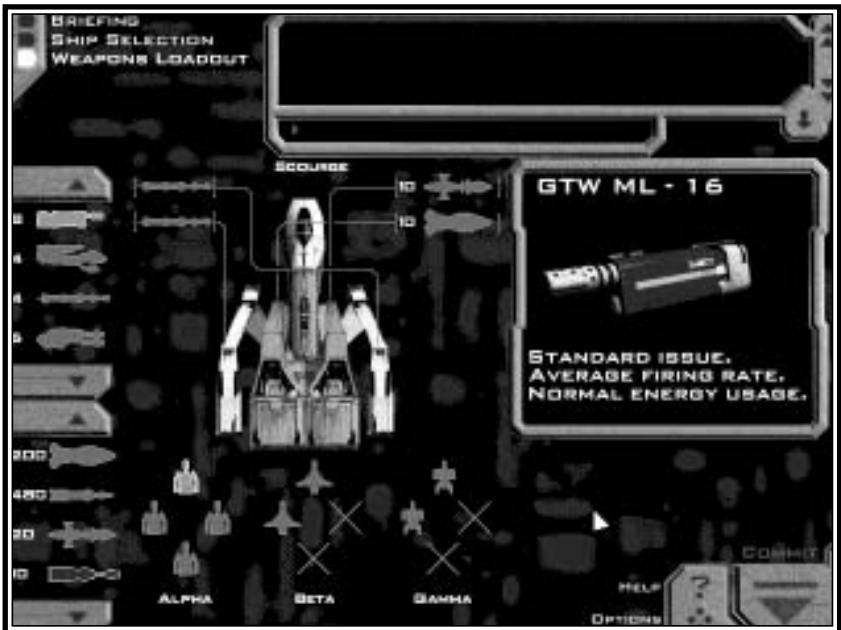
In cooperative missions, all players must share the same ship and weapon resources. In team vs. team missions, all players in a particular team must share the same ship and weapon resources.

Once you are done making your ship and weapon choices, click the "Commit" button on any of the three screens (briefing, ship selection, or weapon selection). Once everyone has committed their changes, you are ready to start your mission!

In-mission

Missions in multiplayer games proceed just like single player missions with a few exceptions.

When a multiplayer game is paused, every player in the game is paused automatically. The pause screen in multiplayer has a chat area for people to communicate during the pause time. Only the player who paused the game or the host of the game may unpause the game after it has been paused unless setup otherwise.

If you target a ship being flown by a human player, their callsign will appear in the target info area on the HUD.

When you die in multiplayer games, you will have the ability to respawn into a new ship and continue playing unless designated otherwise by the host. The number of times that a player is allowed to respawn is a mission setting that can be modified by the host in the host options screen. Once out of respawns, a player can either quit, or re-enter the mission as an observer. See page 22 for information on observers.

The mission is over when any player that is allowed to end the mission engages their subspace drives. (See the host options for details on who can end a mission). Once the mission is ended, all players are warped out and taken to the debriefing.

Debriefing

The debriefing screen is very similar to the single player version. The main addition is the ability to view mission statistics for any player currently still in the game by selecting that player in the player list box, then clicking the "Statistics" button in the upper left corner.

If you are playing in campaign mode, once all players have accepted the mission, everyone will be moved to the next mission in the multiplayer campaign.

Descent: FreeSpace

General Network/Multiplayer Options

The general network/multiplayer options screen can be reached by pressing F2 from anywhere in the game, then clicking the "Multi" icon along the top of the options screen.

On the left hand side of this screen, you can choose network options which affect how your computer searches for multiplayer games to join. The "Allow Broadcast" buttons determine whether your machine will look for Descent: FreeSpace games on your local TCP/IP subnet. If you are using a service provider to connect to the Internet, we recommend that you play Descent: FreeSpace with "Broadcast Locally" off.

If you register with Parallax Online, you may use the area at the bottom left of this screen to input your Parallax Online username and password. When you enter the Ready Room, Descent: FreeSpace will validate your username with Parallax Online. Once validated, any multiplayer game that you start will automatically be registered with Parallax Online. Also, any game statistics will be transferred to Parallax Online once you are done playing.

Voice Options

Descent: FreeSpace supports a number of ways to communicate with other players in the game. In addition to a chat box in all pre and post mission screens and the pause dialog, Descent: FreeSpace supports the ability to record your voice through a microphone connected to your sound card, and send that recording to all other players in the game (real-time voice). The real-time voice option is only supported on sound cards which allow recording and playback of sound simultaneously. To see if your sound card supports both, choose the "Setup" button in the Launcher, and click on the Audio tab. This property sheet will indicate whether or not your card supports real-time voice.

Using real-time voice in game is easy. In any screen where a chat box is present (any pre or post mission screen as well as the in-mission pause dialog), you may press and hold the ⌐ key which is located directly above the TAB key. While holding the key, talk into your microphone. Once you are done talking, release the key and your recorded voice will be sent to all other players in the game. The amount of time which you can talk is set by the host (see the section Host Options on page 15 for details).

While in mission, voice works slightly differently. There are 4 separate keys (⌐1,⌐2,⌐3, or ⌐4) available for real-time voice and typed messages. Quickly pressing one of these keys allows to you type a message, while pressing and holding one of these keys allows you to send a real-time voice message.

In-Mission Messaging Keys:

1: Press the ⌐1 key to send a message to everyone in the game. When typing a message, you may also preface your message with "name:" to send your typed message to a specific player. When using the "name:" feature, your message is sent to all players whose callsign begins with "name". So "Hungus: blah blah" will send the message "blah blah" to all players whose callsign begins with "Hungus".

2: Press the ⌐2 key to send a message to everyone on your team (team vs. team games only).

3: Press the ⌐3 key to send a message to everyone on the opposing team (in team vs. team games only).

4: Press the ⌐4 key to send a message to the ship that you currently have targeted.

In addition to these in-mission messaging options, you may also send "orders" to other players in the game using the Comm Menu system (see page 54). When you message a player using this system, that player will receive a HUD message stating your order.

Observer Mode

An observer of a multiplayer game is simply a player who cannot directly interact with the progress of the mission. You may join a game as an observer by clicking the "Join as Observer" button in the join screen. In mission, if you die and are out of respawns, you are given the option of returning to the game as an observer.

Observers have a limited HUD, but are allowed to use all targeting keys to view the status of any ship in the game. They may also chat, send messages, and use any of the external camera views.

Global Options Menu

There are a number of general network options available in global Options screen (⬚F2⬚).

On the left side of this screen, you may set options regarding how Descent: FreeSpace should find games you wish to join. By choosing the IP address option, you will be able to add an IP address to Descent: FreeSpace. Click on the Add button to add an IP address. To remove an IP address from the list, simply click on the IP address you wish to remove, followed by clicking the REM button. Selecting the "Broadcast locally" option allows your computer to search

all machines on your local LAN. This option is not recommended when you use
a dial-up Internet connection to an Internet service provider. It is only
recommended if your machine is part of a local area network.

If you have registered with Parallax Online, you can click the Parallax Online
button using your username and password which you registered with. When you
join games in the Ready Room, Descent: FreeSpace will automatically connect to
Parallax Online and give you a list of current games.

On this options screen, you have the ability to set general network options, and
real-time voice related options.

General Options Menu
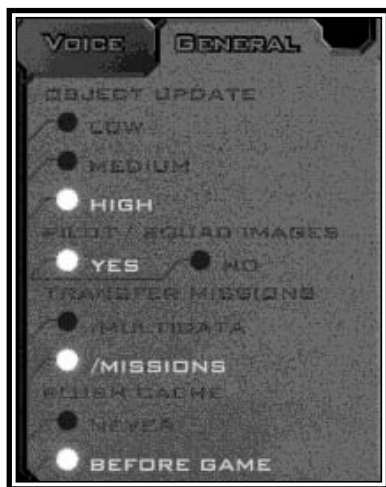
Object Update Level: This option controls how quickly a game server will send
position and orientation updates to your machine. The lower the setting, the
more prediction your machine will use to move ships and weapons inbetween
updates. The "low" setting is recommended on slower dialup Internet
connections.

Pilot / Squadron Images: With this option set, anytime you play a multiplayer
game, the server will transfer the pilot and squadron images of other players in
the game to you. If this option is not set, these images will not be transferred to
your machine when you join a game.

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Transfer Missions: This setting determines where transferred missions are placed. When you join a multiplayer game, and do not have the mission that the host selects, the mission is automatically transferred to you. The "Multidata" folder is a folder created by Descent: FreeSpace specifically to hold only disposable multiplayer data. The "Missions" folder is where all user created missions get placed.

Flush Cache: You can use this setting to determine how long to keep disposable data in your "Multidata" folder. If you play multiplayer games with the same people, it might be a good idea to set this to never, meaning that the contents of this folder will never be deleted by Descent: FreeSpace. If you are low on hard drive space, setting this option to "Before Game" will cause all data in the folder to get deleted before you play a new multiplayer game.

Voice Options Menu
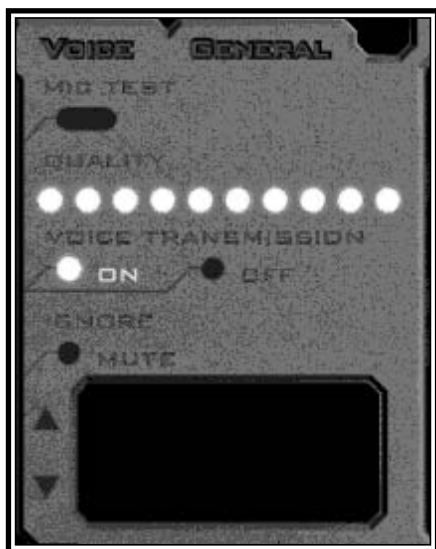
Mic Test: Click this button to test if the microphone connected to your soundcard is working properly with Descent: FreeSpace. After clicking on this button, you have 3 seconds to talk into your microphone. After the 3 second time limit, your voice will be played back to you. This test is also good to experiment with your voice to determine how best to talk into your microphone so that you can be easily understood.

Quality: The quality setting can be used to change the quality of the compression used for the real-time voice system.   The higher the slider, the higher the quality. This slider only changes the quality of the microphone test.

Voice Transmission: This setting determines whether or not you will be able to receive real-time voice transmissions from other players while playing a multiplayer game. If you are on a slower dial-up Internet connection, you might wish to turn this setting to "off" to free up bandwidth for game data.

Ignore: This area is only active once a multiplayer game has formed. You can use this section to ignore (mute) real-time voice from specific players instead of simply having to turn the system completely off.

Parallax Online

Parallax Online is Volition's game tracking and statistics keeping service provided free of charge to all players of Descent: FreeSpace. Visit our web site at

www.volition-inc.com
or
www.parallaxonline.com

for information on how to register and take advantage of this service.

Parallax Online provides a central location for players on the Internet to start and join games. In addition to tracking Descent: FreeSpace games all across the world, registered pilots will have their statistics updated after a multiplayer game is played through Parallax Online. Check out the Volition web site for up-to-date rankings of the best pilots in the Descent: FreeSpace universe.

P R E - G A M E   S C R E E N S

Main Hall

The Main Hall is the main menu for Descent: FreeSpace. From this screen, you can "move" your Pilot to different areas of the game.

> **NOTE:** Pressing ⌨F1 from anywhere in FreeSpace will bring up screen-specific help. If you're in a pre-mission interface screen such as the Main Hall, you will get a Help Overlay which will outline hotspots and give brief descriptions of each.

Pressing the right mouse button will cycle through the different hotspots on the Main Hall screen.

From the Flight Deck, you have access to the Ready Room, Campaign Room, Barracks, Tech Room, and Exit. There is also a monitor you can use to bring up the Options screen (also available by pressing ⌨F2).

Options

The global Options screen can be brought up from anywhere in Descent: FreeSpace by pressing [F2]. From here, you have control over sound volume, skill level, as well as access to detail settings, controls configuration, and other items.
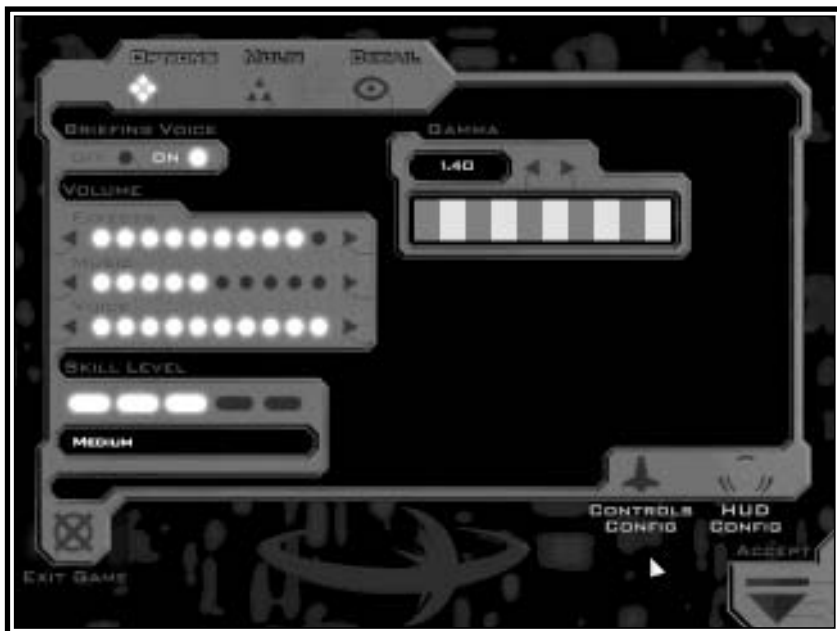
Effects: This slider controls the volume level for in-game sound effects, as well as the volume of the cinematic audio tracks.

Music: Adjusts the volume of the digital music in Descent: FreeSpace.

Voice: This slider will adjust the volume of briefing/debriefing voice, as well as all in-game voice messages.

Skill Level: This alters the current skill/difficulty level used in the Descent: FreeSpace missions, from Very Easy all the way to Insane.

> **NOTE:** Once a mission has begun, your Skill Level setting is locked in. You must wait until the mission is complete before changing it again.
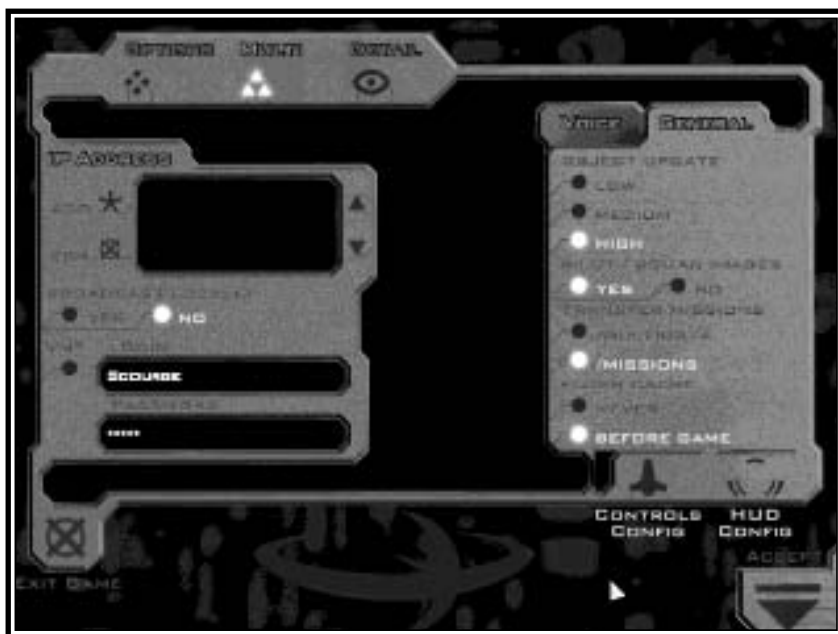
Descent: FreeSpace

Exit Game: Lets you exit Descent: FreeSpace, and back to Windows.

Gamma: All computer monitors handle darkening colors differently. As a result, this slider will help adjust your visuals to the "ideal" range for your monitor. To set your Gamma correctly, use the arrow buttons to adjust the value until the grey bar appears to be one uniform level of brightness. Squinting your eyes a bit might help. Once you have set this value, you should use your monitor's Brightness & Contrast controls to make further changes to the game's appearance.

The remaining buttons on the Options screen (Multi, Detail, Controls Config, and HUD) take you to the different sub-options screens available to you.
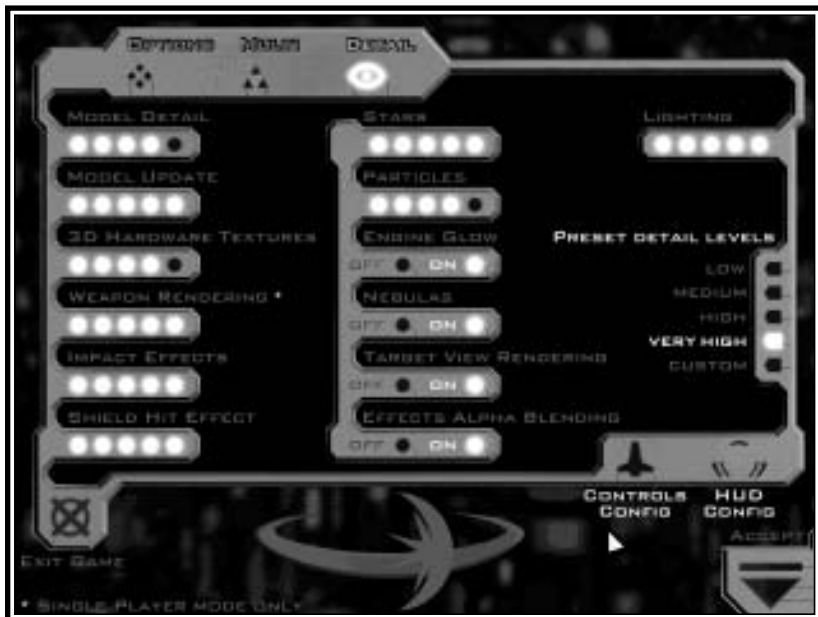
Multi Options Screen

Please see page 20 for details on Multi Options

Detail Options

The Detail screen allows you to change the various levels of detail used in Descent: FreeSpace. Since the game is designed to run on a wide range of computer types & speeds, you can set these values to your personal preference.

On the right side of the screen is a list of Preset Detail Levels. When Descent: FreeSpace was installed, a default Detail Level was chosen for you based on your computer speed, RAM, and other hardware. Feel free to change this Preset, but be aware that setting it higher will cause the gameplay to run at a slower framerate.

By using the "Custom" preset, you can set each individual detail setting separately. This is useful if you find a particular detail setting more important than others.

Individual setting descriptions:

Model Detail: As a ship/object gets further away from the player's eye, it will change to simpler 3D models. This slider alters the distances at which those changes occur. Higher settings put those distances further away, giving you more 3D detail at the cost of speed.

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Model Update: At the highest setting, Descent: FreeSpace will always render objects and ships as 3D objects. If this slider is lower than the max, it will sometimes render the objects as bitmaps. The lower the slider is set, the less often the bitmaps are updated, and the closer the distance thresholds are.

> **NOTE:** This setting will only affect the software mode of Descent: FreeSpace.

3D Hardware Textures: This will alter the resolution of the textures used in the hardware mode of Descent: FreeSpace. Potentially, this will improve the framerate in some complex scenes by reducing texture resolutions.

Weapon Rendering: This alters the culling-out of weapon objects based on lifetime and their presence onscreen. This option is ignored in multiplayer games.

Impact Effects: Changes the number of weapon impact effects rendered.

Shield Hit Effect: At its lowest setting, this turns the shield-hit effect off entirely. At medium settings, this will cause the shield-hit effect to render as a single 2D bitmap. At higher settings, it will render normally across a 3D mesh object surrounding each shield-capable ship.

Stars: This alters the number of visible stars.

Particles: At low settings, this will cause much fewer hit & damage particles to be rendered.

Engine Glow: Toggles the translucent engine glows on or off.

Nebulas: Toggles the colored background nebulas on/off.

Target View Rendering: When on, this will display a 3D view of your current target in the Target View gauge. If you do not use this gauge much, turning this off will give you a small increase in framerate.

Effects Alpha Blending: Toggles blending of in-game effects like explosions and thrusters on or off.

> **NOTE:** This will only affect the software mode of Descent: FreeSpace.

Lighting: This slider alters the lighting model used in-game. At high settings, all objects will use full static & dynamic lighting, including explosions. At lower settings, less lighting will be used, and on fewer objects.

Controls Config

This screen allows you to customize your controls setup and change your key bindings.

> **NOTE:** Settings found in the Controls Config screen are stored in your Pilot file, so you may have different control setups for different pilots. If you wish to take your Pilot with you to another computer that has FreeSpace installed, simply copy your Pilot file to a diskette and take it with you. Pilot files can be found in the \FreeSpace\players\ directory and end with a .PLR filename extension.

Control functions are divided into four categories:

Targeting: All targeting-related functions are found here.

Ship: Flight controls and other ship functions

Weapons: Weapon control functions, including countermeasures

Misc.: Other functions such as wingman command shortcuts, energy management, and multiplayer messaging functions.

Each category contains a list of functions on the left, and the current key/controller binding on the right.

Binding:

If you wish to change the binding for a given function, simply double-click on it, and you will enter Bind Mode. With Bind Mode on, simply press the new key/controller button you wish to assign to that function. You may press the "Undo" button to undo your last binding.

All functions allow the use of one keyboard key, and one joystick button to be bound to that function at the same time.

You may also use the ALT and SHIFT buttons in the lower left part of the screen to assign [Alt] and/or [Shift] modifiers to your selected binding.

Clearing Bindings:

If you wish to clear the bindings of a given function, simply use your mouse to select that line, and press "Clear Selected." All key/controller bindings will be removed for that item. Pressing "Clear All" will remove all bindings.

Conflicts:

If you assign a key/controller button that is already assigned to another function, a "Conflict" warning will flash at the bottom of the screen, and the conflicted keys will be shown in red. If the duplicate binding appears in another Category, that Category button will be shown in red at the top of the screen.

You must resolve all conflicts before exiting the Controls Config screen.

If you press "Clear Conflict", the older binding will be removed, and the current one will take effect.

Hitting the "Accept" button will save your current Controls Config and take you back to Options.

TIP: There are many different targeting functions available to you under Controls Config/Targeting. Many of which are not covered in the training missions. Once you have some combat experience in Descent: FreeSpace, you may wish to try using some of the more advanced targeting controls. Mastering these functions is a key to becoming a great Descent: FreeSpace pilot.

HUD Config

This screen allows you to customize various aspects of the Heads Up Display (HUD). For detailed information on the HUD gauges and their functionality, please see page 48.

The main screen shows an image containing all HUD gauges and indicators. On the surrounding edge are buttons that allow you to change the HUD's color and relative brightness. In the lower right are buttons for Accepting your changes, or Resetting to the defaults.

Each gauge and indicator on the HUD display can be set to "On" or "Off". Simply click on that gauge/indicator in the onscreen display, and choose its new mode using the buttons in the lower left.

When set to mode "Off", gauges and indicators will be drawn in grey. Otherwise, they will display in the HUD color you have selected.

Many gauges allow you to set a third mode called "Popup". In Popup mode, the gauge will only remain onscreen when its status changes. If no further change occurs, it will disappear within a few seconds.

For example: If you set the Weapons Display to Popup mode, it will only appear when you change which weapons are armed and/or linked. It will remain onscreen for a short time, then disappear unless you make additional changes.

The Brightness slider changes the relative intensity of the HUD gauges against the game screen. The higher the setting, the more opaque and bright the HUD will display.

Barracks

You can manage your various Descent: FreeSpace Pilots in the Barracks screen. From here, you can create and delete Pilots, as well as view their combat statistics and medals.

In the upper left, you'll see a list of Pilots. If this is your first time playing Descent: FreeSpace, you will only see one Pilot.

If you have multiple Pilots displayed, you may change your current pilot by highlighting the name, and clicking the "Select" button.

> **NOTE:** Single-player Pilots are stored separately from Multi-Player Pilots. Use the "Single" and "Multi" buttons in the upper right of the Pilot list to change which types of Pilots are displayed. By leaving Barracks with a Multi-Player pilot selected, the game will effectively be in Multi-Player mode (see page 40 on Ready Room for more information).

There are four buttons underneath the list of pilots:

Create: This will create a new Pilot. The Pilot will be Single-Player or Multi-Player, depending on which mode is currently active.

Clone: This will duplicate your currently selected Pilot, and prompt you for a new name (pilot names must be unique). This cloned Pilot will have all the same Controls Config settings as the original Pilot.

Remove: This will delete the selected Pilot. If you delete the only pilot in a given player mode, you will be required to create another before leaving the Barracks.

Convert: This copies the current Pilot much like Clone does, but will place the new pilot in the opposite player mode (Single or Multi). Example: If you Convert a Single-Player pilot it will create a Multi-Player version, complete with the same Controls Config and Option settings.

> **NOTE:** Clone and Convert will not copy your pilot's statistics, only your Options and Controls settings. Please see page 36 on "Statistics" for more information.

In the upper right of the Barracks screen, you will also notice a picture associated with each pilot. Using the arrow buttons under that picture, you may change which picture is assigned to your current Pilot. Each newly created pilot will be assigned a random picture.

Descent: FreeSpace allows you to use your own Pilot pictures. Simply create a 256-color PCX image at 160x120 resolution and place it in the \FreeSpace\players\images\ directory, and it will appear in the Barracks screen the next time you run Descent: FreeSpace.

In multiplayer games, your Pilot's picture is automatically uploaded to the other players.

Statistics

In the center of the Barracks screen, you'll notice a section devoted to your Pilot Statistics. These are an ongoing record of your performance while using that Pilot.

> **NOTE:** Permanent Statistics are only kept for Campaign missions. If you fly a mission in the Tech Room Simulator, you will receive a statistics report at Debriefing, but your Pilot's all-time statistics will not change.

The statistics are self-explanatory, with these possible exceptions:

Kills: If you deal the most damage to any single ship out of all other friendly ships (AI or player-controlled), then you are granted one kill when it is destroyed. You also must have dealt it at least 20% of its total sustainable damage. If no single ship inflicts more than 20% damage to an enemy ship, no ship will receive the kill when it is destroyed.

Assists: You will receive one Assist for inflicting 15% or more damage to any ship that is later destroyed. Therefore, several different players/ships may receive an Assist for attacking the same enemy craft.

You will not receive Kills or Assists for destroying asteroids and other non-combative targets.

Medals Display

In your tours of duty as a GTA Pilot, you will periodically granted medals for outstanding achievements. The Medals screen shows your Pilot's accumulated service medals.

You will see the name of a granted medal when you place your mouse over it.

Some medals are granted for superior dogfighting skills. Others are granted for superb performance in a combat situation. It takes a skilled pilot indeed to acquire every GTA service medal. See the Rank & Medals section for more details.

Each new Pilot begins at Ensign rank. During the course of a Campaign, your Pilot will accumulate combat experience. As his skills grow, he will be periodically promoted, and granted more responsibility. Eventually, your Pilot will have full control over his flight wings and weapons loadouts. The rank pip on the Medals screen displays your Pilot's current rank symbol.

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GTA Pilot ranks are as follows:
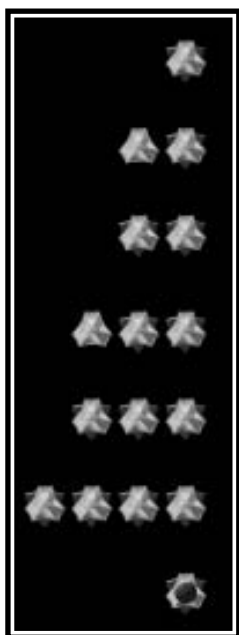
Ensign

Lieutenant Junior Grade

Lieutenant

Lieutenant Commander

Commander

Captain

Commodore

Tech Room

The Tech Room is where you can go to view Database information, fly missions in the Simulator, view previously-seen Cutscenes, or see the list of game Credits.

Technical Database

The Technical Database screen was not completed before the printing of this manual. Please see the Descent: FreeSpace README.TXT file found in your FreeSpace directory.

Mission Simulator

From the Mission Simulator you will be able to replay single player missions that you have completed during your Campaign.

Simply choose the mission you wish to fly (or re-fly) from the displayed list, and click Commit.

Two filters at the bottom will switch between stand-alone missions and Campaign missions that have been previously flown by your current Pilot.

> **NOTE:** Replaying Campaign missions in this manner will not replace the performance you achieved while playing it in Campaign mode, it's a simulation only. Once you have accepted a mission's outcome in Campaign mode, you will not be able to replay it unless you restart the Campaign.

The Mission Simulator also allows you to fly single missions that are not part of a Campaign. These may be add-on missions from Volition, Inc., or home made missions you or your friends have made using FRED, the mission editor. In order for such missions to appear on this screen, they must be placed in the FreeSpace\missions subdirectory.

View Cutscenes

This screen will allow you to view cutscenes you have seen previously while playing a Descent: FreeSpace Campaign. Your current pilot must have seen a cutscene during Campaign play before it will appear on this list.

Credits Screen

This screen displays the list of development credits for Descent: FreeSpace.

Campaign Room

Descent: FreeSpace missions can be arranged in Campaigns. These Campaigns provide a way to connect missions with each other in storyline as well as gameplay.

Each single-player Descent: FreeSpace Pilot you create may have one Campaign in-progress (or "open") at a time. Between Campaign missions, progress is automatically saved, and you may continue it later by returning to the Ready Room (See page 40).

In order to change the current Campaign being flown by a Pilot, you must visit the Campaign Room. From here, you can either select a new Campaign from the available list, or you may restart your current Campaign.

Your current Campaign is marked by a green icon.

If you choose to restart or change your Campaign before your current one is completed, your Pilot will lose all progress and statistics made during that Campaign. Only when a Campaign is completed will your Pilot's accumulated statistics, promotions, and medals become permanent.

The default Campaign when you first install Descent: FreeSpace is called "FreeSpace - The Great War". More Campaigns will appear here if you have created your own using FRED (the mission editor), or have downloaded others from the Internet.

Ready Room

The Ready Room is where you go to continue your current Campaign. When you first start Descent: FreeSpace as a new single-player Pilot, the default Descent: FreeSpace Campaign will already be open for you.

> **NOTE:** The single-player Ready Room is quite different from the multi-player version. For more information on the multi-player version, please see the "**Join A Game**" section on page 10.

The single-player Ready Room is simply a sequencing area that will take you into your next Campaign mission for Briefing, Ship Select, Weapons Loadout, and the mission itself.

Command Briefing

Before many missions, you will receive a Command Briefing from GTA Command. This briefing is given to all pilots stationed on your ship, and is designed to give an overview of the war.

It will outline fleet movements, recent engagements, and discuss any new technologies that have been recently put into service.

Command Briefings are typically divided into several stages. Using the "stage arrows" you can advance through, or review all stages.

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Mission Briefing

The Briefing screen is where you receive your mission orders and overview of the objectives.

 In the upper left you'll see sequencing buttons for Briefing (currently highlighted), Ship Selection, and Weapons Loadout. If you are playing a training mission, the only available choice will be Briefing.

Like Command Briefings, Mission Briefings are divided into several stages. Each stage typically focuses on one task expected of you during the mission. Using the "stage arrows" you can advance through, or review all stages.

In each stage, you will see a graphical icon-based representation of what GTA Command expects you to encounter in the mission. You may use your mouse to click on any of the icons to see a real-time view of that ship or object.

At the bottom of the screen, you will see your briefing instructions for the current stage. Your commanding officer will also read the instructions to you. Descent: FreeSpace missions can become quite involved, it's highly recommended that you review all briefing stages before moving on.

The last stage in every briefing is the list of Mission Objectives. These are the objectives you are expected to meet once you arrive in the combat area.

Primary Objectives are very important to mission success. If you fail to meet

one or more of these objectives, it is unlikely the mission will be considered a success. Depending on the severity of the failure, you may be forced to replay the mission before advancing to the next.

Secondary Objectives are still important, but not as crucial. If you fail to meet any secondary objectives, the mission may not be considered a total success, but you will usually be able to advance to the next mission.

Bonus Objectives are a result of unforeseen events that occur during a mission. Therefore you will never see a Bonus Objective in your Briefing. For example, an enemy Cruiser arrives unexpectedly, but you and your wingmen manage to destroy it. Since GTA Command did not expect such a ship to arrive, you were not briefed on it. However, once it did, you were given a successful Bonus Objective for destroying it.

Once you have reviewed all Briefing stages, you should proceed to Ship Selection. Again, if you're in a training mission, you will not have that option. Simply hit Commit to accept your orders and enter the mission.

Ship Selection

This screen allows pilots to select the ships best suited for the mission at hand. At the start of the main Descent: FreeSpace Campaign, your pilot will not have enough experience to outfit all of his wingmen with specific ships. If you fly well, however, you will quickly advance in rank and will be given more options on this screen, as well as Weapons Loadout.

NOTE: Ship Selection is handled quite differently in multi-player missions. For information on multiplayer Ship Selection, please consult page 17.

At the bottom of the screen, you will see an arrangement of flight wings. As a single-player Pilot, you will always be a member of Alpha wing, which is shown on the left. You will also always be flying "point" for Alpha wing, which is the topmost icon in that group, drawn in green.

In addition to Alpha, you may also see wing groupings for Beta and Gamma. Alpha, Beta, and Gamma make up your primary fighter force in Descent: FreeSpace missions. Depending on the needs of the mission, you may also be joined by more wings, typically designated Delta, Epsilon, and so on. However, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma will be the only wings you have Ship Selection and Weapons Loadout control over.

The wing groupings and ship slots at the bottom use the following symbols:

Ship icons: These icons represent the ship class currently assigned to that slot. Each ship class has a different top-down view symbol. If a ship symbol is present in a wing slot, that ship class will be deployed in that position. Any ship may be replaced by another ship class if you wish.

Closed icon: This icon indicates that this wing slot cannot be filled in this mission.

Open icon: This indicates an open and available wing slot that is currently unfilled.

Above the wing display you'll see a rotating view of the "current" ship class, with a text description of its properties and flight statistics. By left-clicking on a different ship icon anywhere below, you can see the properties for that ship class.

On the lower left corner you will see the Ship Pool. This contains a scrolling list of the ship classes available to you in this mission, and an inventory count for each. This count represents how many "spare" ships of each class is available, and does not include ships already placed in wings.

You can use your left mouse button to "drag and drop" different ship class icons from the Ship Pool onto the available wing slots. As you remove a ship from the pool, its inventory count will drop. If you drop a new icon onto a placed ship icon, it will replace it and return the original one to the Ship Pool.

Modifying the Ship Selection for a mission isn't often necessary. Terran Command typically gives good default wing layouts for the tasks at hand, and all missions may be completed with the defaults. However, as you become more familiar with the different fightercraft in Descent: FreeSpace, you may favor some ship classes over others. Ship Selection allows you to outfit your forces differently if you have different thoughts on what works best.

If you wish to reset the wing layouts to the mission defaults, simply press the "Reset" button on the right.

When you have completed your Ship Selection, you may choose to advance to Weapons Loadout, or to Commit and enter the mission directly.

Weapons Loadout

The Loadout screen operates very much like Ship Selection. In this area you can modify the default weapons armed on each ship to better suit your preferences.

> **NOTE:** Like Ship Selection, the Weapons Loadout screen functions somewhat differently in multi-player. Please see page 17 for details on this.
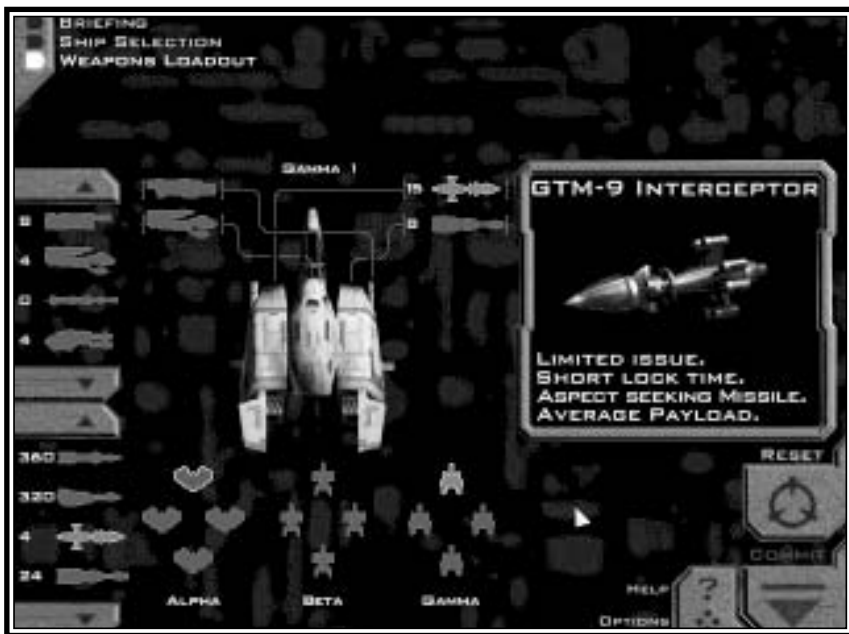
On the left side of the screen, you'll notice not one, but two Weapon Pools. The top list is your available Primary (cannon/energy-based) weapons, and the bottom list contains Secondary weapons (missiles & bombs). Much like Ship Selection, each icon has an inventory count indicating how many of each are still "unplaced."

In the center of the screen you'll see a top-down view of the currently selected ship. Next to this you'll notice slots for each Primary and Secondary weapon banks available on that ship class. To change the currently selected ship, left-click on one of the ship icons in the wing layout at the bottom.

Notice that on the right side of the ship diagram, each Secondary weapon icon has a number displayed. This is the raw number of missiles of that type that the bank is carrying. You'll notice that different ship classes have varying missile bank capacities, and each missile type occupies a different amount of that space.

On the right side is a diagram and description for the currently selected weapon type. To view another weapon's description, simply left click on a different weapon icon.

To change the weapon currently armed on the selected ship, simply drag-and-drop the new icon onto the desired bank next to the ship overview. Like Ship Selection, if you drop onto an placed weapon, the original will be returned to the Weapons Pool.

> **NOTE:** Each ship class has its own weapons capacity and compatibility. If your selected ship cannot be outfitted with a certain weapon, that weapon icon will appear as grey in the Weapon Pools.

Like Ship Selection, modifying your weapons loadout is not necessary to complete the game. Each ship class has a good default weapon loadout, each mission. This screen will simply allow you to fine-tune the loadouts as you see fit.

When you have completed your changes in Weapons Loadout, click "Commit" to enter the mission.

IN-GAME SCREENS

The HUD (heads-up display)

This is the main game screen for Descent: FreeSpace. Any or all of these gauges and displays may be turned off/on individually in the Options/HUD Config screen.
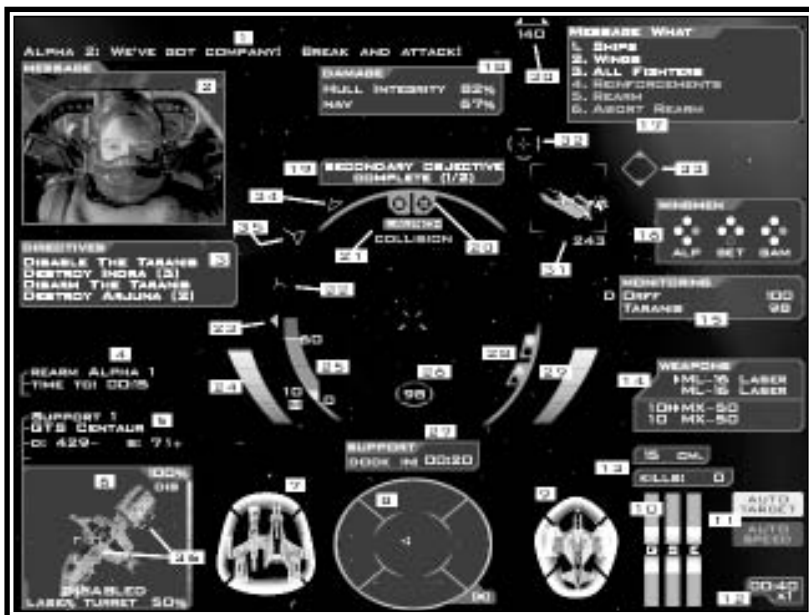
1. Message Output - This is where incoming messages appear. Messages can be from wingmen, Terran Command, or any other ship in the mission.

2. Comm Video - This displays a visual of the person transmitting the incoming message.

3. Directives View - Mission directives will appear here. Directives are much like Objectives, but are broken down into smaller goals. When given a directive to destroy an enemy fighter wing (i.e. "Destroy Arjuna [2]"), the number following the wing name indicates how many ships are left in the wing.

4. Extra Target Info - This text gauge shows the current orders given to the targeted ship, as well as estimated time-to. The time-to field will only display for docking and waypoint maneuvers.

5. Target Monitor [Target Info] - The first two text lines display your target's Designation (name) or Wing name, and Ship Class. The third line displays its distance and speed.

6. Target Monitor [Target View] - A realtime view of your target is shown here. In the upper right is your target's Hull Integrity and status. The four possible status abbreviations are "OK" for Okay, "DMG" for Damaged, "CRT" for Critical, and "DIS" for Disabled.

    Also, along the right side of this frame is a vertical bar indicating its Hull Integrity graphically.

    If you have a subsystem targeted, its name will appear at the bottom of the Target View, next to its integrity value. If your target is Disabled (because of a destroyed Engine subsystem), the word "Disabled" will appear below the view as well.

7. Target Shield - This 2D view displays a top-down view of any fighter/bomber target. If your target is equipped with energy shields, a four-quadrant shield strength display will surround the ship diagram. Full-strength shields will be shown bright, and will gradually become dimmer as they take more damage.

    The shield quadrants and hull diagram will also flash briefly to indicate what portion of the ship is receiving damage.

8. Radar - This circular display shows targeting "blips" for all ships and objects in the battle area. It's a full 360 degree view of your surroundings. Blips in the inner circle are in your forward hemisphere. If your target is in the exact center of the radar, he is directly in front of you. The outer ring represents your rear hemisphere. Target blips on the very edge of the radar are directly behind you.

    Hostile targets are shown in red, friendly in green, and unknown/neutral in grey. Ships that are just arriving/departing through subspace will be shown briefly as blue blips. Your current target's blip is always displayed larger than the others. Additionally, contacts that are farther than 1500 meters are shown in a dimmer color.

    Your Radar system can be set for different ranges. Any target falling outside of that range will not be displayed on the Radar Gauge. Your current range setting is displayed in the lower right of this gauge.

9. Player Shield - This is similar to the Target Shield (7), but displays the shield & hull information for only your ship.

10. Power Management - These bars indicate the current power settings for your ship's Energy Transfer System. Vertical bars indicate the power output to your ship's Guns (G) and Engine (E). If your ship is equipped with a Shield system (S), the energy output to it will be displayed as well.

11. Auto Target/Auto-Speed-Match Icons - These two indicators show the current on/off status for your Auto Targeting and Auto Speed Matching.

12. Mission Time - Shown here is the total elapsed mission time, as well as the current time compression setting (1X, 2X, or 4X).

13. Countermeasures / Kills Gauge - The "CM" gauge shows you how many countermeasures you have onboard. "Kills" is a raw count of how many ships you have received a Kill for in the current mission.

14. Weapons Display - The top half of this gauge shows the arming status of your Primary weapons. The arrow icon to the left of the weapon name indicates what is armed. If you have two Primary banks, and they are both linked, both will show an arrow icon.

    The Bottom half shows your Secondary arming status, and missile count(s). Your currently selected Secondary bank will have an arrow icon to the left of it. If you have that bank set to dual-fire mode, two arrow icons will be shown.

15. Monitor View - Placing a ship in your Monitor Display will give you a constant heads-up indication of its hull integrity. If a ship appearing in this display is taking hits, its entry will flash briefly, and the numerical hull integrity will drop accordingly. If the ship becomes disabled, a "D" icon will appear to the left of its name.

    Up to three ships may be monitored at one time. Consult the Reference Card for keys used to add/remove ships from the Monitor Display.

16. Wingmen Status - Use this display to keep tabs on the members of your attack wings. Each friendly wing present in a mission is represented by a group of icons, and a name label for that wing. Each ship "dot" has four states:

Ship present, and hull integrity is above 50%

Ship present, but hull is below 50% integrity

Ship not present, has departed area

Ship not present, has been destroyed

If a wingman is taking damage, his icon will flash briefly. The only wings supported by this gauge are Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon.

17. Comm Menu - This menu displays your messaging options. Simply choose the number corresponding to the order/target you want.

18. Damage Display - Shows any subsystem damage you have taken on your ship, including overall Hull Integrity. Unless a non-hull subsystem is at 0% (destroyed), it will auto-repair. Support ships may also be used to repair damaged/destroyed subsystems.

19. Objective Notifier - This indicator will appear when a Primary, Secondary, or Bonus objective is resolved (as either successful or failed). A number following the text indicates how many objectives of that type have been resolved. Example: If the gauge displays "Primary Objective Complete (1/2)", that means you have resolved one of two Primary objectives.

20. Threat Gauge - The circular indicator on the left flashes when a hostile ship is firing Primary/laser weapons at your ship. The crosshair indicator on the right flashes when a hostile ship is attempting to gain missile lock on you (a low-pitched warning sound will accompany this).

21. Missile/Collision Warnings - The "Launch" indicator will appear when a locked missile has been launched at your ship. If you use countermeasures to evade the missile, the indicator will change briefly to "Evaded". The "Collision" indicator will flash briefly if you have taken damage as a result of a ship-to-ship collision. It will also display "Blast" if you have received damage from being in close proximity to an explosion.

22. Target Orientation - This T-shaped indicator graphically shows the aspect angle of your current target. If the indicator is in the top half of its orbit circle, your target is facing you. If it is in the bottom half of its orbit, your target is facing away from you (with 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock facing directly at you and away from you, respectively). This information is very

useful when attempting to fire heat/aspect-seeking missiles. Ideally, you should wait until this indicator is in the bottom half of the orbit before launching your missiles. Doing so will ensure a much more favorable convergence angle to your target.

23. Current Target Direction - This triangle essentially points offscreen toward your target, letting you know the shortest direction to turn in order to face it.

24. Afterburner Energy - This graphically shows the energy level in your afterburner reserve.

25. Throttle - This gauge displays information regarding your throttle and current speed. The number at the top right indicates your current top speed at full throttle. This number may change based on your ETS (Energy Transfer System) settings. The number to the left of the bar indicates your current speed. If you have speed matching (or auto-speed matching) turned on, there will be a small "M" icon next to this number.

26. Target Hull/Shield Icon - The number indicates your current target's Hull Integrity. If your target has shields, it will display four small shield quadrants around this number. Functionally, this is the same as the Target Overhead.

27. Support Status - If you call for rearm/repair support, this will show the current status of the incoming support ship. If this gauge shows "busy", the support ship is currently rearming another friendly fighter. If it shows "Obstructed", there is an object blocking the support ship from reaching you. Otherwise, this will show the estimated time-to-dock based on your current position.

28. Weapon Linking - This is a smaller version of the Weapons Display. It simply shows the arming/linking status of your current weapon banks.

29. Weapons Energy - This is a graphical indication of your current Primary weapons energy bank. When this reserve is depleted, you will be unable to fire primary weapons until it has received more energy. If you have the "G" portion of your ETS system set to zero, this reserve will not recharge.

30. Offscreen Indicator - This shows the offscreen position of your current target, and the direction you should turn to face it. The two triangle-halves will move further apart the farther offscreen your target is. The number indicates the physical distance in meters between you and your target.

31. Target Brackets - Indicates your current target. The number in the corner indicates the physical distance between you and the target.

32. Lead Indicator - These two reticle-like indicators show where you should fire your weapons in order to correctly "lead" your target. Note that this is based on its current flight speed and trajectory, and cannot guarantee a weapons hit. The inner crosshairs will only display if you are within firing range of your currently armed Secondary weapons. Likewise, the outer circle displays when in range of your current Primaries.

33. Aspect Diamond - This indicator displays when you are attempting to gain target lock with an aspect-seeking missile (like the Hornet or Tsunami). The closer this diamond moves to your target onscreen, the closer you are to achieving lock. Once lock is achieved, it will be surrounded by rotating arrows.

34. Closest Attacking Hostiles - This hollow red triangle indicates the current offscreen direction of a ship that is attacking you. You may see several of these at one time if you have multiple threats.

35. Locked Missile Direction - This yellow triangle will display when a missile is incoming, and its position around the orbit reticle indicates its offscreen position. The line protruding from this gives a graphical representation of its distance from you. The longer the line, the further it is from you.

36. Subsystem Targeting Bracket - This indicates the position of your currently targeted subsystem. If the subsystem is on the facing side of your target, it will be a simple square. If the subsystem is not within line-of-sight on the far side of the targeted ship, it will display as a diamond with an "X" through it. Grey indicators are displayed for destroyed subsystems.

M E S S A G I N G   W I N G M E N

The in-game Comm Menu is one of the most powerful features of Descent: FreeSpace. With it, you can order wingmen to do numerous tasks, request reinforcements, and call for rearming and repair.

The menu itself is context-sensitive, and will only display choices that are currently available for the selected ship.

Message What?

The first level of options (labeled "Message What?") determines who to send the message to. Your choices at this level are:

1. Ships - use this to message a specific ship by name/designation

2. Wings - this will send the message to an entire flight wing (Alpha, Beta, etc.)

3. All Fighters - message will go to every friendly fighter/bomber currently in the battle area.

4. Reinforcements - If the current mission has reinforcement wings, this will allow you to call them in. Once they have arrived, they may be messaged using options 1-3.

5. Rearm - This will call for a Support ship, if one is available in the current mission. See Rearm/Repair on page 57 for details.

6. Abort Rearm - This will cancel your Rearm/Repair request.

If an option is greyed out in this menu, then it is not a valid choice at the moment. Example: If you have a full load of missiles and have no subsystem damage, you will not be able to call in a Support ship for Rearm/Repair.

Select Ship

If you have chosen option 1 above, you will be given a list of ships to direct your order to. They will be listed by their mission name/designation.

If you often find yourself wishing to direct orders to arbitrary groups of ships that don't necessarily belong to one wing, you may wish to familarize yourself with the Hotkey system. See page 66 for details on Hotkeys.

What Command?

If you have chosen to message a Ship or Wing, the next Comm Menu level will reflect the orders you're allowed to direct.

> **NOTE:** This menu level will not appear if you have used one of the messaging shortcut keys (⌨Shift - Ⓐ for attack my target, ⌨Shift - Ⓦ for Form on my Wing). Simply choosing the target of the order in the previous menu is enough.

Depending on the source and target of the order, several of these orders will be available to you on the "What Command" menu level:

* **Destroy my target** - Your wingmen will attack the ship you have targeted.

* **Disable my target** - Your wingmen will attempt to disable your targeted ship by destroying its Engine subsystem(s). They will not disable it if doing so would likely destroy the ship.

* **Disarm my target** - Ships given this order will attempt to remove the offensive capabilities of your target. They will first attempt to destroy its Weapons subsystem, making its defensive fire much less accurate. They will then attempt to take out all turrets and missile launchers. The target of this order must be a large freighter, cruiser, or capital-level ship. They will not disarm it if doing so would likely destroy the ship.

* **Destroy subsystem** - Friendlies given this order will attempt to knock out the subsystem you currently have targeted on the hostile ship. Once this subsystem is destroyed, the friendlies will cease fire until issued another order. They will not destroy the subsystem if doing so would likely destroy the ship.

* **Protect my target** - Ships issued a protect order will attempt to guard your targeted ship. If hostile ships attack or otherwise threaten that target, your wingmen will engage them.

* **Ignore my target** - All friendlies will ignore your target, and will not freely engage or attack it. Note that this is not a ship-specific order. Regardless of who you issue it to, all friendlies will begin ignoring that target.

* **Form on my wing** - Use this to order your wingmen to form up around your ship, and to stop pursuing their previous orders.

* **Cover me** - Ships issued this order will attempt to engage any ships attacking you.

* **Engage enemy** - This is essentially the opposite of "form on my wing" order. Use this to give your wingmen permission to engage any and all hostiles in the battle area.

* **Depart** - Requests that your wingmen activate their subspace drives and leave the battle area. Once a wingman has departed, he may not be recalled.

> **NOTE:** Like any intelligent wingman, your wingmen in FreeSpace have a keen sense of self-preservation. Regardless of their standing orders, if they are attacked or otherwise threatened sufficiently, they will turn on their attacker. If they destroy the attacker, or determine it is no longer a threat, they will then return to their standing orders.

REARMING & REPAIRING

In many missions you may run out of missiles, or receive serious subsystem damage on your ship. Terran Command often has a Support Ship fueled up and ready to assist you and your squadmates.

In-flight rearming and repairing in Descent: FreeSpace is a simple matter. Once you have used the Comm Menu to request for Rearm/Repair (either through the [Shift]-[R] shortcut, or the "C" Comm Menu), a Support Ship will quickly enter the battle area via subspace. If a Support Ship is already in the battle area, it will note your request.

When it has finished docking with any wingmen who had previously requested support, it will approach your ship. The Support Status gauge will give you an estimated time to docking, based on your distance to the support ship.

As the ship approaches, drop your throttle to zero and wait. The Support Ship will maneuver into position and quickly dock with your fighter/bomber. It will then take note of your systems status and begin replenishing your missile banks and energy reserves.

NOTE: You can target the support ship by pressing [Alt]-[R].
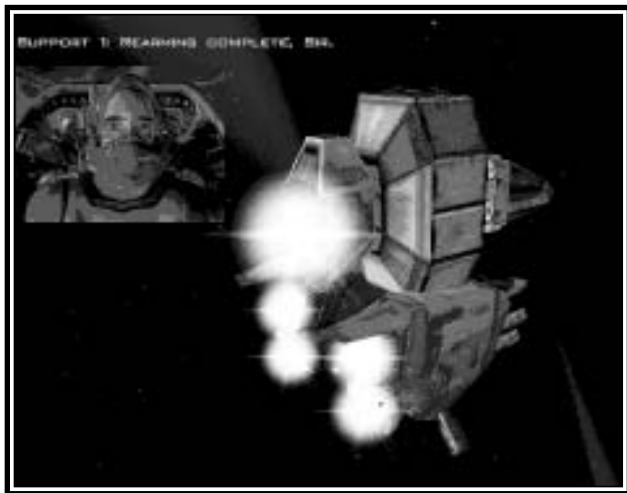
GTF Hercules being rearmed by a Support Ship

If any of your onboard subsystems have been damaged or destroyed, it will also repair or replace them.

> **NOTE:** Your fighter's Hull Integrity is a measure of the exterior armor's strength and damage level. While Support Ships can repair damaged electronics subsystems, it can do nothing to repair damaged armor and Hull Integrity.

Once the support procedures are complete, the ship's pilot will notify you and will disengage from your fighter. You are also free to abort the Rearm/Repair procedure at any time using the Comm Menu, or by simply breaking the docking seal by accelerating away from the Support Ship.

MISSILE FIRING AND COUNTERMEASURES

Heat-seeking vs. Aspect-seeking

There are two types of homing missiles in Descent: FreeSpace: heat-seeking and all-aspect-seeking.

Heat-seeking missiles require no lock time, and may be launched as soon as your missile bank is ready to fire. The missile will find the nearest hostile target in its forward view cone and lock onto it. If the target leaves the missile's view cone, it will attempt to lock onto another hostile target.

An aspect-seeking missile will not lose lock if its target leaves the view cone. It will turn to pursue the target until it makes contact or runs out of fuel. However, aspect-seeking missiles require the pilot to gain aspect lock on the target before launching.

Gaining aspect lock is a simple procedure, but can become difficult if your target is highly maneuverable. If you have an aspect-seeking missile such as the Hornet or Interceptor armed, the "aspect diamond" on the HUD will appear and begin tracking your target onscreen. As the target moves around your forward viewscreen, the aspect diamond will follow, attempting to close the distance. Once the diamond is centered on the target, lock is achieved.
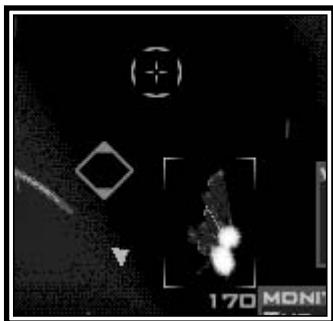
The Aspect Diamond, as the pilot attempts to achieve lock on a Shivan Fighter.

The more advanced bomb-type missiles such as the Tsunami and Harbinger will require longer aspect-lock times than the lighter ordinance.

Countermeasures

All space fighters are equipped with a set of specific missile countermeasures. (Default key binding is ⌧) These are small electronics "decoys" designed to mimic the flight signatures of that fighter. When dropped behind the ship, they will attempt to fool incoming missiles into tracking them instead of the fighter.

Countermeasures are the most effective when the incoming missile is at close range. Unfortunately, if you wait too long to drop them, you risk sustaining damage from the missile blast as well as direct impact. Practice is the key.

Advanced aspect-seeking missiles are somewhat less susceptible to countermeasures than other missiles.

If you deplete your supply of countermeasures during a mission, you may call for Rearm/Repair and the support ship will replenish you.

Your Countermeasure supply is displayed above the
Kills counter in the lower right of your HUD display

Also be warned that enemy fighters are also equipped with countermeasures.

ADVANCED TARGETING

Descent: FreeSpace features many different targeting controls, each with their own uses. As you become more familiar with space combat, you may wish to learn more of the advanced targeting features.

One such feature is Auto-Targeting (default binding is ⌐Alt⌐-⌐H⌐), and is indicated in the lower right of your HUD. When Auto-Targeting is enabled, your ship's computer will automatically target the next closest hostile when the current one is destroyed. It will also change targets if the previous target leaves the battle area.

Using Auto-Targeting ensures that you always have a nearby hostile fighter in your sights.

Other useful targeting controls include:

- Target next ship in reticle (default binding ⌐Y⌐)
- Target nearest Hostile attacking Self (default binding ⌐R⌐)
- Target next subsystem (default binding ⌐S⌐)

(See the Reference Card for a full list of advanced targeting controls.)

MATCHING SPEED

One of the most effective dogfighting techniques is to match speed with your target (default binding ⌐M⌐). When speed matching is enabled, your fighter will automatically adjust its velocity to match that of your target. This is useful if you are engaging a slower fighter, and do not wish to overshoot it.
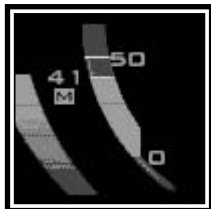
The "M" icon indicates that you are matching speed with your current target.

The standard form of speed matching will only apply to your current target. If you select a new target, it will turn off. If you wish speed matching to be enabled for all targets, use auto-speed matching (default binding Alt - M).

ENDING THE MISSION

You may leave the battle area of a mission at any time by engaging your subspace drive (default binding Alt - J). This will cause your fighter to make a subspace jump back to the Galatea, or other base of operations. Your subspace drive has a brief warm-up period, during which you can cancel the jump by hitting ESC.

Doing this will end the current mission and all objectives will be evaluated in their current state. In most missions you are informed when it is time to leave the battle area.

FRED (FREESPACE MISSION EDITOR)

FRED is the Descent: FreeSpace mission editor. With it, you will be able to create a single or multiplayer mission for Descent: FreeSpace. For more information on how FRED works, please refer to the Help tab from within FRED. All instructions will be listed there, as well as a tutorial to help get you started.

RANK, PROMOTIONS, AND MEDALS

As you rack up combat experience in Descent: FreeSpace, you will be promoted from time to time. Some promotions result in increased responsibilities in missions.

The Pilot ranks of the Galactic Terran Alliance, in order, are as follows:
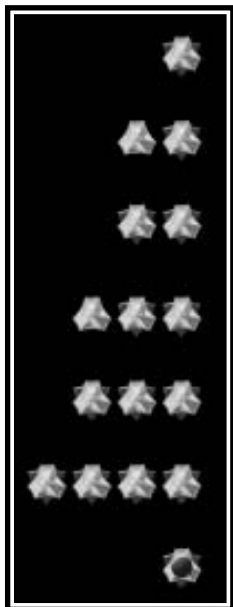
Ensign

Lieutenant Junior Grade

Lieutenant

Lieutenant Commander

Commander

Captain

Commodore

Experience is primarily accumulated by meeting your objectives in each mission. Fighter kills, exceptional performance, and preservation of military hardware all affect your experience level as well. Additionally, calling in for needless reinforcements is a sure way to hurt your potential promotions and commendations.

You may also receive service medals for outstanding performance in a mission. You may view your Pilot's accumulated medals in the Barracks/Medals screen.

There are two basic types of medals granted to GTA pilots. The first is the "star" pin granted to pilots who achieve an outstanding number of kills in any given mission. Pilots may be granted bronze, silver, or gold stars, depending on how many kills they have achieved.

The other, ribbon-type service medals are granted to pilots based on specific situations and achievements.

Multiple medals of any type may be awarded to one Pilot. You can see how many medals your Pilot has by placing your mouse over it in the Medals display off the Barracks room.

ENERGY TRANSFER SYSTEM (ETS)

The ETS system is simple. Each fighter has a reactor that produces a certain amount of power. This power is directed to one of three primary systems: weapons, shields, and engines. The ETS is simply a way for pilots to change the amount of power directed to each, based on current need.

> **NOTE:** Until the GTA acquires shield technology, the ETS will only operate on weapons and engines. Once fighters are equipped with shielding systems, the shield component of the ETS will appear.

On your HUD, you'll see the ETS display in the lower right. The three bars represent the three areas of energy allocation ([G] for guns/weapons, [S] for shields, and [E] for engines).

Shield energy rate boosted, at the cost of
Engine output and Guns/Weapons recharging.

With the default bindings, you may use the six keys found above the arrow keys on your keyboard ([Insert] , [Delete] , [Home] , etc) to control the energy allocation to each system. You'll notice as you increase power to one system, the other two levels will drop.

The effects of this balance is described below:

Guns/Weapons - The ETS level for guns determines how quickly your Primary energy bank recharges. If ETS for guns is set to zero, it will not recharge at all. You will still be able to fire until your bank depletes, but it will not receive more energy until you raise its ETS setting. Likewise, raising the ETS setting will recharge the reserve at a faster rate.

Shields - A high ETS setting for shields will cause your four shield quadrants to recharge at a faster rate. The energy is distributed to the four quadrants evenly. If one or more quadrant is at full strength already, the energy will essentially be lost, and not re-routed elsewhere.

Engines - Increasing power output to engines will raise the top speed of your fighter by 20-30%. The exact amount varies from fighter to fighter, dependent on their reactor capacity and make of engine. Similarly, decreasing the engine ETS setting below its default will cause your engines to operate at below normal capacity, lowering your top speed by up to 30%.

> **NOTE:** If an energy reserve is at full capacity (full weapons bank, or full shield charge), the energy directed to that system will not be automatically redirected, and will be "lost". Therefore, if your ship has a full weapons bank, you may wish to drop its ETS setting to move the extra energy to engines.

In addition to changing the rate at which reactor power is distributed, you may also shunt bursts of energy from shields to weapons, and back again without affecting power distribution settings. The default bindings for these two controls are:

`Scroll Lock` - transfer energy from Primary weapons/guns to shields.

`Shift` + `Scroll Lock` - transfer energy from Shields to Primary weapons/guns

Efficiently managing a fighter's energy system is crucial to survival in many combat situations.

WEAPONS SELECTION & LINKING

Many GTA fighters come equipped with multiple Primary and Secondary weapons banks. Only one weapon type may be loaded out into each bank.

With Primary weapons, you have the option of arming one or both of the two possible banks. Arming only one bank is useful when firing weapons like the Disruptor Cannon, which is designed to disable, but not destroy, a target.

Primaries set to single- and linked-fire modes

In fighters that carry two Primary banks, you may also arm both at once (default primary cycle keys are ⌊<⌋ and ⌊>⌋). This is called linking. When you have two cannons linked, both will fire together. However, because of the increased energy needs, they will fire at a slightly slower rate than when individually fired.

Secondary missile-type weapon linking is done somewhat differently. Only one Secondary bank may be armed at any one time, but you can set that bank to dual fire mode (default binding ⌊Shift⌋-⌊/⌋). This will launch twice the number of missiles per burst than single-fire mode.


*Secondaries set to single- and dual-fire modes*

H O T K E Y S

Hotkeys are one of the more advanced features in Descent: FreeSpace. They are designed to supplement the Comm Menu and provide greater flexibility to your wingman messaging.

Hotkeys may be defined for [F5] - [F12] on your keyboard. By default, [F5] is assigned to Alpha wing, [F6] to Beta, and [F7] to Gamma.

Hotkey Usage

After issuing an order using shortcut keys such as [Shift]-[C] or [Shift]-[A], you may then ignore the Comm Menu and hit a defined Hotkey to direct that order to only those ships. The ships assigned to one hotkey may be one entire wing, members of several wings, individual ships, or any combination thereof.

For example, let's say Alpha and Beta wings are comprised of bombers, while Gamma wing is fighters, who are to cover the bombers. If you used the Comm Menu, you would only be able to redirect the entire Gamma wing, or each individual Gamma ship by itself. If you wanted to make Gamma cover both Alpha and Beta, it would take many keypresses.

However, if you assigned Gamma 1 and 2 to the [F9] hotkey, and Gamma 3 and 4 to [F10], you could quickly direct Gamma to split and cover both Alpha and Beta. Or order two Gamma ships to cover Beta while ordering the other two Gammas to attack an enemy freighter.

This allows complete flexibility. You can quickly direct orders to arbitrary groups of ships, including specific members of different flight wings, as well as individual ships.

Defining Hotkeys

Hitting ⌨F3 from any mission or pre-mission screen, including the gamescreen itself, will take you to Hotkey Assignment. This is where you change or add hotkey definitions.

The screen lists all currently known ships for the current mission, divided into "Friendly" and "Hostile" groups. Wings are shown with a small triangle icon next to their name ▲ . Left-clicking on these icons will expand them to show their individual ship members.

To the left of each ship/wing name, you'll see the hotkey assigned to it (if any). Alpha wing will always be shown here assigned to ⌨F5 by default. Beta and Gamma will be assigned to ⌨F6 and ⌨F7, if they are present in the mission.

Double-clicking on a ship/wing name will add or remove it from the currently selected hotkey. You may also use the ⌨+ and ⌨- buttons to add or remove ships from the current hotkey.

The current hotkey is shown in the upper right. To change it, simply press the corresponding function key (⌨F5 thru ⌨F12).

Note that any ship/wing may be a member of multiple hotkeys.

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Special Thanks
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Chad Nicholas
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