

Edna/Exocist's *Starfinder* 2e Core Issues

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Short Summary

Starfinder 2e carries over the core ruleset of *Pathfinder* 2e to maximize compatibility between the two games. After having played and GMed the game from 3rd to 20th level, I have personally found there to be **many** areas where this feels clunky or otherwise unsatisfying. *Pathfinder* 2e's combat mechanics are grounded mostly in melee engagements, and *Starfinder* 2e attempting to transform the metagame into something ranged-, flight-, AoE-, and cover-centric has often felt very "square peg in round hole."

I think that it would be best for *Starfinder* 2e to slightly compromise on the idea of 100% compatibility with *Pathfinder* 2e and adjust some of the game's core rules to better suit a game wherein ranged weapons, flight, AoE, and cover are all more prevalent.

Initial Disclaimer: The Metagame Shifts as the Levels Rise

This section is **not** a complaint or an issue. It is here simply to lend context to everything else I write.

Much as in *Pathfinder* 2e, the metagame of *Starfinder* 2e shifts substantially as the levels go by. Consider the martial metagame at the start of 3rd level, when melee weapons are at their best due to Strength modifier to damage, while ranged weapons are single-damage-die peashooters. Then, think about the martial metagame at ~8th or ~9th level, when weapons are sporting two damage dice, weapon specialization, and two energy damage upgrades. At ~8th or ~9th level, rifle operatives and action hero and bombard soldiers are the strongest martials in the entirety of *Path/Starfinder* 2e, given two energy damage upgrades and Overwatch on the soldier, and their class feats get only better from there. This is merely a difference of ~5 or ~6 levels, and already has the metagame shifted considerably.

There are myriads of more nuanced cases. Melee soldiers start off moderately better than ranged soldiers at 1st level (aside from glaring mobility and no- or slow-flight issues), but become more and more outshined by ranged soldiers. Witchwarpers begin completely outclassed by mystics, but then gain some decent focus spells at character level 7th, and abruptly become the single strongest caster class at 10th with Twisted Dark Zone, doubly so at 18th with Complete Transposition and triply so at 19th with warped infinities. Higher-level ultralight wings allow PCs to kite enemies. *Advanced cloaking skin*, a 12th-level item, can warp high-level combat. *Singularity seed*, an 8th-rank spell, devastates large amounts of lower-level enemies, which are actually rather dangerous at party level 15th and above. These are just a few examples out of many.

I have played and GMed *Starfinder* 2e games at 3rd, 5th, 8th, 13th, 16th, and 20th level. I have seen how the metagame metamorphoses as the levels rise. I urge people to try to reframe points of reference such as "I played a solarian from 1st to 7th level. They picked up a 7th-level *commercial photon crystal* before anyone else could get an energy damage upgrade. My solarian kicked butt, so the class as a whole must be fine," or "I played a melee soldier at the lower levels. They were great as a tank, so melee soldiers seem good enough to me." These frames of reference are fair under the context of a class's lower-level performance, but do not address a class's relative competence at higher levels.

Second Disclaimer: No Major Header Here Concerns Only One Class

No major headers in this page concern only **one** class. For example, even though Complete Transposition at 18th and warped infinities at 19th totally break the endgame, they are self-contained to the witchwarper, so they [go into a different page](#).

I Really Do Not Like Tracking Ammunition Mid-Combat

Tracking ammunition mid-combat is such an inconvenience. In *Pathfinder* 2e, it is easy, because a crossbow or a firearm is either loaded or unloaded. Here, no: players and the GM alike have to painstakingly count each and every shot, so that they know when a reload is necessary.

I have not found this enjoyable in any way, shape, or form. It is especially frustrating when I am GMing, and I have to count ammunition for multiple enemy NPCs, who may also have different weapons. It has been so grueling that I am now firmly in the camp of "the rules should force a character to reload only as a cost for certain ammo-draining abilities, such as automatic fire."

Low-Level Ranged Weapon Damage

Ranged weapons become **substantially** powerful by ~8th or ~9th level, to be clear. By the time martial classes are sporting two weapon damage dice, weapon specialization, and two energy damage upgrades, ranged weapons outshine melee in most cases: and rifle operatives and action hero and bombard soldiers are the three strongest martials in all of *Path/Starfinder* 2e, aging even finer and finer with higher-level class feats.

At the lowest of levels, though, it can be frustrating and anticlimactic to use ranged weapons. Their damage is small and swingy. For example, a ranged soldier's performance is heavily dependent on their raw dice luck with damage rolls. A commercial stellar cannon deals a flat 1d10 damage, and it does not feel good for a 3rd-level ranged soldier to roll a 1 on that d10 while Area Firing.

I think that advanced (the weapon improvement category, not the weapon proficiency category) weapons and above are fine as they currently stand, but commercial and tactical weapons could use even a slight damage improvement.

Reach Reactive Strike Is a Menace

I have found NPCs and monsters with reach Reactive Strike (e.g. the crest-eater from *Second Contact*, the immolsivix from *Empires Devoured*) to be some of the deadliest around, simply because they can punish characters for using the ranged weapons that *Starfinder* 2e emphasizes. This one ability makes them outsized threats.

The *Pathfinder* 2e Connection

Please ignore this specific section if *Pathfinder* 2e compatibility is of no concern to you.

Reactive Strike can be on PCs, too. Sure, solarians can have reach Reactive Strike by 4th level, but given their so-so martial damage, it is nothing outrageous. What **is** egregious, on the other hand, is bringing a reach fighter, a reach dragon barbarian, or a reach giant barbarian into a *Starfinder* 2e game. This is supposed to be possible in the full release, after all: "This means that we expect to see parties of adventurers where classic fighters and wizards play alongside soldiers and witchwarpers—*pretty Drift, huh?*"

A fighter or a barbarian has Sudden Charge from 1st level, a feat that the solarian has no native access to. A fighter has Reactive Strike built-in, and a barbarian can have Reactive Strike from a 4th-level archetype feat or a 6th-level in-class feat. A fighter, dragon barbarian, or giant barbarian's Reactive Strikes are **scary**, and hard to avoid with a d10 reach weapon in hand.

A fighter, dragon barbarian, or giant barbarian can Sudden Charge right into a rifle-wielding enemy's face, then use their d10 reach weapon to threaten a hard-hitting Reactive Strike. If the enemy is lucky, and the terrain allows it, they may be able to Step, Step, and Strike. Sometimes, this is not an option, and even if it **is** possible, it is a severe tax on a combatant's action economy.

Hair Trigger (Even Post-Errata) and Overwatch Are Also Menaces

Movement and ranged attacks are some of the most common actions that a PC or an enemy will want to take in *Starfinder* 2e. So why are Hair Trigger (yes, even post-errata) and Overwatch so good at punishing these? I find it very unreasonable.

This is not as much of a problem for, say, lower-level Hair Trigger, because it is just a single-damage-die ping. (Of course, it can still disrupt a manipulate action on a critical hit.) By ~8th or ~9th level, however, I have seen operatives and soldiers either: (A) perform hard-hitting reaction attacks with ease, or (B) "pin down" enemies by restricting their actions to Steps, melee attacks, and the occasional special ability, just to avoid provoking a reaction attack.

Yes, [Hair Trigger will be made no longer capable of disrupting](#), but the threat of receiving a critical hit from an operative is still significant.

Flight

Fly Speeds are common in *Starfinder* 2e. This applies to both PCs (ultralight wings, one of **the** best purchases in the game for anyone other than a soldier, are a 3rd-, 6th-, 9th-, or 12th-level item for a fly Speed of 20, 30, 40, or 60 feet) and to enemies with ranged attacks (e.g. 1st-level observer-class security robots, 1st-level hardlight scamps, 2nd-level electrovores, the enemy in the final battle of the 1st- to 3rd-level adventure *A Cosmic Birthday*, the enemies in the final battle of the 1st-level-only adventure *Shards of the Glass Planet*).

Given the abundance of ranged combat options, this has major ramifications.

Flight Rules Can Be a Hassle

The flight rules of *Starfinder* 2e are inherited from *Pathfinder* 2e. Even after having played and GMed *Starfinder* 2e from 3rd to 20th level, I still find the flight rules to be clunky and unintuitive. I have never liked them.

I do not know how to fix this.

Measuring Three-Dimensional Movement and Range Is a Pain

I strongly dislike having to calculate three-dimensional movement and range. It slows the game down considerably. I do not want to have to bring out formulae just to measure movement and range. This is further complicated by rules such as "[moving upward \(straight up or diagonally\) uses the rules for moving through difficult terrain](#)," which can force a flying creature to take weird angles if they want to reach a certain position.

Measuring Three-Dimensional AoEs Is a Nightmare

Solarians have Black Hole and Supernova, soldiers rely on AoE weapons, witchwarpers have their quantum field, and casters have AoE spells in general. I have always, always found it brain-wracking to try to measure three-dimensional AoEs when combatants are at different elevations: and all the more so when those AoEs leave behind a lingering zone, such as a witchwarper's quantum field.

Certain other grid-based tactical RPGs solve this by using one-one-one diagonal movement and making their AoEs cubes, which are relatively easy to figure out the three-dimensionality of. *Path/Starfinder* 2e, however, uses one-two-one diagonals and sphere-based AoEs, which can be difficult to measure three-dimensionally.

But Actually, No Flight

Here is where I would have complained about many class features and feats specifying only Strides, rather than any form of movement, if the developers did not [promise a “traversal” trait to patch this exact issue](#). Barathu will no longer be debilitated in this regard, at least.

Zero-G

I have found the zero-g rules to be hard to decipher, and unclear on several points. Here are a few that immediately come to mind.

- Can a creature with an active jetpack still Stride on solid ground?
- What is the clumsy value for being untethered?
- What happens to a creature who is knocked prone (e.g. via critical specialization) in zero-g?
- Suppose we have a PC with Titan Wrestler and an active jetpack squaring off against a void shark from *Wheel of Monsters* in a zero-g environment.
 - **Scenario A:** The PC Athletics Trips the low-Reflex void shark and scores a critical success. “Trip causes the target to change the direction they float on a Success and become untethered on a Critical Success.” How does the void shark become un-untethered if the void shark already has the cosmic trait and a fly Speed?
 - **Scenario B:** The void shark uses Strafing Kerplunk to untether the PC. How does the PC become un-untethered if they already have an active jetpack?
 - If the answer to either is “The target cannot become untethered if they already have a fly Speed that works in a zero-g environment (or magboots),” then what is the point of specifying that these untether the target if a target without such a fly Speed (or magboots) would already be untethered anyway?

Beyond that, zero-G movement can be frustrating to track, much like flight. I once played in a combat wherein PCs were using magboots to stick along the exterior hull of a ship while fighting an asteray, and it was **very much** a bother to track on Foundry.

Turtling, Kiting, and Defensive Tactics

PCs and their enemies having greater access to ranged combat options (and flight) means that there is more incentive for PCs and their enemies to resort to turtling, kiting, and defensive tactics in general. In *Pathfinder 2e*, this is less of a problem, due to the game’s greater emphasis on melee; it is much more apparent in *Starfinder 2e*.

I personally do not like this. I much prefer it when combat encourages aggressive engagements more than playing defense.

Map Design

Map design plays into the above. Exocist and I have been using official Paizo *Starfinder 1e* poster maps, because those are the maps that Paizo still seems to be using in *Starfinder 2e* playtesting (e.g. Field Test #5, the GenCon demo against the jinsuls, *Shards of the Glass Planet*, *It Came from the Vast*, *Wheel of Monsters*).

I do not think these maps are that good for tactical combat, to be frank. From what I have seen, the bulk of them disincentivize aggressive engagements and instead encourage turtling, kiting, and defensive tactics.

Scenario Design

Scenario design **also** plays into the above.

Combat in the great majority of Paizo adventures has the objective of “wipe out the enemy side.” Take the final battle of *Empires Devoured*, for example. The PCs are trying to prevent some big ritual from happening. (Conveniently, the time scale allows the PCs to approach this at a leisurely pace.) How does this work, mechanically? The PCs fight the enemies, and **then**, once all of the enemies are dead, the PCs disarm the ritual; the adventure gives zero incentive to disarm the ritual mid-combat. This is fairly typical of Paizo adventures.

Even the final combat of *Shards of the Glass Planet*, in which the PCs are trying to escape from the eponymous glass planet, has a win condition of “wipe out the enemy side.”

Sci-fi wargames, and at least one grid-based tactical sci-fi RPG with lots of ranged combat, solve this through objective/capture points. These are usually zones on the map that units have to stay inside in order to “capture” them or something similar (e.g. hack the terminals). Alternatives include an object that needs to be “pushed” around the map by staying next to it (e.g. escort the truck), and points that need to be defended from enemy attacks (e.g. protect the towers). Often, these zones are out in the open, making them difficult to turtle in. I would like it if Paizo were to experiment with such scenario design in their adventures.

Objective/capture points also make AoE stronger. This may or may not be a good thing. As I discuss in [another document](#), AoE weapons are generally on the weaker side, but soldiers receive **so many** improvements to area and automatic weapons that by ~8th or ~9th level, action hero and bombard soldiers are two of the three strongest martial classes in all of *Path/Starfinder 2e*, and growing even more powerful as the levels rise.

Ramifications on Our Playtesting

It was an inelegant solution, but it was the best one we could think of at the time. We implemented a [ten-round victory countdown](#) to encourage aggressive gameplay rather than kiting, turtling, and defensive tactics.

Why is this “ten rounds, then PCs win,” rather than “ten rounds, then enemies win”? Usually, because **enemies** are the ones with control over whether or not the PCs can actually damage them, with mechanics like Burrow (like the [stone mauler](#), which appears in *Wheel of Monsters*), Sneak with an extraordinarily high Stealth modifier, or Speed so high that the PCs cannot possibly catch them. It can be trivial for **certain** to continuously hit-and-run while waiting for a recharge, for PCs’ buffs to run out, and so on: unless this timer is implemented, that is.

Even with this timer, a fair bit of kiting and turtling still happened. **Without** this timer, there would have been plenty more.

Cover Is Weird

[Cover is bidirectional, because it traces from center to center.](#) If you have cover from an enemy, because you are around a corner or whatnot, then that enemy also also has cover from **you**. This disincentivizes availing of cover.

It takes [another action](#) to make your attack trace cover from an edge or a corner of your square, thereby preventing your own attack from incurring cover.

[Take Cover](#) is also an action. I have seen it used **rarely**: usually, only when a combatant had nothing better to do. This is a three-action economy, and every action is precious.

Suppose you want to Stride over to a source of cover, spend an action to make your attack trace cover from an edge or corner of your square, and then Strike. That is three actions, and you did not even have an action left to Take Cover. Is this really a good use of three actions?

Simplistic NPCs Use Cover Better

PCs often have other actions that they want to use. An envoy, for example, probably wants to spend an action on Get 'Em!

When push comes to shove, activating these actions take higher priority than spending an action on making your attack trace cover from an edge or corner of your square, or spending an action on [Take Cover](#).

Simplistic NPCs, though, sometimes lack special actions. A –1st-level Ghost Courier from *A Cosmic Birthday*, for instance, is a very vanilla enemy. In any given adventure, PCs are likely to be attackers, while NPCs are probably defenders who are already in comfortable positions. Consequently, simplistic NPCs **can** afford to resort to defense-oriented routines, such as: (start of turn) already begin adjacent to source of cover, (first action) trace cover from an edge or corner of the attacker's square, (second action) Strike, (third action) Take Cover.

Simplistic NPCs Can Play Peek-a-Boo Instead

Simplistic NPCs, with their lack of special actions, have an alternative to relying on cover. For lack of a better term, I call this peek-a-boo:

Stride/Fly/Burrow around a wall or another obstruction with one action, Strike with a clear shot towards a PC, and then Stride/Fly/Burrow back around the wall or other obstruction, thus completely breaking line of sight and line of effect.

This is sometimes better than relying on cover and the Take Cover action, because it forces the PCs to spend actions manually chasing enemies around walls, corners, and other obstructions.

Operatives Laugh at Cover

The operative class can ignore cover: starting with 1 cover bonus at 1st level (e.g. lesser cover), then 2 at 11th level (e.g. standard cover), then 4 at 17th level (e.g. greater cover).

I find it awkward that one class can so easily trivialize a mechanic. It is not as though the operative is a weak class: oh, no, far from it.

Huge and Gargantuan Combatants

Many higher-level enemies are Huge or Gargantuan. (Huge enemies show up as early as creature level 3rd, and Gargantuan non-troops appear as early as creature level 8th.) Depending on the distances involved, it can be hard for these enemies to avail of cover, unless the map is specifically designed to include massive terrain features and structures.

Since cover [traces center-to-center](#), certain positions allow a PC to trace cover to the (elevated) center of a Huge or Gargantuan enemy's cube, ignoring cover outright. Of course, since cover is bidirectional, this cuts both ways; the same Huge or Gargantuan enemy can likewise ignore the PC's own cover, depending on the positioning.

Huge and Gargantuan enemies become more common as the levels rise, so cover likewise becomes less relevant as the levels increase.

To be clear, **this is not necessarily a bad thing**, and it is probably working as intended. It is simply an observation on the diminishing importance of cover.

Flight and Cover

[As previously mentioned](#), flight is common in this game. It is **significantly** more disruptive to cover (and total line of sight/effect blocks) than Huge or Gargantuan size is.

Unless there is a low ceiling overhead, it is easy for cover to be made significantly less important by all of the combatants flying around.

[Take this side-view diagram as an example.](#) The character on the left is, let us say, a 6th-, 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-level envoy or operative with a fly Speed of 30 feet from 6th-level ultralight wings. To the right is an enemy NPC, hiding behind a row (stretching towards and away from the viewer's screen) of 5-foot-high metal blocks. The NPC would normally be untargetable by Strikes, and a grenade would be wasteful and not particularly effective against this single enemy ([not that grenades are good to begin with](#)).

The envoy or operative uses an action to Fly 15 feet up and, with a teensy bit of free diagonal movement, to the right. If the PC is an envoy, they use Get 'Em! and Strike. If the PC is an operative, they use Weakening Shot. Either way, the attack is made with no cover whatsoever (because cover [traces center-to-center](#)): and more importantly, the attack was made possible, when it would have been impossible otherwise. The PC can then choose to either stay in the air, **or** fall safely thanks to their [Cat Fall](#) skill feat and expert Acrobatics (or maybe it is master, because the character also wants [Kip Up](#)).

Kiting

Depending on the items that the party picks up, how good the party's ranged attacks are (e.g. the 8th-, 13th-, 16th-, and 20th-level parties that Exocist played were all dedicated ranged PCs), and the precise environment that the GM sets a combat encounter in, it can be possible for PCs to kite enemies.

Have a look at the Speeds of various 6th- to 13th-level *Starfinder* 2e enemies:

- Swarm bastorox, creature 6, Speed 25 feet
- Agent of chaos, creature 7, Speed 30 feet
- Voice of destruction, creature 7, Speed 25 feet
- Azlanti dissident, creature 8, Speed 25 feet
- Zo!ceratops, creature 8, Speed 30 feet
- Captain Vasoya, creature 9, Speed 20 feet
- Corpse Fleet screamer, creature 9, Speed 25 feet, fly 20 feet (jetpack)
- Corpse Fleet sniper, creature 9, Speed 25 feet, fly 20 feet (jetpack)
- Troll bombard, creature 10, Speed 30 feet, fly 20 feet (jetpack)
- Fang of the Devourer, creature 9, Speed 25 feet
- Kehtarian mulch muncher, creature 9, Speed 25 feet, climb 20 feet
- Famesworn, creature 11, Speed 30 feet
- Heliacal Maw ferocitum, creature 11, Speed 20 feet, fly 20 feet (only while graviton-attuned)
- Sediya Vrath, creature 11, Speed 25 feet
- Sihedron Guard specialist, creature 11, Speed 25 feet
- Swarm dissolver, creature 11, Speed 20 feet, fly 30 feet
- Heliacal Maw stellar hulk, Speed 25 feet
- Kurshudi, creature 12, Speed 20 feet, fly 30 feet
- Shimmerspawn, creature 13, Speed 20 feet

Speed 30 and below tends to be kiteable by PCs with Speed 40+: especially if the creature lacks flight while the party has it, if a soldier in the party is applying suppressed (or 10th-level Anchoring Impacts for a crushing –20 to all Speeds), or both.

There are two ways to kite in this system: by land and by air. The former is significantly less reliable than the latter, and only a marginal improvement from *Pathfinder* 2e. Aerial kiting, on the other hand, is leaps and bounds better than in *Pathfinder* 2e.

By Land

Ground-based kiting is accomplished with [Trick Magic Item](#) (or a 2nd-level spellcaster multiclass feat), *2nd-rank spell chips* of [tailwind](#), and speed suspension cybernetic augmentations. For example, a human with [Fleet](#), *tailwind*, and a 4th-level speed suspension has a land Speed of 25 human + 5 Fleet + 5 item + 10 status = 45 feet. A higher-level human with [Fleet](#), *tailwind*, and a **12th**-level speed suspension instead has a land Speed of 55 feet, or 75 feet once per encounter, when they use their once-per-ten-minutes, [1,300-credit](#) cardiac accelerator.

If the whole party has high land Speed and good ranged attacks, and the GM sets the combat encounter in a wide, open space, then the PCs can feasibly kite enemies with slower Speed. This creates somewhat of an incentive for GMs to set battles in tight, cramped spaces that restrict kiting.

By Air

Ultralight wings, one of **the** best purchases in the game for anyone other than a soldier, are a 3rd-, 6th-, 9th-, or 12th-level item for a fly Speed of 20, 30, 40, or 60 feet. This alone makes it much more possible for PCs to kite.

There is a significant difference between having **a** ranged attack and having a **good** ranged attack. Many melee-oriented enemies in *Starfinder* 2e have **a** ranged attack, but not a good one. Take the 8th-level Zo!ceratops from *Wheel of Monsters*, whose ranged Strike is 5 less accurate and deals only ~61% as much damage as their main melee Strike. Look at the 13th-level shimmerspawn from *Empires Devoured*, whose ranged Strike is 3 less accurate and likewise deals merely ~61% as much damage as their main melee Strike.

If the whole party has flight and good ranged attacks, while the enemies lack flight and have poor to no ranged attacks, and the GM sets the combat encounter beneath a high ceiling or an open sky, then the PCs can just keep flying above the enemies. This likewise generates an incentive for GMs to keep combats underneath a low ceiling.

Ramifications on Our Playtesting

My associate in this playtesting endeavor, Exocist, was the one who picked out maps and dictated starting positioning. Once we started playtesting at 13th level, whenever the enemies had mediocre Speed, poor ranged combat capacities, or both, Exocist trended **heavily** towards the PCs starting off completely surrounded and with a roof overhead: [example #1 with party 13A](#), [example #2 with party 13A](#), [example #3 with party 13B](#), [example #4 with party 13B](#).

Why did Exocist do this for maps and starting positioning? Because Exocist **absolutely did not want** the enemies to get kited, whether by land or by air. However, even with these rather contrived initial positionings, the party still got to kite enemies every so often, thanks to sheer Speed and flight.

No, Monsters Should Not Be “Balanced Around the Idea That They Will Be Kited”

As Exocist and I have covered during our preliminary Field Test reports, *Starfinder* 2e is shaping up to have nightmarishly numbers-stacked melee monsters, such as the crest-eater (analysis [here](#)) and the glass serpent (analysis [here](#)). These two have high land Speeds, but they can be kited aerially: and I find this to be questionable design.

I do not **want** there to be enemies that are designed around the idea of “This monster will tear to shreds anyone it reaches in melee, but that is fine, because PCs are supposed to kite it from the air.” It is very binary. Either the party is equipped and optimized to do exactly that, and they win, or one or more PCs is unable to participate in the kiting and gets eviscerated by overwhelming melee numbers.

I am serious about that last part. The 4th-level crest-eater and the 5th-level glass serpent are terrifyingly strong melee brutes even by *Pathfinder* 2e standards. I really do not think this should slide just because “Well, yeah, but they can be aerially kited.”

Opening Roar Is Too Good an Ancestry Feat Even with Its Weakest Interpretation

Opening Roar is an ancestry feat I have seen on many of the characters I have played and GMed for. It is easy to see why. The character can almost always use Intimidation for initiative, and pair it with a Demoralize (at **least** two Demoralizes with Battle Cry). This has great synergy with not-actually-an-action Intimidating Shot and the *Pathfinder-2e*-native [Terrified Retreat](#).

Yes, at **least** two Demoralizes with Battle Cry, because Opening Roar is very ambiguously worded. Is it two total Demoralizes (the second paragraph of Opening Roar fully replaces the first sentence of Battle Cry)? Is it three total Demoralizes? Is it four total Demoralizes, because the second paragraph of Opening Roar never explicitly states that it replaces the first paragraph of Opening Roar, and never explicitly states that it replaces the first sentence of Battle Cry?

In our game, we were capping Opening Roar at just two Demoralizes, and it was still an exceptionally useful feat: maybe a little too good.

Barathu Plentiful Synthesis Is Too Good with *Pathfinder 2e* Material

Notably, Synthesize Materials explicitly references *Pathfinder 2e* content, namely, elixirs and potions. Therefore, Plentiful Synthesis, a 13th-level ancestry feat, gives one free elixir or potion, once per hour. I find this to be too strong due to how unrestrained it is.

Fabricator Breaks Downtime

The Fabricator skill feat completely blows away all other Earn Income mechanics. You can use Computers instead of Crafting to Craft tech items, each of your checks to make progress is performed in 1 hour instead of in days (the feat erroneously refers to pre-remaster legacy text of “4 days”), and you receive an additional multiplier based on the quality of your creator capsule. For example, a 75-credit tactical creator capsule doubles your efficiency, allowing you to compress 2 days of work into 1 hour, and higher-quality capsules things get only faster from there.

With several hours of free time, you can free up a non-negligible amount of funds. With days or even weeks of free time, you can effectively halve equipment costs.

Remember: the crafting rules save you money if you are willing to spend the time, but PCs usually do not have **that** much downtime to spare. Fabricator makes you spend **significantly** less time, which means you need only days or weeks to halve your equipment costs.

Method Actor is Too Universal a Social Skill Replacer

I have made extensive, extensive use of Method Actor on many of my PCs, simply because of the sheer degree of skill compression it offers. Little stops a character from simply declaring their persona to be “a better version of myself,” or something equally easy to portray and find social success with.

Yes, there is a threat of it dropping once the character rolls a critical failure, but that is a small price to pay considering just how **much** it compresses skills together. Add an item bonus to Performance, such as from a *diva’s microphone* (why is this Bulk 1 for a worn item, by the way?) and a +1 or +2 circumstance bonus from [Virtuosic Performer](#) (acting), and the character’s social skills are exceptionally high.

Two New Skills, But No Extra Skill Trainings

Starfinder 2e introduces two new skills: Computers and Piloting. Unfortunately, characters do not actually have any extra skill training slots. Therefore, it can often feel as though characters without a hyper-skill-compressor like Method Actor are oddly lacking in their ability to tackle noncombat tasks.

Nature Covers Too Much, and Life Science Lore and Physical Science Lore Are Clumsy

The Wisdom-based Nature skill covers way, way, way too much in *Starfinder 2e*: “fauna, flora, geography, weather, the environment, natural creatures (like animals, beasts, fey, and plants), the Universe, the First World, and the Elemental Planes.” That is virtually all astronomy.

Starfinder 2e attempts to solve this by offering “Life Science Lore” and “Physical Science Lore” as possible Lore skills. However, I find this to be an inelegant solution, because Nature still covers too much.

Bulk and Carrying Capacity

Yes, they will be [fixing up Bulk](#). This section is here simply to show why it needs to be fixed up.

Let us set the scene: a cryopike, a doshko, a fangblade (two-handed chainsword), a “hammer” (a two-handed hammer that probably needs a more specific name), a painglaive, a plasma doshko, an acid dart rifle, a scattergun (shotgun), an assassin rifle, an injection rifle, a shirren-eye rifle, and an aeon rifle are all **Bulk 1**. Okay, fair enough: these are all two-handers that could conceivably be on the high-volume, high-mass side.

But then, many *Starfinder 2e* items are Bulk 1+ for little apparent reason. Magboots being Bulk 1... okay, maybe, given that these are metallic boots. However, we also have energy pistols, the **worn** *diva’s microphone*, and other items also at Bulk 1. A significant number of guns are Bulk 2 or 3, making them hard to wear as backup weapons, short of taking Hefty Hauler, casting *ant haul*, or both. (It is still not worthwhile to invest in Strength as a non-melee character. It is too costly to do so. Just take Hefty Hauler, *ant haul*, or both, and call it a day.)

The only Bulk L gun is the semi-auto pistol. Energy pistols are all Bulk 1. Therefore, the semi-auto pistol is the only gun that works while [Swallowed Whole](#).

Ranged soldiers are not much better off. Yes, they have walking armory, but all of their desired weapons are Bulk 2 or 3, and they want heavy armor.

Starfinder 2e’s containers are missing the *Pathfinder 2e* [backpack](#)’s provision concerning effective Bulk reduction.

Medium Armor is Very Niche

Heavy armor is for soldiers. Light armor is for everyone else, who can pick up ultralight wings and fly around with ease.

Who is medium armor actually for, then? It is stuck in an awkward in-between: not good enough for a soldier, yet incompatible with ultralight wings.

Damage Resistances Are Too Cheap

I have played against and GMed with many of the monsters available in *Starfinder* 2e sources. Energy damage is common, yes, but physical damage remains frequent as well. So in that sense, dermal plating has constantly saved characters from plenty of pain, especially when facing large clusters of weaker enemies.

The item is very cost-effective. For example, a 1st-level, 180-credit item gives a character a constant resist 1 physical, while a 10th-level, 9,000-credit item nets a character a constant resist 5 physical. A 16th-level, 90,000-credit version confers resist 8 physical. I have squeezed dermal plating into virtually all of my characters, because it is just that good.

Dermal plating obsoletes most armor specializations. There is one, though, that remains very valuable: ceramic, because it grants resistance to acid, cold, fire, and electricity. This plus dermal plating gives a character resistance to many common damage types.

Unfortunately, ceramic armor specialization is in an awkward spot in *Starfinder* 2e. The only *Starfinder* 2e class with armor specialization is the soldier, and a ranged soldier does **not** want to use the only ceramic heavy armor because it has [bulwark](#): a **forced** replacement of Dexterity modifier for +3. A ranged soldier, who is heavily incentivized to invest into Dexterity, actually penalizes their Reflex against damaging effects by using any bulwark armor.

At higher levels, even better than is [energy aegis](#), available to all spellcasting traditions. *Starfinder* 2e enemies often employ energy damage, and energy aegis cuts into this considerably. For example, when the party is facing 12th-level immolsivixes from *Empires Devoured*, whose Bomb Barrage inflicts four separate instances of energy damage (fire, sonic, fire again, sonic again), an *energy aegis* can reduce damage from that Bomb Barrage by 20!

Holy Damage Is Hard to Come By

Some enemies in the playtest have regeneration, weaknesses, or both, keyed to holy damage. These include Midwives from *A Cosmic Birthday* and atrocites and kurshudis from *Empires Devoured*. Any fiends imported from *Pathfinder* 2e likely have the same regeneration, weaknesses, or both. Fighting a [nessari](#), with regeneration **and** weakness keyed to holy, is so much more of a pain in *Starfinder* 2e than in *Pathfinder* 2e.

Starfinder 2e gives virtually no native access whatsoever to holy damage, since no classes are eligible for sanctification, and no spells are holy. The playtest instructs us to use *Player Core* spells, but "[Players should avoid using Pathfinder Second Edition ancestries, backgrounds, classes, equipment, and feats that aren't explicitly included in the playtest](#)." Thus, our **only** option for holy damage is [holy light](#): an attack spell, and we do not have access to [shadow signets](#) to improve our accuracy.

This would not be a problem at all in *Pathfinder* 2e due to the greater access to holy damage, such as throwing [holy water](#) at a square adjacent to the target for [splash](#) damage, using a [holy](#) rune, taking [Champion Dedication](#) and availing of [the fall 2024 errata](#) that makes it hand out the champion's sanctification class feature ("You gain the holy trait and add that trait to any Strikes you make"), or selecting the ever-controversial Exemplar Dedication and Basic Glory (Sanctified Soul).

Perhaps a simple solution would be to simply present a port of the lowly, 2nd-level [holy](#) fusion from *Starfinder* 1e?

Borai Twist Up Undead Mechanics

Judging from the two mentions of "as if you were a living creature," borai appear to **not** be living creatures. However, they do not have void healing. This confers upon them a variety of cheesy immunities.

Spells like [desiccate](#) and monster abilities such as [Aura](#) of [Misfortune](#) simply cannot affect a borai. A spell like [execute](#) or *Starfinder* 2e's own *death sentence*, or an effect such as a psychopomp's [Shepherd's Touch](#), likewise fail against a borai, who takes harmless vitality damage.

Borai are also [immune to bleed due to being nonliving](#), which hardly seems intentional.

Augmentations Make Constitution Even More Important Than Usual

Constitution is already a valuable attribute that nearly every character wants to raise. I really, really do not see why it should be made **even more** important by having it be what determines a character's maximum number of augmentations.

Advanced Cloaking Skin Defines High-Level Combat

Have a look at the higher-level monsters in *Wheel of Monsters* and *Empires Devoured*. Absolutely **none** of them have a precise alternate sense. Only two of them have *truesight*, and one of them is a support caster rather than a primary attacker.

The 12th-level *advanced cloaking skin*, then, is a major debilitation against most of these enemies. Three times per day, for just a single action, the character gains 4th-rank [invisibility](#).

All of the parties I have played and GMed for at 13th level and above have had 12th-level *advanced cloaking skin*. It is just that beneficial. 4th-rank *invisibility* is a significant offensive and defensive buff. At higher levels, parties have used [hidden mind](#) to maintain the advanced cloaking skin even against *truesight*; it appears on the arcane and occult lists, and is conveniently an 8th-level granted spell for the healing connection mystic.

One close *Pathfinder* 2e equivalent, I believe, is the 9th-level consumable [dust of disappearance](#), a legacy item from the original core rulebook that was never reprinted in the remastered *GM Core*. However, this is inferior in one key way: it takes an Interact action to activate, which means it needs to be held in an otherwise free hand. Even if a character specifically starts combat with *dust of disappearance* in one hand and uses it with an action, the character needs to spend another action putting their hand back on a two-hander or whatnot.

Another close *Pathfinder* 2e equivalent is the pre-remaster, 12th-level [cloak of elvenkind](#) which takes two actions to activate, and only twice per day (assuming the character also has pre-remaster, 5th-level [boots of elvenkind](#)). The post-remaster, 12th-level [cloak of illusions](#) can be used only once per day.

You might notice that parties [13A](#), [13B](#), [16A](#), [16B](#), [20A](#), and [20B](#), half from Exocist and half from me, had *advanced cloaking skin* on **all** characters. This is likely a sign that a certain item is too good.

Singularity Seed Distorts High-Level Combat

Singularity seed, an 8th-rank spell, completely distorts high-level combat unless the GM specifically takes measures to select enemies, arrange the map, and dictate starting positioning in such a way as to discourage its use (which, of course, is precisely what my GM has been doing, knowingly or otherwise, and even then, one map and its enemies were still sucked up into a seed regardless).

It is very, very oppressive. It prompts a Reflex save against all creatures in the area the moment it is cast. It prompts a Reflex save from a creature whenever that creature uses an action to move within the radius, or whenever that creature ends their turn. CS/S/F/CF is still 0/10/20/30 feet of dragging; it is possible for the spell to be cast, for the epicenter to appear right next to an enemy, for that enemy to succeed on the Reflex save, and for that enemy to be sucked right in regardless. It is hard to get away from the radius, because moving away from the epicenter is halved movement, and remember, simply moving in the area prompts a Reflex save.

Many types of creatures are screwed if they get sucked into the epicenter. They take 10d10 void damage for entering, and another 10d10 at the start of their turn. The only action that a creature sucked in can take is Athletics (Escape): nothing else, Athletics only. It is still an attack action that incurs MAP, and a critical failure still denies future Escape attempts during that turn.

I have seen an enemy get sucked into the singularity for 10d10, then take another 10d10 at the start of their turn, then luckily Escape, then get sucked right back in during the exact same turn for another 10d10. It is a totally tyrannical spell.

Enemies can cast it, too, whether from a repicked spell list or from a 10th-level [manifestation](#) spell. Even an Athletics-trained PC is practically doomed if they have only middling Strength: especially if the epicenter appears next to them.

Sure, it might be fun for a PC spellcaster to screw over an entire encounter this way, and I have seen this happen multiple times. Unfortunately, it is also possible for an enemy to make a *singularity seed* appear next to a trained-Athletics, low-Strength PC (ideally a spellcaster who would normally be able to dispel the *seed*) and suck them on anything but a critically successful save.

Bonus: Hazards Are (Still) Very Wonky

I would like to direct you to our [5th-level iconic playthrough](#), which entailed the six 5th-level iconics getting repeatedly slaughtered by an 8th-level disintegration chamber from the playtest rulebook: supposedly a “moderate” encounter.