

Bridge Crew Format Design Document

What is Bridge Crew Format?

Bridge Crew format is a set of changes to the standard STCCG 2nd Edition Rules, intended to be used with Decipher cards and TrekCC virtual cards.

At the moment BCF is in design and subject to change. It is likely that the final version will have some combination of: additional deck building rules, a bridge crew that you start the game with, and some changes to the play/draw and execute orders phases. You can see the current version in the Latest Rules section.

This document will update the latest state of the rules as ideas get tested.

Design Goals

The BCF rules are intended to achieve the following goals:

- You get to be more like a Captain and less like Q: getting to know and love the superstars in your bridge crew instead of having disposable "whoever you draw" pawns
- short enough game to fit multiple games in on a weeknight (aiming for 30 minutes per game)
- less uninterrupted time for one player
- easier for beginners
- easily recognizable for existing 2e players:
 - minimal bans (but there will probably be some)
 - minimal cards that don't work the way they read
 - minimal cards that are drastically more powerful because they assume some limiting factor that is not in this format (e.g. Neural Parasites is much stronger in Slipstream than standard, but not as strong in this format)
- similar amount of variety as in standard (although it is likely that the decks that are most powerful will be different from those in standard)

Latest Rules (v15 beta)

This is not a complete rulebook, just a list of changes from STCCG 2e.

BEFORE THE GAME

Starting bridge crew and support cards

You may start the game with 15 counters worth of cards from your draw deck.

This must include:

- 1 ship that is playable at your HQ (aka your flagship)
- 1 event with the **ritual** keyword

You may include:

- 1 non-unique, non-artifact equipment
- Any number of personnel that are playable at your HQ, as long as the total of starting cards does not go over 10.

Place the flagship and personnel at your HQ. *Both ship and personnel must be playable at that headquarters mission.*

Exception for the following no-HQ scenarios:

You may place the U.S.S. Equinox or U.S.S. Voyager at Caretaker's Array if you have no HQ. Bridge crew that would be playable to the U.S.S. Equinox or U.S.S. Voyager must be placed on the ship.

You may place the U.S.S. Relativity at Prevent Historical Disruption if you have no HQ. Bridge crew that would be playable to the U.S.S. Relativity must be placed on the ship.

If you have Ceti Alpha V and no HQ, Genetically Enhanced non-aligned bridge crew may be placed on the mission. Do not include a ship in your starting cards.

You cannot use "when you play" text on your starting cards. You also cannot include personnel or ships with "to play this card" restrictions; the game has not started yet so you do not command anything or have anything with which to pay costs.

Reveal your starting cards to your opponent

You must reveal all your starting cards to your opponent before the game starts. You may conceal personnel as in a normal game once the game has started.

IN-GAME CHANGES

At the start of each turn, decide whether you will take a *Supply Turn* or an *Orders Turn*. You cannot do both in one turn.

Supply Turn

Place flagship at HQ:

Place your flagship (and any number of personnel at the same mission as your flagship) at your HQ. Your ship does not need to be staffed.

Play/Draw:

Take a normal play/draw phase (7 counters to draw/play), except:

you cannot play or place cards at your opponent's HQ, regardless of card text.

Orders Turn

Execute Orders:

- You may take any number of order actions that your cards allow, beaming, ship movement etc.
- you may only make one mission attempt per turn
- ships are not destroyed by having 3 damage markers placed on them
- You cannot move your cards to your opponent's HQ

Victory conditions

The first player to solve both space and planet, and have 70 points wins the game.

Time limit

30 minutes IRL, 45 minutes online

****All other rules are the same as a standard game****

DECK BUILDING RESTRICTIONS

Banned Cards

You may not include any of the following in your deck:

Phoenix, Risen from the Ashes

Pivotal Destiny

Causal Recursion

Founder's Homeworld, Contingent Refuge

Orbital Weapons Platform

These cards are much a bit harder to deal with in BCF than in standard, because of the shorter time limit to the game.

No-Win Situation

No-Win Situation can give an immense advantage to any deck that can produce lots of counters; since it is not team stamped there will be many possibilities. In BCF it is really easy to create a mega counter setup from turn one to pay for two or even three copies.

Strategy (v15)

There are several ways deck building can take advantage of the new rules:

- You don't get to draw cards on your orders turns, so you want cards in hand that are useful even when you aren't spending counters, e.g.

 - Interrupt cheaters

 - Fuel for ongoing effects, e.g. Treachery Klingons to discard for Gowron or Feds to place on Security Drills

- Drawing in the orders phase is good because you get to see more of your deck without needing a supply turn, e.g.

 - Data Laughing

 - Stunning Reversal

- When you do take a supply turn, you want cards that can quickly restore you to mission solving capacity, e.g.

 - Cheap staffing

 - mission skills

 - Good attributes

- The only reason for including extra ships is for interference with your opponent, or if a really expensive ship has a super strong ability but you don't want to use those counters on your bridge crew

- Kill dilemmas can force a supply turn (i.e. no progress on mission solving for an entire turn) and therefore kill prevention is good

- Your opponent's bridge crew probably has really good abilities so Dereliction of Duty seems good

- Swashbuckler and Equipment Malfunction are good if people lean more towards verbs than in standard

- Dilemmas like Qualification that reference interrupts become much stronger because there is more room for interrupts in a BCF deck

- Setting the Stage and other “if you have 9 personnel remaining” dilemmas are good because of the ease with which your opponent can set up mega counter turns early in the game.

What will be br0ken in this format?

Some of the rules changes lead to certain mechanics increasing their power dramatically. Some might necessitate banning certain cards, others might lead to rules changes, still others might just be something that the meta can solve.

Things that I am currently worried about:

- Big counter gain that can happen reliably on the first 2 turns
 - E.g. K'mpec, Protector of the Empire, New Power Rising, Common Purpose,
 - Big crews are not such a worry due to Mark of Gideon etc (IMO the meta will adjust), but big events (e.g. No Win Situation, Tenuous Alliance) can be a problem
 - Addressed to some extent:
 - allowing people to choose a ritual from their deck lets them bring Code of the Ushaan to every game
 - Banned No-Win Situation
- “If you command X missions in the same region” or “If all of your non-HQ missions are X” requirements are easier to meet
 - E.g. Shankar

Things that I have been worried about in the past:

- There are no spare missions to escape if one mission gets blocked
 - E.g. ~~Orbital Weapons Platform~~, ~~Biogenic Weapon~~
 - SOLVED in v15: return to 5 mission setup
- No-HQ decks are a puzzle ... do they get three missions? Or is e.g. Ceti Alpha considered a headquarters?
 - SOLVED in v14: certain missions can be used instead of an HQ. They are not attemptable and are considered to be worth zero points
- Counter reduction is really bad when you have limited counters

- Karreman Fleece, Molecular Reversion, Tribunal Sentencing, Unsavoury Customers
 - SOLVED in v11: time to set up counter denial will be a loss for most turns where your opponent is just solving missions; on those turns you have 7 counters
- Discard can _easily_ wipe out a 3 card hand
 - Gal'Gathong, Reman Subterfuge
 - SOLVED in v11: We are back to a 7 card hand / up to 7 counters to spend on draws
- Powerful "lose 5 points" abilities can have an entire mission's points dumped into them
 - SOLVED: by making you need to win with by reaching your printed points total in v11
- Small swings in personnel e.g. capturing/assimilate/kill are much more powerful when you can only replace 3 counters worth of personnel each turn.
 - SOLVE in v11: More counters to spend
- Destaffing is scary with only 3 counters
 - SOLVED in v11: Supply turns are back at HQ
- Missions that are solved for fewer than the printed points allow you to build a big bridge crew without having harder missions to solve
 - E.g. Wolf 359, Last Stand; Aid Lost Colony
 - SOLVED in v11: by making you actually need the printed points total
- Draw deck randomness is reduced because of bridge crew being removed before drawing starts. $35 - 8 = 27$ cards.
 - ☞—SOLVED in v13 increased draw deck minimum to compensate for the starting crew being removed before the start of the game
- Harder to escape interaction at your HQ because you have to take an orders turn to beam people on/off a ship
 - E.g. Pseudopod, TR-116 Rifle, Queen's Borg Cube
 - ☞—SOLVED in v13 by preventing personnel being played at opponent's HQ

Explanation of Design Goals

More like a Captain, Less like Q

Trek has characters, the TV show is more like an adventure/RPG than an RTS battle in space. Getting to know and love your superstar bridge crew is easier when you start with them every game instead of sometimes appearing or not, depending on your draw.

Another aspect: if your bridge crew is important, you can't be drawing and playing so many cards that you're completely replacing them every three turns. In the whole of TNG Season One, only Tasha bit the dust. They scrapped and dodged and puzzled their way out of every other bad situation.

Having a smaller number of cards available for longer makes it easier for beginners to know the good cards that are linchpins of their deck, as opposed to the ones that are just there for repetition of a skill. Otherwise, they need a lot of games to learn these things. Before that, their deck will just seem ponderous. Or put another way: I want people to be closer to how to “do 2e right” from the start.

Shorter games

In my neighbourhood, trek is no-one's main game (except for mine). That means I have to get people together without taking up too much prime time. The biggest success I've had has been casual weeknights, but with the standard format we get about 1.5 games in and it's suddenly closing time.

We tried slipstream, which is good for timing (30 minutes), but that format has some serious problems. Bad experiences like: “Oops that card doesn't work in this format”; “Oops I won on my first attempt”; “Oops that card shuts down my only plan, you win” happen too easily.

I am also hoping to create something that matches other CCG players' expectations of game length. Unless you played the serious golden oldies (B5 CCG or Middle Earth perhaps), 1-1.5 hours is not that. I am aiming for 30 minutes.

In more recent times M:TG players have become used to longer commander games. This is worth considering.

Less uninterrupted time for one player

Games with long turns where you might as well be on your phone while you wait are not great. I am taking aim at multiple complicated play/draw phases here.

For the v15 beta, we will allow multiple mission attempt turns again. I'll keep an eye on this.

Easier for beginners

Our market is small, but it's way bigger than the current player base. Think about: the number of Star Trek fans in the world; the number of CCG players in the world who might like a free CCG that is still being maintained; the number of random geeks you know with twistable arms (ok that list might be shorter) if only there were fewer obstacles (we can make the list of arm-twistable geeks longer).

Two themes I am currently looking at are:

(1) the amount of time that new players need to think about who to play at the start of every turn. 2e makes players pick 2-3 cards out of 7 when it really isn't going to make a difference in those first few turns who you play ("just play 7 dudes and attempt, trust me you'll be fine").

(2) trying to move some in-game decision making before the game. An experienced player can help with decision making before the game, and the beginner just arrives to play with enough to start immediately.

Recognisable for 2e players

There's an existing player base, and an existing card pool that has been tested and balanced for more than 15 years. We can't build either from scratch.

I want the number of surprise bad experiences from: "what, this card is banned?" or "that card isn't good? Now my deck sucks!" to be minimal. It's cool if a card is more powerful than expected in a new format, but it shouldn't destroy the game.

That also means no dream cards, and the format should be able to handle new cards designed by TrekCC.

Variety

Lots of strategies should be viable. I am anticipating that this is linked to not making very drastic changes, because I doubt playtesters will have this format in mind while they are testing.

Rules Variations (in or out)

Documenting various things that have been thought about. Not putting a lot of effort into explaining these thoughts nicely.

Currently in

These are in the latest version of the rules:

- * Seed a captain or a bridge crew

- WHY: a faster start to the game, get to know your heroes rather than just whoever shows up
- only works with a low number of cards to play/draw each turn (your bridge crew isn't special if you double the number of starting people every 2 turns)

- * ~~One mission attempt per turn.~~

- ~~- WHY: this limits 10 minute multiple mission turns towards the end of the game, especially important after time~~

- This is out for v15 beta. The “everyone attempts”, long dilemma pause, “I can’t pass that, your go” turn is quite boring for the active player. Give them some more decision making power again.

* Remove the ship destruction rule.

- WHY: Losing your starting ship and bridge crew is a serious NPE and removing this rule does not affect the text of many (any?) cards

* allow seeding of events and equipment because a lot of flavour comes from these (and ETUs are good for keeping your dudes alive through kill piles)

Currently bubbling under

These ideas are recent suggestions that I am likely to test:

* scrap downloads because they increase time limit

* have a maximum crew limit and allow personnel to be replaced (discarded and a new personnel enters play)

* maximum carrying capacity per ship, based on cost or staffing or an attribute

* you can only include uniques in your bridge crew, not in the rest of your deck

Currently not included

These ideas are either tried and discarded, or would require greater design/testing effort and I’m not yet sold on them.

* Use a smaller number of counters

- WHY: fewer cards in play for most of the game is a goal, I’d rather players get familiar with their hero cards and what they draw/play is just spice

- WHY NOT: makes a lot of cards make much less sense and many more change their usability greatly. Could hurt bad if counter denial or discard is a big thing. Switching between execute orders and play/draw turns achieves a lot of the same things more simply.

* A flat number of counters per turn, ignoring cards that give you more counters.

- WHY NOT: Switching between execute orders and play/draw turns achieves a lot of the same things more simply.

* missions do not give you points.

- WHY: You don’t need points for victory and it would be bad to be able to dump your entire first

mission's points into Krim or Powershift. If you want to use those verbs, get the points through draw deck things that gain you points.

- WHY NOT: difficult to explain

- * allow non-uniques to report to ships (like, they've always been there, but you only notice them when they wear red and beam down with Kirk)

- WHY: To deal with destaffing in a game where you're probably not going to have a lot of crew to spare

- WHY NOT: this is a big departure from the current rules and could break something

- * Use a maximum total cost in deck building

- WHY: another way to make cost and mission points matter

- WHY NOT: it makes deck building complicated and the bridge crew means that mission points do still matter

- * Remove the play phase, no worrying about counters to draw or play. Instead draw a small number of cards each turn (1-3?), and you can play anything you draw

- WHY: drawing and playing is a very small part of the skill in a turn, but new players feel they have to take a long time making a good decision about who to play (even when I tell them - "don't think you have to read everything, it'll be a few turns before you can do anything with them")

- your maximum draw deck cost is what prevents things from being imbalanced here

- the only decision is do you play or do you keep some cards in hand to pay discard costs

- WHY NOT:

- Loads of cards (entire affiliations/teams) depend on discounts (e.g. past Klingons, Khan, TNG), which just make no sense when there are no counters

- it might be necessary to ignore "when you play" abilities

- * Don't use costs for dilemmas in the game, instead you can play anything you draw

- WHY: one less decision during the most complicated phase; for a new player forgetting the cost rules and two dilemmas fizzle is a NPE.

- but remembering rule 1, make the total cost of dilemmas available 20-50% less than the average of competitive piles now so that you won't face 3 8-costers in one attempt.

- maybe a 1x limit on dilemmas so you can't face 3x Nothing to Lose

- WHY NOT: too easy to kill an entire crew or wall infinitely, game length is short enough without this simplification

- * Don't play cards to your HQ, instead seed a ship and everything gets played there

- WHY: "fly home, swap ships, fly back" is 95% repetitive work and no skill. It's also not really very trek. 5 year mission, right? No risk of getting ship-screwed, or destaffing, and this way your superstar ship is actually cool. Can't see anyone seeding an Excelsior.

- HQs are only relevant for deck building restrictions

- maybe NA people can only play to planet missions, and you only get to use them when you get there?
- WHY NOT:
 - DS9 will be less DS9 without, um Deep Space Nine, but just think of it as Dominion war era where they're hanging out on the Defiant all the time
 - HQ-less teams (Voyager, Relativity, Equinox) will have less advantage vs their weaknesses, I'm not sure how that will balance out
 - it's probably ok to have other ships in the deck, but maybe you can't attempt from them?
- * One mission location per turn. You can move to another mission, but doing so ends your turn.
- "fly home, pick people up, fly back" is not really very Trek (apart from DS9). It's a 5 year mission!
- this only works (obviously) if your new people play to the ship
- to make interaction at other missions work, maybe the right thing to do here is to call one mission the active mission, and swapping the active mission is what ends your turn. This would be orthogonal to how much range you have... so you can still use range to fly elsewhere and disrupt things.

If I get hit with a madstick

These are the seriously out-of-nowhere ideas that will probably never go anywhere but I just wanted to write them down:

- * Instead of announcing an attempt, your whole turn is an attempt. At the start of the turn, your opponent draws dilemmas for the whole turn, and she gets to decide when to play them (one dilemma at a time). At the end of the turn, if you have unstopped people at a mission with the right requirements, you solve the mission
- WHY: mission attempts are like a whole separate game-within-a-game. They're also often several minutes of one player doing something (choosing dilemmas) while the opponent has nothing to do.
- might need some complicated rules about actions, but basically the active player gets to do an order and then the opponent can choose to throw a dilemma or not; then next order;
- this might introduce situations where a combo of two orders gets disrupted half-way through because order number 1 is executed but then that personnel is stopped before order number 2 is executed.
- how many dilemmas to draw is an issue:
 - a) that might be based on the total number of people you have in play and the total number of overcome dilemmas at ALL missions,
 - b) or if playing the one mission per turn rule, your opponent draws at the start of the turn, based on the number of people/dilemmas at the current mission after all your new personnel are played.

* Parallel turns. We BOTH draw and play cards and we BOTH draw dilemmas at the start of the turn. I make an order, you make an order, until we both pass, then we draw/play and start the next turn.

- this would result in you having to decide at every point whether to take an action to advance your agenda, or to throw a dilemma to hurt your opponent.

- and it would result in a very different set of skills to play the game (guessing what my opponent can do next, forecasting how many actions we each have)... that makes this the rule I'm most lukewarm on.

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Design Document Changelog

v15 beta

- Simplified bridge crew rule: start with 15 counters, including 1 ship, 1 ritual, and any number of personnel
- New victory conditions: 1 planet mission, 1 space mission, 70 points
- Unique personnel can be played from the discard pile at cost +2 during a supply turn
- Recommended card pool is back to standard

v14

- You now start with 10 cards: 1 ritual, 1 ship, optionally 1 non-unique, non-artifact equipment, and the rest personnel
- No HQ rules: Caretaker's Array, Prevent Historical Disruption, and Ceti Alpha V, Forge Settlement can be used in place of an HQ. They are worth 0 points and cannot be attempted
- Recommended card pool is Hall of Fame

v13.1

- Clarification: ships cannot be chosen as flagship if they require that you command something in order to play them.
- Tidied up Broken section with v13 fixes

v13

- new banned cards: No Win Situation and Orbital Weapons Platform
- Seed a ritual
- Minimum deck size increased to 45
- Draw one card on orders turns
- You cannot play/place/move your cards to your opponent's HQ

v12.5

- Banned Founder's Homeworld, Contingent Refuge
- Introduced term "flagship" to refer to the ship you started with
- You may move any number of personnel at the same mission as flagship at the start of a supply turn (not all personnel)
- Bridge crew and flagship must be playable to the HQ

v12

- Added banned cards
- Improved strategy section

v11

- change version numbering so that people don't expect an imminent, final v1.0
- Each turn, choose either a Supply (play/draw) or Execute Orders turn. You can only do one of these phases in a turn, not both.
- At the start of each supply turn your crew + ship is placed at your HQ
- Remove other changes to the play/draw phase
- Victory conditions now include having at least as many points as your printed mission total

v0.8

- Removed all deck restrictions apart from bridge crew
- Removed saving extra counters to the next turn
- Added playing non-unique personnel to a ship
- Removed ship destruction rule

v0.7.2

Missions do not give points; if you want to spend points during the game you have to get them some other way, e.g. Promenade school.

v0.7.1

- Bridge crew max cost is now TOTAL missions points divided by three (rounded up)

v0.7.0

- Draw deck restrictions removed, aside from standard rules
- Dilemma piles are now restricted to max counters = total points on all missions
- One mission attempt per turn

v0.6.2

- Deck restrictions are simplified: max counters = total points on all missions, seeded ship and bridge crew count towards that
- Bridge crew cannot be more than 7 personnel
- No more than 2 copies of each dilemma

v0.6

- Renamed format to Bridge Crew format
- Play/Draw phase is restored to the same as the normal game, except you get 3 counters only;
- Ship cost is excluded from your total counters

v0.5.5 Exclude the bridge crew cost from your deck total so that there are more counters available for surviving mass kills

v0.5.1 Numbers based on the lowest point value of your missions, instead of the highest

v0.5 drop the restrictions+rule changes to dilemmas, seed a ship and a bridge crew, total cost based on mission points, reduce the starting hand+draw+play allowance

v0.3.1 drop the minimum dilemma pile size, drop the max dilemma cost to 30

v0.3 increase deck restrictions to 20 / max 40 cost dilemmas and 35 / max 70 cost dilemmas