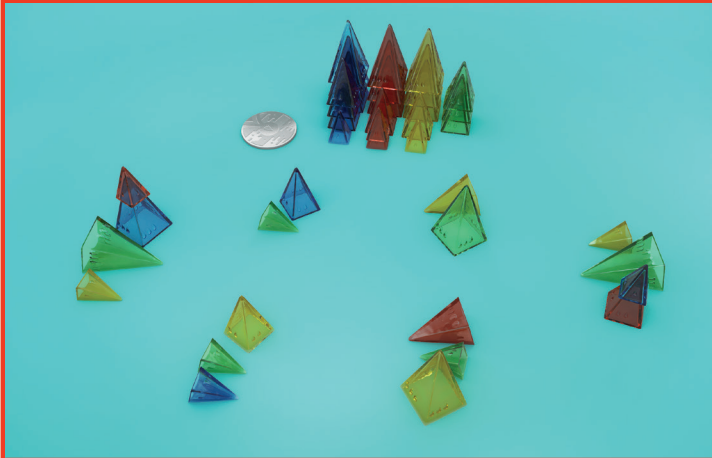




HOMEWORLDS

DESIGNED BY JOHN COOPER



2



LONG



COMPLEX

EQUIPMENT

- Three Trios each of Red, Yellow, Blue, and Green
- Turn Token



OVERVIEW

What Chess is to medieval warfare, Homeworlds is to Star Trek and Star Wars. (Actually, the best comparisons are Starship Troopers and Ender's Game.) Our people have discovered an alien race, but they are Evil and intent on destroying us, so we must obliterate them first. We are galactic overlords in this epic space opera, commanding fleets of starships, blowing up planets in our wake, and ultimately conquering the universe. And it's all done with what appear to be random clusters of colorful pyramids arranged upon the table.

GOAL

Dominate the universe by destroying the enemy's Homeworld, or conquering or destroying all of their ships at their Homeworld. You lose the game if you have zero ships at your own Homeworld, regardless of how many other stars or starships you might control.

SETUP

Stack up the pyramids, sorted by size and color, and place them to the side of the playing area. This is the Bank.

WHO STARTS

Flip a coin if the players' skills are evenly matched. Otherwise, the lesser-experienced begins.

HOW TO PLAY

Let's begin with the fundamentals of interstellar space travel:

- Star systems are marked on the playing field with upright pyramids. This "star map" displays only the star systems actually being visited by spaceships.
- Spaceships are represented by flat pyramids. The direction in which they point indicates who they belong to. Your pieces always point away from you.
- When a ship discovers a new star system, it appears on the star map, and when the last ship leaves the system, the star piece is immediately returned to the Bank.
- You can move a ship from one star system to another **ONLY** if the stars are of different sizes. Differently-sized star systems are connected, but same-sized stars are not. (Why? It's just the way the wormhole technology works...)
- A Binary Star (a system with two stars) is only connected to a star if it's of the size not included in the Binary Star.

THE FIRST TURN

The game begins with a setup round, during which the players choose their initial pieces.

- A Binary Star and Large Ship: To begin, take a Large spaceship (of any color) and place it with your Homeworld, made of two upright pyramids, in your choice of sizes and colors. Stack them up to form a Binary Star. (All Homeworlds are Binary Stars, and all other stars are single stars.)
- Choosing Your Homeworld: The decisions you make during setup will greatly affect the entire game. You need to make smart choices when deciding on the colors & sizes of your Homeworld stars and the color of your Large ship. (See Strategy Tips below.) If this is your first game, we recommend starting with a blue and red Homeworld and a green ship, with the second player choosing a different pair of sizes for their stars than did the first.

HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)



TURN OPTIONS

During each turn, you may perform one Basic action, OR you may return one of your ships to the Bank in order to gain as many as three Sacrifice actions. Also, at any time during your turn, you may invoke the Catastrophe option for any Overpopulation situation on the table.

- **Basic Action:** You may perform your Basic action in any system where you have a ship, using any power you can access in that ship's system.
- **Sacrifice Action:** The number of Sacrifice actions you get by removing one of your ships is equal to the pip count of that ship. You get that many actions, of that ship's color, in any systems where you still control a ship, regardless of colors you have available at that star.

COLOR POWERS

Access to a power you can use for your action is provided by one of the following:

- 1) Star: Color of the system's star
- 2) Ship: Color of a ship YOU control there
- 3) Sacrifice: Color of a ship you give up

Each color provides a different game option:

- **Green = Build** (The green Colonists construct the starships.)
- **Yellow = Move** (The yellow Navigators grok the wormholes.)
- **Red = Attack** (The red Warriors wield the weapons.)
- **Blue = Trade** (The blue Ice-Traders offer transformations.)

GREEN

Build a new ship, by taking a piece from the Bank and placing it next to one of your existing ships.

- **Same Color:** The color of your new ship must be the same as one of the ships you control in the system where the new ship is being Built.
- **Smallest Size:** The ship you Build must be the smallest size of that color currently available in the Bank.

YELLOW

Move a ship from the system it's in to any other Connected system (new or known).

- **Discovery:** Take a piece of your choice from the Bank, add it to the board as a star, then move your ship to that star.
- **Abandonment:** Return a star to the Bank immediately if zero ships are there.
- **Travel:** Move to any Connected system whether it is currently populated with your ships, your opponent's ships, or both.

RED

Take control of an enemy ship by turning the piece around so that it points away from you. (Note that attacking never destroys another ship; it's more like stealing than attacking.)

- **Size Matters:** You can only attack a ship if it's smaller or the same size as the biggest ship YOU have in that system. But note that a small red CAN be used to attack a larger ship — you just need to have your own larger ship (of any color) in that system, which can attack the enemy's ship using the power of your Small red.
- **Example:** Suppose you have a Small red and a Medium yellow, and the other player has a Medium red in the same system. Your Small red is not big enough to attack the Medium red, and your Medium yellow cannot attack on its own (except when the star is red). But together they can prevail, because the Medium yellow can "borrow" the power of the Small red.

BLUE

Swap one of your ships with a differently colored piece of the same size from the Bank. You can only trade exact size for exact size; if the size you want is not available, you cannot swap.

OVERPOPULATION

Too much of one color in one system can trigger a disaster. Overpopulation exists any time a single system contains four or more pieces of the same color — including ships on both sides AND the star itself.



HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)

CATASTROPHES

At any point during your turn, if you notice an Overpopulated star system, you have the **OPTION** to declare a Catastrophe in that system (even if you don't have a ship there). If called, all pieces of the overpopulated color are returned to the Bank. If this includes the star itself, then **ALL** ships at that location are destroyed (unless the star was half of a Binary Star, in which case it becomes a single-star, but still a Homeworld).

HOMEWORLD ABANDONMENT

It's OK to temporarily abandon your Homeworld as long as you have a ship there again by the time your turn is over. However, you are eliminated from the game if both stars in your Homeworld are destroyed, or if you don't control any of the ships at your Homeworld when your turn ends. If you destroy your opponent's Homeworld but lose your own in the process, the game ends in a tie.

HOW TO WIN

There are three paths to victory:

- 1) Direct Assault: Use Red to take control of all enemy ships at the enemy's Homeworld.
- 2) Fleet Catastrophe: Destroy all enemy ships at their Home by causing a catastrophe.
- 3) Star Demolition: Cause two catastrophes, destroying both halves of the Homeworld.

OTHER NOTES

THE TURN INDICATOR

It's very helpful to move a token back and forth to indicate whose turn it is. This helps avoid confusion (in cases of distraction or interruption), but also signifies that you're done with your move. Since one turn may consist of a sequence of actions, there are times when you won't realize that you want to rethink your move until after you've seen how it looks on the table. So think of moving the coin as being like clicking "send" on the orders to your fleet.

MARKING THE HOMEWORLD

It will be clear which star systems are some player's Homeworld for as long as both stars of such systems remain intact, since all binary systems are by definition someone's Homeworld. However, once a player's Homeworld is reduced to a single star, you may find it desirable to mark said system with a card or token of some kind, to remind the players of its importance.

ARRANGING THE STAR MAP

Because the layout of this game's playing area is free-form and ever-changing, players should feel free to move the star systems as needed, to positions that are the most desirable for seeing the connections. This process is sometimes called Star-Towing. Here's our system for arranging the board:

- Stars connected to a player's Homeworld are placed nearest to said Homeworld.
- Stars not connected to either Homeworld go in the middle.

Arranged in this way, each star is connected to the stars in the rows ahead and behind, but not to stars in the same row. Think of it as being like cars on a freeway: your ships (and the systems you control) are moved to your side of the road. Assuming you drive on the right side of the road, place your ships on the right side of your star, and move star systems that you control to the right side of the star map.

NOVICE VS. EXPERT

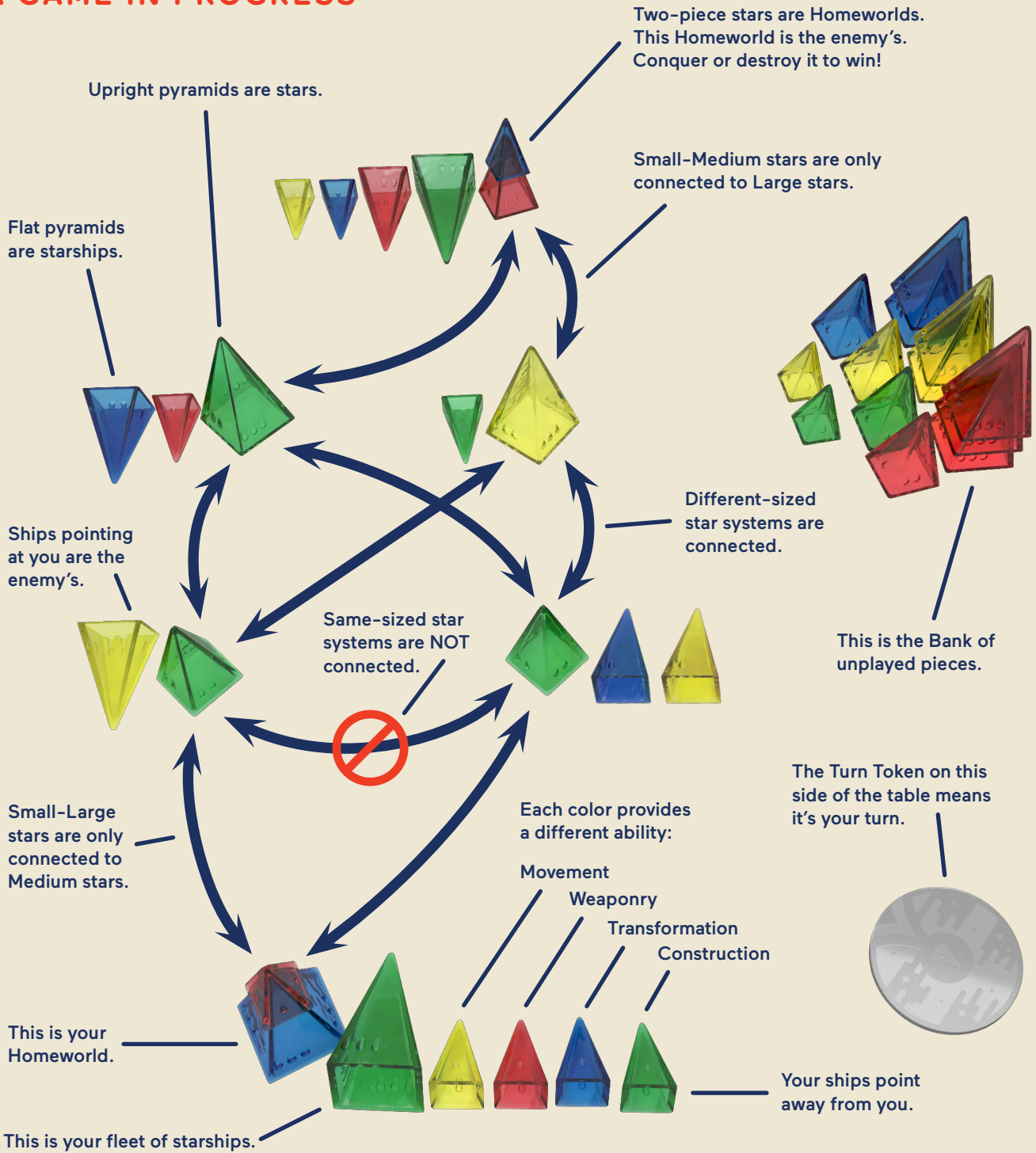
Homeworlds is a complex game with a steep learning curve. Because of this, novice players (known as "Junior Officers") will be no match for experienced players (called "Senior Officers"). To make the game equally challenging for both, a Senior Officer may wish to offer one or more of these headstart options to the new player:

- Second Turn Timewarp: After both players build their Homeworlds, the Junior Officer may be allowed to perform one or more bonus turns, so as to get ahead faster.
- Red Alert: Not unlike saying "Check" in Chess, the Senior Officer will say "Red Alert" whenever the Junior Officer is in immediate danger of elimination.
- Brain Transference: The Junior Officer is given one chance, at some point during the game, to completely change places with the Senior Officer for the remainder of the game.

HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)



A GAME IN PROGRESS





HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)

COMMON MISTAKES

Homeworlds is a difficult game to learn, and even seasoned players can make mistakes. Here are some of the concepts new players find most difficult to grok:

- **Can't Move There:** Beware of thinking two systems are connected when they aren't.
- **Can't Do That:** You can't use the power of a color another player has in the same system; only your own ships, the star itself, and power gained by sacrifices.
- **Can't Build That:** You can't grow a ship if you don't have a ship of that color in the same star system.
- **Can't Attack Yet:** The one-two punch nature of attacks in this game are confusing at first. You have to have the drop on the other player — you cannot move in and attack all at once. When you move a ship into my system, I get a turn to respond before you get to attack me. And during my turn I can (potentially) take instant control of your ship, as if it were a gift being delivered to my doorstep.

PHOTO DOCUMENTING

Homeworlds can be a long game. If you need to pause it, remember that everyone has a camera on their smartphones now so it's easy to save a record of the state of a game and reconstitute it later. Just make sure the picture includes the pieces in the bank, and a marker showing whose turn it is. When reconstructing the game, a check of your bank against the state of the bank in the photo will confirm if you have everything restored correctly.

HOMEWORLDS FOR MORE THAN TWO

Although originally intended by the designer as a game for more than two players, non-Binary variations of this game have gone the way of Icehouse. For starters, you can't even play with more than two unless you get more pyramids. (For each additional player, you need another Trio of each color.) Then you'll also need additional rules to determine who you need to knock out in order to win: You can fight to the last captain standing, each player can be seeking to destroy the one on their left, or you can assign secret Good or Evil roles to all players, with Good players seeking to destroy all Evil and Evil players seeking to destroy anyone. But while these variations can be interesting, it's the pure, two-player version that has become a classic.

THE SECOND TURN

It will almost always be the case that both player's second turns will be the same: the growth of a small ship of the same color as your initial Large. Other options don't make sense: there won't be anything to attack yet; even if you decide to begin with yellow, you can't go anywhere on your first turn; and if you wanted a different color than blue, you'd have chosen it rather than wasting your first turn changing your blue ship to another color. The only time when the second turn isn't automatic is in the rare case in which you went first and the other player created a setup that conflicts with yours in such a way as to make an immediate use of blue desirable.

STRATEGY TIPS

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ECONOMY

While Homeworlds may seem like a war game, like most wars, it's all about the financing. So keep a close eye on the bank! Here are some tips on banking wisely:

- **Don't Take the Last Serving:** Whenever possible, avoid being the player who has to take the last available Small or Medium piece of any given color. (You'd rather be the one who gets to build the first ship of the next size.)
- **Smart Shopping:** Wait for bargains, and snap them up when they're available. It's a good time to go shopping when there are three of a size available in the bank, but the best time is when there are two, since the other player will be opening up availability of the next size if they copy your action. Other good opportunities to look for are times when you might be able to sacrifice a green Medium to grow a couple of Larges, and times when you can leave the next size open because you know your opponent can't safely grow the next size themselves.
- **Never Get Frozen Out of Any Color:** Maintain control of at least one ship of each color (and seek to freeze out your enemy by monopolizing a color they lack). It's easy to get frozen out of a color early in the game, when most of the pieces in play are Smalls. If the only piece you have available to change into a new color is a Small, and the other player grabs the last Small of that color, you won't be able to get into that economy until you have a Medium available to transform... and that could take awhile. And by then, all the Mediums might be gone and they'll be building Large ships while you're still struggling to catch up.

HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)



CHOOSE YOUR HOMEWORLD WISELY

But what setup is best? Most Starship Captains agree that you need to start with Blue and Green along with either Red or Yellow. Beyond that, opinions vary. Some players like to start with Yellow, so they can move immediately, but others prefer starting off with a Red ship. Many like building a "Planetary Defense System" which means including Red as one of the two colors that form the Homeworld itself. As for the size pairings, here are the three possibilities:

- **Banker (Small-Medium star):** This setup gives you an edge when using the Investment strategy, since it moves first to Large systems.



- **Fortress (Medium-Large star):** This setup makes your Homeworld harder to invade as the game progresses, since the supply of Smalls needed for bordering star systems dwindles as players turn all the Smalls all into starships instead.



- **Goldilocks (Small-Large star):** The stars you can go to from here are "just right" because they're not too big and not too small.



AVOID SMALL UNIVERSE

If the second player chooses the same two sizes of pieces for their Homeworld as did the first player, the map will be far more compact than with non-matching Homeworlds. This shrunken universe makes the game very claustrophobic, and not as much fun. Choosing a "Gemini Star" (Large-Large, Medium-Medium, or Small-Small) also shrinks the universe.

AVOID GETTING BLUEBIRDED

Imagine you have exactly two ships at your Homeworld, and they're both the same color. Let's say they're blue. If your opponent has a large yellow, and two blue ships at near and far positions, they can knock you out in one move. Don't let this happen to you! (The name refers to a coffeeshop in Amsterdam called the Bluebird, where a particularly memorable game ended this way, back in the earliest days of the game's history.) There are two ways a Bluebird can happen, and one is easier to see coming than the other. Either way, you are vulnerable if you have exactly two ships at your Homeworld and they're both the same color.

- **The Easy Bluebird:** Your enemy sacrifices a yellow Medium to simultaneously move two ships of your color, from systems one jump away, into your Homeworld.
- **The Tricky Bluebird:** Your enemy sacrifices a yellow Large to move in two ships of your color, one from a nearby star and one from two jumps away.
- **The Sitting Duck:** This is like a Bluebird but even more vulnerable. If you have three ships of the same color (or two ships plus a star of the same color) and no other ships at your Homeworld, all your enemy needs do is to drive one ship of that color into your system and KA-BOOM it's game over.

MAKE INVESTMENTS

When the only ship at a star system goes away, the star-piece is immediately returned to the bank. If the ship that just departed was green, and was Sacrificed, it may be possible to instantly change the star it was taken from into a ship. Parking green ships at stars you'd like to change into ships later is called Investing. The best use of this strategy is to park greens at Large stars while Mediums and Smalls of that color are available, then wait until the Bank is empty to "cash in." You just need to hope that your enemy doesn't move any other ships into your Investment system before you can sacrifice the solitary green ship you have at that system to turn its star into a ship.

DON'T RUSH

Tempo is tricky in this game. Sometimes fortune favors the patient, not the bold. For various reasons (such as how all Bank quantities are in odd numbers), the player who acts first can sometimes get the short end of the stick. If it's a bad time to go shopping, consider stalling instead, moving ships around rather than constructing new ones.



HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)

BEWARE THE INCOMPLETE BATTLE-PLAN

One of the easiest ways to lose this game is to mount an attack that fails to annihilate your opponent, but leaves your own empire vulnerable. This most often happens when you knock out half of a player's Homeworld, leaving you with fewer ships and more connected stars than before. Plan for total victory!

BUILD A FACTORY

A Large Green ship, along with another Green ship in the same system, sets up a powerful maneuver called the Factory. Once no Greens remain in the Bank, you can Sacrifice your Large Green for three Build actions. Then, as one of those actions, re-build the Large Green in the same system you took it from. You now have two more Build actions without having lost your original Large green. You can do this over and over again!

CREATE HAPPY SYSTEMS

When you have a star system containing exactly four pieces, one of each color, we call it a Happy System. It's the ideal arrangement, since it's hardest to blow up and gives you all the options. So, while it's great to have a Factory, doing so requires having two greens in the same system, which is more dangerous.

PLAY KEEP-AWAY

If you can't build a desirable piece as a ship, try turning it into a star. Even if the ship you discover it with isn't Green, you might be able to turn the system into an Investment opportunity later on. More importantly, you are preventing your enemy from getting to build a ship with that piece.

SQUONKING

There are times when you might wish to sacrifice a piece wastefully, specifically to interfere with your opponent's access to the Bank. We call this Squonking (a combination of squandering and blocking). For example, you might want to sacrifice a yellow Small when moving a ship away from a yellow system, not because you need the movement ability — you don't — but because the return of the yellow Small to the Bank will block the opponent from growing a larger yellow piece.

TERRAFORMING

When you sacrifice a yellow for movement, the piece immediately goes into the Bank, which means you can instantly take it out again and place it back onto the board as a star, while moving one of your ships into orbit alongside it. We call this Terraforming, and it's a very useful technique for a couple of different reasons. First, it allows you to maintain control of the yellow piece you're sacrificing, so that your opponent can't immediately grow it as a ship themselves, which is particularly important if the yellow ship you are sacrificing is a Large and the Bank is empty. Secondly, Terraforming allows you to transform one of your yellow ships into a star, which can be crucial when all pieces of that size are gone from the bank and you need to get to a star of that size.

USING GREEN TO TELEPORT

This trick is very useful if you get frozen out of Yellow. You can "teleport" a small Green ship into any other system where you have another Green ship. Just Sacrifice the ship to get a Build action, then rebuild that ship in a different star system. If the Bank is low on Green, you can also Teleport Medium or even Large ships, and get extra Build actions in the process!

THE DEMOLITION FLEET

This is a tricky maneuver, requiring just the right conditions, but it will be devastating if done correctly. It's only possible if your opponent has just one Large ship at their Homeworld, along with at least one other ship of that color. (Note that if they have zero other ships at home, it's a Bluebird situation.) You will need two ships of the same color as your opponent's Large, accompanied by a Large of your own of a different color. We will call these three ships your "Demolition Fleet." You will also need a yellow Large you can sacrifice, and some kind of access to red. Position the ships in your Demolition Fleet at stars one jump away from your enemy's Homeworld. Spread your fleet out between multiple stars if you can, to make it more difficult to notice what you're setting up. Assuming they don't see the threat in time, you can move all three of your Demolition Fleet ships into your enemy's Homeworld at once, and call Catastrophe. They will be left with no ships big enough to challenge your Large, and as long as you don't run out of attack power, you should be able to take control of all enemy ships at their Homeworld on subsequent turns — including any other Large ships they might try to return home after the damage is done.

HOMEWORLDS (CONT.)



THE DOOMSDAY MACHINE

With a particular fleet of nine ships, scattered across the galaxy in specific positions, you can vaporize your enemy's Homeworld in exactly two moves. We call this setup a Doomsday Machine:

- 2 Large Yellow ships (for two triple-jump moves)
- 3 ships of one of the colors of the target system, all located at systems one jump away
- 3 ships of the target system's other color, located at stars that will be within one jump after the first half of the target Homeworld is gone
- 1 extra ship, to protect your own Homeworld

THE PRIMARY DIRECTIVE

The Starship Captain's Primary Directive is to defend the Homeworld. Here are four practical tips for accomplishing this:

- 1) Keep a large ship at the Homeworld at ALL times. Tempting though it can be to use that big powerful ship elsewhere, you should always protect your Homeworld with a Large ship, unless you are about to win or are absolutely certain you will get a Large back at home before being invaded.
- 2) As soon as your enemy gets a weapon (i.e. a red ship), you should get one too. You may not need a weapon until your enemy has one, but as soon as they do, you need to arm yourself immediately. (This is particularly true if you lack a Planetary Defense System. i.e. a Homeworld setup that includes red in your star.)
- 3) Diversify and minimize your local defense fleet. To reduce the threat of catastrophe, avoid having more than one piece of each color at your Homeworld, either as a ship or part of the star system. In particular, never let all your home ships be of a single color if there's ANY chance of being invaded.
- 4) If your star is half-destroyed, monopolize the remaining color of your Homeworld. After half of your Homeworld has been blown up, your enemy needs just three ships of your remaining color to finish you off. Take those pieces out of circulation any way you can!

