

# THE EXPANSE TRADES OF THE EXPANSE



SCOUT

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## SCOUT

Scouts are the eyes and ears of humanity. In Earth's past, scouts were the ones to look at what's over the next hill, travel across the country to find the source of the river, and peek through a spyglass into the enemy camp to count their troops. In the era of the Epstein Drive, much is still the same: scouts still look for things, though their focus is much farther away. They look at what's around that gas giant, travel through ring gates to find habitable new worlds, and peek through a probe's scan of a pirate asteroid base to count their ships.

### BEING A SCOUT IN THE EXPANSE UNIVERSE

In *The Expanse* RPG, scouts specialize in gathering information about the universe. Most commonly, they are the ones who visit new systems to find and document points of interest, but they are also called upon to explore areas of known systems (even Sol) when new evidence surfaces that something important might be found (for example, a spectrographic reading that points toward the presence of valuable minerals on Pluto, where none were detected before).

In the systems beyond the rings, scouts chart planetary bodies, major asteroids, ring systems, comets, strange space phenomena, and more. They also note sites for further exploration by planetary surveyors. In both extrasolar systems and the Sol system itself, scouts chart safe navigable routes around or through dangerous areas of space, most commonly asteroid and debris fields.

Some scouts operate in a military capacity, observing structures on planetary bodies or space stations (or even fleets) in the void. They sometimes report on the movement of enemy forces, both in space and on a planet. When observing enemies, scouts commonly pay attention to their number, equipment, activities, and status, and even sometimes provide target acquisition for other forces. They may also perform route reconnaissance, which involves analyzing the paths to and from a target site.

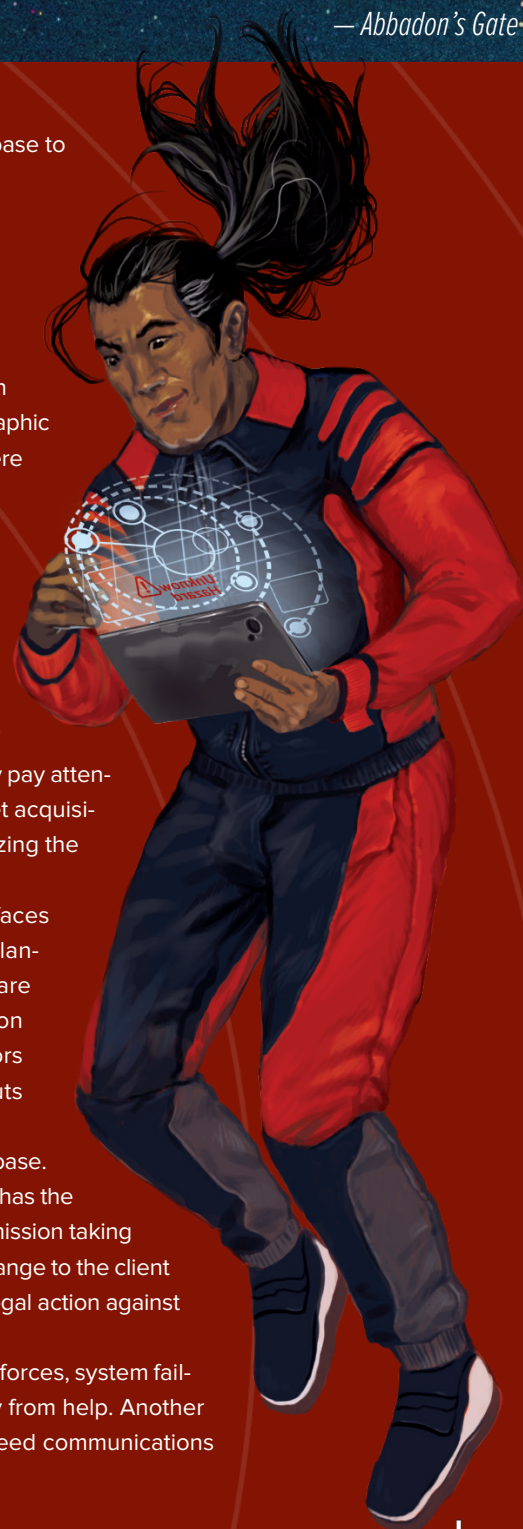
The primary area of operation for scouts is deep space. They don't explore planet surfaces or determine their suitability for colonization, mining, or otherwise—that's the job of planetary surveyors. There *is* some overlap between the two, though, because scouts are typically looking for locations that would be useful to their employers, so they focus on bodies that would be promising to send a surveyor to at a later date. But where surveyors are equipped for landing on planets and asteroids to explore them in person, scouts generally limit themselves to analysis from orbit—if even that close.

The data that scouts gather on their explorations usually goes directly into a client's database. Sometimes that's where it stays, awaiting further analysis and possible use when the client has the resources to do either, but at other times, the data might result in an immediate follow-up mission taking action on what was learned (possibly involving the crew due to their prior experience), a change to the client or government's policies related to what was discovered, or even a declaration of war or legal action against a corporation or government.

The dangers of space scouting include the obvious perils of space phenomena, enemy forces, system failures, encountering outlaws who would rather not be found, and simply being a long way from help. Another possible hazard is, simply, isolation: being so far away from civilization that even lightspeed communications can't provide real conversation.

"If humanity were capable of being satisfied, then they'll still be living in trees and eating bugs out of one another's fur. Anna had walked on a moon of Jupiter. She'd look up through a dome-covered sky at the great red spot, close enough to see the swirls and eddies of a storm larger than her home world. She'd tasted water thawed from ice as old as the solar system itself. And it was that human dissatisfaction, that human audacity, that had put her there."

— *Abbadon's Gate*



There are, of course, rewards to balance the dangers. Many scouts *crave* the isolation, choosing the scout life because they are loners who embrace such solitude. Perhaps the greatest draw, however, is that scouts can potentially be the first to discover something no one has ever seen before; the call of the unknown can be a powerful motivator.

## TYPES OF SCOUTING JOBS

Scout missions vary primarily by the area of space being studied and what the scout is looking for. In this section, these are described as Job Locations and Job Missions. For a quick random mission assignment—perhaps as a hook for a job, or to establish what routine task the characters are doing at the start of a different adventure—the GM may roll (or choose) once on the **Scouting Locations** table for the location and then again on the **Scouting Mission** table to determine the nature of the mission.

### SCOUTING LOCATIONS

| 1D6 | LOCATION                |
|-----|-------------------------|
| 1   | System                  |
| 2   | Star                    |
| 3   | Planet                  |
| 4   | Moon                    |
| 5   | Asteroid / Comet / etc. |
| 6   | Constructed location    |

### SCOUTING MISSIONS

| 1D6 | MISSION                    |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 1   | Locate potential valuables |
| 2   | Determine usability        |
| 3   | Map an area                |
| 4   | Chart a navigational route |
| 5   | Gather scientific data     |
| 6   | Locate something specific  |

### JOB LOCATION

The **Job Location** indicates the scope of the job. Are they scouting an entire system, or details on a particular asteroid?

**SYSTEM** The target area is an entire system. Since the Sol system has been well explored already, this generally occurs in the systems accessible through the ring gates. **Examples:** *Auberon, Laconia*.

**STAR** The star (or stars, in some systems) around which a stellar system revolves. Stars are vast balls of nuclear chaos that throw off many kinds of radiation, so scouting one for a particular purpose can be challenging. **Examples:** *Bara Gaon, San Esteban*.

**PLANET** One or more planets in a system, whether they are rocky planets, gas giants, or dwarf planets like Pluto. **Examples:** *Neptune, Illus*.

**MOON** One or more natural satellites of a planet. Most planets have at least one, and gas giants support complex systems of numerous moons. **Examples:** *Phoebe (Saturn IX), Titania (Uranus III)*.

**ASTEROID / COMET / ETC.** A specific non-planetary natural space phenomenon. Asteroids are the most common such bodies to scout, and consist of general groups called fields—the term “asteroid belt” is reserved for when they form an entire orbital ring around a star. However, it could be a single noteworthy asteroid, a comet, a planet’s rings, a gas cloud, or some other natural object. **Examples:** *Juno, Halley’s Comet*.

**CONSTRUCTED LOCATION** A location built by intelligent beings, human or otherwise. Common examples of this are space stations, planetary bases, orbital fleet yards, cities and towns on a planet, and alien artifacts. **Examples:** *Tycho Station, a builder structure*.

### JOB MISSION

The Job Mission provides details on exactly what aspect of the location is to be investigated. Are they looking for valuable minerals, or a safe navigational route? Some missions might not make sense with the chosen location. If the result doesn’t work for you, roll again or just choose one.

**LOCATE POTENTIAL VALUABLES** A very common objective of corporate missions is finding exploitable resources, typically on a planet, moon, or asteroid—but not always, because this could also represent identifying things worth stealing at an occupied location. **Examples:** *platinum, water*.

**DETERMINE USABILITY** Scouts are sometimes asked to find evidence of a target’s usability for a specific purpose. This is usually done at a planet or moon. **Examples:** *evidence of habitable biosphere, evidence of non-terrestrial plant life*.

**MAP AN AREA** One of the primary activities of a scout is making detailed maps of all the major objects in an area, whether it is an entire star system or a localized vicinity such as an asteroid field. This can be for the purpose of identifying

resources and phenomena to explore later, flagging navigational hazards, or simply mapping what's in the system to help narrow down future in-depth surveys. **Examples:** *map a gas giant's moons, map the asteroid belt in a new system.*

**CHART NAVIGATIONAL ROUTE** An especially appreciated scouting task is charting navigational hazards and noting the safest, fastest, or most efficient routes around or through a system or area. **Examples:** *asteroid belt, site of a recent battle.*

**GATHER SCIENTIFIC DATA** Not just a task requested by research firms, gathering data about places, objects, and phenomena is useful to everyone at some time or another, especially military organizations or potential settlers. **Examples:** *gather data about a new planet, determine what materials an artifact is composed of.*

**LOCATE SOMETHING SPECIFIC** Sometimes clients don't need something discovered, they need something found. Note that this kind of job involves scanning for the object from a ship some distance away to ascertain its whereabouts, without visiting the site or recovering the object. (However, this *might* lead to a client's follow-up request to do exactly that, which a wise scout would negotiate separately.) **Examples:** *a stolen weapon prototype, a kidnapped person.*

## WHO HIRES SCOUTS AND WHY?

This section details the most common sources of jobs for scouts. Some of the clients listed here regularly employ full- or part-time scouts. While our focus here is on freelance contract scouting because this gives a group of characters great flexibility, there's nothing to stop the crew from having a regular job as forward scouts for the MCRN, or the eyes of an OPA faction, or a vital team of planet-hunters for a corporation focused on colonization or the study of alien life.

### CLIENTS

"Individuals rarely hire scouts. Clients are most often corporations, institutions, governments, and other large groups that have the resources to pay for a ship and its crew to fly across the system and beyond, to work for an extended period of time.

"I call it the land rush. A whole lot of covered wagons heading for the promised land."

— *Nemesis Games*

### GOVERNMENTS

Government clients are often, but not always, military. The civilian arm of a government might hire characters for just about any type of scouting. A treasury department could use help locating valuables; an agriculture department might need to know if any moons in a system are suitable for installing domed garden habitats like the very successful Ganymede; planning and building departments need detailed maps of potential space station construction areas; a department of transportation often needs fresh navigational data from just about anywhere; research departments often need more ships in the field gathering data than they are provided; and intelligence agencies often make use of unofficial crews when they need something unusual found. These types of jobs are usually freelance but sometimes become official employment, especially during wartime, when more of their own ships and personnel are tied up for military purposes.

Military forces of governmental bodies can hire scouts for similar reasons but also for tasks that more directly involve actions against a rival government: studying enemy fleet traffic, finding a safe route to a supposedly hidden base, or mapping a network of relay stations in an asteroid field. While the UN and Martian navies prefer to run classified operations themselves, they must sometimes outsource less-sensitive jobs, especially if ships or personnel are committed elsewhere, a crew is available in the right place at the right time, and the crew has an appropriate reputation. (See **Reputation** in the *The Expanse* RPG; suitable honorifics for attracting a military contract include those related to loyalty to the government—or hostility toward their enemy.)

### CORPORATIONS

The biggest demand for scouting services comes from companies and corporations. Those that specialize in hauling water or ice, like Pur'N'Kleen Water Company or Krystal Kleer, always need to find new sources to harvest, as do companies that specialize in other commodities. Shipping companies such as Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile (or, after the Eros incident, the Kwikowski Mutual Interest Group) and Pope-Sanchez Shipping aggressively seek up-to-date data on safe navigation routes for their shipping business. News organizations like Pyramid News Network might hire scouts or be interested in buying information after scouts have already obtained it, perhaps by happenstance.

Larger corporations—including Pope Enterprises, Royal Charter Energy, and Masstech—have diverse needs, and therefore make use of scouts for nearly every mission type. Some of these are similar to the needs of scientific and colonization companies, covered below. In wartime, corporations devote scouting resources to keeping an eye out for enemy actions that could endanger business assets. And at all times, some corporations send scouts—particularly expendable ones—to locate or identify individuals or materials that rivals possess, with an eye toward finding an opening to liberate them.

## SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS

Research institutes, pharmaceutical companies, universities, and other science-focused concerns are the main clients to hire scouts for gathering information about natural phenomena. After the discovery of the protomolecule—and later, the worlds accessible through the ring gates—such institutions have become obsessed with finding sites with alien flora and fauna and, especially, protomolecule builder artifacts. All of these offer priceless opportunities to learn more about the universe.

However, most of these groups—or at least their parent companies—have more focused interests: they want to learn how to produce new manufacturing materials, stronger armor, next-generation weapons, coveted wonder drugs, and technologies no human has yet imagined. To that end, they need scouts to find planets or moons that are likely to host extraterrestrial life or builder artifacts.

Scientific competition can be surprisingly cutthroat, and the field is currently seeing a rapidly escalating rivalry between Royal Charter Energy, Dhanbad Nova, and Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern.

## COLONIZATION COMPANIES

After the ring network was discovered, colonization took on a new importance. Now, in addition to the limited options of either migrating to an airless low-g asteroid or moon or committing to a generational journey to another star, people wanting a fresh start could pop through a gate and settle on a new planet.

Since demand is high but ring-accessible systems are limited (1,373 including Sol), competition between colonization companies is intense. Two of the biggest involved concerns are Epoch Colony Services and Royal Charter Energy (itself also heavily invested in finding exploitable extraterrestrial resources beyond planets suitable for colonizing). In addition to frequently hiring scouts to search for planets and moons that have biospheres capable of sustaining humans, they also pay “bounties” for reports of such that independent scouts encounter on their travels.



## CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

Those who operate outside the law, in an organized capacity, sometimes hire independent scouts for special services. A group of pirates or organized criminals such as the Silver Hook, Corentin Francisco, or the Maw might hire scouts to spy on shipyards or fleet gatherings to learn the timings of convoys or escort fleets—or look for weaknesses in a juicy target just asking to be stolen or robbed. Terrorists and revolutionaries (including the Voltaire Collective, Persephone’s Scythe, and some other OPA factions) could use scouts to keep an eye on targets to communicate with when it’s time to strike. Of course, knowing that the more militant organizations hire scouts to do such things, their opponents (including moderate or even non-violent factions) sometimes hire scouts to monitor *their* operations.

## RELIGIOUS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Some of the most unusual scouting jobs originate from philosophically oriented organizations. Some religious groups are interested in locating a planet to establish a colony of fellow believers; the Church of Latter-Day Saints is one example, having lost their generation ship to Fred Johnson. Others have more short-term needs, such as finding a symbolic site where three

bodies line up in the night sky to fulfil an ancient prophecy. The fringe group known as the Devotees of the Ring might pay a team well to do something with no apparent practical value, such as monitor a specific ring at a certain time and look for any unusual phenomena. Or a group of survivalists might need help finding an unclaimed asteroid suitable for turning into a home.

## FINDING WORK

When a scout or scouting crew is looking for work, the GM can play out the search and interactions with potential clients if they wish (especially if the GM has a story hook in mind), or they can ask for a test to randomly see what work is available. If using a test, have the player(s) choose the type of contract they are seeking (as detailed in this section). The base target for this is an advanced TN 11 Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Technology) test with a time increment of one day. The final TN and success threshold are determined from the **Finding Scout Missions** table, based on the type of contract being sought. On a successful test, use the number on the Drama Die from the last successful roll to consult the **Scout Missions Available** table and determine the type of mission found and the Income reward offered on successful completion. To find out the target location and the specific assignment, roll on the **Scouting Locations** and **Scouting Missions** table.

### ASSIGNMENTS FROM AGENCY/EMPLOYER

Scouts sometimes work for an agency or other organization that connects them with job assignments; this option can also work to represent scouts who are permanently employed. Depending upon the agency or employer, sometimes they connect the scouts with a third-party client, and in others, they send the scouts on the mission themselves. Some scouts have even formed working collectives with others in the business, where they jointly fund human resources experts to track down job opportunities.

### FREELANCE CONTRACTS

Sometimes clients will approach the crew on their own initiative to offer jobs, which are classified as freelance contracts. These become more common after scouts have earned a reputation for their skill, reliability, or other factors important to the client—the old classic “enemy of my enemy” has landed more than a few jobs. Freelance jobs are often assignments that the client doesn’t want to advertise publicly, or that they feel the scouts they seek out will be particularly well-suited to accomplish.

A freelance contract starts with the client approaching the scout with an offer of work, either in person or via transmitted message. The amount of detail presented, payment offered, formality of the contract, and reliability of the client are highly variable.

### JOB BOARDS

The most basic way to find a scouting job is by consulting the variety of electronic job boards available throughout the Sol system. Job boards are usually hosted by information networks, space stations, major cities, governments, and corporations. Most are available remotely via terminal access and commonly in person at kiosks in spaceports, though generally only those hosted by interplanetary sponsors have their data replicated in multiple places with any frequency.

Some of the jobs on offer here will be routine ones that any scout could do, while others will be difficult, unpleasant, or just plain strange tasks that nobody wants.

### JOB FIXERS

As is common with certain other jobs, scouts make use of job fixers: individuals who act as matchmakers between scouts and clients in exchange for a small percentage of the fees involved. Successful fixers tend to be people-focused, with many connections among clients, scouts, or both. As such, they can be found in places frequented by scouting clients (corporate events, science conferences, colonial fundraisers) or scouts themselves (space stations, spaceports, spaceport bars).

| FINDING SCOUT MISSIONS          |             |           |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| CONTRACT TYPE                   | TN MODIFIER | THRESHOLD |
| Freelance Contract              | +2          | 25        |
| Job Fixer                       | +1          | 20        |
| Assignment from Agency/Employer | +0          | 15        |
| Job Board                       | -1          | 5         |

| SCOUT MISSIONS AVAILABLE |                   |                                          |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------|
| DRAMA DIE                | CLIENT            | INCOME MODIFIER                          |
| 1                        | Criminal          | +3 temporary Income bonus or +1 Income   |
| 2                        | Government        | +1–2 temporary Income bonus              |
| 3                        | Corporation       | +1–3 temporary Income bonus or +1 Income |
| 4                        | Colonial          | +1–3 temporary Income bonus or +1 Income |
| 5                        | Scientific        | +1–2 temporary Income bonus              |
| 6                        | Religious/Special | +1–2 temporary Income bonus              |

## DEEP SPACE SCOUTING

The basic test used to scan or search targets or areas in space is Intelligence (Technology) plus the ship's Sensors score, against a target number of 11. If taking care of a scouting job were that easy, though, there would be little need for hiring scouts. Having said that, a simple test like this could be useful in determining if a recent incidental scouting mission was successful or not, or to gauge whether the scout spots something specific while scouting a larger area.

"The weeks—sometimes months—spent on the burn were like stepping out of history into some small, separate universe."

— *Nemesis Games*

A scouting test involved in an adventure will usually be either an advanced test or a challenge test. Use an advanced test when there is no danger or consequence for failure; the results tell how long it took to scout the area. Advanced tests are appropriate for scouting tasks such as mapping a routine area or gathering scientific data unimpeded by any other parties. A typical test for scouting is a TN 11 advanced test (success threshold 15). This may include tests of Intelligence (Astronomy), Intelligence (Technology), and no more than one Willpower (Self-discipline) test—helpful in enduring this long, boring process. All scouting-based Intelligence tests add the ship's Sensors score. Tests

have time increments ranging from one hour if the mission area is a planet, to up to one day if it covers an entire system.

A challenge test is more useful for performing scouting activities that involve some element of risk, whether that is damage from space phenomena, being spotted on a stealth mission, or something else. This includes scouting activities like mapping an area of conflict, searching for something at a protected location, or charting a navigational route involving space hazards.

## SCOUTING CHALLENGES

The sample challenges that follow cover several common scouting tasks. They can easily be customized for similar missions, or they might inspire alternative ideas.

## CHALLENGE: CHART A ROUTE THROUGH AN ASTEROID/DEBRIS FIELD

**DIFFICULTY:** TN 11 **Success Threshold:** 15 **TIME PER TEST:** 1 hour

**ABILITY FOCUSES:** (All Intelligence tests add the ship's Sensors score) Intelligence (Technology), Intelligence (Astronomy), Intelligence (Navigation), Intelligence (Physics), Dexterity (Piloting)

The asteroid belt in the Sol system is well mapped, and even the densest areas generally pose little navigational risk due to the vastness of distance between hazards. However, the same cannot always be said for post-battle debris fields and asteroid fields in other systems. Finding a safe course through an asteroid/debris field is a common task for scouts and pilots who don't have a scout available. This challenge can also be used for mapping an asteroid or debris field, locating an asteroid suitable for mining, charting a route through a gas giant's moons, or similar missions.

## CONSEQUENCES

## MINOR

A dense section of micro asteroids requires tricky flying to get past safely, preventing progress until the characters can succeed at a TN 11 Dexterity (Piloting) test to get around it.

## MODERATE

A slip-up invalidates much of the completed charting, wiping out half of the accumulated successes.

## MAJOR

An asteroid strike inflicts a loss on the ship and requires a TN 17 Intelligence (Engineering) test to prevent losing all accumulated successes and 1d6 hull damage.

## CHALLENGE: GATHER SCIENTIFIC DATA

**DIFFICULTY:** TN 11 **SUCCESS THRESHOLD:** 15 **TIME PER TEST:** 12 hours

**ABILITY FOCUSES:** (All Intelligence tests add the ship's Sensors score) Intelligence (Technology), Intelligence (Astronomy), Intelligence (Physics), possibly Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Cryptography, Engineering, or Planetary Sciences

Scouts are asked to gather information from all manner of sources: stellar disturbances such as flares and sunspots; planetary conditions that might affect a colony; emissions from an asteroid that might indicate a secret enemy base; and unexplained phenomena that could manifest just about anywhere. Adjust the time per test upward for a larger area, and increase the difficulty for more unusual phenomena.

## CONSEQUENCES

**MINOR** A mistake while gathering information, or some oddity about the data or the environment, causes a systems glitch that adds +2 to the TN of further data-gathering tests until the characters can succeed at a TN 13 Intelligence (Technology) test to remedy the malfunction.

**MODERATE** The data requires a multidisciplinary approach; the characters may no longer use the discipline that triggered this consequence toward the success threshold.

**MAJOR** A computer storage failure threatens to lose all collected data unless a character succeeds at a TN 17 Intelligence (Technology) test.

## CHALLENGE: SCAN AN OCCUPIED AREA

**DIFFICULTY:** TN 13 **SUCCESS THRESHOLD:** 16 **TIME PER TEST:** 30 minutes

**ABILITY FOCUSES:** (All Intelligence tests add the ship's Sensors score) Intelligence (Technology), Intelligence (Astronomy), Intelligence (Engineering), possibly Intelligence (Security) and Intelligence (Tactics), others as appropriate to the location or the item sought

Locating a sought-after item, person, phenomenon, or other object at a specified target site usually involves passive sensors. This challenge assumes that the scout is trying to conduct their search in secret, hence the passive sensors, and that the mission site is defended in some way. If these are not true, the GM will need to revise the consequences.

## CONSEQUENCES

**MINOR** Sensor sweeps by security systems at the site require greater caution, slowing progress to 1 test per hour unless the characters succeed at a TN 13 Intelligence (Engineering) test to reduce ship emissions further.

**MODERATE** An accidental active ping or simple happenstance draws a small patrol ship to investigate.

**MAJOR** The scout ship is spotted, leading to a chase or combat with the forces guarding the site that must be resolved before the search can continue.

## CHALLENGE: SEARCH A SYSTEM FOR A HABITABLE PLANET

**DIFFICULTY:** TN 11 **SUCCESS THRESHOLD:** 20 **TIME PER TEST:** 1 day

**ABILITY FOCUSES:** (All Intelligence tests add the ship's Sensors score) Intelligence (Technology); Intelligence (Astronomy), Intelligence (Chemistry); Intelligence (Planetary Sciences); limit 1 success

This challenge assumes the scout is searching all the planets and moons in a system for a planet that can support human life, within whatever parameters the client has specified—such as an allowable gravity range or whether a thin atmosphere that requires breathing assistance is acceptable. The challenge can also be used to search for planets or moons with other features (artifacts, existing human colonies, alien flora/fauna), or to only search the moons around one or more gas giants (reducing the time per test to perhaps 1 per 6 hours). The GM can decide in advance how many bodies of the desired specifications are available to find, or they can roll 1d3 (or even 1d6) and decide if each is a planet or moon.

## CONSEQUENCES

**MINOR** An undetected radiation belt impairs the sensors, increasing the TN of tests using them by +2 until the characters can succeed at an Intelligence (Engineering) test to retune them.

**MODERATE** Strange readings from many of the objects in this system invalidate a lot of the sensor scans, preventing the reuse of one already-used Intelligence focus until the characters can succeed at an Intelligence (Research) test to find a way to compensate.

**MAJOR** The time and effort spent on this job starts to take its toll, erasing half of the accumulated successes gained so far unless the characters can succeed at a Constitution (Stamina) test to push through.

## VEHICLE COMBAT STUNTS SHIP SENSORS

| SP COST | STUNT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1+      | <b>Eye Patch:</b> Reduce the TN of a damage control test to repair a loss to Sensors by 1 for each SP spent.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1+      | <b>Eat Static:</b> You adjust your ship's active emissions in a way that makes it harder to target, adding +SP to your ship's next electronic warfare test.                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3       | <b>Exploitable Terrain:</b> If you are near appropriate exploitable terrain (asteroid field, dust cloud), you spot a path near or through it that the pilot (whether you or another character) can use as protective cover. Immediately trigger either the Evasive Maneuver or Follow the Leader chase stunt. |

on meeting in person, either for maximum security or because they want something more than data. Clients of this type often value their scouts' personal impressions and opinions about what they've seen and learned about their target as much as any data they might have gathered, and the end of such a mission involves an extensive debriefing before payment is handed over. The nature of the client determines whether this is more like a dinner party or an interrogation.

## INCOME REWARDS

Successfully completing a scouting mission earns a base amount: a +1 temporary Income bonus. In addition, performing the mission especially well can increase that amount. Refer to the **Scout Missions Available** table for the mission type's Income modifier. Then consult the following list to help determine where in the Income range this job will pay. Each of the following can add +1 to the temporary Income bonus, up to the maximum Income modifier listed for the job. If the temporary Income bonus reaches +3 (only possible on certain jobs), the scout can choose to take a permanent +1 increase to their Income score instead. The GM can add other options relevant to the specific mission.

- Scout completed the job much faster than expected.
- Scout found something particularly valuable to the client.
- No witnesses observed the scout (if pertinent).
- Scout went above and beyond to serve the client.

As an alternative to this payment method, the GM may allow the players to trust their payment to an opposed Communication (Bargaining) test against their client's representative.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The types of gear that help scouts do their job focus on things that help in gathering information and remaining unnoticed. Because scouts do the majority of their work inside a ship, this gear is usually in the form of drones, expert software systems, and ships.

## DRONES

A few specialized drones see frequent use by scouts. Some ships (including all four of those in the following **Ships** section) even feature drone bays they can use to easily launch and recover them. The drones presented here have tiny Epstein drives similar to those on torpedoes, though once their limited fuel is exhausted, they will continue moving on their last course at the same speed. The rest of their features can continue working for years on battery power. Controlling a drone requires a Dexterity (Piloting) or Intelligence (Technology) test, assuming the operator can locate it by either tightbeam or open radio broadcast.

### COMMUNICATIONS DRONES

Some of the systems and worlds beyond the rings wreak havoc on communications. Communication (or comms, as they are often called) drones allow scouts to circumnavigate these issues. Comms drones can be placed to act as a signal relay, or if a ship finds itself in an area where communications are impossible, a drone with a recorded message can be launched and sent on autopilot to a location where it can transmit a signal, possibly even back through a ring.

## SENSOR STUNTS

The standard exploration stunts (see **General Exploration Stunts** in *The Expanse RPG*) work well for scouts. In addition, the following vehicle combat stunts offer new options for a scout to use sensors to their advantage.

## GETTING PAID

If the mission is successful, the scout can collect payment. For many clients, the data the scouts gather is all they want, so they are happy to receive their scouts' reports via long-range transmission (usually tightbeam for privacy purposes) and to transfer payment electronically.

Some clients prefer a more personal interaction and insist

## DECOY DRONE

Many missions require a scout to remain undetected while doing their work, typically including surveillance missions and attempts to locate something at an occupied location. Decoy drones are useful in this situation. Such a drone can be triggered to draw attention to itself—and thus away from the actual scout ship—by mimicking the active emissions of a variety of preset ship types. To determine if an adversary is fooled by the decoy, have the character who launched it (or is currently operating it) make a modified electronic warfare test (see **Electronic Warfare** in *The Expanse* RPG) opposed by every ship attempting to locate the scout. (In this case, the ship's Sensors score represents the ship's ability to tune its emissions so they are less detectable than the decoy's.) Any opposing ships that succeed and beat the scout's test have detected the scout; if the scout wins, nobody detects it, and only the opponents that beat the TN detect the decoy.

## PROBE

Probes are a type of drone designed to gather information from an area and transmit it back to their mothership or other set destination. They can be launched from either a drone bay or a torpedo tube. Drone bay launches require the probe to use its own mini-Epstein drive to move into position, or else the ship can drop the probe at the target location before the ship itself moves on. Torpedo tube launches impart enough velocity to a probe to rapidly propel it to long range, and it can continue farther than that. Probes collect data from a selected target (including a region, star, planet, asteroid, ship, etc.) and can send their collected data by tightbeam or open radio broadcast.

## SCOUTING EXPERT SYSTEMS

Scout ships often make use of specialized expert systems that use hardware and software packages to assist with common sensor scans. Each of these systems grants a +1 bonus to tests using Sensors for a specific type of scouting test. Because these systems are installed in shipboard computers, they are represented in-game as ship qualities. Applying the same scouting expert system quality a second time upgrades it to an advanced version (for example, Advanced Mapping Expert System) and increases its bonus to +2. A ship's bonus from scouting expert systems may not exceed its Sensors score.

## MAPPING EXPERT SYSTEM

Adds +1 to tests using Sensors to map and catalog an area of space (for example, mapping a system or planet, but not finding a safe route; that's pathfinding).

## PATHFINDING EXPERT SYSTEM

Adds +1 to tests using Sensors to chart a route through space to maximize safety and efficiency.

## PATTERN SEARCHING EXPERT SYSTEM

Adds +1 to tests using Sensors to locate some specific item, person, or other target. This includes locating mineable resources.

## SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS EXPERT SYSTEM

Adds +1 to tests using Sensors to collect and process usable data. This includes determining if a planet has a specific type of atmosphere or life signs.

## SCOUTING EQUIPMENT

| ITEM                              | COST |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| <b>Drones</b>                     |      |
| Communications Drone              | 16   |
| Decoy Drone                       | 15   |
| Probe                             | 17   |
| <b>Expert Systems</b>             |      |
| Mapping Expert System             | 15   |
| Pathfinding Expert System         | 15   |
| Pattern Searching Expert System   | 20   |
| Scientific Analysis Expert System | 20   |



## SHIPS

Where people who pursue other trades usually see ships as a means of conveyance or an occasional weapon, scouts use them to perform the entirety of their job. Some scouts spend years without ever leaving their ship.

Every kind of ship has been used at some point to perform scouting work, but to be truly effective at it, a ship needs a



## MOSQUITO - CLASS LIGHT SCOUT

|                 |                    |               |       |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-------|
| FACTION         | Any                | CATEGORY      | Small |
| DRIVES          | Epstein, Thrusters | LENGTH        | 12m   |
| CREW (MINIMUM)  | 1                  | HULL          | 1d3   |
| CREW (STANDARD) | 1                  | SENSORS       | 4     |
| COMPETENCE      | Average            | FAVORED RANGE | Long  |

## ARMAMENT

| WEAPON TYPE | RANGE | DAMAGE | ARC |
|-------------|-------|--------|-----|
| None        |       |        |     |

## FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

Blinking Maneuver, Calculation\*

## QUALITIES

Drone Bay\*, Emergency Batteries\*, Maneuverable

## FLAWS

Poor Amenities, Uncomfortable\*



## DOVE - CLASS STEALTH SCOUT

|                 |                    |               |        |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|--------|
| FACTION         | Any                | CATEGORY      | Medium |
| DRIVES          | Epstein, Thrusters | LENGTH        | 24m    |
| CREW (MINIMUM)  | 1                  | HULL          | 1d6    |
| CREW (STANDARD) | 2                  | SENSORS       | 4      |
| COMPETENCE      | Average            | FAVORED RANGE | Long   |

## ARMAMENT

| WEAPON TYPE   | RANGE | DAMAGE | ARC  |
|---------------|-------|--------|------|
| Grapplers (2) | Close | None   | Fore |

## FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

Blinking Maneuver, Evasive Action, Guidance

## QUALITIES

Drone Bay \*, Reliable \*, Stealth, one Advanced Scouting Expert System\*\*

## FLAWS

Poor Acceleration \*, Weak Hull \*

high Sensors score and the ability to travel far from home. Dedicated scout ships often lack landing capability or weapons, instead focusing on fuel efficiency (for extended range) and a minimalist systems layout that reduces the “noise” that limits sensor effectiveness in most ships.

This section presents four classes of scout ship of which player character scouts may make use. Players may also choose to accomplish their jobs using one of the many ships presented in *The Expanse* RPG and its sourcebooks (especially *Ships of the Expanse*). For military scouts, the UNN *Phantom*-class escort or the MCRN *Morgaina*-class patrol destroyer (both in *Ships of the Expanse*) would serve as effective scout ships, especially if upgraded with the Advanced Sensor Package quality.

(Note: qualities marked with \* are detailed in *Ships of the Expanse* and qualities new to this book are marked with \*\*)

## MOSQUITO-CLASS LIGHT SCOUT

Many scouts have experience with this tiny class of scout, nicknamed the “Tin Can,” though few remember the experience fondly. The habitable compartment contains only a small crash couch for the pilot, who barely has room to change positions. The Tin Can’s small size and minimalist loadout is balanced by a solid sensor suite, superb maneuverability, and economical fuel use. The ship also carries two mission-swappable drones in exterior mounts to assist with specific objectives.

The most recent versions of this ship have been outfitted with a software-based AI companion, intended to alleviate the loneliness often experienced by the ship’s scout/pilot on long scouting voyages. This companion has several personality options, which it can express through the ship’s internal speakers, video displays, and drones.

## DOVE-CLASS STEALTH SCOUT

The *Dove* class is a considerable step up from the *Mosquito* class—some scouts would say the addition of a coffee maker alone achieves that feat, but the class also features two decks, more generous crash couches, and an actual toilet. This two-person class excels at stealth operations; while it can’t compete with military stealth ships, it is effective at performing long-range observations while not being observed in return.

It’s not unusual for these ships to be crewed by married couples, either both scouts or one of them a pilot, scientist, or engineer. Both crash couch control positions allow full control of the ship’s systems, so the crew can divide the labor however they wish, or they can take turns sleeping and operating the ship.

## ORION-CLASS HEAVY SCOUT

The *Orion*-class heavy scout is intended for use on long-distance, long-term missions—especially those expected to see trouble. With a standard crew of six, it’s got room for a

## ORION - CLASS HEAVY SCOUT

|                 |                    |               |       |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-------|
| FACTION         | Any                | CATEGORY      | Large |
| DRIVES          | Epstein, Thrusters | LENGTH        | 51m   |
| CREW (MINIMUM)  | 3                  | HULL          | 2d6   |
| CREW (STANDARD) | 6                  | SENSORS       | 5     |
| COMPETENCE      | Average            | FAVORED RANGE | Long  |

### ARMAMENT

| WEAPON TYPE           | RANGE | DAMAGE | ARC  |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|------|
| Torpedo Tubes (2)     | Long  | 4d6    | Fore |
| Point Defense Network | Close | 2d6    | Fore |
| Grapplers (2)         | Close | None   | Fore |

### FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

Evasive Action, Multi-Targeting, Precise Hit

### QUALITIES

Drone Bay \*, Improved Stores, Medical Expert System, Redundant Hull (Double) \*, two Scouting Expert Systems, or one Advanced Scouting Expert System\*\*

### FLAWS

Poor Acceleration \*, Vulnerability \*

## BETA - CLASS SCOUTING PLATFORM

|                 |                    |               |      |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|------|
| FACTION         | Any                | CATEGORY      | Huge |
| DRIVES          | Epstein, Thrusters | LENGTH        | 85m  |
| CREW (MINIMUM)  | 10                 | HULL          | 2d6  |
| CREW (STANDARD) | 40                 | SENSORS       | 7    |
| COMPETENCE      | Capable            | FAVORED RANGE | Long |

### ARMAMENT

| WEAPON TYPE               | RANGE | DAMAGE | ARC           |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|---------------|
| Point Defense Network (6) | Close | 2d6    | Full Coverage |
| Grapplers (2)             | Close | None   | Fore          |

### FAVORED COMMAND STUNTS

Calculation, Evasive Action, Tactics

### QUALITIES

Advanced Communications Systems \*, Advanced Sensor Package; Drone Bay \*, Emergency Batteries \*, Hangar Bay, Luxury Amenities, Medical Expert System, Sensor Scrambling \*, three Scouting Expert Systems, or one Scouting Expert System and one Advanced Scouting Expert System\*\*

### FLAWS

High Maintenance, Lumbering

diversity of specializations and skillsets. Orion-class ships are sturdy and comfortable and can accommodate twelve people without much adjustment, but many crews seem to appreciate having extra personal space on longer voyages.

This class has been repurposed from a retired class of patrol ship from the UN Navy. Some ships of this class are recent constructions, as it is still being produced at civilian shipyards, while others are still-functioning UN models. This latter type often features the Aging flaw (from *Ships of the Expanse*) and full-coverage PDCs.

### BETA-CLASS SCOUTING PLATFORM

Designed to remain in a target area for an extended period, the *Beta* class is technically a ship but functions as a mobile scouting platform: a base of operations for a team of scouts to perform detailed mapping of a large space. It carries two shuttles, which are typically used to either “divide and conquer” the area or to closely focus on a special area of interest while the rest of the team continues the general mission.

Living and working on a scouting platform is the other end of the spectrum from scouting in a *Mosquito*: the food is better, each crew member has a spacious living area, and the ship’s interior is aesthetically pleasing. This extends to the functionality of the ship as well, including a cutting-edge sensor suite, PDC defenses, and powerful transmitters that, in an emergency, can even disrupt enemy sensors.





## DOING THE WORK

The following optional additions to the *AGE System* rules for *The Expanse* focus on scouts and their work. For rules on taking a specialization, see **Specializations** in **Chapter 3** of *The Expanse* RPG.

### SCOUT (SPECIALIZATION)

You're no casual deep-space explorer; you have a knack for finding things and a deep knowledge of astronomical objects and cosmic phenomena. Your ship feels like an extension of your body, its sensors letting you see everything around you in three dimensions. As the planets, stars, and comets dance around you, you see them all, and you feel right at home.

**SYNERGIES** A Scout-Hacker would excel at gathering intel from places protected by humans. A Scout-Investigator can follow leads across the universe. A Scout-Thief has the skills to appropriate a source of valuables once located.

#### SCOUT TALENT

**REQUIREMENT:** Intelligence 2 or higher and the Intelligence (Astronomy) focus.

You're skilled at understanding an area of space and finding what you're looking for.

**NOVICE** You are adept at making the most of your instruments when looking for something. If you fail an Intelligence (Technology) test when using sensors, you can re-roll it but must keep the result of the second roll.

**EXPERT** Your astronomical abilities are unrivaled. When you make an Intelligence (Astronomy) test as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Drama Die. This increases your total roll and allows you to reach the success threshold faster.

**MASTER** When you perform tests using ship sensors, treat them as if their Sensors rating is 1 higher.

### REPUTATION

A scout's reputation (see **Honorifics** in *The Expanse* RPG) can affect the jobs they are offered, as well as the types of clients that seek them out. Good reputations attract contracts from reputable governmental and corporate groups, involving well-defined and above-board missions. Bad reputations leave scouts to scrape the barrel and end up working for fringe groups doing dangerous, sketchy, or illegal jobs. Some of the most common honorifics (*The Expanse* RPG, pp. 218–220) for scouts include the following:

## EXPERT SCOUT

This version of the Expert in the Field honorific represents a scout known for their skills, knowledge, and accomplishments. Such a reputation usually takes many years to achieve, though some scouts have gained it in a short period after a few high-profile successes. The likelihood that one expert scout gets along with another greatly depends on whether they compete for jobs.

## EYES OF THE OPA

A version of the True OPA honorific, this indicates a scout noted for being a valuable asset to the OPA, having completed multiple scouting missions that benefit one or more OPA factions. This can, of course, draw negative attention from Inners, or even those of opposing factions. Variants of this honorific for other governments are also common, such as Eyes of the UN or Eyes of Mars.

## DEEP SPACE DWELLER

This new honorific represents someone who seems to spend more of their time in deep space than they do on a planet, asteroid, or other “stationary” body. Deep space dwellers are often well-regarded by Belters, naval veterans, and career freighter crews. Variants of this honorific include Born on the Float, Orbit Hopper, and Vacuum Veteran.

## BAD REPUTATION

Actions or situations that lead to a bad reputation make things difficult for a scout. Just as a good reputation offers benefits to a character, a bad one imposes penalties. These

penalties are described below, in the same categories as a positive reputation. Characters can get rid of bad reputations by performing Reputation interlude activities (see **Interlude Activities** in *The Expanse RPG*) or perhaps as a reward for completing a noteworthy mission.

## PERSONAL

When an opponent knows the character’s bad reputation or invokes it in a conflict, they gain a +1 bonus on an opposed test against the character, particularly in a social encounter.

## SUPPORTIVE

When a group of people know about the character’s bad reputation and spread that around during an encounter, the character suffers a +2 increase in the target numbers of related tests, essentially making things one category more difficult.

## INSPIRED

Tests involving areas where the character has a bad reputation suffer a –1 penalty to the number of stunt points generated on the Drama Die, which can potentially change a roll that generates 1 SP to a roll that generates none.

## PASSIVE

Lastly, the character’s bad reputation tends to worsen attitudes and generally make some people automatically dislike or mistrust them. It might lead to increased hostility from some factions, such as Earthers if the character is a notorious Martian snoop, or simply local security who make it clear they are keeping a close eye on the character’s actions.

## THE CHURN

Even on a solo mission far from civilization, the Churn can strike and turn everything upside down. The following are some compilations the Churn can present on a scouting job:

## MINOR COMPLICATIONS

- The scout fails a sensors test unless they recalibrate and try again.
- The ship strikes a micrometeoroid or piece of space debris, causing a hull loss.
- The scout loses 1d6 accumulated successes from an advanced test or challenge.

## MAJOR COMPLICATIONS

- A rival is in the area trying to poach the job from the scout or ruin the scout’s chances at success.
- Another ship or party in the area creates a complication, such as drawing attention to an area the scout needs

to visit in secrecy.

- One of the threats turns out to be one rank higher than expected (Moderate to Major, for example).

## EPIC COMPLICATIONS

- A significant fact from the mission briefing turns out to be false (intentionally or not), resulting in much greater danger or difficulty. Increase one of the threats in the mission by two.
- The scout’s client has intentionally misled them or outright betrayed them in some way, possibly leading to a trap.
- On a secret mission, the scout’s presence is revealed, or their cover is blown.

## LOOKING FOR SCOUTS

The following are examples of clients or job fixers who might hire scouts for various missions, including what kinds of jobs they offer and where they might be encountered.

## MARTIAN MILITARY CONTACT: COLONEL ENGEL DRAYTON

THREAT LEVEL: MODERATE

Colonel Drayton is a proud but practical Martian who understands that even his beloved fleet is sometimes stretched too thin and needs the services of outsiders. One of those common services is scouting. Even so, he only contracts scouts with a proven track record of competence and reliability—and good relations toward Mars.

The Colonel often has a need for eyes (and sensors) on a sensitive area *without* revealing the fact that the MCRN is watching. If he suspects that enemies of Mars are hiding out at a remote location—such as pirates at an asteroid base, or Martian defectors who fled to Saturn—Drayton might send a scout to take a look since a Martian ship on the hunt could scare away the quarry.

Drayton is a short man who projects a large presence, in no small part due to his booming voice. He has dark skin, salt-and-pepper hair, and is always in uniform. Though he seems serious at all times, the Colonel likes to sprinkle his conversations with jokes, though not always successfully. He might meet the characters on Mars, or one of the Jovian moons (as he visits the Callisto shipyards from time to time), or on a neutral station.



## OPA CONTACT: BRYANT ALDOMÀ

THREAT LEVEL: MODERATE

The OPA is well-accustomed to utilizing whatever assets they can find, so a “fixer” like Bryant Aldomà is frequently on the hunt for scouts (or even amateurs with a ship) to do a bit of helpful scanning—with a side of sneaking and snooping. Aldomà is especially interested in hiring scouts who have shown themselves to be supportive of Belters—or a thorn in the side of the OPA’s rivals.

OPA personnel filter many jobs through Aldomà. He likes to test a new scout with a less-sensitive mission, such as searching a section of the Belt for usable materials, before advancing to jobs that require more insider knowledge, like finding out which Uranian moon is hiding a valuable cargo stolen by a rival faction.

Bryant Aldomà is a bald, lanky Belter who favors colorful jumpsuits. He has a talent for accents and likes to match those of the people he talks to. Characters could encounter him anywhere in the Belt, but he has offices on Ceres and Tycho Station.



## CRIMINAL CONTACT: ZOYA

THREAT LEVEL: MAJOR

A wanted crime lord known as Zoya has been known to hire scouts (and other types of professionals) from time to time to assist in her criminal enterprise. She avoids scouts with too clean an image, preferring to reach out to those who have demonstrated what she would call “moral flexibility,” or at least shown promising tendencies toward such. Once she has found a suitable prospect, she approaches them in a private location with several intimidating guards to encourage good behavior.

Zoya starts small with her new scouts, sending them on entry-level missions along the lines of watching a station until a certain ship arrives or taking inventory of a ground-based cargo depot from orbit. After this, the crime lord eases them along a slippery slope of criminal scouting, from acting as lookouts to detect approaching military ships to shadowing convoys and sending the signal when they’re ripe for interception.

Zoya is a sturdy-looking Earthar with black dreadlocks. She usually wears a black flight suit with no insignia and is always flanked by two silent guards. Zoya herself is usually all smiles, though her smile never reaches her eyes. The crime lord is equally at home in the Belt or down a gravity well, though she does not visit Earth due to a warrant for her capture.





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