

SWORD OF THE STARS

STRATEGIC TURN WALKTHROUGH

"System update". Welcome to your section of the galaxy. As you'll quickly see, SOTS is a highly graphic game; you'll be able to get loads of information simply by looking at the space around you. Right now, there isn't much to see. A five-pointed star highlights your homeworld, and any additional colonies will be highlighted with your player color as well. If you're human, you'll notice blue node lines extending from your colonies; these are your only routes of transportation for now.

The camera is fairly simple. Holding down the right mouse button will allow you to rotate the camera around the object of focus, while using the mouse wheel or holding down both left and right buttons and dragging will zoom in and out.

The first thing you'll want to do is design Extended Range ships. These ships are incredibly useful for their price, being able to fight almost as well as any armor destroyers. Also, if you're playing human, the extra range will let you explore node lines that would otherwise be too long for your other ships. While you're in the design menu, you'll want to upgrade the basic ship designs you already have, especially if the game starts with extra techs.

Queue up some ships on your homeworld/colonies. Remember, queuing a ship costs money, so early on, you should only queue up what can be completed by next turn or two. This will keep you in the green, and hurt a lot less if you lose a colony.

SLIDERS, BUTTONS AND WINDOWS

There are several sliders you'll utilize during strategic turns. The largest is the savings/research slider. This determines where your profit goes. As you might expect, putting money into research speeds it up, dramatically. Note, however, that the total cash flow in the savings/research slider is dependent upon any construction projects you have going on elsewhere. For example, building lots of ships and colonizing high-hazard planets will take up a large portion of your income, and you'll notice diminishing returns on research speed and profits.

You can redirect these construction funds back into your savings on planetary sliders. There are five of these: overharvest, construction/trade, terraforming, infrastructure, and ship construction. You'll notice that each planet has a resource value, which will stay constant throughout the game barring meteor collisions or overharvesting. In the latter case, you will notice your planet's resources slowly draining. For this reason, using over harvest is not recommended until you have a good deal of experience with the game.

The remaining four bars are all connected to each other. The construction and trade slider will determine where your colony is putting its construction points, while the others will determine where that construction money is going. Construction points put towards trade generate cash, while construction points put towards construction are used for building. If you have all your construction points in construction, and there are points left over, the excess points generate savings. If you move any of the other three sliders to their maximum, you'll notice that the construction and trade slider moves towards construction. Infrastructure and terraforming will only appear on planets that have recently been colonized, or been damaged in fighting. Once the hazard rating reaches zero, terraforming will disappear, and with infrastructure at 100%, that slider will go as well.



Finally, the ship construction slider allocates cash to your shipyards. The higher it is, the more money goes into building, and the faster ships will be completed. However, that means less cash in pocket next turn.

TACTICAL TURN WALKTHROUGH

Eventually, you'll end a turn and a window will popup with details for a tactical encounter. The window will show a list of your and your enemy's fleet, and give you the option of fighting the battle or letting the AI play through or auto-resolve. This can be toggled by clicking on the icon that looks like a pair of crossed guns. While auto-resolve can be handy, it is often better to fight manually, as it gives you greater control over the outcome of the battle, and allows you to move your fleet with human creativity.

Once you confirm combat, the tactical session will load. After a brief animation of the combatants entering the combat area, you will be given command of one of your ships. As is conventional in RTS games, you can select multiple ships by band-boxing them while holding down the left mouse button. You can assign combat groups by selecting ships and using CTRL + a number. These combat groups will not be carried over into the next combat. Finally, you can switch between all ships under your command by using tab. *Note that until integrated sensors are researched, you MUST have a ship selected to see anything in sensor view.

The camera controls are identical to the strategic turn controls. Note that you can use the middle mouse button to focus on any object in the combat area.

If you are entering combat with an opponent for the first time, your weapons will be set to hold-fire, as noted by the little red circle on the upper left hand side. Click it to allow your ships to fire automatically whenever they are in range and a turret has a firing solution.

To give your ships a move order, simply right-click anywhere on the plane of combat. Remember though, that SOTS uses Newtonian physics, so ships have realistic momentum. If you fire your engines on full towards a target, they'll have to turn around and face thrusters in reverse to stop.

Ships will automatically fire on any target within range, however, you can specify targets by left clicking on them. A red circle will appear around the enemy ship. Your ships will fire as close to where you click on the target (polygon specific) as possible. Because of this, it is recommended you focus on the ship you want disabled to be able to target the systems you want to destroy first. You can even shoot off individual turrets, though you might not notice this until you research weapons with greater accuracy.

Targeting the right places on ships becomes very important, especially since different sections are more or less difficult to destroy. The tactical importance of this is obvious: destroy an enemy's engines to leave it stranded, destroy a tanker section and the enemy fleet won't have access to that fuel, take out an armor section and those weapons will be destroyed with it.

You also have access to several fleet-wide command behavior buttons. In some cases it can be more effective to order all movements manually rather than rely on the AI protocols, as it keeps your fleet together and under your control. However, in larger combats, AI captain behavior can also be important.

Almost all the information in battle is graphical. You will not find any health bars on your ships or the enemies. Ship sections will show signs of damage, allowing you to see which of your ships is about to blow, or which enemy targets are the easiest pickings.



OTHER CONTROLS

There are several other interfaces in combat. One of the most useful allows you to switch between battle and sensor view. Sensor view gives you a clean overview of the battle, and is very useful for sorting out where everything is during a battle. In the full game, you will be able to research better command abilities which will allow you to control fleets from the sensor pane as you would from the battle plane itself.

Once you research Battle Computers, you can build ships with the Squadron CnC mission section. This will allow you to field more ships if a CnC ship is in the battle, as well as give you a reinforcement list. Fleets will reinforce themselves on their own before CnC, but with the CnC you can select the order they come out in.

IMPORTANT RESEARCH

There are several techs, which are very important to remaining a competing power in SOTS. Remember, for many researched upgrades, you will need to redesign your ships to apply the results.

Waldo Units - These lower the cost of all ships you build, and also give you access to the Hammerhead command section, which gives you extra forward mounted turrets.

Pulsed Fission (also, **Recombinant Fissionable**, **Fusion**) - Very important for humans; this increases the range of all ships, and the speed they move at.

Battle Computers - Gives you the Squadron CnC mission section, which lets you field more ships, manage fleet formations before combat, and manage reinforcements in tactical.

Translation - When you start playing a match, you won't be able to understand or initiate diplomatic sessions with any of the other races in the game. After contacting them, you will be able to research their language.

Point Defense Tracking - Gives you the ability to create Point Defense turrets, which shoot down missiles and torpedoes, as well as asteroids and certain other targets.

Armor - There are two types of armor in the demo; reflective coating, and polysilicate alloys, which improve your defense against laser and ballistic fire, respectively.

While there are many core technologies that every race will get every game, there are several random technologies, as well as race specific technologies.

WEAPONS

Finally, I'll break down the different weapons types in the demo. Remember, turret slots limit weapons. There are small, medium, and special weapons slots. Medium slots can also hold missiles, a cluster of small turrets, or a single medium turret.

Lasers - Lasers come in three varieties in the demo; red, green, and UV. As you climb the research tree from red to UV, lasers become more powerful and accurate. Occasionally, you will be able to research directly from red to UV, skipping green laser development entirely. You'll have to judge for yourself whether this is the best course of action.

Emitters - Emitters come in two flavors in the demo; their mid-size version, and the smaller Light Emitter. They are random techs, and very powerful anti-ship weapons. Emitter blasts are able to jump from ship to ship, making them very effective against clusters of smaller ships, however they are woefully ineffective against planets.

Missiles - Missile warheads will automatically upgrade throughout the game for all ships. In the demo, the most powerful warhead is the Fusion warhead. They are very long range, but can be shot down by enemy guns.

Ballistics - There are two ballistic weapons in the demo; Gauss cannons and Mass Drivers. While much less accurate than other weapons, ballistics pack a punch, and can also



physically knock ships around. VRF technology will increase their rate of fire. They are also devastating against planets.

Torpedoes - There are several types of torpedoes in the demo. Plasma torpedoes can track enemy ships and can be shot down, while disruptors and emp torpedoes are line-of-sight fire. Photonic torpedoes are very long range rapid fire, but highly inaccurate.

Energy Cannons - There is only one cannon in the demo, that being the plasma cannon. Its tracking abilities make it highly accurate.

Beams - Beams are long range heavy hitters, and can only be used in the demo via the spinal mount section. They are highly inaccurate against destroyers.

Mines - Little packages of explosive joy. To lay mines simply click the mine icon and tell the ship to go somewhere.

Planetary Assault Biomissiles - These deliver bio weaponry to the surface. You must research Plague to use them in the demo. Once fired, you must repair the biomissile ships to replace the missile.

Assault Shuttles - These launch assault shuttles at the planet. If an assault shuttle mission section is destroyed, the Assault shuttle will try to dock with another ship, or else will be lost at the end of the turn. Likewise, if an assault shuttle is destroyed, the ship with its section must be repaired to gain a new shuttle.

**Note: When using biomissile ships or assault craft ships, you must click on the weapons slot holding the missile or assault ship in order to launch it. Simply targeting the planet will not launch these special weapons.*

NEW FEATURES AND CONTROLS

After the release of the demo and the early release of the game via direct download methods, players began to request features to heighten their SotS experience – and after carefully considering them all, a number were implemented into the 1.1.0 release patch. Here are a list of some of these things and how you can take advantage of them;

- The right mouse button can now be used like the left mouse button in the design screen, allowing you to rotate your ship for viewing at different angles.
- Middle mouse button will focus on stars and planets in the strategy starmap.
- The Home key will focus/select your reinforcements.
- The O key will toggle the tactical overlay for all ships in visual range.
- The Enter key will bring up the Chat Window on any game screen that has chat.
- Planetary build queues are now visible on the Colony summary page and double clicking the Build Queue title will take you to the build screen.
- The Delete key will remove ship designs from your design lists.
- CTRL+T will end turn, allowing you to end turn on any screen in the strategy round.
- The Tilde/End quotes key will call up Tool Tips immediately.
- The Tab key will allow you to cycle to the next colony in the build screen and in the starmap.
- The Shift key plus mouse click will add 5 ships to the build queue at a time.
- Q/Shift+Q cycles between enemies.
- You can now quit the game from combat.
- Holding the Shift key, while holding the Right mouse button and moving the mouse, will allow you to rotate the position of the formation of you selected ships, when giving move orders.
- CTRL-Page Up/Down to increase or decrease time compression in solo combat.

There is a great deal more that has gone into the game, but these are the items that you manually control yourself. For a full run-down on changes to SotS, it's time to make like it's 1987, and read the read-me file.



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