

PILOT CREATION

The directions that follow are useful for creating your pilot step by step; however, if you want to randomly generate your pilot in part or in whole, jump to Appendix A for methods to do that.

1. Choose a **playbook**. This will guide your pilot's methods.
2. Add the **3 starting action points** from your chosen Playbook to your character sheet. As you add action points in the following steps, note that **no pilot or vehicle action can exceed 2 during character creation**.
3. Who were you before The War stole from you? This is your **History**. **Put 1 point into a pilot or vehicle action that expresses it**.
4. How has your pilot experienced the costs of war? This is your **Tragedy**.
5. What were you doing before you joined the Squad, but after your Tragedy? This is your **Opening**. **Put 1 point into a pilot or vehicle action that expresses it**.
6. What do you hope to change in the world? This is your **Drive**.
7. **Assign 3 points** by dividing them among the **vehicle actions**.
8. **Put 2 points split between any pilot and/or vehicle actions**. You will now have 10 total action points.
9. Choose an **ability** from your playbook.
10. Write your **name, pronoun, call sign, and look**.
11. Write the names of each of the other members of your squad on your **Connection Sheet** and put 1 Tick in their **Connection Clock**. Create 1 **Belief** you have about each pilot, or choose an example Belief listed in any playbook.

PILOT LOOKS

Pilots in Beam Saber come from all walks of life. Some are grizzled veterans, others are former pop idols, a few are teens trying to cope with their newfound situation. Here are some suggestions for how to describe their appearance.

- Face: masked, beautiful, scarred, young, decorated, rugged, calm
- Eyes: artificial, cold, mocking, trusting, trustworthy, uncertain, warm
- Hair: flowing, military, punk, braided, poofy, slick
- Body: big, compact, flabby, muscular, scarred, skinny, toned, voluptuous
- Outfit: military, ornate, formal, vintage, practical, casual, scavenged

HISTORY, TRAGEDY, AND OPENING

The War has affected everyone, with the lucky only having rationing in their lives, but many more have experienced some form of tragedy. The pilots are not solely tragic figures though; they have a history before The War stole from them, and they find ways to live before they join the squad where the story opens on them.

When choosing your pilot's History, Tragedy, and Opening, there's no need to have it fully fleshed out. Having just a single detail for each is enough because developing the character through play and discovering who they are is part of the game. It also leaves room to learn that other players' characters are part of your past. If you DO have a lot of backstory ideas that you are very happy with, keep them; just keep an open mind about including new details as the game progresses.

HISTORY

A pilot's History is who they were before their Tragedy. Generally, this is a fairly mundane existence where The War is not something that fills their thoughts. Sure there's rationing, the neighbour's kid got conscripted, and your second cousin is moving back in with their parents after the space station they lived on got destroyed, but you can go most days without thinking about things like that. So don't worry about the tragedy looming in your future because for now life is... normal.

EXAMPLE HISTORIES

- Academic: A university professor or student a researcher, a doctor, a journalist, or some other person who furthers knowledge.
- Art: An architect, a sculptor, a writer, a composer, or some other person creating art.
- Criminal: A burglar, a con artist, a gang member, a drug pusher, or some other person who preys on vulnerabilities.
- Entertainment: An actor, a pop idol, a sex worker, an athlete, a livestreamer, a podcaster, or other some person who entertains.
- Family: A stay at home parent, a teen, a legal guardian, a PTA member, or some other person invested in caring for the young.
- Labor: A farmer, a factory worker, a transport driver, a seamster, a miner, or some other person living by the sweat of their brow.

- Law: A cop, a lawyer, a social worker, a court clerk, or some other person involved with legal proceedings.
- Military: A cadet, a quiet posting, a quartermaster, a deckhand, a guerilla, or some other job involved in The War.
- Political: A local council person, a volunteer, a propagandist, an activist, or some other person pushing political goals.
- Spiritual: a choir member, a yogi, a priest, a psychologist, or some other person invested in spiritual well being.
- Trade: a stock trader, a cashier, a banker, an arms dealer, or some other person who handles money.

TRAGEDY

A pilot's Tragedy is the event that propels them into their involvement in The War. It might be the loss of loved ones, being targeted by accusations (regardless of the truth), or witnessing an atrocity. It might not put them immediately into a squad, but it does put them on a course where every day they get closer to the controls of a war machine.

EXAMPLE TRAGEDIES

- Hid in a mass grave.
- Lone survivor of a militia
- Friends started disappearing.
- Family killed as collateral damage.
- Orbital station home used as a kinetic weapon.
- Unwillingly experimented on by unethical researchers.
- Exiled from homeland.
- Falsely charged with a major crime.
- Shown the lie of their own life.
- Participated in a failed coup or mutiny.

OPENING

A pilot's Opening is what they were doing with their life before they joined the Squad. It is what they did with themselves between their tragedy and the opening of the game. Some will be in a deep depression, possibly at the bottom of a bottle. Others will be training hard to get their revenge. A few will try to continue with their lives, pretending that their fate is not

irrevocably changed and pulling them towards The War. All will be forced into a new life at the start of the game.

EXAMPLE OPENINGS

- Building a custom vehicle from spare parts.
- Avoiding people with long voyage transport jobs.
- Studying military strategy in preparation for war.
- Catching deserters as a bounty hunter.
- Stuck in prison for petty crimes.
- Driving a taxi in areas autocars can't navigate.
- Commanding a gang of rabble and scum.
- Tending to the needs of an admiral as their valet.
- Getting by as a sex worker.
- Fighting in the vehicle arena.
- Shuffling papers in a cubicle farm.
- Serving drinks in a run down bar.

DRIVES

What do you want to change? Regardless of how they ended up in The War, every Pilot has an ambition. Maybe they want to get revenge on the Squad that destroyed their village. Perhaps they want to climb the ladder, and reach a position of power in their Faction. Then there's the always relevant "live happily ever after." Drives are how these changes are made.

The ability to make changes are represented by a Drive, and two 4-tick clocks. The Drive is a sentence that briefly explains what the Pilot hopes to change in the world. When a Pilot does something new that furthers their Drive, they can add 1 tick to a Drive clock at the end of the mission as part of the Reward process. If they complete a Long-term Project that furthers their Drive, they can add 1 tick to a Drive clock in addition to the normal benefits of completing that project. Repeating an action during a mission or a Long-Term Project during downtime to further your Drive won't provide more than the first tick. It doesn't matter how many times you record an album, only the first one will help you become a pop idol.

You can also get Drive ticks by calling in favours from your Patron Faction or other Squads. To do this you must have a Relationship with your Patron of +1 or higher, or a +3 Status with another Squad. If you are spending your social capital with your Patron, lower your Squad's Relationship by 1. If you are using good will with another Squad to advance your Drive, lower your Squad's Status with them by 3. Obviously this affects the entire Squad and not just your character, so make sure that you have permission from all of the other players before you use this rule.

If you've chosen a Drive that seems too big or too amorphous to affect, it is alright to get Drive ticks for relatively small actions. For example if your Drive is to "remove the orbital debris cloud," you could get a tick by suggesting that a salvage squad could turn a profit by taking the cloud apart. Focus on moving one step at a time, and you'll make the journey before you know it.

The one thing Drives can't do is end The War. There are too many pressures from too many sources for one person or one Squad to stop it. You might be able to shift the nature of The War however, by changing how or why it is fought. See Spending Drive (page ??) for details.

EXAMPLE DRIVES

Here are some example Drives along with examples of what might add ticks to them.

Drive	Progress
Kill the man responsible for destroying my hometown.	• Defeat your Rival. • Learn his weaknesses. • Find out where he sleeps.
Become a famous pop idol.	• Get a record deal. • Record an album. • Perform for a crowd.
Get a high ranking position in the military.	• Help a superior advance in rank. • Weaken a peer's political position. • Prove your own competence.
Build a horse ranch away from The War.	• Acquire land in a safe place. • Acquire a few quality horses. • Hire some ranchers.

Develop a weapon that could end The War.

- Develop an overlooked science into something deadly.
- Prove that it can be controlled.
- Weaponize it on a massive scale.

Make sure that my friends will have a good life.

- Start a trust fund for your friends.
- Help them avoid getting a Scar.
- Take the blame for a disaster.

SPENDING DRIVE

Once a Drive clock is full it can be spent to change the world. The more clocks spent at once, the bigger the change.

- Spend 1 clock to negate Harm or Damage of any Level, change an Action or Fortune Roll to a 6, or Assist another Pilot by providing all 4 benefits.

- Spend 2 clocks to change the life circumstances of one person. This is the only way to permanently defeat a Rival.

- Spend 3 clocks to change the circumstances of a Squad.

- Spend 4 clocks to change the circumstances of a Faction.

- Any time you spend a clock, in addition to the normal benefits you can choose to rewrite your Drive.

As a Pilot only has 2 Drive clocks, more than one Pilot must spend Drive to change the circumstances of a Squad or Faction. If more than one Pilot spends Drive to affect a Squad or Faction, one of them is designated the Leader. The Leader is the Pilot who came up with the idea, presented the evidence, organized the squad, and just generally took charge. Every Pilot donating a Drive clock gets to add one tick to their Connection clock with the Leader, and the Leader gets to add one tick to their Connection clock with everyone who donated a Drive clock.

What is meant by "change" and "circumstances" is left intentionally vague because what can be changed and how much, are ways to control the tone of the game. In a game where the Pilots are narratively powerful changing a Faction could be convincing the Jovangellian Empire to become a constitutional monarchy, giving political power to the masses. In a less heroic game spending 4 clocks might only mean that the Jovangellian child empress is able to reach adulthood in good health. While the example about of the child empress reaching adulthood is a 4 Drive change it could also be a 2 Drive change instead. The difference is on the scale of the effect. Spending 4 means that the empress grows up and this changes the Jovangellian Empire. Spending 2 means that she grows up but is ineffectual and becomes a footnote in history.

The changes wrought by spending Drives can build on each other. For example, if the Jovangellian Empire becomes a constitutional monarchy, a later expenditure of 4 Drive could put it and the Democratic Federated Systems into a true alliance with no betrayal foreshadowed. When combining the effects of spending Drive, the expense does NOT need to be the same amount each time. The only restriction is that each instance of spending Drive must affect the appropriate scale. For example spending 2 Drive and then 3 Drive must affect a person and a Squad respectively, and cannot affect a Faction. If 2 Drive was spent to ensure an ally is put into a position of Jovangellian power, that could be built upon by spending 4 Drive to have them enact the move into a constitutional monarchy.

Lastly, the changes from spending Drive must follow the fiction. If a Pilot has been fighting fiercely against their Rival with no concern for either side's health, spending 2 Drive to permanently remove their Rival as a threat doesn't mean the Rival will suddenly switch sides; they are going to die. Likewise spending those 2 Drive against a Rival who has just appeared in the Mission will not immediately fill their progress clock, but it WILL seal their fate once that clock is filled. That said, to gain Ticks in a Drive clock in the first place a Pilot must have done things that further their Drive, and so there is a good chance they have in fact already laid the groundwork. In short, when spending Drive consider the Pilot's past acts in relation to their goals, and how those will shape the outcome.

CONNECTIONS

The ties between pilots in a squad are as diverse as those between family. Sometimes they are intense, heated, and asymmetrical, while other times they are cool, cordial, and mutual. These Connections determine how Stressful it is and competent you are when you need to assist your fellows.

On each pilot's character sheet, there will be a 4-Tick Clock representing how well you know each pilot in the squad. For each Tick in that Clock make a Belief about the pilot the Clock is tied to. When the Clock fills, ask the target pilot for a truth about one of the Beliefs tied to them, then reset it to 0 Ticks as you see them in a new light. It'll take time and effort to

understand them again and relearn their rhythms, so the pilot erases all the Beliefs they have for that pilot. After they've revealed a truth about themselves, you both take 1 XP which can be put into any attribute or into the pilot playbook.

BELIEFS

Pilots in Beam Saber are survivors, and part of their ability to survive is correctly judging the people around them. They quickly form opinions about who they can trust, who they should fear, and who they can use. This makes them rather opinionated about their fellow pilots, and of course they aren't always correct. These opinions are a pilot's **Beliefs**.

Each Belief a pilot has is a statement that they feel is true about another pilot. They are simple, quick, and influential in the rapport between the two; however, the players need to remember that they are not necessarily true.

Each playbook has some example Beliefs that can be used, but feel free to write your own.

A good Belief is:

- Something that a pilot might say about their squadmate to a confidante.
- Easily summarized so that it can be quickly remembered when relevant.
- Potentially true.
- Suitable for the game's setting and tone.
- Something the player is interested in exploring.

If a character struggles because of the Beliefs that they have about their fellow pilots then they can mark 1 XP at the end of session, or 2 XP if it came up more than once.

PILOT ACTIONS

When Pilots take actions that don't require their vehicles, their player selects the Pilot Action that is most suitable to the situation. There are 12 actions, and they are broken up into groups of 4, all of which fall under their shared Attribute. An Attribute is a loose description used for determining Resistance rolls (see page ??).

All pilot action ratings max out at 4 points, but during pilot creation they can't have more than 2 points in an action. The mastery Squad upgrade is required to unlock the fourth point.

Pilots have access to the following actions:

INSIGHT ACTIONS

Hunt: for tracking ad long distance precision.

Study: for inspecting details and evidence.

Survey: for observing surroundings and possible outcomes.

Engineer: for adjusting and creating devices and mechanisms.

PROWESS ACTIONS

Finesse: for using manual dexterity.

Prowl: for moving with grace and power.

Struggle: for engaging in close quarters combat.

Wreck: for applying brute force.

RESOLVE ACTIONS

Command: for compelling quick obedience.

Consort: for socializing with others.

Interface: for using complex digital equipment.

Sway: for influencing through guile, charm, or debate.

VEHICLE ACTIONS

The abilities of a vehicle are as important to the outcome of an action as the skill of the pilot. When a pilot needs to roll an action that uses their vehicle they roll the relevant vehicle action rating. If a pilot tries to remotely pilot a vehicle or a vehicle that is not theirs they have reduced Effect.

All vehicle action ratings max out at 4 points, but during pilot creation they can't have more than 2 points in an action. The mastery squad upgrade is required to unlock the fourth point. Vehicles have access to the following actions:

EXPERTISE ACTIONS

Battle: for attacking at short range.

Destroy: for razing with unsubtle methods.

Maneuver: for moving swiftly and precisely.

ACUITY ACTIONS

Bombard: for blasting with long range fire.

Manipulate: for deftly handling objects.

Scan: for quickly assessing a situation.

All vehicle actions belong to the Expertise or Acuity attributes. These attributes are used to resist consequences. They gain a point of XP when a Desperate vehicle action is performed with them, or a point of general XP is assigned to them. When the Vehicle Upgrade track is filled through the Upgrade Downtime Activity an additional point can be added to any Vehicle Action.