

Escape Velocity Basics

What you need to know to get up to speed in Escape Velocity

Flight Controls

I remember the first time I ever sat in the pilot's chair of my first ship, the cargo shuttle Journeyman. I hadn't been at the controls of a ship that small in quite a while — not since I piloted a single-seat fighter during the Great War, in fact. It didn't take me long to get used to the controls again, though. They say piloting a starship is like riding a bicycle; once you learn how to do it, you never forget.

To start a new game in Escape Velocity, click on the New Pilot button. A dialog box appears, allowing you to name your pilot, and decide whether you'd like to play by Strict rules or not. If you choose to play by Strict rules, when your pilot dies, he's truly dead (so make sure you're quick to jettison in your escape pod). If you decide to not play by Strict rules, when your pilot dies, you can simply click on the Open Pilot button and resume where you left off.

We recommend playing by Strict rules if you want to play Escape Velocity as it was truly meant to be played, however, you may not want to do this when you are first starting out, because it is a savage universe out there.

Either way, your first look at your new cargo shuttle will be in orbit around the planet Levo. In a minute you'll learn how to land on the planet, but first let's get used to flying your ship around. The flight controls in Escape Velocity are similar to many other space games, including Ambrosia Software's Maelstrom. Hold down on the right or left arrows to rotate your ship clockwise or counterclockwise. The up arrow will activate your ship's main engines, accelerating you forward. Because there's no air drag in space, you'll keep going forward even when you let off the up arrow key, and you can rotate your ship to a different heading while your ship coasts in the previous direction.

Your ship's guidance computer will assist you in stopping the craft, if you wish: holding down on the down arrow key will make your ship's computer try to align your ship's heading along the reciprocal of your current path. In other words, it will make you turn around backwards with respect to your current motion. Holding down on the down arrow to rotate you backwards and then hitting the up arrow to apply "reverse" thrust is a quick and easy way to stop.

By the way, don't be alarmed if you see asteroids drifting across the screen — you can't run into them. However, they do have useful benefits which will be discussed later in this document.

Landing

My first action as captain and sole crewmember of the cargo shuttle Journeyman was to land on the planet I was orbiting, the freeport of Levo. As I set down on the landing pad, I couldn't help but notice all the water around the spaceport perimeter. Sure, they say the island of Locanda is "perfectly safe" from tidal storms, but I sure wouldn't want my brand-new ship to receive a hull-washing without my permission...

After you've mastered the basics of maneuvering your ship through space, the next thing you'll

probably want to do is land on the planet of Levo. All you have to do is hit the L key — your ship's computer will automatically select the nearest planet (Levo is the only one in the system you're in) and contact the planetary spaceport's traffic-control center to request landing clearance.

After you've requested landing clearance, you'll have to approach the planet itself. If you drifted too far away while you were learning to fly your ship, hold down on the A key and your ship's computer will automatically align your heading to point toward Levo. You can also locate the planet by looking at the radar display in the upper right-hand corner of the screen; your ship is the bright green dot in the center of the display, and the planet Levo is a small green circle.

Fly toward the planet until it appears on the screen. It should have a set of blue brackets around it, indicating that your ship's computer has set it as your current navigation destination. (if, for some reason, the residents of Levo didn't want you to land, those brackets would be red instead) To land, you need to fly your ship directly over the planet and get rid of most of your speed. You don't need to be completely stopped, just moving relatively slowly. Once you've accomplished this — don't hesitate to go around again if your landing approach isn't working out like you want it to — hit L again and you should land on the planet. If you're too far away, or if you're moving too fast to enter the atmosphere, your ship's computer will beep at you and you can try again.

[The Commodity Exchange](#)

I had been in many spaceports before when I was first mate on the ore freighter Loadstar, but I hadn't really looked closely at one before. The Levo spaceport was rather interesting — there were several things to do there. I saw an automated mission computer terminal on one wall, and over on the west side there was a sign advertising some kind of spaceport bar, but I decided those would have to wait. If I was going to make any money, I figured I'd have to start trading some goods. I hoofed it over to the Levo commodity exchange to see what was for sale...

Once you've landed successfully on Levo, take a moment to familiarize yourself with the spaceport. Other, more industrialized planets will have additional options for you to choose from, but for now there are plenty of things to do at Levo. For one thing, if you're going to make money as a starship captain, the first thing you should do is try trading some goods. Click on the button marked "Commodity Exchange" to enter Levo's trading center.

n the list box are entries for the different commodities that Levo will trade, along with their cost and how much of that commodity you have in your ship's hold. The price for each commodity is listed in credits per ton, and also tells you if that price is low, medium, or high. The Buy and Sell buttons will buy and sell up to 10 tons of the selected commodity. You can tell how much free space you have left in your ship's cargo hold by looking at the bottom of the status display, which should still be visible behind the spaceport dialog box.

I loaded my ship with foodstuffs from the Levo commodity exchange. Food is in demand on a lot of worlds, so I figured it wouldn't be tough to find a place to turn a profit on it.

Remember, not all planets trade the same things, and different planets will pay different prices for the same commodity. A shrewd trader uses this to his advantage, buying low on one planet and selling high on another.