

Critical Mass

Copyright Sean O'Connor, August 1995

The Mission Objective

The first screen shows you your mission objective and your squadron, Alpha Squadron. The ship in the centre of the squadron is your own ship, Alpha Leader. Also shown is a [Buy Ships](#) window listing the different types of attack [ship](#) found in the galaxy and a [Ship Info](#) window displaying the details of any ship that you point to in the Buy Ships window.

To start the mission, click on the Begin Mission icon at the bottom right hand corner of the screen.

The Mission

To control your own ship, click on the end of the white arrow coming from it and move it to where you want your ship to go to. You can only accelerate, decelerate or turn by as much as your engines will allow you.

To fire a [missile](#) click on any of the missile icons in the [Ship Info](#) window. You can only select as many missiles to fire in a turn as you have missile bays ready. To deselect a missile, click on it again. It takes a whole turn to re-ready a missile bay once a missile has been fired from it.

You can view different parts of the game by dragging the screen with the hand icon, or by clicking somewhere on the [Scanner](#) window. You can also zoom in and out by clicking on the '-' or '+' buttons in the [Scanner](#) window.

If you think that your ship is about to be destroyed, select the **Eject** option from the **Orders** menu. An escape pod will launch from your ship which will try to fly out of the playing area to safety.

Once you have finished moving your ship and selected all the missiles you want to fire, click on the End Turn button in the Scanner window.

The Mission Debrief

The Mission Debrief screen tells you whether you were successful in your mission. Also shown will be how the squadron fared: the ship's individual outcomes, the [medals](#) they received and the friendly and enemy ships that they destroyed.

The Windows

While playing the game you can click the right hand mouse button in any window to bring up the following help on it:

[Buy Ships](#)

[Scanner](#)

[Squadron](#)

[Ship Info](#)

Miscellaneous

[Demo Game](#)

[Credits](#)

[Ordering a copy](#)

Demo Game

At any time you can run a demo game by selecting **Demo Game** from the **File** Menu and watch the computer play out a random mission.

You can then return to where you left off in your own game by selecting **Abort Demo** from the **File** menu, or you can let the demo finish and then return to your own game.

Medals

On finishing a mission each ship in your squadron may be awarded any one of the following medals for bravery and enemy kills made during the mission:



Medal Of Honour

The most commonly awarded medal, for competent flying skills on the mission.



The Medal Of Conspicuous Bravery

A medal for above average combat accomplishments.



The Medal Of Outstanding Courage

A medal normally awarded for a large kill rate and excellent piloting skills.



The Gold Cross

The Gold Cross is the highest award given to attack ship pilots. It requires outstanding courage as well as a high kill rate and is only given very rarely.

Buy Ships window



The Buy Ships window lists all the different types of attack ship that are found in the galaxy and how much they each cost in credits. In the full version of Critical Mass it is used to build up your own squadron.

Squadron window

NOTE: This window will not appear if you are running Windows in 640x480 pixels.

The squadron window shows you the ships in your squadron as a series of buttons. The first button is always the squadron leader (your ship).

You can jump to any of your squadron's ship's current positions by clicking on their corresponding button.

If a ship either leaves the sector or ejects and the escape pod manages to get away to safety it will be shown as a  symbol. A ship which has been destroyed will be shown as a .

Clicking on the Report button will ask the ships in your squadron to report back to you on their current damage status.

Scanner window

The Scanner window shows a view of the entire sector and highlights the area that you are looking at in the main window with a grey rectangle. Friendly ships are shown as green dots, asteroids as grey, and missiles as yellow dots. Enemy ships are shown as dots in their own colour.

There are two buttons marked - and + which can be used to zoom in and out of the sector.

The End Turn button ends the turn, and all the movement will begin.

Ship Info window

To see the current state of any ship (or missile or asteroid) click on it with the left hand mouse button. The following details will then appear in the Ship Info window:

The ship`s name

If the ship is in your squadron its call-sign will be shown in the window`s title bar.

The ship`s type

The type of ship will be shown at the top of the window.

The make-up of the ship

A picture of the ship will be shown in the middle of the window with icons showing what the ship has in its front, left, right and rear. The icons represent:

☀ **Command center.** A ship is destroyed when all of its command centres have been hit.

■ **Shielding.** All missile impacts will be taken by the shielding on the side of the ship that the missile hits. Shields are four times as good at taking damage than any other object. Once all shielding on a side has been destroyed, the rest of the ship becomes very vulnerable from that side as damage will be taken by all internal objects.

🚀 **Missile Bay.** Ships can only shoot one missile from each bay per turn.

🔥 **Used Missile Bay.** It takes a whole turn to ready a missile bay to shoot another missile.

📡 **Radar.** Without the aid of a radar, ships can only see a fairly short distance. Each additional radar increases the distance that a ship can see on the side of the ship that the radar is situated.

🚗 **Engine.** The more engines a ship has the faster it will go. Engines at the rear of a ship determine the ships acceleration and deceleration, and engines at the sides determine how quickly a ship can turn.

📦 **Cargo.**

💣 **Rubble.** Anything destroyed by missile impact will become rubble.

The ship`s missiles

Beneath the ships picture the missiles that the ship has are shown. When your own ship is displayed in the Ship Info window, you can fire a missile by clicking on one with the left hand mouse button. Clicking on it again will deselect it. You can only select as many missiles as you have missile bays ready.

The ship`s manoeuvrability

A ships manoeuvrability depends on its mass and how many engines it has at the rear (for thrust) and on the left and right hand sides (for turning).

Ships

The attack ships:

Scout

Scouts are the cheapest ships available. They have superb radars but fairly poor defensive and attacking capabilities.

Fighter

Fighters are the most common attack ships in the galaxy. They are cheap and yet have excellent manoeuvrability.

Blaster

Blasters are similar to fighters but have 12 additional Plectron type missiles and an extra missile bay giving them extra firepower making them more suitable for attacking static fortifications.

Killer

Killers have a more advanced anti-ship capability than the basic fighter with the addition of an extra missile bay and 6 Daycorn missiles, as well as 12 Plectrons.

Raider

Raiders are a specialist anti-fortification ship. Their 12 Plectron and 12 Yatari missiles with 2 missile bays gives them a devastating amount of firepower but almost no anti-attack ship capability.

Hunter

Hunters are the ultimate anti-ship ship. They have the best turning circle of any ship in the galaxy, and a battery of the excellent Daycorn missiles as well as the cheaper Geenees, and 12 Plectrons for additional firepower.

Destroyer

Destroyers are all round ships, with the capability to tackle the best ships in a dogfight as well as having the ability to attack heavy fortifications.

Warrior

Warriors are the largest type of attack ship dedicated to dogfighting. What they lack in manoeuvrability compared to some of their lighter cousins they make up for in armour and firepower.

Cruiser

Cruisers are the largest type of attack ship to be found in the galaxy. They have a huge amount of firepower for taking on either other ships in dogfights or static fortifications, and they have excellent manoeuvrability considering their vast amount of armour.

Other ships:

Freighter

Freighters are slow moving and have no missiles at all. Their pilots are not surprisingly prone to ejecting at the first sign of real trouble.

Turret

Turrets are a static defence with large amounts of armour to compensate for them being easy targets. Their rear is their weakpoint, so they are generally positioned in rings to give each other mutual support.

Starbase

Starbases are the headquarters for controlling sectors of the galaxy. They are almost always heavily defended by a ring of turrets and an escorting squadron.

Passenger Liners

Passenger liners carry civilians and are therefore essential to destroy before the civilians can be conscripted into the enemy war machine.

Hospital ships

Hospital ships are slow moving recuperation centers for injured enemy pilots and must therefore be destroyed.

Factory ships

Factory ships are vast assembly lines for building new ships and missiles to equip the colonies in deep space.

Missiles

Combat between ships is done using missiles. Yataris, Geenees and Daycorns all have homing mechanisms which can see up to 30 degrees either side of the direction that they are travelling in. Missiles will home in on the nearest ship (or asteroid) in this cone whether it is a friend or an enemy, so care must be taken not to hit your own ships. Plectrons have no homing mechanism and will just fly in the direction that they were launched.

Yatari

Yataris have huge warheads but very poor thrust and turning circles. This makes them very bad anti-ship missiles, except for against crippled ships, but superb for destroying static fortifications.

Geenee

Geenees are the main ship-to-ship missile. They have a small warhead but good homing in capabilities and are the most common type of missile found in the galaxy.

Daycorn

Daycorns are an updated version of the Geenee. They have a slightly smaller warhead but a better homing computer and a tighter turning circle. However, to make space for its more advanced capabilities the fuel load had to be reduced giving it only a fairly short controlled flight.

Plectrons

Plectrons have large warheads but are a very basic cheap missile with no turning ability. Their main use is in launching at static fortifications, crippled or slow moving ships, and in salvos at large enemy concentrations.

Credits

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Order Form

The full copy of Critical Mass allows you to have 6 different commanders who can each play any of over 30 different types of mission and lets you build up your own squadrons. To order a full copy, please send:

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62 Whitney Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 4BJ, England.
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