

strategy & Tactics: Rebel Assault

by Joshua D. Rothman

If you drop by any on-line services nowadays, you're likely to find a discussion somewhere about Rebel Assault for the Mac. If you look back through the messages, most of these discussions went like this: "Rebel Assault is coming!" "Where's Rebel Assault?" "TELL US WHERE THAT GAME IS NOW!!!!!" "I got it, I got it!"

And after all the hubbub died down, most people starting posting the same message: "This game is really difficult!"

But do not despair! Following is no-nonsense look at Rebel Assault, from training to trench run. Good luck, and, oh yea, may the Force be with you.

Control is Key

The most important thing involved in mastering this game is confidence with your control device.

Joysticks: Rebel Assault comes with several handy joystick sets, and these will usually suffice. There are a few adjustments you should make, though.

First, tune-up your stick. Whether this is called "tuning" or "calibrating" or "turning the stick until your arm hurts" in the software doesn't matter, but make sure that your joystick is in good working order. Finally, set your stick's tension to its highest possible setting (this is usually accomplished by turning a wheel at the base of the unit). If you've done this, try out Beggar's Canyon. If your stick is smooth, and lets you corner by holding a steady pressure in any direction, you're all set.

Keyboard: The keyboard is useful only for flight. Aiming with the keyboard, although accurate, is too slow for some scenes in the game. If you don't normally use the keyboard to fly in games (like Hornet or Flying Nightmares), you'll have to make some adjustments or use a joystick instead.

Mouse/Trackball: The mouse and trackball are great devices for aiming in the game. If you have a trackball, turn any accelerated settings you may have on off, and set the tracking speed to a slower than normal rate. The same is true for the mouse. Use quick, accurate

hand-movements to jump from one part of the screen to another.

Chapter 1 — Flight Training

Location: Beggar's Canyon, Tatooine

Okay, welcome to Beggar's Canyon on Tatooine. The speed you move through the canyon with does not change with difficulty level; instead, each hit causes more damage the higher your difficulty is set.

The trick here is not to fly too low. The lower you are, the closer the canyon walls are to you, and the more difficult it is to avoid them. Here you'll learn a very important lesson; don't overcompensate when flying. Although most people automatically pull hard away from the wall if they take damage, all this does is cause you to crash into the opposite side of the canyon. Handle the controls gently. The joystick is generally easiest here, but if you don't have one use the keyboard. Do not use the mouse. Use only a little pressure on the stick or tap the keyboard directions instead of holding them down.

If you go left when the canyon splits, stay down and keep your Skyhopper in the center of the screen. The land bridge should not be a problem. If you go right, and follow Green Leader, stay in the center of the screen as well. Pull hard left when you reach the first hairpin turn, and as soon as you get Green Leader in sight again, pull hard right, without waiting for him to prompt you. In the final turn back left, don't pull hard left; instead, stay in the center and turn slowly, gently pulling (or tapping) up on the stick. If you pull hard left, you take damage from the left wall.

In Part II, you should use the keyboard to move around the screen. Remember not to touch the rock spires. The target drones will usually fly to you, so don't go chasing them around the screen. There is a slight delay between firing and impact on the canyon floor, so lead your targets.

Chapter 2 — Asteroid Field Training

Location: Deep Space

Passcodes: Easy: BOSSK Normal: BOTHAN Hard: BORDOK

The asteroid fields in this game will probably prove to be the most frustrating sections. First of all, keep in mind that your A-wing's frame extends around you, outside the cockpit. Just because an asteroid isn't heading right for your head does not mean that it won't hit.

Spend more time flying and looking and less time shooting. Look at all the asteroids, and figure out which ones are coming your way. If it's an ice asteroid, destroy it (I would recommend using the mouse here). If a rocky asteroid is heading your way, pull away from it; don't try your luck by hoping it'll miss. A good trick here is to follow Commander Farrell, and do what he does.

Chapter 3 — Planet Kolaadore

Location: Planet Koloadore

Passcodes: Easy: ENGRET Normal: HERGLIC Hard: SKYNX

This Chapter constitutes the final phase of your training, and you'll need steady hands to get through the course.

The most important thing here is actually to stay low, because the rock spires are slanted

inward. Throughout most of the course, the A-Wing will actually fly itself, and your main job will be to make tiny adjustments. If you're using a joystick, remember not to overcompensate. Make extremely small movements to the left and right, and try to match the angle at which Cmdr. Murleen's ship is moving. If you're using the keyboard, tap the keys instead of holding them down.

There will be several fallen spires of rock lying across the course. Just before you reach the highest one, the A-Wing will for some reason FORCE itself to go right, then left, smashing you into the rocks. Be mindful of this, and work to counteract it as much as possible.

Chapter 4 — Star Destroyer Attack

Location: Space over Tatooine

Passcodes: Easy: RALRRA Normal: LEENI Hard: DEFEL

This level is best played with a mouse or trackball. Unless you're on the hard level, the only damage you can possibly incur here is from TIE Fighters.

When cruising along the side of the Star Destroyer, there will be both shield generators and turbo-laser batteries. If you're on easy or normal, it doesn't matter which you fire at, since you can see where they are; fire indiscriminately. On the hard level, however, you won't be able to see where the batteries and generators are. Since the generators cannot hurt you, and you have a seemingly unlimited length of time to destroy them, focus your attention on the turbo-lasers. Watch to see where laser fire is appearing, and fire at the source. Once the lasers are gone, you can scan the side of the ship for generators by moving the cursor around until you see the LOCK notation at the bottom of the screen. Then spray the general area with fire.

To fight off the TIEs, you'll need to lead your targets. It's extremely important to eliminate them before they get passed you; if only five or six of them get away on the EASY level, you'll be a goner.

There are three basic TIE formations, and there's a way to deal with all of them. [Tuncer, should there be a diagram of some sort here? I can't really do graphics, but if you think it's appropriate I can try. Something with pictures of the fighters, with red lines to describe their flight path and green lines to show the path of your aiming sight might work well.]

(1): A-Frame Formation In this formation, the Fighters roughly describe an A, with two fighters on the bottom and one in between and above them (This is called a "wedge" or "arrow" in many flight simulators). This formation rarely breaks up, so look to see where the fighters are going, and put your cursor in a position to hit the lowest targets. What you want to do is describe an upside-down 'V' with your aiming sight. This should only be a short twitch of your finger or hand. If done correctly, you can completely destroy the TIEs every time. This will be especially crucial in later levels, where hordes of TIEs attack.

(2): Side-by-Side This one is simple to take care of. Two TIEs will come at you, right next to each other horizontally or vertically. The best way to deal with this is to get the fighters from far off, when they seem closer together. If you're overwhelmed and they're getting close, place your cursor where the fighters are going and let them walk right into your fire.

(3): Split Formation In this formation, the TIEs will resemble the Side-by-Side arrangement, but split and head off in two different directions. Once again, destroying them before they split is best. If they get too close, you'll have to work real hard to get them both. Don't wait for them if they've already split; just describe a straight line from one side of the screen

to the other, destroying both fighters in one movement.

When you reach the shield generator towers, fire only at the one closest to you. When it goes off-screen, fire at the other one. Move your sight up at the last minute to take care of the fighter that approaches.

Finally, when you get to torpedo the command center, you'll have to aim carefully. The game doesn't let you fire until you're on target, so double-click continuously while trying to align the target. This is difficult, and you only have a limited time to do it.

Chapter 5 — Tatooine Attack

Location: Beggar's Canyon/Mos Eisley Spaceport

Passcodes: Easy: FRIJA Normal: THRAWN Hard: JEDGAR

Part I of this chapter is fairly simple. If you can, destroy the three TIEs immediately upon entering combat. This is possible by quickly moving your craft from left to right, while firing. If you can't do this, you're in for a real thrill ride.

This canyon run is much faster than the first one you took. You really will need to concentrate on flying, and not on shooting. The thing that will help you most here is a knowledge of the canyon. If you remember, even roughly, how the canyon winds and twists, you can concentrate on aiming your target sight, and not as much on flying. To be honest, if you haven't gotten the TIEs by the time you get under the land bridge, you're in deep trouble. At the bridge, two of the fighters go under, and one goes over. You may just have to do this one over and over until you're used to flying the canyon.

In Part II, there is no real strategy involved at all. Just shoot, shoot, shoot. Really, this is a bonus level; you can't die, all you can do is score points.

Chapter 6 — Asteroid Field Chase

Location: Asteroid Field over Tatooine

Passcodes: Easy: LAFRA Normal: LWYLL Hard: MADINE

Chapters 6 and 7 are probably the two most challenging in the game. The asteroid field is faster and thicker than the one you negotiated with Commander Farrell.

The same principles still apply, though. Watch out for oncoming ice asteroids, and be aware of the rock asteroids that are close enough to hit you. Using the mouse here is a good idea, because it lets you change direction faster than the keyboard.

It's okay to let TIEs past you here, as they do nothing to hurt you once they're behind your ship. The most deadly part of the field is the section where you view the asteroids vertically; be very careful here. At the end, watch the direction you're going in and be careful when you enter the doughnut-shaped asteroid.

Chapter 7 — Imperial Probe Droids

Location: Hoth Ice Caves

Passcodes: Easy: DERLIN Normal: MAZZIC Hard: TARKIN

This level is extremely easy if you know the right way to go. The cave splits at several points in the chapter. To get through the caves, go left, left, right, left and left again.

If you want to destroy the most Imperial probe droids, stay roughly in the vertical center of

the cave. The droids won't hurt you nearly as much as the walls will, so be careful in terms of flying.

Chapter 8 — Imperial Walkers

Location: Hoth Snow Fields

Passcodes: Easy: MOLTOK Normal: JULPA Hard: MOTHMA

To destroy the walkers, you need to obliterate all of the armor panels along its body. Each panel takes two hits, and you'll need to destroy nearly all of them to take the walker down.

The game offers you two different attack paths to take. Path A gives you a few seconds opportunity to fire at the walkers dorsal armor, and Path B gives you some shots at the difficult-to-get leg patches. You should alternate paths until you've gotten as many armor panels as you can, then use the paths selectively, depending on where the most patches are left.

The only danger in this level comes from the walker's blaster fire. Emanating from cannons along-side the head, all you have to do to dodge it is pull away with your mouse or joystick. Don't use the keyboard here.

Chapter 9 — Stormtroopers

Location: Rebel Base on Hoth

Passcodes: Easy: MORAG Normal: MORRT Hard: GLAYDD

Switch to the mouse or trackball for this level. If there's a single chapter designed to frustrate you, this will be it.

Destroying stormtroopers is extremely simple on the easy level. Just point and blast. But when you get up to the normal and hard levels, you'll lose your target sight.

If you don't have a sight, you have to watch where your blaster fire is going. If it's too high, you have to notice and lower it. The troopers only appear in a few set places; memorize where they are and know how to get the blaster pointed in that direction. If they appear in a difficult to find area, like below a catwalk or on an overhang, ignore them.

The base is twisted and has several branches in the corridors. The direction you should go in is picked randomly by the computer. Generally, if you go the wrong way, you'll be ambushed by troopers or dumped back where you started. REMEMBER which way you went, just in case you have to start over.

Chapter 10 — Protect Rebel Transport

Location: Space Over Hoth

Passcodes: Easy: TANTISS Normal: MUFTAK Hard: OTTEGA

This level is rather simple: shoot the TIEs. There's no real strategy at all involved in this one. Just aim and shoot, using the procedures outlined earlier (in Chapter 4). If you die here, practice some more, because you'll need to know how to defeat TIEs for later levels.

Chapter 11 — Yavin Training

Location: Yavin Riverbed

Passcodes: Easy: OSWAFI Normal: RASKAR Hard: RISHI

This level is a no-brainer, just like the last one. Be careful in navigating the riverbed, and

don't bother aiming; just hold down the fire button and hope you catch a few. If you survive 'till the end, you'll be fine for the rest of the game. Treat this just like Beggar's Canyon, except that you're holding the fire button down. Nothing will kill you faster here than to be aiming instead of flying.

Chapter 12 — TIE Attack

Location: Space Over Yavin

Passcodes: Easy: KLAATY Normal: JHOFF Hard: IRZINA

This one requires a lot of luck, as well as skill.

You will be positively overwhelmed with TIE Fighters, from beginning to end. Battle the fighters with the strategies you've used so far, and keep on the lookout for new ones, coming at you from far off. Don't let your guard down here; if there's no fighters close to you, rest assured that there will be fighters coming at you from far off.

There is one section of note in this Chapter. At one point, Captain Simms will come under attack from three or four fighters. It is imperative that you destroy these, even if others are coming at you. Aim at the extreme bottom of the screen and try to knock them out before they fire on the Captain and you're forced to abort your mission.

Chapter 13 — Death Star Surface

Location: Death Star Surface

Passcodes: Easy: IRENEZ Normal: IHTOR Hard: KARRDE

Follow Commander Murleen's advice here: "Keep your eyes open." Watch where you're flying, and make sure not to hit any of the Death Star's towers. Don't aim, just hold the fire button down and move your ship up and down, side to side in a random manner. The most important thing here is to watch where you're flying; don't fly into nests of turbo-lasers, and don't crash into Death Star surface features. This one will be over before you know it.

Chapter 14 — Surface Cannon

Location: Alongside of Death Star Trench

Passcodes: Easy: LIANNA Normal: UMWAK Hard: VONZEL

It's important to concentrate on the TIE Fighters in this level, not on the cannon's armor plating. Take out the fighters, and in between waves go for the blue plating at the base of the turret.

Once you get inside the cannon, you'll be going for the glowing green power-couplings. Just match your target sight with the openings where the couplings go and fire continuously. You may have to leave and return to the cannon several times before you get them all.

Chapter 15 — Death Star Trench

Location: Death Star Surface Trench

Passcodes: Easy: PAKKA Normal: ORLOK Hard: OSSUS

Okay, folks, this is it. The majority of this chapter is spent firing at the turbo-lasers along the floor and walls of the trench. Take out as many as you can, and NEVER stop firing. Don't bother aiming either, just spray the areas around the turrets with blaster fire.

After Simms makes his run at the exhaust port, it'll be your turn. Fly around those bulges in the trench, and destroy all of the targets at the bottom of the trench when you come to the

blue gates. When you get to the end, completely ignore the two cannons at the top of the trench wall and start searching for the exhaust port (it can be difficult to see). Aim your torpedoes and fire. You have to hustle here, because if you don't aim and fire in time, you'll pull out and have to watch as the Alliance is defeated.

The Ending

Passcodes: Easy: NORVAL Normal: NKLLON Hard: MALANI

To view the endings, you have to beat the trench levels at their respective difficulties. But since the ending doesn't change with the difficulty level, you just have to beat it on easy.

This is a great ending, if a little short. The programmers obviously had a little fun with the LA logo at the end.

Easter Eggs!

There are two known Eggs in Rebel Assault.

Yoda's Power Mode! Go into the game options screen, hold down the SHIFT, CONTROL, OPTION and COMMAND keys at once, and triple-click in the space between the "Rapid Fire" and "Quit Other Applications" check-boxes. There should be a Yoda's Power Mode check box there.

What does it do? Well, first, it enables rapid fire on your joystick. Second, it allows you to skip to any level in the game by using the keys 1-0 and A-F. Finally, hitting the + key (or SHIFT and =) returns your damage to zero. Hitting - on the keyboard or keypad raises your damage (why you'd want to do this is a mystery).

About Box Egg! In the about box, turn on Balloon Help and click on the picture of R2D2. If you've hacked the game with ResEdit and seen those odd strings, this is where they appear. R2 spews forth interesting comments ("Han Solo, you look a lot like Indy" is a memorable one).

If you're still having trouble with this game, you can appeal to your local user group or your favorite on-line service. Or you can hop out to your local video store, and rent the films for the night . . . nothing helps more than a few lessons from the masters.

Feel free to send comments, questions, flames, etc to the author at joshuadr on AOL (joshuadr@aol.com on the Internet).