How To
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EV Plug-ins - Revised

About 6 months ago, we talked a little about plug-in design for Escape Velocity. This issue, we
will look a little deeper into the process. But, because of the recent demise of the Delta_V mailing
list, let me tell you where you can get information and assistance with designing plug-ins.

Some enthusiastic plug-in designers have created a replacement mailing list for those who need assistance with plug-in design. The list is called EV-Delta and is maintained by Michael Solomani Mifsud. In order to subscribe, do the following:

Send mail to:

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majordomo@electric-rain.net
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with the following in your mail message:

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subscribe ev-delta-request@electric-rain.net
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To mail to the list, send mail to:

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ev-delta@electric-rain.net
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And for help, contact:

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solomani@electric-rain.net
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The EV Plug-in FAQ

We are completing work (finally) on a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document that literally walks you through plug-in development. This document will be part of a package designed to get you started in plug-in development.

The FAQ is designed like a recipe book. The questions that deal with creating specific items in EV (such as a ship or a planet), are broken down into three sections: Ingredients, Uses, and Construction. The Ingredients section lists everything you need to create the item. The Uses section describes what you can do with the item as well as some examples of what is possible. And lastly, the Construction section provides a step by step method of making the item.

Along with the FAQ is a starter plug-in. This plug-in has all of the resources that you may need as well as some "starter data" that will give you an idea of how the data should appear. This starter plug-in is meant to be used by those who will be using ResEdit to create the plug-in. Other editors should have the option of creating one of these "base" files themselves. But, in the event they do not, you can start with the Starter plug-in.

Both of these items will bundled together as "The Plug-in Package," soon to be available from our Escape Velocity Add Ons page (http://www.ambrosiasw.com/Products/Add_Ons/EV_AddOns.html) as well as somewhere on the vast Escape Velocity Web site (http://www.escape-velocity.com).

Plug-in Helpful Hints

It is very easy to get lost in the resources of Escape Velocity. Just about everything in the game has some dependency on something else in the game. The government item is a good example. Think about all of the different things in EV that are related to a government. Ships, dudes, planets, systems, etc. all have a relation to a government. If you plan on making all of these items, it is a good idea to start making the government first.

If you research what you want to do before actually doing it, you will be able to find a logical order of steps in which to take to be the most efficient. Know what you are getting into before actually getting into it. This will help you the most.

In addition to this, keep track of where you are and what you are doing. If you are working with a particular ID range (let's say for a group of new ships), make sure you have notes or something written down that you can use as a reference point. In systems as complex as this, it may also be a good idea to have your plans mapped out on paper before you start the heavy work.

If you are just getting into plug-in development, it may be best to start small and work your way up. For example, suppose you want to add a new system that has 3 planets and has special equipment only available from your new system. You may want to start by creating the smallest element you can. In this case, you will want to mimic one of the uninhabited systems and place your new system on the map. Then, test your plug-in and make sure you can go to the system. Afterwards, work your way to more specific things, such as the planet, the ships and equipment, and any missions that you wish to include. Remember to test your plug-in as often as you can throughout the process.

On final pointer to making plug-ins: Make sure you include as much information as possible on operating your plug-in for your potential users. This will cut down on the mail you will have to answer (some people actually read the Read Me's). For instance, if you add a sound to your plug-in, EV will need more memory in order to load its sound. If you do not instruct users of your plug-in to increase EV's memory allocation, EV is going to quit when it runs out of memory while loading the new sound. The more information you tell people, the better it will be for everyone.

Well, that's about it for this issue. Look for the new Plug-in Package on our Web site soon. If you do decide to take the plunge into plug-in development, sign up to the EV-Delta list as mentioned

earlier. There are many people on there, including myself, that will be able to help with any questions you have about plug-in development. Use your resources!

As always, comments can be directed to help@AmbrosiaSW.com.