

Star Traders: Frontiers

v 3.3.37

Salvage Contractor & Antique Collector & Specialty Acquisitions Unlock Guide

by Iguana Tabarnak

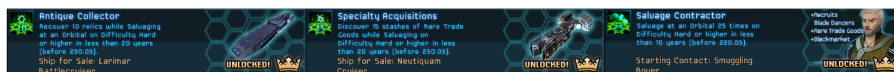


Preface

I know many Star Traders players are perfectly happy on Normal difficulty. But there comes a day for all of us where the siren song of the "Hard or higher" unlocks can no longer be resisted.

This is the second in a series of detailed guides on how to achieve these Hard+ unlocks, even if it's your first time venturing above Normal.

In this guide, we'll be completing, in a single run, three of the Hard+ unlocks known for giving pilots the most difficulty: **Salvage Contractor**, **Antique Collector**, and **Specialty Acquisitions**.



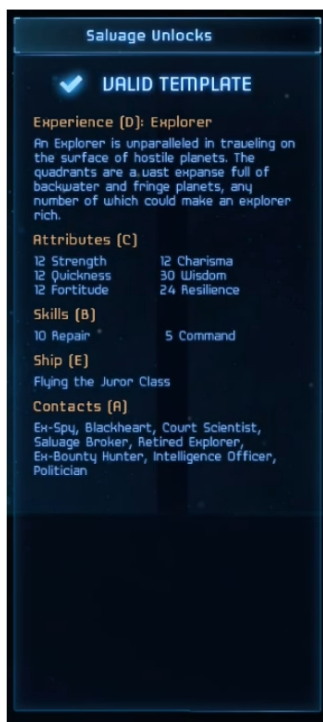
All of these unlocks involve orbital salvage operations. **Specialty Acquisitions** requires us to find 15 stashes of Rare Trade Goods while salvaging and **Antique Collector** requires us to find 10 Relics (weapons, armour, and crew gear) while salvaging, both within 20 years. **Salvage Contractor** asks us to perform 25 salvage operations within 10 years. With this guide, you'll be able to complete *ALL THREE* in a single run, usually within about 5 years.

Following this guide requires that you have already completed the **Covert Operative** and **Privateer** unlocks, for which I have previously published a guide.

NOTE: *There is a video companion to this guide available on the Tabarnouche Interplanetary YouTube channel*

Captain Template

The demands of a sprint unlock are ordinarily quite distinct from those of an ordinary Impossible playthrough. But because this run gives us so much time compared to the 2 and 5 year unlocks, we have a little more flexibility. This captain build is optimized for completing the run as quickly as safely as possible, but there is definitely room to adjust your captain traits to something that you might want to continue playing once you have achieved the unlocks. The salvage rush strategy these unlocks require is interesting because it also sets you up *very well* for a generalist Impossible run. Particularly, this guide is not specifically dependent on any traits or talents of the Captain, so while we get some benefit from an optimized **Explorer** captain, any captain job can work. Of all the advice below, the only thing that is truly essential for this guide to work properly is that you put Contacts at priority A and follow the guidance for contact selection. Also, it is highly recommended that you start in a small ship with at least 24 crew.



Priority A: Contacts - Only five of the eight contacts chosen here are truly essential. The first three contacts should be Ex-Spy, Court Scientist, and Blackheart, as we will need **Spy**, **Scientist**, and especially **Pirate** recruits. Contacts four and five should be Salvage Broker and Retired Explorer for the salvage rumours. The last three contacts can be anything. I usually choose contacts that buy intel, as contacts in these slots are usually in other factions and can thus provide an easy way to repair rep.

Priority B: Skills - Salvage operations frequently test your ships Repair pool, and a high Repair pool can also influence the card game to offer rare reward cards more often. Giving your captain 10 points of Repair is not essential, but it's a big leg up. The other 5 points can go anywhere, I like Command.

Priority C: Attributes - Similar to skills, maxing out Wisdom provides an edge on certain rolls frequently made in salvage operations. Again, this is not essential, but it helps. I like to put the rest of the points in Resilience for death saving rolls. Hopefully that shouldn't come up though!

Priority D & E: Experience and Ship - We're going to fly the Juror, the cheapest ship in the game. It's surprisingly well suited to our needs. Money is going to be a little tight but Experience at D gives just that tiny boost to let your **Quartermaster** reach rank 5 and learn **Reliable Hand** just before we want to take the Arbiter Neutrality mission, which ends up providing more credits than we get would get from putting the Juror at D. As for captain job, **Explorer** is the clear best for this. We'll be flying around quite a bit, and there is nothing else in the game that compares to the **Explorer's Voyager** trait (10% less travel time and fuel) when it comes to enabling us to do that quickly. But, as I said above, any captain job can work. We won't be feeling time pressure here unless the RNG really screws us on salvage rumours.

Starting Options

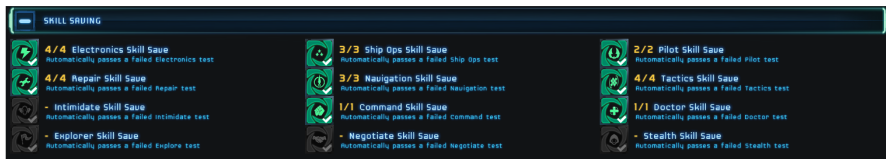
For pretty much all of the sprint unlocks, I recommend choosing Rychart as your faction, especially if you're playing on the Default Map v2. Rychart has only four zones in its starting quadrant, which keeps your starting contacts clustered together and limits travel during the initial rush for reputation, credits, and influence. The fact that Rychart has a particularly high cap on rep from intel can also be a huge boon for nudging uncooperative contacts to the higher recruit levels.



As with all these guides, I'm playing on Impossible. If you choose to play on Hard, these strategies will work even more smoothly, with a bit of a buffer. And we're definitely going to want to manually assign talents here.

Choosing Talents for your Starting Crew

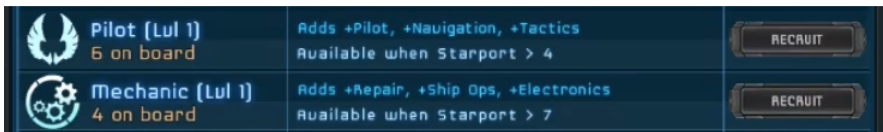
As soon as the game loads, I always recommend assigning your talents, before even landing anywhere. It's very unlikely that the game is going to throw a brutal deep space skill check at you on your way to pick up the Arbiter, but on the harder difficulties, you never know.



For the most part the talents we are interested in for this run fall into just four categories: Skill Saves, Salvage Talents, Life Saves, and Intel Generation. Unfortunately, the only one of these the **Explorer** Captain starts with is an Explore save, and we're not going to need that. So I recommend taking **Far Voyager**. For the starting **Engineer** officer (who we're going to dismiss very soon), I take **Port Maintenance** just because it can save us a tiny amount of time and money in the early weeks. Two of your **Pilots** may want to start with **Sure Landfall** to save time early as well. For literally everyone else, take a skill save (Navigation for your **Navigators** and Command for your **Quartermaster**). Don't worry about your starting combat crew, we're dismissing them as soon as we touch down (to recruit the **Mechanics** that give us all the repair saves depicted above).

Recruiting Mechanics and Meeting Calagan

We need the introduction to Calagan Faen for this unlock, so go grab the Arbiter, set your ship to Auto Refuel (assuming you're as absentminded as I am), dismiss your starting combat squad, and drop Estelle off at Calagan's court.



Once you've finished chatting with Zette, immediately buy one level of Rank with Calagan Faen (we'll absolutely earn out the cost through the 2% mission payment bonus) and recruit 3 **Mechanics** and 2 **Pilots**. That's another nice thing about Rychart, you can always get **Mechanics** on Faen's world. Teach the **Pilots** **Sure Landfall** and the **Mechanics Careful Testing**

Crew Changes

- 2 Soldiers
- 1 Pistoleer
- 1 Swordsman
- +3 Mechanics
- +2 Pilots

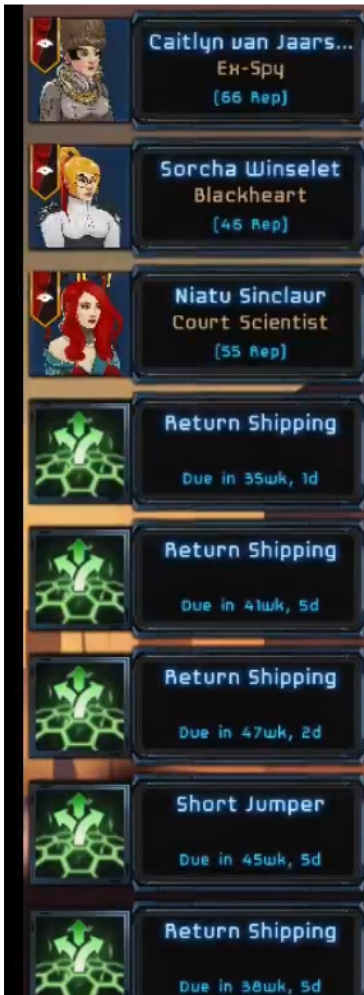
No empty beds

Blitzing Proving Your Charter Missions

Now it's time to prove our charter. For the first 17 weeks of the game (until 210.20), Calagan Faen and your starting contacts will be offering this type of mission exclusively. The Proving Your Charter missions are all quite straightforward, involving no skill checks, no crew or ship combat, and no reputation loss. The goal here is to blitz through as many of them as we can in as short a time as we can, to earn easy cash and to pump our faction rep, contact rep, and contact influence up the point where we will be able to recruit the high level **Pirates**, **Spies**, and **Scientists** we need. Our first priority is recruiting level 14 **Spies**, because they will provide us the intel to top up our other contacts when they are lagging behind.

There is no time to waste here. Until the in game clock reads 210.20, the only thing you should be doing is running Proving Your Charter missions. No trading, no repairing, no spice hall, no healing. No bathroom breaks. Just proving. They can pee into the void engine if they need to.

When taking these missions, only accept ones that are in the home quadrant (distance in AU, not jumps) and prioritize the Return Shipping and One-Way Shipper missions. You can also take the So-and-so Escort missions and the Short Jumper missions, but bear in mind that you only have a single passenger cabin. If you get a mission roll where it's all passenger offers, it's not the end of the world to pull guns from your ship and add another Passenger Cabin or even two. Installing a Passenger Cabin takes 3 days and costs \$7k, but it's worth it if the alternative is running fewer Proving Your Charter missions. *DO NOT* take the Commodity Delivery missions.



Faen will only let you accept one mission at a time to start, so grab the best one and then head straight to the nearest zone with contacts. With a little luck, using Rychart on the default map, all three of your contacts will be in the same zone.

Now, go ahead and take as many Proving your Charter missions as you can from each of these contacts as well, using the same prioritization above. Once you're loaded up with a full slate of 7 or so missions, just start flying a loop around the four Rychart planets, turning in every mission you can at each zone and picking up more if you have a contact there. You'll have more missions at this point than there are zones for them to spawn in, so play zone defense rather than plotting a course based on individual missions. Oh, and if you find yourself running out of **Sure Landfalls**, just dismiss the pilots who are on cooldown and recruit new ones.

When you're turning in these missions, you'll usually have a choice between a faster option (Over the Spice Plate or similar) and a more prestigious option (Public Spectacle or similar). Always choose the fast option with Proving Your Charter missions. You get more rep (and cash) per in-game week speeding through them rather than getting caught up in pomp and ceremony.

If you encounter ships while flying about, always submit to looting or inspection if it's an option, and retreat if it isn't. In the first year of the game, with neutral rep to all factions, there should be no circumstances where you are forced into ship combat. Once your Rychart rep is high enough that acknowledge becomes an option in these encounters, start choosing that.

Recruiting a Reputation Officer and Two Spies

As you're proving your charter, each time you find yourself at a zone with a contact, check to see their recruiting levels. We want to hire a temporary rep-loss-mitigation officer at this stage, dismissing our **Engineer**, and any level 8+ recruit will do. Just don't hire him from your Court Scientist contact, as we can't repair their rep with intel. Optimal is hiring this officer as a **Pirate** from our Blackheart for the starting Intimidate levels. If not the Blackheart, a **Soldier** or **Shock Trooper** from Faen works well. Give this officer 5 ranks in **Bounty Hunter** and 1 Rank in **Diplomat**. Spend remaining ranks on whatever grants the most Intimidate. Teach him **Red Badge**, **Settlement**, and **Winning Compromise**. This is to prevent losing Cadar rep while running Arbiter Neutrality, just in case we end up salvaging in Cadar space.



We also want to hire two level 14 **Spies** as soon as our Ex-Spy will give them to us. Ditch two **Sure Landfall Pilots** to make room. Teach the **Spies Secrets Unbound**, **Data Haul**, and **Scouring Search**. The earlier you have **Secrets Unbound**, the sooner you will start generating passive intel from landing at zones.

Crew Changes

-2 Pilots

-1 Engineer officer

+1 BountyHunter/Diplomat/X officer

+2 Spys

No empty beds

OPTIONAL OPTIMIZATION: In a later chapter, we will be dismissing all four **Gunners**, two **Pilots**, and two **E-Techs** to recruit 2 level 14+ **Scientists** and 6 level 10+ **Pirates**. We don't need them to be any higher level than that, and higher level recruits cost more money (and you can't deliberately choose to recruit at a lower level than the highest available). If, while you're proving your charter, you happen to catch your Blackheart recruiting at exactly level 10 or your Court Scientist recruiting at exactly level 14, consider dismissing some of the above jobs (without dropping any non-Gunnery ship pools below 100%) and recruiting a few of these crew at that time, to save cash.

Back to Calagan



As the clock is ticking towards 210.20, make sure that you are requesting a full slate of Proving Your Charter missions from each contact *after* accepting missions from them. These offered missions take a little while to expire, and can still be accepted after 210.20, even though you won't be offered new ones. Continue blitzing these missions until there are no more home quadrant cargo or passenger missions to accept. Once you are on the very last batch of these missions, you can switch from turning them in with the spice plate option to turning them in with the +rep option for a final little reputation boost.

When the Proving Your Charter well runs dry, it's the last chance to recruit your **Spies** and **BountyHunter/Diplomat** officer, if you haven't yet. Now pay your crew. Hopefully your **Quartermaster** officer will have dinged rank 5 so you can learn **Helpful Hand** for a payment boost in what follows. Your captain will also have levelled up. If you're optimizing for this run, I recommend giving your captain 1 rank in **Navigator**, and then pumping the rest into **Quartermaster** (now and forever). Take the Navigation save and the Ship Ops save. Keep levelling **Quartermaster** throughout the game, taking saves and other good **QM** abilities

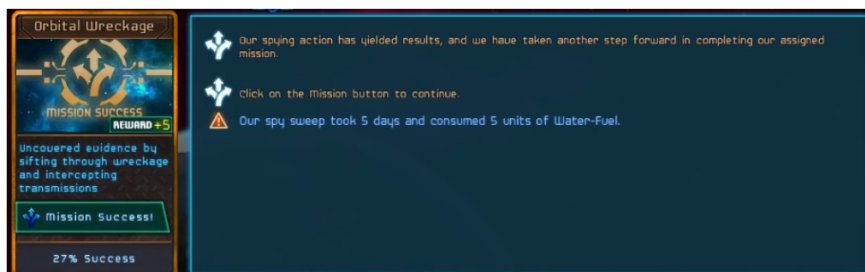
(particularly **Contract Bargain**). Again, you can also feel free to level your captain up in any other way. We'll be running a very tight budget of regular ship crew, and we might be flying through some high danger quadrants, so the extra saves are very welcome. But they don't make or break the run.

Now, go to Faen, buy one rank of Edict (so **Red Badge** can function), chat with him in his court, and accept the Arbiter Neutrality mission. If all has gone well, you should currently be sitting at 100+ faction rep.

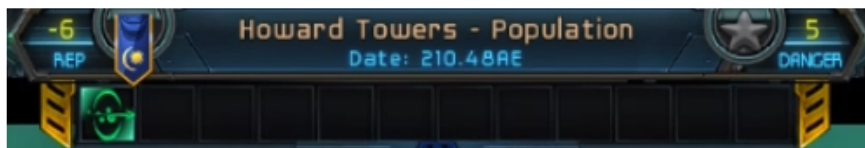


Arbiter Neutrality

Running Arbiter Neutrality is straightforward. At the first mission step in Char's court, choose Light Escort. For the second step, you have the option of spying or conducting diplomacy on the ground. Take a look at the spy minigame and use **Scouring Search** if the hand doesn't look that bad.



Don't take any risks here. If you burn through both **Scouring Searches** without success (or if you get a hand with 2+ Death to Crew and/or Reputation Lost cards), dock up and take the diplomacy route. Depending on how much intimidate your **Bounty Hunter** officer has, you can probably safely choose to Join Arbitration here for the bonus payment (we need the cash). Escort Arbiter is also fine.



Now return to Calagan Faen with the bad news. With a little luck, this whole outing will have cost us less than 10 Cadar rep.

Leveling your Crew

Somewhere around this point, or soon hereafter, some of your regular crew will start to be ready to train new talents. The truth is that, for the **Pilots**, the **Gunners**, and the **Navigators**, it doesn't matter what you train, we're dismissing them very soon anyway. As for the others...

Mechanic: Repurposed Parts

Crew Dog: Scrap Procedures

E-Tech: All of **Signature Jammer, **Alert Scanner**, **Storm Shielding**, and **Buzzing Wires** are good for this run. I like **Signature Jammer** myself.**

Spy: Deft Control

Skip Off the Void Navigators from Saere

Back at the Faen Court, we're going to want to talk to Erik (twice) and get him to offer us Delayed Settlement. The very first step of this mission will introduce us to Faction Judge Saere Vento, who we feel very sorry for, but are going to immediately badger nonetheless for some shiny **Skip Off the Void Navigators**.

When you arrive at Saere's system, first complete the mission step and then scope out her recruit panel. We need our **Navigators** to be recruited at level 14+ for them to be able to learn **Skip Off the Void** right out of the gates. Sell her intel (which should have been accumulating from **Secrets Unbound**) one bundle at a time until she's happy enough, and then dismiss all three starting **Navigators** and recruit two level 14 **Navigators** from Saere.



The key skills to train on these **Navigators** are **Read Charts** and, obviously, **Skip Off the Void**. For your additional talents, it's a pretty even competition between **Efficient Route**, **Exacting Design**, and **Pathfinder's Lead**.

If you don't have enough intel to make Saere happy, check your spies and make sure that **Secrets Unbound** is off cooldown. So long as it is, undock, do one spy

operation with **Scouring Search** right at Saere's planet, then redock and hope for **Secrets Unbound** to fire. Repeat until you have two level 14 **Navigators**.

NOTE: In the very unlikely event that you use up both your **Scouring Searches** and still don't have any intel, you can pay to retrain your **Spies**, or spend a couple of weeks bouncing back and forth to a nearby part, waiting for **Secrets Unbound** to activate. Or, worst case, you can swap a Passenger Cabin for a Prison Cell and run a Prisoner Transport mission or two for Saere. This should *really* never be necessary, unless you failed to recruit level 14 **Spies** early on.

Crew Changes

-3 Navigators

+2 Navigators (but these ones have Skip Off the Void!)

1 empty bed

Vibe Check: \$200k and 150+ Rep by 212AE

The only thing left to do before we are ready to actually get to salvaging is hire a small army. All told, this will run us something on the order of \$150k by the time we're done. And we want to have at least \$50k left for fuel, salvage rumours, and—ideally—a couple of minor ship upgrades.

So take stock of your credits and your contacts. If your contacts are offering the appropriate crew at the appropriate levels and you're in a position to afford it, leave Erik hanging and skip straight to the next chapter.

Often though, you'll find that you need to pump your wallet, and possibly your rep, just a tiny bit further. If so, start by finishing out the remaining steps in Delayed Settlement. Then talk to Erik again and accept More Than Meets the Eye (you'll need to swap a weapon for a second passenger cabin if you haven't already) and take Torca and Kaewsl on their horrible road trip. Choose the Forged Papers turn-in option and you should be safe from crew combat so long as you have a ready Electronics save.

Once this is complete, if you *still* don't have enough money and rep, you can take some Political Crusade missions from Calagan or run the very early steps of Zetta or Valencia's arc, if you know how to do so while avoiding crew combat or other negative outcomes. You should still have your **BountyHunter/Diplomat** officer with you to mitigate rep loss.

If you run out of safe mission options, and don't have some other brilliant plan for quick risk-free credits, you'll just have to hire fewer **Pirates** in the next phase.

If you end up taking that course, I do recommend coming back to your Blackheart contact and topping up on **Pirates** after completing your first salvage rumour.

If you've followed this guide diligently, one way or another, you should be sitting on ~\$200k credits and 150+ faction rep before year 211 is out, early year 212 at the latest. (Although, honestly, even if you somehow spin your wheels all the way to year 215, you still have plenty of time, but the game difficulty will be progressively ramping up...)

Mass Dismiss and Recruit Crew Recomp

We've been building up all this money and rep for a reason. It's time to go on a recruiting spree. Which means we're going to be dismissing some fools.

Our shopping list is: 6 **Pirate** crew (level 10+), 2 **Scientist** Crew (level 14+), 2 **Pirate/Scientist** officers (level 14+), and one level 16 officer with literally any job. Oh, and 4 **Swordsmen**.

To make room for this, we're obviously going to have to dismiss all our current officers. We're also going to dismiss ALL 4 of our **Gunners**, ALL 4 of our **Pilots**, 2 of our **E-Techs**, and 1 of our **Crew Dogs**. But, um, don't dismiss the **Pilots** until the very moment when you're ready to hire the **Pirates** to replace them.

Optimizing for Cost: As previously discussed, the higher the level your contact is recruiting at, the more expensive the recruiting, and the only way to recruit at a lower level is to bring down their effective rep or influence (or to be dead broke). But we don't really get a significant advantage in this run from having our crew **Pirates** and **Scientists** be higher than level 10 and 14, respectively. If your Court Scientist and/or Blackheart is just barely recruiting at level 16 or 14, you can selectively recruit officers from them first, lowering their rep in the process, and then recruit cheaper regular crew at a lower level.

Dealing with Uncooperative Contacts: If your Blackheart, for some reason, isn't recruiting at level 10 at this point, just feed him intel until he is. It shouldn't take much. If your Court Scientist isn't recruiting at level 14, there's no real simple way to improve that. Hire two of the highest level **Scientists** you can, and your two **Pirate** officers will have to do double duty as **Doctors** (as we won't have

Laboratory Triage for a lifesave). If *no-one* is recruiting at level 16 for your top officer, go to Calagan Faen. If necessary, you can buy 5 levels of faction Rank to boost the recruiting level of his **Soldiers** by 2.

Finally, pick up 4 poor level 1 **Swordsmen**. Really, any combat job will do, but I recommend **Swordsmen** because they will be at the bottom of your crew list alphabetically, and thus easy to keep track of.



Crew Changes

- 3 Officers
- 4 Pilots
- 4 Gunners
- 2 E-Techs
- 1 Crew Dog
- +6 Pirates
- +2 Scientists
- +4 Swordsmen
- +1 level 16 Officer (any job)
- +2 level 14+ Officers (ideally Pirates or Scientists)

No empty beds

Jobs and Talents for the New Recruits

Time to assign a million jobs and talents, starting with the officers. Your level 16 officer is the most straightforward. He gets 15 ranks of **Scavenger** and he learns: **Master Reclamation, Picky Looters, Careful EVA, Artful Solder, Dogged Treatment**, and either **Depot Sweep** or something useful from his rank 1 job.

Your other two officers each get 8 ranks in **Pirate**, 1 rank in **Pilot**, and 5+ ranks in either **Scavenger** or **Scientist**. It's sort of a coin flip whether **Scavenger** or **Scientist** is better for this role. **Scientists** give you command (which this crew comp is otherwise low on) and more Doctor (skill). **Scavengers** give you Repair (which means better salvage draws) and more money (through **Picky Looters**). If their first job is **Scientist**, the decision is made for you. If their first job is **Pirate**, you can go either way. I like taking one of each. Regardless of which you choose, you'll be leveling that forever. These guys never want **Pirate** rank higher than 8 nor **Pilot** rank higher than 1.

If, due to Court Scientist problems in an earlier phase, your crew **Scientists** are below level 14, you will instead need to make both of these officers into **Pirate Doctors** for the **Life Saver** talents. This is also something you can choose to do with one of your officers, even with high level **Scientist** crew, if you are paranoid about life saves.

A **Pirate/Scavenger/Pilot** officer learns: **Nose for Loot, Careful EVA, Picky Looters, Artful Solder, Expert Maneuver, Depot Sweep**

A Pirate/Scientist/Pilot officer learns: **Nose for Loot, Trace Analysis, Accurate Predictions, Field Distortion Survey, Experimental Treatments, Expert Maneuver**

A Pirate/Doctor/Pilot learns: **Nose for Loot, Life Saver, Medical Staff, Assisted Care, Expert Maneuver, Icy Stare**

Pirate crew learn: **Nose for Loot, Icy Stare, Blackheart Fraud** (Level 10 **Pirates** should be evenly split between **Icy Stare** and **Blackheart Fraud**. They *all* get **Nose for Loot**.)

Scientist crew learn: **Laboratory Triage, Trace Analysis, Accurate Predictions**

Swordsmen crew learn: Literally any talent. Or none. It doesn't matter.

Talking to the Salvage Broker

It's time to get to the actual meat of the run. To be honest, the difficult part is behind us.

Open up your contacts menu and navigate to the home zone of your Salvage Broker contact. Once there, consider selling him a little intel to garner some rep and max out the discount on ship upgrades. There's one upgrade in particular that we want. The Juror comes equipped with a Reinforced Structures 1 in a medium slot, and we want to replace that with a Salvage EVA Deck.

The screenshot displays the 'Replacing Reinforced Structures 1' interface. At the top, it states: 'Old component will trade for \$23.6k and leaves 540 Mass for a new component.' Below this, it notes: 'Installation requires 3 days of work in the starport upgrade bays.' A 'TOTAL:' bar shows a cost of 518.1k. The 'COMPONENT COMPARISON (OLD AND NEW)' section features two items:

Component	Cost	Mass	Slot
Reinforced Structures 1	\$23.6k	325	Medium
EVA Deck 2	\$41.7k	275	Medium

Reinforced Structures 1 (Old Component):
Costs \$23.6k. Provides +0 Ship Ops, +0 Electronics, +0 Navigation, and +0 Pilot. Benefits include +6 Uoid Resist; +26% Armor, +5% Shielding, +3 Jump Cost, and +35% to be Hit in Combat (protects other components). It is a Structure component.

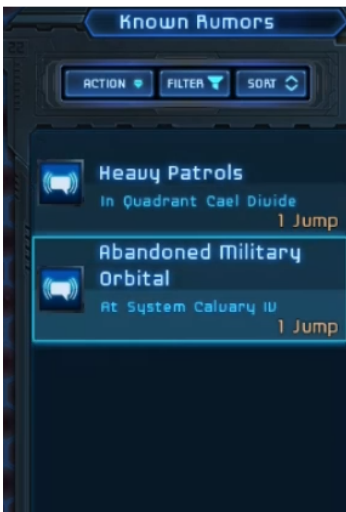
EVA Deck 2 (New Component):
Costs \$41.7k. Provides +1 Ship Ops, +1 Electronics, +0 Navigation, and +0 Pilot. Benefits include Reduces crew damage by 30% during Orbital Salvage, reduces Turns used (does not stack, damaged on use); Adds 10 Fuel Capacity, +2% Shielding, 2 Medical Rating. It is an Orbital Ops component.

Among the several useful things the EVA Deck does, it reduces the in-game time taken by salvage operations. This not only helps us meet our unlock deadline, it also lets us salvage more times per rumour, since they disappear on a schedule. Perfect.

The sell value of the Reinforced Structures is high enough that we should be able to install an EVA Deck 1 here for basically free, although if you have the cash I recommend springing for the EVA Deck 2. It only takes 3 days to install an EVA Deck.

The other useful upgrade that likewise only takes 3 days to install is the Reactor Spike Module 1. One of the biggest limitations of the Juror for our task is its relatively anemic fuel tank, and especially how large a percentage of that tank a hyperwarp jump burns. Reactor Spike Modules will help with both. Pull weapons or Passenger Cabins, or even the Weapons Locker to make room. Just make sure you leave yourself with at least \$30k or so when you're done, so you can afford rumours and fuel.

NOTE: If you're rolling in cash, you might be tempted to make more comprehensive upgrades, particularly in the areas of the Bridge, the Engine, and the Cargo Hold. *DON'T*. These upgrades take weeks or months to complete, and the benefit they'll give for what we're doing are negligible.



Upgrades complete, take a quick peek in your Rumours tab to see if you already happen to know about an existing salvage rumour. If you do, just start flying towards it immediately. Usually, however, you will have to buy a rumour from your Salvage Broker, so go ahead and do so. Take note when your contact tells you how much time is left on the rumour, and then check in the Rumours tab to see how far away it is. If it's got more than a year left on it and is less than about 5 jumps away, that's a jackpot. If it's further or shorter, you can consider buying another rumour if you have the

cash. In the end though, *we are going to fly to the nearest/longest rumour, even if it's not that near or that long.*

NOTE: The different types of salvage rumours have very different pools of cards and different risk/reward levels. The Abandoned Medical Station is probably the best overall for our purposes, because it has the most Rare Trade Goods for the more difficult Specialty Acquisitions unlock. Derelict Space Hive and Abandoned Military Orbital, on the other hand, are particularly rich in the relics we need for Antique Collector. You can use this info to prioritize if you have two otherwise equally appealing rumours. But, really, any salvage site will do.

Utilize your regular space travel hygiene along the way: Submit/retreat from deep space encounters whenever possible, **Skipping Off the Void** when that's the only option. And stop to refuel often, you need to stay above the hyperwarp jump cost marker in order to have **Skip** as an option.

In due time, this run will finally have made contact with a salvage site! Ideally it should still be year 212 or earlier.

Introduction to Salvaging

If this is your first time salvaging, don't worry, the basic mechanics are familiar from the other minigames. It's just that both the risks and the rewards are on a different level. You'll find the salvage button in orbit, next to the Spy/Patrol/Blockade buttons, for as long as the salvage rumour is active. The salvage minigame looks like this:



As you can see, we have quite a lot of talents available. This is good because we're going to use one on every single draw. Most of our salvage talents have a 9 week cooldown, and most salvage operations take 3 to 4 days with Salvage EVA Decks. So as long as you have about 18 talents, you should thus be more or less keeping pace as they come back out of cooldown. If you have 20 to 23 (which you should if you've followed this guide diligently to this point), you should essentially never run dry.

Our very first priority is to start using our **Nose for Loot** talents. The real bottleneck on this run is Rare Trade Goods and we will, on average need to use **Nose for Loot** 75 times in order to get our 15 trade goods from this card alone (in

practise, we will get some from natural draws as well). With our complement of 8 **Noses**, that's 90 weeks (almost two years!) spent just waiting for them to come out of cooldown. And being as those talents are spread across 8 crew, retraining in order to cheat cooldowns is not a financially viable option. So, whenever **Nose for Loot** is available, use it immediately to get the cooldown timer ticking again.

After that, the next most valuable replace talent for us to use is **Picky Looters**. Straight cash will always be helpful to us. (We'll end up rolling in high value loot, but it takes time and effort to convert it into credits, and we'd rather just have the money).

The remove talents, we should be conserving, if possible, for hands that naturally include either a Rare Trade Good or a Relic card. By using a remove rather than a replace on these hands, we can increase our chances of drawing the card we want from 20% to 25%. Here are the cards we are specifically looking for:



Note that ANY gear, weapon, or armor card counts as a "relic," not just the cards that say "relic" on them. Note also that Kloxian Medical Bay cards count as rare trade goods. Cards that give Xeno Artifacts also count as rare trade goods.

As for **Master Reclamation** (your full hand redraw), you should be saving that for hands that have two or more *Major Problems* (see next chapter).

Card Removal Priority

Major Problems



Any card that features two back to back crew battles is a non-starter, as is any card that is going to straight up kill our crew without the option of a lifesave.

Devious Spies and Assassins both put our continued safety in serious peril. It is important that we have neutral or positive reputation with the faction who controls the space we're salvaging in, otherwise we will face much worse ship encounters and potentially not even be able to refuel. If we're currently sitting at 50+ reputation with the faction that controls the system (which can happen quickly with a couple of rep gain draws), then Devious Spies can be downgraded to a *Minor Problem*, but **Assassins** is always a major one as it can result in rep loss from any faction.

Any one of these cards is an automatic remove/replace, regardless of whatever other threats might be present in the hand.

Any hand with 2+ Major Problems is cause to use **Master Reclamation** to draw an entirely new hand. If **Master Reclamation** is on cooldown, dock up and pay to retrain your **Scavenger** officer, resetting the cooldown on all his abilities.

Minor Problems



We'd honestly rather face Xeno in ship or crew combat than have even 10 turns sapped away from the remaining time we have to salvage, so any time delay or reduced duration card is a problem (if you're getting close to the wire of an unlock deadline and haven't completed it yet, definitely upgrade some of these to *Major Problems*, especially "30+ Fuel and Turns").

Radiation Storm is specifically annoying because it runs a serious risk of disabling our engine or some other component that is very expensive in both time and funds to repair. We have at least two death saves, so Double Fatality isn't as bad as it seems, but it will still leave two crew at low health (which leads to wasted healing time) and likely force us to spend funds retraining our lifesaves to bring them off cooldown.

If there are no *Major Problems* in the hand, these are all priority cards to remove or replace. If a hand has 3+ of these *AND* has no relics or rare goods *AND* you're doing okay for funds, you might consider using **Master Reclamation**, knowing that you're likely going to have to pay later to bring it off cooldown.

Annoyances



Crew damage is generally less of a problem for us than ship damage, in part thanks to the EVA Decks, but we still don't love it. If you happen to have non-combat crew that are already sitting below 50 HP, you might upgrade Spacewalking Accident to a *Minor* or even *Major Problem* until you get around to healing.

Deadly Accident and Xeno Hive Ship are zero threat to us, but they force us to burn a **Laboratory Triage** or a **Skip Off the Void** every single time (triple check that they're off cooldown before drawing from this hand). Infected Scavengers is a little worse than an ordinary crew combat because it can stick one of our crew (including non-combat crew) with a trait that could potentially actually hinder us.

Major Setback is a particularly weird card for us. It doesn't come with faction rep loss like Assassins does, but it can hit any contact of the relevant faction, even outside the quadrant. If we have no contacts of that faction, this is completely irrelevant to us. If we do have contacts of that faction, this can be an *Annoyance* or a *Minor Problem*, depending on who the contacts are. In the specific case where one of our salvage rumour contacts has already died or already has negative influence *AND* this card could potentially hit our other salvage rumour contact, treat it as a *Major Problem*.

Overall, *Annoyances* are just that. I wouldn't consider wasting **Master Reclamation** on a hand that contained even 5 *Annoyances*. But still, preferentially remove or replace them in a hand that has no *Major* or *Minor Problems*.

As for the rest of the risk cards... we can just shrug them off.

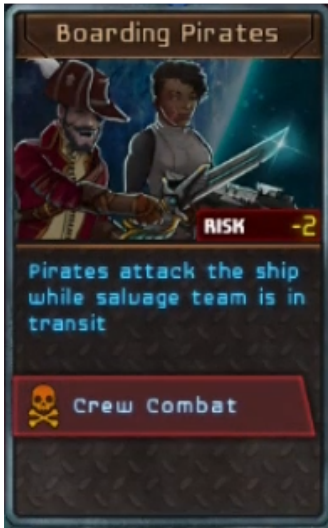
Dealing with Specific Cards



Ship Encounters: You'll draw plenty of cards that have you encountering hostile ships. As long as your rep remains mostly neutral or positive with all factions, very few of these should force you into actual ship combat. When given the option, always Submit to inspection or looting. Otherwise, simply Retreat. If you can't Retreat but do have the option to offer a Bribe, pay up until the choice to Retreat becomes available. If you're faced with an aggressive Bounty Hunter that won't let you Retreat, don't hesitate to use **Blackheart Fraud**, multiple times if need be. And, if all else fails, simply **Skip Off the**

Void.

NOTE: Miscallicking on the options in the ship encounter screen and accidentally entering ship combat is the most likely way to screw up this run, so read carefully.



Crew Combat: Don't worry, we've got **Swordsmen**. When you're forced into a crew combat situation, always send in your 4 **Swordsmen** and then, as soon as you get action priority, simply surrender. Surrendering, rather than going down fighting, has a somewhat higher chance of leaving you with survivors (although, at this difficulty, you'll still almost always take losses). Then simply dock up and hire new level 1 **Swordsmen** for free from the spice hall until you're back up to a full complement. Make sure no-one tells them what happened to the last guys.

NOTE: If something happens and you somehow end up in crew combat while not having a full squad of swordsmen, fill the squad out with your **Spies**. It's better than letting the game fill the space randomly. If your **Spies** die, you will probably need to replace them with **E-Techs** for the Electronics skill. Once you're at this stage in the run, you can usually tolerate losing the intel talents.



All Systems Go: A Pre-Salvage Checklist

As you salvage, there are a number of things you have to keep your eye on. Here's a list of things to double check before clicking that "Salvage" button.

- **Fuel:** Ensure that your fuel is far enough above the hyperwarp jump line that you will still be able to use **Skip Off the Void** if need be *AFTER* the fuel usage (~5-10 fuel) from a ship encounter.
- **Talents:** Ensure that you always have one **Skip Off the Void** that's not on cooldown. Likewise, always be sure to have at least one lifesave off cooldown, even if there's no Death Among Crew or Double Fatality card in the hand. If these talents are on cooldown, dock up and retrain talents on the relevant crew member. Similarly, if you've got a hand with multiple *Major Problems* and **Master Reclamation** is on cooldown, dock up and retrain your **Scavenger**.
- **Health:** Generally try not to salvage with more than one non-combat crew at less than 50hp. Or, if you do, be very careful about what cards you're drawing. Combat crew can safely be left at low hp indefinitely. When you need to dock up and visit the doctor, do so.
- **Morale:** Again, combat crew can be left at low morale with no worries, but other crew being below 50 morale should be dealt with promptly. Dock up and pay everyone. Usually that will fix things. If it doesn't don't be afraid to visit the spice hall. A mutiny can really ruin your day.

- **Components:** You can safely keep salvaging with most minor components damaged, but you should definitely dock up and repair if your Hyperwarp Drive, your Void Engine, or your Salvage EVA Decks are incapacitated. When damage starts piling up, consider using the **Repurposed Parts** talent on your **Mechanics** to fix things up on the fly.
- **Combat Crew:** You're going to be regularly sending **Swordsmen** to their death. And the ones that come back will be on death's door and can drop dead without you noticing. Get in the habit of double checking that you don't have any empty beds before drawing from any hand with crew combat in it.
- **Cash:** Refueling, repairing, and retraining can get pricey. With any luck, cash from Credit Bearing Salvage cards will be refilling the coffers faster than you empty them, but if your reserves get below about \$10k, it's time to cash in some of your loot. Check your cargo screen for stashes of rare loot and sell them (even at F prices) at the nearest Independent zone. Or find a nearby contact who sells weapons, armour, or gear and go unload some of your relics. They'll still count towards your unlock if you sell them.

Failstates and Emergencies

Non Combat Crew Death

One of the worst things that can happen in the midst of this run is if you lose one of your **Scientists**, **Navigators**, or officers. They need to be replaced immediately, but don't panic. Just fly back to your home quadrant and talk to your old contacts. You should have plenty of fresh intel to make them happy again. Refresh your crew, hire a couple more pirates if you've lost some or if crew leveling has given you space for more dismissals, and get back to salvaging. Following this guide, it's very possible to complete all three unlocks in less than five years, so taking a couple of months or even a year to replace dead crew is not the end of the world. As for minor crew like **Crew Dogs**, **E-Techs**, and **Mechanics**, just replace them from the spice hall. **Spies** can also usually be replaced with more **E-techs** at this point if it saves time.

Salvage Rumour Ends

This is not actually an emergency, it's kind of expected. It is theoretically possible to complete this run on a single salvage rumour, but your luck needs to be fantastic. When your rumour ends, just take it as an opportunity for a short breather. If you're low on funds, collect and sell your loot. If your crew composition isn't ideal, head back to your home quadrant and nab some new recruits. Maybe buy a few more Reactor Spike Modules. Then head over to your Salvage Broker or Retired Explorer and do the whole thing over again.

No Salvage Rumours

Okay, this one is a bit of a problem. Most of the time, there will be at least one active salvage rumour somewhere in the galaxy, but every now and then it happens that your contact will say that there are simply no salvage rumours available to be sold. When this happens, find something safe to do to burn a few months. If you're flush with cash, nothing is safer than just upgrading your Void Engine (and then "upgrading" it back if need be) to make time fly by. Keep checking back in until a rumour is available. The RNG can screw you here, but I've never seen it go more than about a year with zero salvage rumours. You should have plenty of time to get back on track.

Deep Negative Rep

If you've made a mistake and let your rep get below about -20 with any faction, you probably need to clear that up asap. If you have a contact of that faction that you can sell intel do, do that. Otherwise, your best bet is patrolling over a zone belonging to that faction. The good news is that, with lifesaves and **Skip Off the Void**, you can avoid most bad patrolling outcomes, even if it is a little tedious.

All Your Salvage Rumour Contacts Are Dead

What? How? Check your contacts that offer introductions. If no one is currently selling an introduction to someone who sells salvage rumours, I'd honestly probably restart the run.

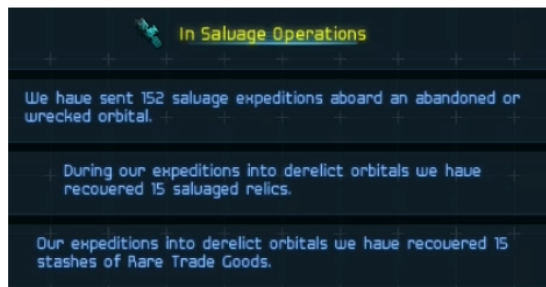
Not Enough Funds to Refuel

Don't let this happen. Very shortly after you start salvaging, you should be wealthy in intel, Rare Trade Goods, and Relics. When your wallet gets low, go sell some of it. If you've accidentally let yourself get completely broke and don't even have enough fuel to limp to a Rare Trade Good stash or a Relic or intel buying contact, I'd honestly say just keep salvaging, using talents to try to force a credit bearing salvage or refuel card. Good luck.

Victory

That's basically it. Just keep salvaging, using a talent every turn according to the priorities in the previous chapters, and keep an eye on the checklist items to avoid ending up in an Emergency. If you want to see how close you are to your goal, look under Scores and Stats. Down near the bottom there is a section titled In Salvage Operations that has three lines pertaining exactly to these three unlocks. You're done when salvage expeditions is 25 or greater, Relics is 10 or greater, and Rare Trade Goods is 15 or greater. Usually Rare Trade Goods will be the last holdout.

So keep clicking, until...



Congratulations!



I highly recommend taking a stab at playing the game further from this start. Even after you have the unlocks, the early salvage rush is an interesting and powerful way to jumpstart a game. Just look at all the cool stuff you have!

The screenshot displays the game's salvage interface. On the left, a list of items is shown with columns for Type, Global Trade, Highest Demand Economies, and Legality. The items include various stashes, Infiliaentine, Benian Spice Tea, RaFenge Royal Jelly, Trauror Spice Wax, Small Craft Components, Capital Ship Components, Mionian Medical Bays, and Benian Spice Tea. Two equipment windows are open on the right:

- Equip Gear:** Shows a list of gear items:
 - Offense Mod: +1 Initiative, +10% Critical (Price: 37,600 n1)
 - Tarban Underplate: Defense Mod, +7% Armor, +10% To Resist Debuffs (Price: 48,800 n1)
 - Memret Scaling: Defense Mod, +2 Initiative, +5% Armor (Price: 56,600 n1)
 - Otrike Injector: Personal Enhancer, +1 Quickness, -15% Critical (Price: 14,600 n1)
 - EUR Jack: Personal Enhancer, +6 Fortitude, +20 Bio-Poison Resist, +10 Blood Resist, -10% To Resist Debuffs (Price: 15,800 n1)
 - Wolfheart Gene: Personal Enhancer, +3 Fortitude, +1 Wisdom, +1 Charisma, +3 Resilience (Price: 26,400 n1)
- Equip Primary Weapon:** Shows a list of weapons:
 - Crossbar Blade: Lvl 6, Uses 6 Initiative, Accuracy from Strength and Blade Skill, +178 Damage, +8 Accuracy, +8 Parry, +15% Parcing (Inventory: 192.0k n1)
 - Ranguard Blade: Lvl 7, Uses 8 Initiative, Accuracy from Strength and Blade Skill, +180 Damage, +8 Accuracy, +8 Parry, +15% Parcing (Inventory: 552.0k n1)
 - Gold Rattler: Lvl 7, Uses 8 Initiative, Accuracy from Quickness and Pistol Skill, +180 Damage, +8 Accuracy, +8 Parry, +15% Parcing (Inventory: 548.0k n1)
 - Solar Dragoon: Lvl 10, Uses 10 Initiative, Accuracy from Quickness and Pistol Skill, +190 Damage, +8 Accuracy, +8 Parry, +15% Parcing (Inventory: 570.2k n1)

Or start a new game with one of the shiny new ships you've unlocked! I particularly like the Reach Vindex.

And stay tuned for my upcoming guides covering the Big Network and Press Gang unlocks!

Appendix - TL;DR

TL;DR version for those already comfortable on Hard+ difficulty:

1. Start with, at minimum, a Blackheart contact and two contacts that sell salvage rumours.
2. Earn your way up to >\$200k without going into significant negative rep with any faction.
3. Recruit the following before 215AE: 8+ Pirates who know Nose for Loot; 2+ Navigators who know Skip off the Void (get them from Saere Vento); At least 1 rank 15 Scavenger officer who knows Master Reclamation; 4 disposable combat crew.
4. Ensure that you also have at least two life saving talents, and at minimum, 18 total salvage replace or remove card talents.
5. Install a Salvage EVA Deck (or Salvage Bay).
6. Buy a salvage rumour.
7. Fly there and start salvaging. If there is a RTG or Relic card, use a remove talent to increase the odds of drawing it. If there isn't, use a replace talent, preferentially Nose for Loot.
8. These are the priority cards to replace or remove: Running Battle, Assassins, Devious Spies, Xeno Assault, Unavoidable Fatality. Every other card is acceptable.

9. If there are two or more of the above cards in a hand, use Master Reclamation every time, retraining your Scavenger officer as necessary to bring it off cooldown.
10. . Ensure that you always have sufficient fuel for Skip, at least one Skip off cooldown, and at least one life save off cooldown (two if there's a Double Fatality in the hand).
11. Whenever you encounter a ship, submit or retreat if you can, Skip if you can't.
12. Whenever you encounter crew combat, just surrender and recruit new lvl 1 combat crew to replace losses.
13. Repeat 6 through 12 until victory.