

Deep Space Swine

In space, no one can hear you squeal like a piggy.
an Animalball Beer & Pretzels game by Mike Jones

Introduction

Comic space opera with corkscrew tails. Deep Space Swine is a lighthearted riff on traditional sci-fi conventions. All the characters are anthropomorphized animals, with names that tend to be horrible puns (I'm looking at you Ham Solo.)

Background

In centuries long past, Earthlings discovered space flight and made their first leap out into the solar system only to find that the Martians had beat them to it. In their competition to occupy the system, Earth and Mars became the bitterest enemies—a feud that continued even after somebody accidentally blew up the sun. No one will fess up to it, but either way, the system was totally destroyed.

Each consolidated their strength, and now their empires face each other across the span of a hundred star systems. The Earthlings are boldly exploring strange new worlds and bringing freedom and justice to the galaxy, whether the galaxy wants it or not. In the meantime, the Martians continue to scheme to overthrow their archrivals.

Into this mix, add an assortment of new friends and enemies: the warlike Felonians, the mysterious Pseudopoids, the wise yet slimy Atlanteans, and the exuberant but utterly annoying Sirians.

A few notes about DSS

Deep Space Swine is a humorous roleplaying game intended for sci-fi fans who already have some role playing experience and a good sense of humor. It is a very traditional RPG in the sense of having a typical GM + Players structure, uses dice, etc. Therefore, DSS takes for granted that its players already know the basics of roleplaying games: terminology, miniatures, how to use freaky dice, that sort of thing. Many standard gaming terms and acronyms will therefore be used within this text without other explanation. There is (as yet) no Deep Space Swine for Dummies... but maybe someday.

DSS uses only twelve-sided dice, or d12's, because the d12 is the most useful and most neglected of all dice. It's useful for each player to have at least one or two—preferably in different colors.

While Deep Space Swine is intended as a humorous parody game, it is for mature players only. Death may not be lurking around every corner, but it's still a very real possibility, and characters are expected to act as if the dangers are real. There may be cuddly animals tooling around on jet scooters, but this isn't Toon.

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Making Characters

To make a character for Deep Space Swine:

1. Select a race, animal type and name
2. Select an Occupation
3. Roll on Character Creation Table 1 to get stat numbers and Talent Points
4. Assign stat numbers and apply race modifiers (if any)
5. Select Talents
6. Select 2 Gifts
7. Select 1 Drawback
8. Fill in the Details—description, equipment, quirks, history, etc

The Races

Each race has its own advantages and disadvantages (see race descriptions). Additionally, the player needs to select an animal type appropriate to their selected race. Typically, animal types are selected to match the character's stats—i.e. a big Buff Earthling will usually be a horse or a bull—but sometimes it's even more fun to play against type—a huge muscled duck, or a puny but brainy ox. The animal type has no specific game function other than flavor and comic effect.

The only real limitation on races is that when playing in a group, the players will need to be sure that they can all reasonably work together. Martians and Earthlings are not terribly compatible, and Felonians won't work with anyone. The GM has discretion to determine what's allowable.

As mentioned above, the people and aliens of Deep Space Swine are all animals... of a sort. However, they are all anthropomorphized to a degree that they are really just humans with cartoony-looking animal heads. The whole “fuzzy” aspect is to heighten the surreality of the game and provide an opportunity for a lot of crappy puns.

Earthlings

Adaptable and adventurous, Earthlings have quickly made a reputation for themselves in the galaxy. Animal choices for Earthling characters tend to be traditional beasts of burden and “eatin’ animals”—barnyard types mostly. Pigs are by far the most

common, but Earthlings can be ducks, horses, cows, chickens, goats, rabbits, sheep. More rarely, they can be squirrels, geese, hedgehogs or others as the GM deems appropriate. However, Earthlings cannot be an animal already co-opted by one of the other groups. (For example, only Martians can be monkeys.)

Pros: 3 extra talent points

Cons: none

Martians

Sly and devious, the Martians are the arch-enemies of the Earthlings. The Martians are all primates: gorillas, chimps, oranges, gibbons, capuchins... monkeys galore. You can always tell they're Martians though, because no matter what type of monkey they are, they are always green. Strangely, though, they will never describe themselves as such. Instead, they'll say they are teal, olive, mint, sea foam, chartreuse, etc.

Pros : +1 Slick, +1 Quick

Cons: none

Felonians

Warlike and savage, these marauding cats pounce on anything that moves. They are constantly voracious and always merciless. They can be tigers, pumas, or just plain housecats, but Felonians are all marked by their glowing red eyes. The red eyes are so distinctive, that they have even worked the motif into their spacecraft, with dual glowing red windshields that give their craft a feral and dangerous look.

Pros: +2 to combat related actions

Cons: -1 Slick, requires a Smart roll to disengage from battle

Atlanteans

Wise and learned, the Atlanteans are clever inventors and great thinkers. On the other hand, most of them aren't worth a darn in an emergency. Having to wear those water-filled helmets all the time really slows them down. Atlanteans can be any type of water-breathing sea creature. Mostly fish, but there's also octopi, sharks, lobsters and others.

Pros: +1 Smart, +1 to knowledge & info gathering rolls, can breathe water

Cons: -1 Buff, can't breathe air

Pseudopoids

These are shape changers. They can appear in virtually any form, but whatever they look like, they always have an extra couple of tentacles that identify them as pseudopoids. Their natural form looks very much like a teddy bear with four extremely long suctioned, scaly tentacles sprouting from its back.

Pros: shapechange

Cons: cowardly, -1 to one stat, -2 Talent Points

Sirians

They're dogs. Yappy, excitable, annoying dogs. Okay, not all of them. Some of them can be mean or scheming, but mostly they are agreeable, loyal, and eager to please. The Sirians come originally from Sirius (the Dog Star) but have spread quite far across the galaxy. They're not highly organized and don't put up much resistance, and yet they're not easily conquered either; always popping back up, as happy and bouncy as ever. The Felonians consider the Sirians to be their ultimate enemy, but the Sirians don't seem to notice.

Pros: likable, puppy-dog eyes, lucky, +1 Buff, +1 Quick

Cons: -1 Smart, -1 Slick, loyal, trusting

Other People

The galaxy is a big place. There's plenty of animal groups not covered here: birds, rodents, bugs, marsupials. There's room for all sorts of creativity from GMs and players alike.

Robots

Robots can be made by any race and will generally have animal traits resembling the people who created them. Robots have different physical requirements than organic races (a power supply instead of food; they need repairing rather than medical care), but they generally have the same Pros and Cons as their creator race plus the following.

Pros: +1 to Buff, Quick, or Smart (maximum of 6), does not require air

Cons: Every robot has an off switch somewhere, -1 Slick, vulnerability to water

[As an example of character creation, we'll create an Earthling Duck, and we'll name him Rick Duckard.]

Occupation

Now select your character's occupation. These can be actual jobs, such as Starship Captain, Private Investigator, Computer Programmer, or Plumber. They can also be more esoteric, such as Beach Bum, Evil Genius, Smiling Sycophant, etc. The main thrust is that a character's occupation describes what the character actually does, what his or her position in society is.

Bonuses. A character gets a +2 bonus to any action that is directly related to his occupation, and a +1 bonus to any action that can be associated with his occupation.

For example, a ship's Chief Engineer would get a +2 bonus to Operate Starship or Repair Starship, as well as a +2 for Stall for Time and Confuse with Technobabble. Tasks that would only get a +1 could include Repair Something that's not a Starship or Create Improv Radio from Coconuts.

A Beach Bum would get a +2 bonus to things like Surf, Wax Surfboard, Impress Chicks, and a +1 for tasks such as Find Parties or Borrow a Fiver til Wednesday.

Penalties. Sometimes, there are tasks that an occupation is particularly unsuited for, and the GM may assign a penalty of -1 or -2 accordingly. The Chief Engineer above would get penalties for Getting a Date, while the Beach Bum would be particularly bad at Be Punctual or Think.

We'll talk more about bonuses and penalties when we get to the Doing Stuff section.

[Rick Duckard selects Bounty Hunter as his occupation. Specifically, he is a Bounty Hunter who specializes in bringing in renegade robots, but Bounty Hunter should suffice for now.]

Stats

Characters are defined by four basic stats: Buff, Quick, Smart, and Slick. These stats determine how good the character is at Doing Stuff.

Buff — A measure of the character's strength, physique, and overall health. Also determines how much punishment the character can take. Used for tasks that rely on size and strength. (eg. Run, Lift Heavy Stuff, Punch Guard, Jump Chasm)

Quick — Used for tasks requiring speed, agility, coordination, and/or manual dexterity. (eg. Dodge Bullets, Catch Falling Baby, Play Piano, Shoot Laser)

Smart — Overall braininess. Reflects not only memory and learning, but problem solving and logic as well. Used for tasks requiring brainpower. (eg. Remember Phone Number, Operate Submersible, Override Security System, Solve Crossword)

Slick — Cool, chutzpah, persuasiveness. Used for any task that involves influencing other people. (eg. Intimidate, Negotiate Price, Sweet Talk, Lie)

All four stats are rated from 1-6, with 2 being average for an Earthling, and 6 being superhuman:

[Stat Table]

1 — Weak

2 — Average

3 — Good

4 — Exceptional

5 — Spectacular

6 — Superhuman

Conceivably, the ratings can continue higher than 6, but that seems like so much work. Six is a good practical limit.

To determine a starting character's stats, roll d12 and consult the following chart (we'll get to Talent Points in just a minute):

[Character Creation Table 1]

Roll	Stats	Talent Points
1	5,2,1,1	10
2	4,2,2,1	10
3	3,3,2,1	10
4	3,3,2,2	8
5	4,2,2,2	8
6	4,3,2,1	8
7	4,4,1,1	8
8	5,2,2,1	8
9	5,3,1,1	8
10	5,3,2,1	6
11	5,2,2,2	6
12	4,3,3,1	6

The four stat numbers can then be assigned to the character's stats in any order desired. Then apply racial modifiers, if any. No stat may be less than 1.

[Rick Duckard rolls on Character Creation Table 1. He rolls a 6, giving him stats of 4, 3, 2, 1. He assigns them as follows: Buff-2, Quick-3, Smart-4, Slick-1. As an Earthling, he also has 11 Talent Points to spend in the next step.]

Talents

While your stats determine your overall proficiency with most tasks, your Talents reflect certain things that you are specifically very good at. A talent can be any specific task, such as Shoot a Gun, Navigate, Mix Cocktails, Speak Martian, etc. The list of possible talents is endless, but a few sample ones are provided in the Talent Table.

[Talent Table]

Buff Talents — Run, Lift Heavy Stuff, Swim, Fist Fight, Hit with Sword, Hit with Bat, Bend Iron Bars, Break Down Door, Jump Over Stuff, Play Rugby, Resist Torture, Alter Shape (Pseudopods only)[NEEDS EXPLANATION]

Quick Talents — Dodge Bullets, Catch Stuff, Play Piano, Shoot Firearm, Hurl Grenade, Thread Needle, Breakdance, Juggle, Balance on Narrow Ledge, Get Around in Zero Gravity, Drive

Smart Talents — Remember Obscure Trivia, Operate Machinery, Override Security System, Solve Crossword, Use Computer, Perform Open Heart Surgery, Forge Documents, Solve Quadratic Equations, Decipher Codes

Slick Talents — Intimidate, Pout Sexily, Negotiate Price, Sweet Talk, Lie, Fast Talk, Impersonate Somebody, Tell Joke, Impress the Ladies, Act Casual

When selecting talents, the character has a number of Talent Points to spend (from the Character Creation table), and each point spent grants +1 to a selected Talent. Starting characters may spend up to 3 points on any one Talent.

[Duckard now has 11 Talent Points to spend. As a Bounty Hunter, he will take Find People (and Robots) +3, Identify Robots +3, Disable Robots +2, Fist Fight +2, Make Intimidating Suggestions +2, Fire Gun +1]

Gifts

Gifts are positive aspects of a character that don't really qualify as learned talents or skills. These are special qualities of the character that provide some significant benefit. Each starting character gets two gifts. However, there are some things that are so powerful that the character has to spend two or more gifts to get them.

[Sample Gifts]

Photographic Memory, Wardrobe for Any Occasion, Danger Sense, Luck, High Security Clearance, Aluminum-Laced Bones, Very Wealthy, Irresistable to the Opposite Sex, Well Connected, Permanently Well-Groomed, A Star Cruiser (2 gifts), Armored Skin (robots and cyborgs only), Telepathic (2 gifts), Diplomatic Immunity, Gills, Can Fly (2 gifts), Personal Vehicle, License to Kill (2 gifts), High Pain Tolerance, Never Out of Ammo

There are tons of others. Any good thing a character can think of can be a gift, and it's up to the GM to decide how many gifts it costs and exactly what its game effects are.

At the GM's discretion, characters can gain extra gifts by taking extra drawbacks on a 1:1 basis (see more on Drawbacks in the next section).

[For his gifts, Rick Duckard decides to give his character Keen Senses and An Interplanetary Astro-Van.]

Drawbacks

Drawbacks are exactly like Gifts... except the opposite. Drawbacks are negative aspects of a character. Each character starts with one Drawback, but can take up to two extra Drawbacks if desired. Each extra Drawback earns the character one of the following: +1 to any one stat (can only be done once), +2 Talent Points, or 1 Gift.

It is up to the GM to decide exactly what does and does not count as a Drawback. It is important to ensure that Drawbacks will actually be a hindrance to characters in play. Allergic to Chocolate is hardly a valid drawback (unless of course the team is planning a mission to Planet Wonka).

[Sample Drawbacks]

Very Ugly, Absent Minded, Deaf, Poor, Severe Body Odor, Extreme Xenophobia, Compulsive Liar, Unlucky, Cowardly, Easily Distracted by Shiny Objects, Addicted to Catnip, Wanted by the Cops, Compulsive Shopper, Enemy, Vow of Silence

[Duckard decides that his character is completely inept with computers and took the whole Robot-Hunting gig because of his fear of complex machinery. He takes Technophobic as his one drawback.]

Fill Out the Details

This is where you finish out the character and add in all the details that finally bring him or her to life.

Description—what does your character look like? How does she dress? Does she have any notable mannerisms or figures of speech?

Possessions—for the most part, characters are assumed to have a job or resources to support a moderate lifestyle (unless they have a gift or drawback to change that). Therefore, all characters can start with whatever equipment they deem appropriate: clothing, toolkits, Interplanet Shuttle passes, food, weaponry, etc. The GM has final approval over possessions and may decide to charge

the character an extra gift if any of the stuff is too powerful.

Background/History—just a few words about where the character came from, what she's like, and why she does what she does.

Quirks—other little things about the character that don't qualify as a gift or drawback, but help define the character a little better. Things like: Always Smiling, Overconfident, Patriotic, Vain, Loves His Mother.

[Duckard is ready to finish up his character. For his history, he decides that his character grew up on the Quackalon 5 space station near Alpha Ceti 6 just before the Robot Rebellion. He enlisted with the Quackalon Home Guard to fight the robots, and then after the rebellion was put down, he turned his skills to bringing in renegade bots. Now he has a dirty office in the bowels of Quackalon 5 and chases down naughty bots in every corner of the Earthling Alliance.]

As for possessions, other than his space-van (see Gifts), Duckard doesn't have much. He keeps a laser pistol for emergencies, plus some handcuffs, and a bot-maintenance kit (which he only uses when he needs a screwdriver to jam through some circuitry). Keeping to his duck noir image, he always has a hipflask and a battered pack of cigarettes with him.

Quirks: Rumpled, Duck of Few Words, Magnetic Eyes (figuratively magnetic... what were you thinking?), Disillusioned.]

Doing Stuff

Most times, doing stuff in Deep Space Swine is pretty simple, players tell what their characters are doing, and the GM describes what happens as a result. However, sometimes the results of a given action are not immediately obvious. Anytime the results of an action are uncertain, the character will need to Do Stuff.

Process for Doing Stuff

1. The player describes what his character will be doing.
2. Player and GM determine what stat applies to this action plus any bonuses from Race, Occupation, Talents, Gifts, circumstances, etc.
3. GM determines the difficulty of the task at hand and sets a Difficulty Rating
4. GM and player each roll d12; GM adds result to Difficulty Rating, player adds result to Stat plus bonuses
5. Interpret results: If player's total is higher, action is successful; if GM's is higher, action fails

Describe Action

This is the easy part. The player describes what his character is attempting to do. The more detail the better

Determine Stat and Bonuses

Figure out which stat is most appropriate to this action. Most will be obvious, but sometimes it may take a bit of discussion, and some tasks really may apply to more than one stat. For example, let's say you just hooked up your new HayStation 2 videogame system and you've just rented a handful of the latest games. Is playing videogames a Quick task or would Smart be more applicable? Depends on the exact game and the player. In disputed cases, the GM has the final word.

After the Stat is selected, add on bonuses for Race, Occupation, Talents, Gifts or other circumstances as determined by the GM.

Set Difficulty

The GM determines the Difficulty Rating of the task at hand. The harder the task, the higher the number.

Difficulty	Description
Less than 0	Super Easy
0	Relatively Simple
3	Routine Stuff
6	Getting a Little Harder Now
9	This is a Real Challenge for Most People
12	For Pros Only; Don't Try This at Home
15	Even the Pros Cringe at This One

Roll Dice

Player rolls d12 and adds it to his stat+bonus total. The GM adds d12 to the Difficulty Rating.

Interpret Results

The easy part here is success or failure. If the player's total is higher, he is successful. If the GM's total is higher, the player fails. In the case of a tie... eh, call it a near miss or a by-the-skin-of-your-teeth success—it's a GM call. By default, assume a zero result is in the player's favor.

Here's the hard part: interpreting the results. The greater the margin of difference between the two rolls, the more extreme the success or failure:

Difference in Rolls	Interpretation
10 or more	Critical Success – spectacular yet comic results
7 to 9	Great Success – ideal; better than you expected
4 to 6	Success
1 to 3	Minimal Success – by the skin of your teeth
0	Partial Success
-1 to -3	Near Miss – oh so close
-4 to -6	Failure
-7 to -9	Miserable Failure – you make things even worse
-10 or less	Critical Failure – disastrous yet comic results

Because roleplaying is about group storytelling, it is encouraged that players and GM's work together to

describe results. However, as with everything, the GM has the final say.

Fight! Fight! Fight!

Combat and Other Ways of Getting Hurt

There's lots of ways to get hurt in this game, and chief among them is fighting. When a fight breaks out, use the following rules

Rounds

During fights or other action where forces are opposing each other, time is broken down into rounds. A round is approximately 4 seconds, and during each round, all the characters involved will get to have a turn.

Initiative

At the start of each round, each character rolls a d12 and adds their Quick. This is their initiative score. During the round, the characters all take turns acting in order of initiative (highest number first). In case of tie, the highest Quick goes first (or Smart if there's still a tie).

On Your Turn...

So what exactly can you accomplish on your turn? Well, anything you feel like really. You can move; you can attack; you can try to open a door; you can throw things; you can shout at people; you can Do Stuff.

Free actions—some things are considered free actions. That is, these are things you can do while Doing Other Stuff without incurring any penalty. Free actions include things like:

Speaking (as much as you think you can squeeze into 4 seconds or so)

Walking (the average character can move up to 10 meters in a turn while doing other things)

Normal actions—everything else though, requires some measure of concentration. Normal action would include:

Firing a pistol

Hitting someone
Putting on your helmet
Piloting your ship
Jumping through the closing blast doors
Dodging laser fire
Swinging over a fallen bridge
Placing a collect call
Running at full speed

Usually, only one normal action can be performed at a time. However, in a pinch, a brave character can try to do several things at once. Each extra action adds +3 to the Difficulty Rating of ALL actions that turn.

Example 1: If Ham Solo wishes to dive through the closing blast doors while still firing at the Imperial Cattle Guard behind him, that would be two actions, so both actions would be at +3 to Difficulty.

Example 2: Princess Petunia is trapped in the communication room of the Martian Embassy. She is attempting to keep the Martian guard restrained while placing a distress call to the Provincial Office of Reconnaissance and Covert Intelligence. At that moment, the Martian Ambassador calls on line 2. While holding the guard and still trying to contact PORCI, the princess does her best to imitate the disabled guard to allay any suspicion. Three simultaneous tasks means that she suffers a -6 penalty to all rolls.

Attack!

Hitting or shooting someone is just like any other action and follows the normal procedures for Doing Stuff. Typically, hitting someone is a Buff task, and shooting someone is a Quick task. The Difficulty Rating is normally the opponent's Quick stat, plus appropriate bonuses for actively dodging, hiding, armor that makes a person harder to hit, etc.

After rolling, if the attacker's total is higher, the result is a hit. If the defender's total is higher, the attack misses. In the case of a tie, it turns out to be Just a Scratch, which does no real damage, but is good enough for special abilities or weapons that only require a touch (like a Cattle Prod).

In the case of a hit, for every three points by which the attack overcomes the defense, the attacker adds +1 to the Damage Rating (see Damage).

Damage

Every weapon has a Damage Rating (see Weapon Table).

Damage Rating	Examples
0	Most unarmed attacks; fist, boot, tentacle
5	Most personal weapons; baseball bat, claws, knife, laser pistol
10	Weapons requiring a Gift; force blade, laser shotgun, land mines
15	Weapons requiring 2 Gifts; Hullcracker sonic prybar, bazookas

Whenever a character is hit, he must make a Buff roll vs. the Damage Rating of the weapon. The character can get bonuses from armor or appropriate gifts or talents. The base Damage Rating may be improved by an exceptionally accurate hit (see previous section).

If the character succeeds at the Buff check, then the wound is considered Just a Scratch. However, failing the check results in the character checking off one wound box on his character sheet. If the Buff check fails very badly, then the character checks off an extra wound box for every 3 points by which his roll fails.

Result of Buff Check	Wound
Successful check	none
Failed by 0-2	1 box
Failed by 3-5	2 boxes
Failed by 6-8	3 boxes
Failed by 9-11	4 boxes
Failed by 12-14	5 boxes
Etc...	

The character has 12 wound boxes on his character sheet. If all 12 boxes are checked off, the character is unconscious and probably slowly fading away. Any further injury at that point probably results in death (GM's call).

Additionally, characters suffer a penalty to ALL actions equal to the number of wound boxes they have checked off. So if Fluffy has 4 boxes checked, then all of her rolls are at -4. By the time it gets to 9 or 10 boxes checked off, the character is still

conscious and able to speak and move (some), but actually accomplishing anything useful would require heroic effort.

Recovery

Fortunately, science is advanced enough that characters can recover from virtually anything as long as they can get to medical help in a timely fashion. Assume that with proper care, most characters can recover up to three wound boxes per day. Without proper care, the character must make a Buff check every day versus the level of his wounds. A successful check means he regains one box.

For characters who have lost all of their wound boxes (or even more) recovery is usually much longer and more difficult. If they live, they are coming back from a near death experience. The GM will determine exactly what that means for recovery.

Unfinished Symphony

Deep Space Swine was created as part of Animalball's 2004 Beer & Pretzel Challenge. The intent was to create a whole game in a week. What you hold in your hands is the result.

This is more than enough information to set up and run a short game or mini-campaign, and any group familiar with classic science fiction books, movie and TV will have no problems filling in the gaps—especially for the sort of light-hearted games for which Deep Space Swine is intended.

But Deep Space Swine is clearly an unfinished product and will always remain that way. To really flesh it out, there are some crucial missing sections, including: more detail on space travel and space warfare, a representative list of typical goods and services with appropriate prices, and of course, more detail and development of the DSS universe itself.

If anyone ever develops such things, please let us know, we'd be more than happy to add them in.