

How To Start Frontier: First Encounters

You've had enough! You play this game for hours, only to keep crashing into things, or getting blown away by some unsavory character in a rusty Adder. You read the mail in the newsgroups, get a few ideas, but still nothing seems to work. Read on, and I will show you how to obtain the Asp Explorer, one of the best all around ships in the game, with a Class 3 Military drive installed, and 800,000 credits to play with - all in just two months of game time.

First of all, set the options up in the game. Start the game, and type the ESC key twice to get to the options page. Here you can adjust graphics, music, sound effects, and display information to your liking. Try some different settings, see what they do, and get a comfortable setup. If you are learning how to play the game, then I suggest turning off the music, space dust, stars, background stars, targeting tunnels, and filename extensions. For now they can be distracting while learning how to fly your ship

Save your setup. Pick a Commander name you like, and replace the FIRSTENC name in the save screen (click on it) with your new name. Now we're ready to make some credits.

The 1st Run to Soholia - Launching from an Atmosphere Planet

The game starts with 1000 credits and a Saker Mk III at Old Blackelk on Hope in Gateway [-1,4]. There is a Wiccan Ware race which will gain you credits and, more importantly, reputation if you win it, so we'll include that. There is also a plague in the Soholia system [-1,5], and they are paying big credits for medicines. The plague will continue until Feb 26, 3250, then the value of medicines will drop. During this time you want to make as many runs as you can to that system. Making the runs requires two things - a fast ship, and a short distance to travel. This guide will show you how.

For now, we need to make some credits. Go to the Equipment Upgrade page and sell the two KLT60 Homing Missiles, Scanner, and the 1 MW Pulse Laser. With me and the Elite Federation by your side, you won't need them! You now have 2215 credits, and 11t of cargo space.

Go to the Stock Market and buy medicines - 4 tons is all you can afford. Note that you already have 1t of hydrogen fuel in your cargo bay. Also buy 3 tons of animal meat, and 3 tons of water, leaving you with 3.6 credits.

Next fly to Old Curie to start the Wiccan Ware race. The flight procedure is as follows:

- 1 Activate the Navigation Computer (green square on right of console) to display the stations in the system.
- 2 Click on the Old Curie icon to lock the destination into the Autopilot.
- 3 Request launch from Old Blackelk Traffic Control. ALWAYS request launch permission before launching from a port. You will be fined if you don't.
- 4 Type the TAB key to start the engines and launch the ship.
- 5 Type the Z key to rotate the ship up into the sky (and the A key if you rotate too far).
- 6 Hold down the ENTER key a few seconds to accelerate.
- 7 Type the U key to raise the undercarriage.
- 8 Note the altitude display on the right side of the screen. When the altitude is 1000m, click on the Old Curie icon. The Autopilot is now flying the ship, and it will rotate to change course for Old Curie.
- 9 As the ship rotates, quickly click on the top arrow on the Stardreamer (max setting). You will now instantly arrive at Old Curie, and are currently docking automatically.
- 10 Click on the second arrow from the bottom on the Stardreamer, and the ship will instantly dock. You are charged a fee each time you dock. In this case, the fee was 3 credits. You now have 0.6 credits.

Clicking on the Navigation Computer can also be done when flying as we will use soon. Once it is set, the distance to the port will be displayed on the main screen. If you inadvertently click on the main screen, it cancels the lock and removes the distance display.

Sometimes the station will be full, and CLEARANCE DENIED will appear in the lower right part of the screen. When this happens, just click on the next station above the original on the Navigation Computer display, then max the Stardreamer to go to it. For Old Curie, you will always get in the first time.

You will occasionally get the message 'VACATE THE AREA IMMEDIATELY. You do not have clearance.' on the lower right part of the screen just after takeoff. The station is telling you that your ship is blocking the approach path to the landing pad. Disregard this message, as you will not be staying around long enough to get into any trouble.

See? That wasn't so bad after all. Now, we want to set the ship up for a perfect departure every time. Go to the outside view by typing the F1 key twice, and you will see the back of the Saker. Hold down the LEFT ARROW key, and rotate the view until you are looking directly at the port side of the Saker. Leave this view on. Note that the F1 key will cycle you through all the views.

Go to the BBS and find the Wiccan Ware message and accept it. Click the Galactic Map icon and use the cursor keys to highlight Soholia [-1,5] with the green crosshairs. The Hyperdrive is now locked onto the system.. Launch exactly as you did at Old Blackelk, but with the external view still on. Upon takeoff, you will see the Saker rotate upward as you type the Z key. When it is 'standing on its tail', hold down the ENTER key to accelerate straight up and away from the planet. Again, raise the undercarriage by typing U.

You can now use the side view, or the front view if you like, for takeoff. I usually use the front view, then quickly check the side view after takeoff to see how good my vertical takeoff was.

Watch the altitude display. At 11,000m, the hyperspace icon will appear, you can click on it to hyperspace to Soholia. However, it's time to save the game first. When the altitude displays 10,000m, type the ESC key twice (or click on the pause icon on the Stardreamer twice) to go to the options page, and then save the game. Return to the game, click on the first arrow from the bottom on the Stardreamer (normal time passage), and click on the hyperspace icon when it appears.

You made it to Soholia - so far. Activate the Navigation Computer, and click on BERLIN. The Autopilot will engage and the ship will change course for the station. Using the Autopilot, the ship will normally accelerate for the first half of the distance to the station, then decelerate for the second half. We want to get there as quickly as possible, so we will accelerate all the way. When the ship is heading directly to the station, perform the following:

- 1 Turn off the Autopilot by clicking on the Navigation Target (green square on the left).
- 3 Hold down the ENTER key to accelerate all the way to the station.
- 2 At the same time, maximize the Stardreamer by clicking on the top arrow. Watch the green distance readout in the center of the screen.
- 4 At just above 1AU away from the station, release the ENTER key, and quickly click on the Navigation Target to activate the Autopilot. You will immediately start the docking sequence for Berlin. The G force in this sudden stop would normally turn you and your ship into space mush. This is one of the bugs in the game which we use to our advantage.
- 5 Click on the Stardreamer 2nd arrow from the bottom to immediately dock.

What this? It Didn't work? You activated the Stardreamer to max, and the next thing you know pirates are trying to blow you away? Good thing you saved the game, as you have no defenses or weapons to survive this encounter. You have just experienced the GOLDEN RULE of the game - 'Save the game, and save it often!'. Always save the game before jumping to another system, or attempting a risky maneuver until you get more experience for the game and how it operates. Unlike other games, the save game in FFE is a much needed tool to get you through the early stages of the game. Without it, all you have is luck as to whether or not you will make it to the next port. And I can assure you the game programmers put all the luck on their side!

The pirates are all over you, so quickly type the ESC key twice to go to the options page, and reload your game. You are now 10,000m above Old Curie - make the jump again. This time maybe the pirates aren't there and you make it all the way in. Sometimes the pirates will always be there at every jump. To defeat this, continue your climb out and stay in the Gateway system a little longer before jumping to Soholia, then try again. The time can be as short as waiting until the altitude display disappears, a few hours, or up to 11:00AM local time. This game time is easily adjusted in a few seconds of real time with the Stardreamer. As a last resort, the overall best results for a jump usually occur around 11:00AM system time.

You finally docked at Berlin station, either by luck or by using the Golden Rule. The docking fee was 4 credits, but you only have 0.6 credits. Don't worry about it now. Go to the BBS and find the following message:

MEDICAL SUPPLIES wanted. Best prices paid.

Accept ONLY this message (there will be others) and sell the medicines. The first ton will sell for 2000 credits, and the rest for 3600 credits each. Go to the Stock Market and sell the animal meat and water. You now have ~13,000 credits. There appears to be a smile on your face....

Note that the actual amount of credits you make will depend upon the changing prices of the commodities at the stations. The amounts listed in this guide reflect the higher side of what is possible in profits under optimum conditions. Do not worry if your values are lower.

Now go to the Shipyard and click on Contact Local Police. Pay the fine of 4 credits, and you have taken care of the docking fee. This 'crime' is NOT recorded on your record.

The 2nd Run to Alioth - Launching from an Orbital Station

It's time to complete the Wiccan Ware race, and make a few credits as well. Buy 2 tons of hydrogen fuel. Go to the Ship's Inventory page, and click on the refuel icon. The Saker's internal tank, used when flying around in a system, is now full with 1 ton of fuel. You also have 1 ton of fuel in the Cargo Bay, which will be used to make the hyperspace jump.

Go to the Stock Market and buy 10t of Robots, filling your Cargo Bay.

Set the Galactic Map for Alioth [0,4], and launch from the station. Orbital launches are the easiest as they place your ship into space, ready to maneuver. Once clear of the station, raise your undercarriage, and turn the ship slightly (hold the right mouse button down and move mouse - left on the joystick - comma key) to clear the approach path to the station. This will immediately bring up the hyperspace icon. Ready to jump? No! Save the game first, then jump.

We're at Alioth. Here is where the Golden Rule will be to your advantage. Whenever you jump into a system, the remaining distance to a selected station is calculated, and displayed as you lock the Autopilot onto it and start your flight in. This distance will change every time you jump into the system. the smaller the distance, the less time it will take to travel. This gives you time to make more runs before the plague ends, and the value of medicines drops.

Activate the Navigation Computer, and click on Ghandi. as the ship rotates toward the station, note the AU distance. Now go to the options page, reload your saved game, and make the jump again. Note the change in the distance on the second jump. Repeat this procedure, called the Re-Jump, until you have found the lowest distance to the station. Get comfortable with the Re-Jump, as we will be using it often, and it is easy to do. Approach the station exactly as you did to Berlin, accelerating all the way in. Use the Re-Jump and increased time before departing to resolve any pirate problems.

Dock at Ghandi. Congratulations! You win the race and another 1010 credits! - most of the time. Go to the Stock Market and sell the robots. You now have 17,000 credits.

The 3rd Run to Soholia

Buy 2t of hydrogen fuel, then refuel your internal tank. Buy 10t of medicines. Set the Galactic Map for Soholia, and launch. Remember to save the game at 10,000m altitude. You can try a few Re-Jumps if you like to lower the distance to the station, but usually it will always be 8 - 11 ly away. Make the run into Berlin and dock just like before. Sell the medicines on the BBS. You now have ~43,000 credits. No, don't look at the Shipyard Upgrade page! Keep your credits in your account!

The 4th Run to Gateway - Making Things Happen

Going to Gateway instead of Alioth will greatly reduce the time required for the hyperspace jump. Gateway is only 6.89ly from Soholia. They also have a need for robots, which we will use to our advantage.

In this run we need to make three things happen. (1) Find the smallest distance to the Sarajevo station. (2) Find a BBS message wanting to buy robots. (3) Find a Viper defence Mk II in the shipyard. You will use the Re-Jump procedure to make these conditions happen - so much for programmer's luck. To increase our chances of finding these items, we will fly to five different stations, all close together, starting with Sarajevo.

Buy 2t of hydrogen fuel, then refuel your internal tank. Buy 10t of robots. Set the Galactic Map for Gateway, and launch. remember to save the game at 10,000m altitude.

Upon entering the system, click on the Navigation Computer, and note that there are TWO Sarajevo stations in the system, We want the one in the first column on the left, below Dublin Citadel. Note that all the ports above Sarajevo are close together. The ones below are farther away and will take more time to fly to.

We will now use the Re-Jump to its best advantage, as the distance to the station changes a lot in the Gateway system. Re-Jump into the system until you have the lowest AU distance to Saravejo that you can get. Depending on the calculation, this will be somewhere between 2 - 6 AUs for each run you make. The best I have seen is 1.3 AUs from the station!

Note that the distance number is also an indicator of what is to occur. If you make a distance run of 8.235 AUs, and do not get what you want. The exact same results will occur if you select the 8.235 AU distance the next time. By not repeating distances you have already tried, you can reduce the number of Re-Jumps.

Land at Sarajevo, and search the BBS for the following message:

WANTED Robots: Will pay 1800.00 per tonne.

The 1800.00 credit value will vary each time you find it. If you find this message, sell your robots. Continue reading as you will need the following information on the next run. If you don't find this message, we will fly to another station. Check the Shipyard for a Viper defence Mk II, as we will be buying this ship before we leave the system.

Launching from an Airless Planet

We will be flying to Dublin Citadel, a station orbiting the planet Hope, which is also the next listing above Sarajevo on the Navigation Computer display. As the Sarajevo station is on an airless planet, there is a slightly different launch procedure. Like in an orbiting station, your ship will be automatically launched into space, from the airlock on the surface of the planet. So you do not need the TAB key. Just wait until you see your ship rise, then rotate, accelerate, and raise the undercarriage in the usual way.

As you accelerate up and away from Sarajevo, Bring up the Navigation Computer display. Note the Dublin Citadel icon, but do not click on it. Watch the altitude display. When it disappears at around 60,000m, click on the Dublin Citadel icon. Then click on the top arrow for maximum Stardreamer, and you will immediately arrive at Dublin Citadel, and start the automatic docking sequence. Click the second arrow from the bottom, and you are docked.

There are many ways to fly from one planet to another in a system. The procedure above ensures you are clear of the departing planet before you start the trip to the next planet. Later, you can depart at lower altitudes as you get the feel for flying your ship.

Once again, check the BBS for the wanted robots message, and the Shipyard for the Viper defence Mk II. If you don't find the message, launch and fly to Turner Town, located on the planet below. After about 2 seconds after leaving the station, bring up the Navigation Computer display, click on the Turner Town icon, then the top arrow for max Stardreamer. You have arrived. Click the second arrow to dock.

Look for the message and the ship. Still no message? Next stop - Turner.

Flying from Station-to-Station on a Planet

Flying from Turner Town to Turner is easy. Bring up the Navigation Computer display. Get permission, Launch, rotate, accelerate, and climb to 1000m, click on the Turner icon, click on the max Stardreamer icon. You are now auto-docking at Turner. As you get good at this, you can forget the altitude and jump almost as soon as you launch.

Still no message? Ship? Repeat the above takeoff procedure for Old Blackelk and Old Curie. Find that message! If there is still no message, then reload the save game and perform a Re-Jump. This may seem like a lot of trouble, and well, it is! But two things are happening here. You are getting comfortable with the computer controls of the game, so much that you won't have to think about the next key to type - You will just type it. This speed is essential to survive in a combat situation. Secondly, you are maximizing your potential for only two months of game time. This will put you in one of the best ships in the game, and equip it with everything you want. I wish real life was like that!

Finding the Message

Hurray! You found the wanted robots message, but you still need the ship. Sell those Robots! You now have ~56,000 credits. Check the Shipyard for the Viper defence Mk II. If not there, then fly to one of the previous stations that had the ship for sale. None so far? Continue your journey through to Old Curie. No ship, then reload the save game and start the jump again. Sorry, but you really need that ship!

Buying the 1st Ship

You Found the ship! After selling the robots on the BBS, go to the Shipyard Upgrades page. Sell all the equipment items except the Class 1 Hyperdrive (it is included in the trade-in price). Go to the Shipyard and buy the Viper Defence Mk II. Congratulations! You now have a 25 ton cargo bay, and an acceleration of 25.5g, compared with the Saker acceleration of 21.1g. Go to the Shipyard Upgrade page and buy Atmospheric Shielding, Navigation Computer, and Autopilot - don't buy anything else - patience!

Fuel Requirements

Go to the Ship Equipment Status page. Note the Drive Type, a Class 2 Hyperdrive, and the number, 17.91ly. This is the maximum distance that the ship can travel in one week of game time. If the actual distance to a system is smaller, then it will take less game time to get there.

The Current number is the distance the ship can travel per the amount of fuel that is currently in the cargo bay. If the distance to be traveled is small, then you will not need as much fuel to get there - which will provide more cargo space for medicines. Note that the fuel required for the maximum distance is calculated by squaring the drive class number. So a class 2 = 4 tons, a class 3 = 9 tons. etc.. This works for all drives except class 8, which uses 9 for the calculation.

The distance to Soholia is 6.89 ly, requiring only 2 tons of fuel in the cargo bay to make the trip. This will give you a current range of 8.94 ly. Top off the internal tank, and you have sufficient fuel to make the run to the station after arriving in the system.

The 5th Run to Soholia

Go to the Stock Market and buy 3t of hydrogen fuel. Top off your internal tanks, leaving 2t of fuel in the cargo bay. Then buy all the medicines you can afford, usually ~7 tons. Also buy other commodities to fill up your Cargo Bay. The specific order to buy them is: Animal Meat - Fruits & Veg - Grain - Liquid Oxygen - Water.

Set the Galactic Map to Soholia and launch, using the specific launch procedure for the station you are at. Notice how this ship accelerates faster than the Saker? Remember to save the game just before making the hyperspace jump.

You're in Soholia. Set course for Berlin, just like you did before, and dock. Again Re-Jumps will resolve any pirate difficulties. As you carry more cargo, pirates will often take notice. However, the faster the ship, the less likely the pirates will catch you on your speed run to the station - and the Viper Mk II is a fast ship!

Dock at Berlin station and sell the medicines on the BBS, and the commodities on the Stock Market. If you did not have the 4 credit docking fee, go to Contact Local Police and pay the fine. You now have ~25,000 credits.

The 6th Run to Gateway

Depending on the fuel consumed, top off your internal tanks, and buy 2t of hydrogen fuel for the cargo bay. Buy 23t of robots.

Launch to Gateway, just like you did the last time. Use the Re-Jump to get the lowest station distance, and to find that wanted robots message. This time you have the ship, so it will be easier.

You found the message! Sell the robots. You now have ~56,000 credits.

The 7th Run to Soholia

Depending on the fuel consumed, top off your internal tanks, and buy 4t of hydrogen fuel for the cargo bay. Buy 63T of medicines.

Set the Galactic Map to Soholia and launch. At 10,000m save the game. Make the jump and dock at Berlin. Sell your medicines on the BBS. You now have ~114,000 credits.

Buying the 2nd Ship

Now it's time to buy another ship! Check the Shipyard for an Asp Explorer. If it is not there, then fly to each station in Soholia until you find one. A trick is to save the game under a different name, then load and launch to each of the other stations. This saves more time and fuel. DO NOT overwrite your current save game as you may still need it! Still no Asp? Re-Jump and make the run again.

You found the Asp! Great! Don't buy it yet. An Asp Explorer requires two crew members, including yourself, to operate it. Once you find the Asp, check the BBS for a crew member looking for a job. If there is no Asp and a crew member at the same station, then perform a Re-Jump.

You found a crew member! Go to the Shipyard Upgrade page and sell all equipment items except the Class 2 hyperdrive. Go to the Shipyard and buy the Asp Explorer. If you are lucky to have more than one, choose the one you like best, note the ship ID number you like. Go to the Shipyard Upgrade page and buy Atmospheric Shielding, Navigation Computer, and Autopilot.

Now go to the BBS and hire the crew member. You can hire for them as low as 5 credits per week by luck, by having more than one crew member on the board to choose from, and by Re-Jump until you get the ship and crew member at the 5 credit price. I won't tell you what happens when you dismiss a crew member...

The 8th Run to Gateway

Go to the Stock Market and buy 6t of hydrogen fuel. Refuel your internal tanks, leaving 4t of fuel in the cargo bay, which gives you an 8.00 ly range. Then buy all the robots you can afford, usually ~21t. Also buy other commodities to fill up your Cargo Bay. The specific order to buy them is: hand weapons - farm machinery - industrial parts - heavy plastics.

Launch to Gateway. Use the Re-Jump to get the lowest station distance, and to find that wanted robots message.

You found the message! Sell the robots and hand weapons on the BBS, and the other commodities on the Stock Market. Pay the docking fee if necessary. You now have ~39,000 credits.

The 9th Run to Soholia

After refueling, fill your Cargo Bay with medicines - usually about 37 tons. Also buy other commodities to fill up your Cargo Bay. The specific order to buy them is: Animal Meat - Fruits & Veg - Grain - Liquid Oxygen - Water.

Set the Galactic Map to Soholia and launch. Save the game. Make the jump and dock at Berlin. Sell your medicines on the BBS, commodities on the Stock Market, and pay the docking fee if required. You now have ~135,000 credits.

The 10th Run to Gateway

Refuel and fill your cargo hold with 69t of robots, jump to Gateway, save the game, and sell them on the BBS. You now have ~229,000 credits.

Military Drives

Go to the Ship Upgrade page and sell the Class 3 Hyperdrive (weighs 45t). Buy the Class three Military drive (weighs 24t). Return to the Stock Market and buy 7t of MILITARY fuel. Refuel your internal tanks, leaving 4t of fuel in the Cargo Bay.

What's this? Radioactives? As you use military fuel, it generates waste products called radioactives. No problem, just go to the Stock Market and sell them. It will cost you only ~4 credits each to get rid of them. In some systems radioactives are illegal, so check the system before you go to it. If they are illegal, you can still go to the system, then dump the radioactives immediately upon arriving. This works fine as long as you are 5AUs away from any station when you dump, which is usually the case. You can even get rid of them at the stations, but I'll let you figure that out. In this guide, radioactives are legal in all the systems.

The military drive has the same abilities and requirements as its hyperdrive version, but weighs 21t less - which gives you more cargo space. You also need the military drive to qualify for certain military missions, so the advantages outweigh the negatives.

The 11th Run to Soholia

After refueling buy 90t of medicines. Set the Galactic Map to Soholia and launch. Save the game. Make the jump and dock at Berlin. Sell your medicines on the BBS. You now have ~396,000 credits. By purchasing the Class 3 Military drive, you made a profit of ~56,000 credits with the additional 21 tons of medicines.

The 12th Run to Gateway

Note that 'refuel' now includes disposing of the radioactives on the Stock Market. Refuel and fill your cargo hold with 90t of robots, jump to Gateway, save the game, and sell them on the BBS. You now have ~519,000 credits.

The Last Run with Medicines

Return to Soholia with Medicines. You now have ~757,000 credits. The date should be close to Feb 26th, 3250, afterwards the wanted medicines message will no longer be on the Soholia BBS. If you think you can get another run in, then go for it. If not, you can still make profits in Soholia on legal commodities, or try smuggling illegal Battle Weapons and Nerve Gas.

A final run to Gateway with 90t of robots should bring your credits up to ~877,000.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You now have ~800,000 credits. You also have an Asp Explorer with a Class 3 Military drive, and an acceleration of 22.2g. This is one of the most popular ships in the game, as it provides a large cargo space with good acceleration. Its advantage is that it is the best ship for multi-purpose usage. The Asp is big enough to make reasonable profits on the trade routes, and fast enough to complete most military missions on time. Its disadvantage is that it only carries one missile, but a good pilot can deal with that!

Like making profits? Use your new skills to buy bigger ships, hire more crew members, and carry more cargo. Replay the game and upgrade to a bigger ship, maybe a Lanner II, when you have the Asp and 229,000 credits. There are many lucrative trade routes, with one selling robots and computers in Sol [0,0], and luxury goods and liquors in Benard's Star at [-1,0]. A number of runs in these systems will soon get you into the Panther and Griffen class ships. Panthers also make ideal 'battleships'. The universe is now yours to explore.

If ELITE is your goal, a properly outfitted Asp, can defeat most pirate ships in the game, providing the pilot gets the combat experience, and develops his skills to survive. Add a little luck, and expert flying, and an Asp can defeat any ship, except when your luck runs out and there is no time to maneuver - a save game will help here. Use the save game to learn what combination of laser, shields, and flying skill works best for you. A hint is to mount a laser, and all the shields you can on a test ship, which will give you time to see what is going on in combat before you die. Soon, you will be taking them out. During this learning curve, the Golden Rule is truly a lifesaver.

Many an inspiring combat pilot likes to fly the Imperial Courier as the ship of choice. With your 18.00 ly range on the Asp, you can easily make it to Sohoa [0, -4] and Facece [0,-4]. There you will find many Couriers, and crew members, to choose from.

You now have a feel for flying several ships in the game, and have solutions to some of the problems you will encounter. What next? Fly your ship manually without an Autopilot. Land in the rough on several different type planets. Make several save games - one for combat, one for learning to fly in a safe system, another for regular game play. Dump some radioactives, then try to pick one up with the fuel scoop or tractor beam. Use them for target practice. Try all the equipment items and see how to use them to their best advantage. Try other ships, and see the feel the difference in they way they handle. Develop your pilot skills, and watch your Rank and Ratings soar. Soon I'll be shaking your hand at the Elite awards ceremony held in your honor.