

Badass Space Marines

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Foreword

This draft has been released for playtesting and feedback on the game. If you have comments on the text, I'd like to hear about them. What I really want is for people to play and test the system, ideally to breaking point, so that I can fix those breaks up.

Please let me know how it went and what you thought of it, preferably via:

- Playtest report at The Forge (<http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forum/index.php?board=62.0>)
- General comments or actual play post at the New Zealand Roleplaying and Gaming forum (<http://www.nzrag.com/bb/viewforum.php?f=21>)
- Email (mike@genericgames.co.nz)
- Comments on the Generic Games blog (<http://genericgames.co.nz/blog/?p=6>)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
What You Need To Play.....	3
Session Preparation.....	3
Setting Ground Rules.....	4
Humour Level	4
Setting.....	4
Why This Matters.....	4
Setting Scenes And Playing Them Through.....	5
Mission Templates.....	5
Advice For The Gamemaster.....	5
Setting Up Scenes.....	5
Pacing and Tension.....	5
Pacing With Damage.....	6
How Long To Spend In Each Phase.....	7
What About Climbing?.....	7
What About Healing?.....	7
The Creatures.....	7
Advice For The Marine Players.....	8
Shooting Each Other.....	8
The Game Phases and Setting Facts.....	8

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Setting Facts.....	8
Who Goes First.....	9
Contradicting Facts.....	9
Inappropriate Facts.....	9
Combat.....	9
Combat Overview.....	9
Declaring the Attack.....	10
Marines In Combat.....	10
The Marine Player's Roll.....	10
Weapon Types.....	10
Stunts.....	11
Marine Turn Summary.....	11
Creatures In Combat	12
The Gamemaster's Roll	12
Creature Turn Summary.....	12
Stunts.....	12
Fuel.....	12
Marine Players & Fuel.....	12
The Gamemaster & Fuel.....	13
The Mission Structure.....	13
Phase One: Shipping Out.....	13
Phase Two: Landing Zone.....	14
Phase Three: Hostile Contact.....	14
Phase Four: Game Over.....	14
Customizing Badass Space Marines.....	14
New Squads.....	14
New Mission Templates.....	15
Glossary.....	16
Inspiration.....	16
Fiction.....	16
Game Elements.....	16
Delta Squad, B Company, 1st Colonial Mobile Reaction Group.....	18
Alpha Squad, A Company, Virginia Sector Emergency Reaction Group.....	21
Gamma Squad, F Company, 4th Colonial Mobile Reaction Group.....	25
Mission Template A.....	28
Phase 1: Shipping Out.....	28
Phase 2: Landing Zone.....	28
Phase 3: Hostile Contact.....	28
Phase 4: Game Over.....	28
Mission Template B.....	29
Phase 1: Shipping Out.....	29
Phase 2: Landing Zone.....	29
Phase 3: Hostile Contact.....	29
Phase 4: Game Over.....	29
Mission Template C.....	30
Phase 1: Shipping Out.....	30
Phase 2: Landing Zone.....	30
Phase 3: Hostile Contact.....	30

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Phase 4: Game Over.....	30
Rules Summary – Gamemaster.....	31
Setting Scenes.....	31
Setting Facts.....	31
Combat.....	31
Fuel.....	31
Phases.....	31
Rules Summary – Marine Players.....	32
Playing Scenes.....	32
Setting Facts.....	32
Combat.....	32
Fuel.....	32
Phases.....	32

Introduction

This is a roleplaying game that is designed to be run with no preparation in a single game of two to four hours. It is inspired by the cinematic soldiers versus aliens genre – that means *Aliens* above all else.

Every game session has the same basic setup – a squad of marines is heading out to investigate an isolated colony (or where ever). Contact has been lost and Colonial Defense is suspicious. Inevitably, there's a hostile force waiting there and it's up to you guys to save the day or die trying. And do it with style.

To make each game different, the mystery is invented as you go along. All players get an equal say in what actually occurred.

What You Need To Play

Absolutely essential are:

- Three to eight people. So far the game has only been tested with four and six, but I figure that three to eight is probably about what it can handle.
- One normal six-sided die for each marine player and a big handful of them for the gamemaster (you might need as many as twenty or thirty).
- Paper and pencils.
- Copies of a marine squad roster and a mission blank. It's best to cut the marines out individually, so they can be grabbed easily.

The following are useful:

- Copies for everyone of the rules summary sheets.
- Counters to keep track of Fuel. About twenty per person is the most you should need.

Session Preparation

Get together a group of people interested in playing through a game that has some badass space marines pitted against some numberless, murderous opposition (usually, but not always, man-eating aliens).

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Ideally, every player should read through the game rules. However, you can get by fine with just one person who has a decent handle on the rules, as long as everyone else has a quick read through their rules summary, the mission template and the squad introduction.

One of you needs to be the gamemaster (or GM). This is the person who sets the scenes in play and controls when and how the opposition attacks. The gamemaster does *not* need to be the person who knows the rules best.

Everyone else is a marine player (or MP). Grab the list of marines and pick one. This is the character you play to start with. Don't get too attached to this grunt – there's a good chance they'll die before it's over, but for now your job is to play them as badass as possible.

You may want to set some ground rules – how much humour or seriousness is acceptable, what some details of the setting are, that sort of thing. If you all know each other well, you can probably just skip this and dive in. If you don't, or you are used to different kinds of games, getting everyone on the same page here is very useful.

Now you're ready to go kick ass.

Setting Ground Rules

Before you begin, you need to talk with the group about what kind of game you want to play. Here are some key things that you might want to set as rules:

Humour Level

- The game is serious, no silly Facts are allowed and the marines should be played totally straight.
- The game is fairly serious, but includes action movie stylistic conventions (such as one-liners in fights, slow motion moves, and maybe a somewhat absurd mystery). This is the default assumed in the text.
- The game is silly. Anything goes, as long as it is funny.

Setting

- The world is a fairly hard science fiction setting, with only a few pieces of technology that do not agree with current physics. Specifically, the game needs faster than light travel to be easy enough for interstellar colonization and the rapid deployment of space marines to deal with problems on those colonies. This is the default assumed by the text.
- The world is a pulpy, mad science setting in which pretty much any crazy technology goes.

Why This Matters

As every player contributes to the creation of the story as play goes on, it's really important to make sure that you are on the same wavelength. If you aren't, then some of you are going to get annoyed when the unspoken, inconsistent rules get broken.

You don't need to spend a lot of time on this, or write it down or anything. Just give everyone a chance to say what they would like to have the baseline be. Humour level and hardness of the

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

setting are the main things that are liable to trip you up, which is why the suggestions deal with these issues.

Setting Scenes And Playing Them Through

Game play is divided into scenes, just like in films. The aim is to focus on the good bits of the story and ignore all the boring stuff. The mission templates help you with this, as well as meaning the gamemaster doesn't have any individualized preparation to do. The gamemaster and marine players have different jobs to do here, so each get their own section.

Mission Templates

The mission templates at the end of the game are your stories. Each one includes several incomplete Facts associated with the four Phases that make up each game. There's more in about how this works below (see page 8). All you need to know now is that you can pick whichever one looks cool and it will do the job. They vary in the type of mission and what things will go wrong for the marines. They can all be reused, even with the same group, because the Facts get filled in separately each time.

If you want to create your own mission templates, there are guidelines for doing so on page .

Advice For The Gamemaster

You stop and start each scene. Like a film director, you want to have each start just as things get interesting for some characters, have something cool happen and then stop it before it gets boring. You're the one who makes the call about the start and end.

Setting Up Scenes

When setting new scenes, you should always take cues from the marine players. If they want to go to a particular place or set a particular fact, then set up a scene that will allow that to happen. If they don't seem to have anything in mind, set up a scene that predisposes unfinished facts to being resolved. You should also keep the tension high from phase two onwards. You should be building pressure steadily in these phases, hitting the marines with more and more swarms as you go.

Setting scenes gives you a lot of freedom to set up the story one way or another. Although everyone gets an equal shot at setting Facts, the way you set up scenes is bound to influence the sort of things that will be decided.

Pacing and Tension

Pacing should be at the top of your mind through the whole game. You need to be building tension all the time and hitting the marines with creatures often when you can.

From the moment they begin, hint that there is more, sinister stuff going on than they've been told. Have them find bodies, weird gadgets and gross slime. You need to try and make things scary and also encourage the players to come up with interesting Facts.

Once you are in Phase 2, you can begin hinting at the nature of the creatures and what happened to the place the marines are supposed to check out. Use vague descriptions to encourage this, or

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

things that are just odd. If they find bodies killed in unusual ways (e.g. skeletons removed, shrivelled husks, etc) it is more likely that the group will end up with some interesting Facts to explain why.

In Phase 2 you can only kill extras alone or in pairs. Aim for two kills of this sort in Phase 2, one midway through and one near the end. If the players never let anyone go off alone, make sure you gloat when you take your extra Fuel at the end of the Phase.

In Phase 3, you should be hitting the marines with creatures every second scene or so. Try to make things go fast – scenes should be quick and focus on establishing facts and/or fighting a swarm without too much messing around. Aim to have one or two scenes of respite, when (for instance) the marines retreat to a safe area. Allow them time to catch their breath and think about what's going on a bit before the swarms break through or they decide they need to leave the safe zone. Begin with smaller groups of attackers and work up. Try to reserve some Fuel for the final Phase rather than blowing it all during this one.

In Phase 4 you should follow the same pattern as in Phase 3 except with fewer respites and bigger fights. You'll need to keep a few points to make the final battle really intense, but don't skimp on the ones leading up to it. Allow a few respites, but only very short ones. Keep them focused on setting facts to end the game. Once they have set an endgame Fact (“We can escape...”, “We can defeat...”) try hard to stop them. If they manage that, then throw everything you have left into the final fight to prevent them achieving the other endgame goal.

Pacing With Damage

One of the most effective tools the gamemaster can use for pacing is the way you allocate damage in combat. Although it only applies to Phases 3 and 4, these are where the majority of the game will take place.

If the marines are doing well:

- Kill extras without mercy.
- Avoid damaging the player marines.
- Hit them with fewer, larger groups of creatures – twice the number of marine players or more.
- Use the ambush rules with groups of 3, 6 or 9 creatures. Every 3 creatures in an ambush is likely to cause a kill, and the marines can't do anything about it.

If the marines are doing really badly:

- Focus on injuring the player marines, but hold off on killing them unless the player asks for it. If all the extras are injured, you should kill player marines (they'll get lots more Fuel from taking an injured replacement).
- Avoid killing extras.
- Use more, but smaller, groups of creatures. As many as there are player marines is an easy fight.
- Use ambushes of small numbers of creatures, just to use up your Fuel more quickly.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

How Long To Spend In Each Phase

The mission templates ought to naturally pace the game. In some cases, you may go to fast or slow in different Phases. Here are some guidelines about how long to spend in each Phase:

Phase 1 – 20%

Phase 2 – 20%

Phase 3 – 35%

Phase 4 – 25%

If you feel that you are moving too fast, slow down on setting Facts and play scenes a bit longer. If you are going to slow, set Facts quickly and try to get through each scene without mucking around.

What About Climbing?

In *Badass Space Marines*, we only have rules about setting facts and resolving combat. For any other kind of task that needs to be done to get the mission done, the marines can just do it.

Late in the game the marines will be able to win if they do certain things that will be set in the Facts during play. Your only method of stopping them is to attack them with creatures and hopefully kill them all. As soon as they get to the right place (or whatever) they can do what is necessary.

Of course, you can narrate it being harder than that and find out how they deal with little problems on the way. But they *will* do it in the end. This narration just adds colour.

The overall rule for marines trying to do any non-combat tasks is “Let them do it, or have creatures attack them.” The answer should depend on your estimate of how much more tense it will be if you attack them – if it will scare them, then do it.

What About Healing?

There just isn't any healing in the game. The medic (or other marines) may want to patch people up, but this does not return any Hits that have been lost. This is just colour for the game and offers no actual benefit.

The Creatures

One of the decisions that you need to make as gamemaster is how to describe the creatures the marines are up against. You should start off with a basic idea, say that they are aliens, crazy robots or mutated humans. However, keep things vague at first. As the Facts about the aliens get set in play, they'll solidify the concept. Often, the way the Facts get set will end up changing the creatures into something quite different to your original idea. If this happens, just go with the flow, discarding the parts of the original concept that no longer apply.

You'll also need to make a decision about how many of the creatures there are. *Badass Space Marines* can support stories with one big tough creature or many small easy to kill ones, or something in between. Mechanically, there is no difference between the choices. This is because as far as the combat rules are concerned, the gamemaster gets a certain number of creature dice and the marines gradually remove them. How you narrate the fight is the only difference, as

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

illustrated in these examples:

Example 1: The gamemaster spends 6 Fuel to get 6 creature dice. They describe 6 creatures attacking the marines. Each time a marine does a stunt, a creature is killed. In the third round, the gamemaster spends 4 Fuel to get 4 new creatures to join the fight. Finally the marines remove all the gamemaster's creature dice and the last creature is killed.

Example 2: The gamemaster spends 6 Fuel to get 6 creature dice. They describe a large creature attacking the marines. Each time a marine does a stunt, the creature is wounded. In the third round, the gamemaster spends 4 Fuel to get 4 new creature dice and describes the creature regenerating some of the damage. Finally the marines remove all the gamemaster's creature dice and the creature is driven off, too damaged to fight any more.

Advice For The Marine Players

Scenes should always include at least one of these three things:

- Setting a Fact and/or playing out the marines discovering the fact.
- Banter and bullshitting between the marines.
- A fight with the creatures.

Shooting Each Other

If you look closely at the combat rules, you will notice that marines cannot shoot each other. This is intentional. These guys will have enough trouble with the creatures without the team cracking up. There may be conflicts in the squad, but they will never cause injury. You can (and should) play out arguments, even fights. However, these have no mechanical effect in the game.

In combat with the creatures, marines cannot opt out of fighting, either. They're too badass to just give up and be killed. You always go down fighting.

And you can't have a marine commit suicide. Well, directly, that is. You can always wander off alone...

The Game Phases and Setting Facts

The mission is divided into four very specific phases. Certain things might be prohibited or mandatory in certain phases. For instance, no alien attacks occur in Phase 1 because you haven't reached the danger zone yet.

Each Phase goes on until all the Facts are set. When this occurs, the next scene begins the new Phase. The only exception is Phase 3, which also ends if all the extras are killed and only player marines remain.

Setting Facts

If you have a nifty idea for a fact that hasn't been determined yet, you should announce to the group that you plan to set it. Tell everyone what you are thinking of and let them give you feedback. If someone suggests a good twist, take it on board.

Then complete the blank part of the sentence from the mission sheet and take 1 Fuel.

Each time a Fact gets set, this should have been played out in the scene already or else should be addressed in the next one. For example, if you decide “The creatures seem to be shark-octopus

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

hybrids” this should be due to someone just seeing one and describing them that way or in the next scene some information should come to light that allows the marines to discover it.

The group may only set one new fact per scene. This is to prevent the game moving too fast.

If you move to Phase 4 before all the facts in Phase 3 are set, you can still set those.

Who Goes First

If two (or more) people want to set facts at the same time, the person who said “I want to set a Fact” first gets to do it. If that means someone else misses out on filling in the same blank, too bad (they can always suggest what they wanted anyhow).

Contradicting Facts

In general, all players should aim to build on what has been narrated in play and set in the Facts rather than to try and override what has happened setting a new Fact. But a player may want to set a Fact in a way that appears to contradict what has gone before. There are a couple of ways to resolve this.

The first is to reword the new Fact to fit in with what has gone before.

The second is to include an explanation of why the earlier Fact appeared to be true and now is shown to not be.

Inappropriate Facts

In general, I expect the game to be played with a fairly straight science fiction background. Some players will want to insert humor into the game via the ability to set facts. Sometimes this works against the enjoyment of the game for the other players.

In order to prevent one player diverting the flow of the game, the rule is the “everyone else thinks that's lame” rule. That is, if you suggest something and everyone else thinks it is lame, then you must take it back.

It's a good idea to discuss up front how much humor everyone wants and expects in the game, just so nobody accidentally crosses this line.

Combat

In Phases 3 and 4, the creatures will attack the marines frequently. This section explains how to resolve these fights.

Combat Overview

The normal course of a combat is this:

1. The gamemaster will narrate the threat or beginning of the attack into a scene. The marine players then have a chance to form up and receive the attack, and may wish to play through doing so.
2. The gamemaster announces how much Fuel they are spending, and thus how many creature dice they begin the attack with. If they choose to have the creatures ambush the

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

marines, this is also declared now.

3. Then combat begins, with the marines attacking first (unless the gamemaster is using an ambush).
4. The sides take turns attacking each other until all the creature dice are gone or the marines are dead.

Declaring the Attack

The gamemaster narrates the beginning of the attack, either as a new scene or as an interruption to the current one. This narration should include all the important tactical details, such as which marines are present and how the creatures are approaching them.

The gamemaster then chooses how much Fuel to spend at their own discretion. Each point of Fuel buys a creature die for the attack. They can then announce how many creatures are attacking, so that the marine players know how to think of their stunts (fighting a swarm of small creatures is different to one big one).

The gamemaster has the option of using a surprise attack, by paying double Fuel for the creature dice. In this case, the creatures take the first turn in combat instead of the marines.

Marines In Combat

Marines in combat roll a die and add various bonuses to get a total. For every six points in the total, they may describe a Stunt that removes one of the gamemaster's creature dice. Depending on what you are fighting, this could be killing a small creature or wounding a large one.

The Marine Player's Roll

Here is what you total for your combat roll:

- The roll of the die
- PLUS or MINUS your marine's weapon rating
- PLUS 1 per extra marine helping you out
- PLUS 1 if you use your marine's Specialty
- PLUS 1 if you use a Fact that has been established
- PLUS 1 per Fuel you spend

Any bonuses from weapons, extra marines, Specialty or Facts must be declared before the roll. Fuel may be spent before or after the roll.

Weapon Types

Marines have two types of weapons.

Some have a permanent bonus, these are listed like “Assault Rifle (0).” Marines may use one permanent bonus weapon each turn. The value in brackets is the bonus associated with the weapon.

The other type are limited shot weapons, which are listed like “4 Grenades (+1)” or “3-shot Rocket

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Launcher (+2).” Whenever this weapon is used for a combat bonus, one of the shots must be marked off.

Example 1: Marine Allsop has a Machinegun (+1) and a Huge Machete (+1). Allsop must choose just one of the weapons for a +1 bonus each turn.

Example 2: Marine Brackett has a Plasma Gun (+1) and 4 Grenades (+1). Brackett may use all four grenades in one turn for a total of +5.

Marine Combat Table

Score	Stunts Allowed
1-5	0
6-11	1
12-17	2
18-23	3
24-29	4
30-35	5
And so on...	And so on...

Stunts

Stunts *must* be original. If someone comes up with a Stunt that has been used before, tell them and let them think of a new one or a variation. This rule is here to create the action movie combat style in which every significant combat move is gimmicky in some way. If someone is stumped, the other players should help them out in thinking of neat stuff to do.

Stunts should also factor in everything that you used in the roll. If you used your Specialty, then you *must* include this in one of your Stunts. If extras helped you, then they might do some of the kills or maybe just help you with yours. If you used a Fact, then you *must* include this in a Stunt.

Marines are free to narrate anything they want into their Stunts, if it doesn't give them a mechanical advantage. This rule is particularly here to allow the use of limited shot weapons in stunts even if you didn't use the bonus, in which case you also do not have to mark off one of the shots as used either. However, it applies to anything. If you want there to be a pipe full of liquid nitrogen to shoot a hole in (or whatever else your stunt needs), you can put it there.

Marine Turn Summary

1. Declare any bonuses you plan to use from Fuel, extras, weapons, Facts and your marine's Specialty.
2. Roll the die.
3. Total up the die plus bonuses.
4. Spend extra Fuel if you want to.
5. Work out how many stunts you are allowed – 1 per 6 points in your total.
6. Narrate your stunts, making sure that (a) they are original and (b) you include all Facts and Specialties that you used to get the total. Including the weapon and extras in the stunts is optional but recommended.
7. The gamemaster removes a creature die from their total for every stunt.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Creatures In Combat

The gamemaster rolls all of the creature dice to get a total.

The Gamemaster's Roll

The roll is:

- The roll of all the creature dice totalled up
- PLUS 1 if you use a Fact that has been established

The total rolled translates one-for-one into damage against marines. This is applied totally at the gamemaster's discretion. You should always be thinking about pacing and tension when you make this call. You can also decide things based on action movie logic about who ought to die (like maybe one of the marines is really nice and has nearly finished their tour - doomed).

Marines die when they reach 0 Hits. Marines almost always start with 10 Hits.

Just like marines and their stunts, every attack on a marine must be described with an original stunt.

Creature Turn Summary

1. Roll all your creature dice and total them up.
2. Add 1 if you are going to use a Fact.
3. Allocate the damage to marines at your discretion, narrating an original stunt for each injury or kill. You must include the Fact you used in the stunts, if you took the bonus.
4. Remind the marine players to take any Fuel from injuries to their marines and deaths of comrades.

Stunts

It can get hard to keep thinking up stunts, especially later in the game when the marines may be killing several creatures each turn.

Everyone should get involved if the ideas stop flowing for anyone. If the active player (either gamemaster or a marine player) ever looks stumped, everyone should help them out with suggestions.

Fuel

Fuel is the currency used by the marines to be more badass and by the gamemaster to make things tougher for the marines.

All players gain 1 Fuel every time they set a fact.

Marine Players & Fuel

Marines also gain Fuel in these situations:

- Gain 1 Fuel per point of damage your marine suffers.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

- Gain 1 Fuel when another marine (or the survivor) is killed.
- When you take over an injured marine, add the number of damage they have taken to your Fuel total.

Marines may spend Fuel for:

- A one-for-one bonus in combat.
- 3 points to upgrade a weapon. The weapon rating is increased by 1. Limited shot weapons do not get any more shots.

Also, if your marine dies and there are no extras left, you must distribute your Fuel to the surviving marine players. You may allocate it anyway you like, as long as it all goes to a player who still has a marine.

The Gamemaster & Fuel

The gamemaster gains extra Fuel when:

- Gain 5 Fuel at the start of Phase 2.
- Gain 5 Fuel if the marine players never sent any extras off alone or in pairs during Phase 2.
- In Phase 3, gain 5 Fuel every time a fact is set.
- In Phase 4, gain 20 Fuel at the beginning of the phase, -3 for each marine player less than 4 or +3 per marine player over 4.
- When the marines achieve the first goal (as defined in a Phase 4 Fact), gain 10 Fuel.

The gamemaster can use Fuel to:

- In Phase 2, kill off extra marines who are alone or in pairs for 1 Fuel each.
- In Phase 3 and 4, to buy creatures to attack the marines. Each Fuel gets you one creature. Spend double to have them ambush the marines (i.e. Take the first turn in the combat).
- The gamemaster may add extra creatures at the end of their turn in combat, for the normal price. If the GM spends double, the creatures can immediately attack the marines instead of waiting until the next turn.

The Mission Structure

Phase One: Shipping Out

Phase 1 always begins with a briefing scene. It may be the squad officers and NCOs receiving their briefing from Colonial Defense or the squad senior officer telling it to the rest of them. One of the first two Facts should be set in the briefing.

The rest of the Phase mainly involves the marines talking about what's coming up. The marine players should be trying to build up the personality of the marines they are playing as much as set up the Facts. Scenes can focus on things like breakfast chat, gear inspections, bitch sessions and drop preparation.

Phase 1 ends when all the facts have been set.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Phase Two: Landing Zone

Phase 2 begins as the squad reaches the mission destination. It involves the marines securing their landing site and investigating the area. They will begin to discover what occurred.

The gamemaster gains 10 Fuel at the beginning of Phase 2.

In this Phase, the gamemaster may not attack the marines directly. However, if non-player marines wander off alone or in pairs, the gamemaster may have them killed “off-screen.” This costs 1 Fuel per extra killed. If the marine players never send extras off alone or in pairs for the whole Phase, then the gamemaster gains 5 extra Fuel at the beginning of Phase 3.

The Phase ends when all of the facts have been established.

Phase Three: Hostile Contact

In Phase 3, the swarms begin attacking the marines openly and in great numbers. This is the main action act of the game.

The gamemaster gains 5 Fuel every time a Fact is set. This is in addition to the normal 1 point if they set it themselves.

The phase ends when **either** all of the facts have been set **or** all the extras are dead and only the player marines remain, whichever happens first.

If Phase 3 ends with some Facts unset, these may still be set during Phase 4 if desired.

Phase Four: Game Over

The few survivors are now the only chance of saving things. They must try to defeat the threat or escape to get more help.

The gamemaster gains 20 Fuel at the beginning of the Phase, adjusted for the number of players. If there are less than 4 marine players, reduce the total by 3 per player less than 4. If there are more than 4 players, add 3 Fuel per player over 4.

This phase – and the game – ends when the marines are eliminated, the threat is neutralized or the marines escape. In order to successfully neutralize the swarms or escape, the marines must do whatever the fact says. The gamemaster will usually throw large numbers of swarms against them to prevent this happening.

Customizing *Badass Space Marines*

After you have played a few times, you may want something new to keep play more interesting. I've tried to design the templates so that they'll allow a bunch of different games without getting stale, but below is the way to set up new ones on your own, should you wish to.

I'm keen to see your new mission templates and squads. In fact, I may ask you for permission to put them on my website or into a new version of the game.

New Squads

Squads are pretty simple. You need a concept for the squad, something cool to give people some ideas to work with in play.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Maybe you want to change around the ranks and chain of command a little. The squads provided all share a rank structure because I wanted to create the idea of a wider interstellar culture, but there's nothing requiring them to all be the same. You should, however, have 16 marines in total plus 1 survivor. If there are less marines, the creatures will have an advantage against them and if there are more the marines will have a cakewalk.

Then you need names for them all.

Then you get to the most important bit. The specialties. This is the key thing about the marines – basically their only differentiation – so you need to work out some really cool ones. They should give a good handle on playing the character and be easy to use in combat while encouraging the player to come up with cool ideas.

Weapons can be tweaked to suit the individual marines. Weapon names are only relevant as a way to colour the different marines. A penalty of -2 is reserved for unarmed characters.

You should match the number of bonuses to this pattern:

- One -1 weapon.
- One -2 for no weapon, typically the survivor.
- +4 points of permanent weapon bonus.
- +40 points of limited weapons bonus, such as 40 +1 grenades or one 10-shot +4 rocket launcher.
- Convert between permanent and limited shot bonuses using 6 limited points for 1 permanent point if you want.

Normally, all marines have 10 Hits. You may want to mix this up a little and have a few guys tougher or weaker than normal. You can zero-sum the Hits values to get this effect, so that for every Hit you add to one marine, you remove one from another. You can also exchange some of the weapons points for this – one permanent weapon bonus point is worth 5 Hits.

New Mission Templates

Mission templates have a set structure to ensure that the game is paced correctly.

Phase 1 includes five Facts. These need to encompass where the mission is and what the marines know about it. There should also be at least two Facts about the marines, to encourage banter amongst the squad.

Phase 2 includes five Facts. One of these should be a big constraint for the marines (being trapped, a time limit, not being able to get somewhere important, etc). There should be some clues about what is going on. There should be more Facts about some of the marines. There should be some Facts that begin to pin down what the creatures are and what they are doing.

Phase 3 includes four Facts. They should answer all the questions raised about what is happening and finish off the definition of the creatures. Usually the survivor is discovered in Phase 3 (although this can occur earlier if desired).

Phase 4 has just two Facts. These will be, essentially, how to defeat the creatures and how to deal with the big constraint from Phase 2.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Glossary

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Marine Player or MP	Someone playing the game on the marine side.
Gamemaster or GM	The player who is responsible for setting scenes and controlling the creatures.
Fuel	This is the currency used to balance the game. The gamemaster uses their Fuel to attack the marines and gains it progressively through the game. The marine players use it to power up their combat rolls and gain it when comrades die or their marine takes damage.
Fact	A sentence on the mission template that gets completed during gameplay.
Mission Template	A set of Facts divided into the four game phases that controls the overall shape of the game.
Phase	The game is divided into four Phases. Each of these is associated with certain Facts in the mission template. The gamemaster's ability to spend Fuel is dependent on which Phase you are in.
Weapon Bonus	The bonus or penalty to a marine's combat roll that using a weapon will impose.
Permanent Weapon Bonus	A weapon that has unlimited uses. Denoted like “Assault Rifle (0).”
Limited Weapon Bonus or Limited Shot Weapon	A weapon that has a bonus that can be used a limited number of times. Denoted like “2 Grenades (+1)” or “3-shot Rocket Launcher (+2).”
Hits	How many points of damage a marine can take before they die. If a marine's hits are reduced to zero, they buy the farm.

Inspiration

This game is my homage to *Aliens*, a story that would be a great roleplaying experience. However, although I have played a bunch of games inspired by it, they missed certain parts of what makes the film great. *Badass Space Marines* tries to manage some of those things – specifically, the way that action movies are paced and the way that fight scenes are shown.

Here's a bunch of similar stuff that has fed into the ideas in this game to a greater or lesser extent.

Fiction

The *Alien* films (and the comics too).

The *Predator* films.

Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlein.

Armor by John Steakley.

Game Elements

“Fuel” is directly ripped off from the playtest edition of *Scarlet Wake* by Ben O'Neal. Having the characters power up from injury is an idea that works perfectly for cinematic action roleplaying games.

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

The game text's structure, with explicit structure and step by step instructions, was something I saw first in *Dogs In The Vineyard*.

Delta Squad, B Company, 1st Colonial Mobile Reaction Group

This squad are fairly experienced but have a relatively new commanding officer who hasn't seen much action. They're intentionally drawn from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, as they are often likely to be dealing with colonists from pretty much any old Earth culture you can think of.

Lieutenant Cho (Commander)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Tactics

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Sergeant Lewis

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Close Combat

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Hall

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Flanking

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Bonnet

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Putting The Boot In

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Jackson

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Throwing

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 4 Grenades (+1)

Private Kulkarni

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Using cover

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Smimov (Demolitions)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Right Time, Right Place

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1), 4 demolition charges (+2)

Private Bhat

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Flames

Weapons: Shotgun (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Ensign Pires (Pilot)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Piloting

Weapons: Handgun (-1)

Corporal Hatch

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Ferocious Assault

Weapons: Shotgun (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Technical Specialist Kwon (Computers)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Improvised Traps

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Technical Specialist Evans (Medic)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: No Fear

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Senior Private Wu (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Rearguard

Weapons: Machinegun (+1), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Thompson (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Pithy One-liner

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 3-shot rocket launcher (+2)

Private Sun

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Rearguard

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 6-shot grenade launcher (+1)

Private Jiménez (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Screaming Abuse At The Enemy

Weapons: Machinegun (+1)

_____ (Survivor)

Does not start in squad. Joins when the 'survivor discovered' fact is set.

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Knows The Area.

Weapons: None (-2)

Alpha Squad, A Company, Virginia Sector Emergency Reaction Group

This squad is an elite unit from a sector of space that was originally settled by Americans and other English-speaking nations. They're well equipped and well-trained but they haven't seen much action except for high-intensity police work (essentially acting as a nastier SWAT team).

Two of the team are non-human. Scarface and Vince are a leopard and Alsatian who have been uplifted to human-equivalent intelligence and combat trained with the rest of the team. They can also talk.

Lieutenant Young (Commander)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Morale-boosting Platitude

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Sergeant Wright

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Surrounded by Foes

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private White

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Slow-mo

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Rodriguez

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Stressed

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Scott

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Bare-knuckle Punch

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Private Martinez

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Knives

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Garcia (Demolitions)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Here's One I Prepared Earlier

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1), 4 demolition charges (+2)

Private Wilson

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Pessimistic Whining

Weapons: Shotgun (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Ensign Baker (Pilot)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Found Items

Weapons: Handgun (-1)

Corporal Harris

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Cool

Weapons: Shotgun (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Technical Specialist Nelson (Computers)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Wisecracks

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Technical Specialist Walker (Medic)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Combat Drugs

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Jones (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Explosions

Weapons: Machinegun (+1), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Anderson (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Bugfuck Crazy

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 3-shot rocket launcher (+2)

UF-104 Scarface

Scarface is an Uplifted Feline unit: a really smart talking leopard in power armour.

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Death From Above

Weapons: High tech claws (+1), Assault rifle (0)

UC-783 Vince (Support)

Vince is an Uplifted Canine unit: a really smart talking Alsatian in power armour.

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Total Carnage

Weapons: High tech teeth (+1), Machinegun (+1)

_____ (Survivor)

Does not start in squad. Joins when the 'survivor discovered' fact is set.

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Holding On Tight

Weapons: None (-2)

Gamma Squad, F Company, 4th Colonial Mobile Reaction Group

The 4th is entirely comprised of genetically engineered clones. They have been chosen for their intuitive tactical excellence and group loyalty. However, even engineered clones turn out a little different each time. This squad has been used as a dumping ground for soldiers considered sub-optimal, but not bad enough to throw them out of the service. Yet.

Note that in this squad all marines are known by their *first* names. They don't have family names, just breeding cohort numbers. In fact, their first names aren't too imaginative either.

Lieutenant Kurt (Commander)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Split-second Decision

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Sergeant Leo

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Ripped Clothing

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Baker

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Two Guns

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Pistols (-1), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Isaac

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Complaining

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Senior Private Otto

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Kung Fu

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 4 Grenades (+1)

Private Peter

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Blunt Objects

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Jack (Demolitions)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Twitchy Trigger Finger

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 2 grenades (+1), 4 demolition charges (+2)

Private Easy

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Charging Right In

Weapons: Shotgun (0), 2 grenades (+1)

Ensign Mark (Pilot)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Spooky Empathic Clone Stuff

Weapons: Handgun (-1)

Corporal Charlie

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Overkill

Weapons: Shotgun (0), Assault Rifle (0), 2 Grenades (+1)

Technical Specialist Dog (Computers)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Superhuman Reflexes

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Technical Specialist Able (Medic)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Harsh Language

Weapons: Assault rifle (0)

Senior Private Henry (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Setting Up The Perfect Shot

Weapons: Machinegun (+1), 2 grenades (+1)

Private Ned (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Intense Pain

Weapons: Assault rifle (0), 3-shot rocket launcher (+2)

Private Fox (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Brutality

Weapons: Flamethrower (+1), 2 Grenades (+1)

Private George (Support)

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Blazing Away On Full-auto

Weapons: Machinegun (+1), 2 Grenades (+1)

_____ (Survivor)

Does not start in squad. Joins when the 'survivor discovered' fact is set.

Hits: 10 (_____)

Specialty: Darkness.

Weapons: None (-2)

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Mission Template A

Phase 1: Shipping Out

You are going to _____, which is a _____
ideas: spaceship, colony, space station

You are being sent because _____
ideas: distress beacon, no regular contact, invaders reported

The place is known for _____
ideas: toxic gas clouds, cave structures, stellar storms, rich geology

Marine _____ has issues with marine _____ because _____
ideas: thinks he's dumb, knows she's up to something

Marine _____ has a problem, _____
ideas: screwed up last mission, on drugs, freaks out when things go badly

Phase 2: Landing Zone

You are trapped here because _____
ideas: spaceship is damaged, storms, hyperspace fluctuations, hangar is occupied

The creatures seem to be like some kind of _____
ideas: reptiles, insects, mutated humans, robots, blobs

This place gives marine _____ a bad feeling because _____
ideas: all the dead people, it's quiet... too quiet, the heat, the cold

We can tell that the creatures have _____
ideas: the capacity to reason, a hunger for human flesh, no need to breathe, a bad smell

Marine _____ does something stupid - _____
ideas: opens a door, makes a loud noise, pisses off the officers

Phase 3: Hostile Contact

The marines need to check out _____
ideas: the control center, the radio tower, the fusion reactor, base records

The creatures are unexpectedly good at _____
ideas: tearing heads off, punching through body armour, surviving explosions

A survivor is discovered, who reveals _____
ideas: the creatures came from the wrecked spaceship, everything was okay until Jones set up the experiment

What happened was _____
ideas: scientists played God with stuff they didn't understand, this is all a test run for a full invasion

Phase 4: Game Over

We can escape if _____
ideas: we repair the dropship with a 45-D flux valve, we disrupt the storm by blowing up the reactor

We can defeat the enemy if _____
ideas: nuke the site from orbit, kill the queen, blow the crap out of the place they're holed up

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Mission Template B

Phase 1: Shipping Out

You are going to _____, which is a _____
ideas: spaceship, colony, space station, mining base

You are being sent because _____
ideas: something happened to station X75, deal with reports of unrest

Something odd about the mission brief is _____
ideas: no clue why marines are needed, missing tactical details, the briefing officer was evasive

Marine _____ is new to the unit and the others think they _____
ideas: are a dumbass, don't know shit, have a big secret in their past

Marine _____ has stuff going on back home, namely _____
ideas: their mother is dying, relationship troubles

Phase 2: Landing Zone

You have to be done in 3 hours or else _____
ideas: the reactor will blow up, the creatures will turn into bigger nastier creatures, your air will run out

Logs show something got here by _____
ideas: eating through a wall, being brought in with the supplies, escaping from a holding tank

The marines find out the creatures can _____
ideas: devour human brains via a tube, turn invisible, fit through very narrow gaps

Your briefing omitted to mention that _____
ideas: this is the real thing not a training scenario, this place is full of explosives, they knew about the creatures

This place reminds marine _____ of _____
ideas: that time when their squad all got killed, a nightmare, home

Phase 3: Hostile Contact

The creatures ignored a survivor, who immediately gets a huge crush on marine _____

The creatures have the ability to _____
ideas: use weapons, dodge bullets, split into multiple mini-creatures

You need to go outside in order to _____
ideas: fix a radio transmitter, defuse a bomb, get away from the creatures

What happened was _____
ideas: scientists played God with stuff they didn't understand, this is all a test run for a full invasion

Phase 4: Game Over

We can get more time if _____
ideas: we destroy the other bomb, repair the gamma transducer, freeze the creatures

We can defeat the enemy if _____
ideas: nuke the site from orbit, kill the queen, blow the crap out of the place they're holed up

Badass Space Marines – Playtest Draft

Mission Template C

Phase 1: Shipping Out

You are going to _____, an isolated _____
ideas: spaceship, research base, colony, space station

You are being sent because _____
ideas: an accident was reported, communications suggested something was wrong

Marine _____ has been here and remembers _____
ideas: the good bars, a particular woman, the fascinating native lifeforms

Marine _____ screwed up some gear (_____) by _____
ideas: armored car/neglecting maintenance, sensor array/spilling beer on it

Marine _____ and marine _____ hate each other because _____
ideas: they had a bad breakup, one shot the other, one bullied the other in training

Phase 2: Landing Zone

The bodies are all _____
ideas: missing, skeletonized, very carefully dissected and missing the pineal gland

The marines get exposed to [A] _____ which causes _____
ideas: native spores/hallucinations, a gas cloud/slow rot, biological research specimens/eventual death

Marine _____ notices the alarming fact that _____
ideas: bodies are moving when you aren't looking, there is a pattern to the pipe noises

The creatures look like _____
ideas: giant intestinal parasites, rapidly moving balls of blades, slime

You have to go to _____ but the way is blocked by _____
ideas: command centre/wreckage, reactor core/enemy creatures, medlab/a huge alien growth

Phase 3: Hostile Contact

The marines need to check out _____
ideas: the control center, the radio tower, the fusion reactor, base records

The people were exposed to [A] _____ so long that _____
Repeat [A] from the Phase 2 fact above. ideas: they died, they went psycho, they mutated into hostile crystalline monsters

There is a survivor hiding in _____
ideas: a storm shelter, the air vents, a cave system

What happened was _____
ideas: a cosmic radiation storm caused bizarre mutations, local lifeforms adapted to human metabolism

Phase 4: Game Over

The marines can deal with exposure to [A] _____ by _____
Repeat [A] from the Phase 2 fact above. ideas: the medic creating a cure, exposure to radiation with the opposite polarity

We can neutralize the threat by _____
ideas: nuke the site from orbit, kill the queen, blow the crap out of the place they're holed up

Rules Summary – Gamemaster

Setting Scenes

Set the scenes to keep the tension ramping up. Be responsive to requests from the MPs.

Setting Facts

Set Facts or refrain from it to maintain game pacing. If things are slow, set a Fact, otherwise wait for the marine players to do it.

Be open to suggestions about Facts you set. Suggest cool twists to the others.

Combat

- In Phase 2, you may kill off extra characters that are alone or in pairs. Killing each extra costs 1 Fuel.
- In Phases 3 and 4 you spend Fuel to gain creature dice to attack the marines on a one-for-one basis. You also narrate the beginning of the attack and the number of creatures involved.
- During a combat, you may add more creature dice at the end of your turn by spending more Fuel on a one-for-one basis.
- Usually the marines get the first turn in combat. You may pay double Fuel for the creatures to go first.
- Roll your creature dice. Add them together to get your damage total.
 - You can gain one bonus to a roll by using a Fact that has been set.
- This total is used to hurt the marines. Each point reduces a marine's hits by 1. Marines die at 0 hits. Describe the attack on the marine (you may not repeat attack descriptions).
- Pace the game with damage decisions.
 - If the creatures are doing too well,

focus on the player marines. Aim to injure more than kill.

- If the marines are doing too well, focus on the extras. Kill them as quickly as possible.
- Marines who upgrade their weapons are begging to be targeted.

Fuel

- Gain 1 Fuel when you set a fact.
- Gain 10 Fuel at the start of Phase 2.
- Gain 5 Fuel if the MPs never sent any extras off alone or in pairs in Phase 2.
- In Phase 3, gain 5 Fuel every time a Fact is set.
- In Phase 4, gain 20 Fuel adjusted by number of MPs (-3 each less than 4, +3 each more than 4).
- If the marines achieve one of the goals in a Phase 4 Fact, gain 10 Fuel.

Phases

You move on to a new Phase whenever at the end of the scene in which the last fact is set. Phase 4 can also be triggered by all the extra marines being killed.

- Phase 1 is before arrival at the mission site. You should aim to set facts quickly and establish marine personalities.
- Phase 2 involves investigating what happened at the site. You may kill off extras who are alone or in pairs.
- Phase 3 involves the enemy attacking the marines in force.
- Phase 4 is the endgame. Finish when the marines achieve both Phase 4 Fact goals or are all killed.

Rules Summary – Marine Players

Playing Scenes

Play along with what the GM sets up. Suggest scenes that you would like to see.

Each scene should include banter between the marines, a fight with the creatures or a Fact that has just been set.

Setting Facts

Set facts whenever you think of cool stuff. It moves the game along and gives you Fuel.

Be open to suggestions about Facts you set. Suggest cool twists to the others.

Combat

- Normally marines have the first turn each combat. The GM can spend extra Fuel to have them ambush you.
- Each marine player rolls to see how many Stunts they get. Get a total from:
 - A die roll
 - PLUS or MINUS weapon rating
 - PLUS 1 per extra marine helping
 - PLUS 1 if you use your specialty
 - PLUS 1 if you use a fact in the attack.
 - PLUS 1 per Fuel you spend (this may be spent after the roll).
- For every 6 points in your total, you can describe a Stunt, which kills a creature.
 - Stunts may not be repeated.
 - You must put your specialty into a Stunts if you took that bonus.
 - If extra marines helped you, they can kill creatures for some of your Stunts.
- Marines die when they have 0 hits. Pick another from the extras. If there are none left, allocate your remaining Fuel

(including Fuel from the deathblow) to the other players at your discretion.

Fuel

- Get 1 Fuel if you set a fact.
- Get 1 Fuel per point of damage your marine suffers.
- Get 1 Fuel if any marine is killed.
- When you take a new marine, add the damage they have suffered to your Fuel.
- You can spend 3 Fuel to get a weapon 1 point better than a current weapon your marine has.

Note that getting your current marine killed is a good way to power up.

The GM gets Fuel mainly when you move to new Phases, and for setting Facts.

Phases

You move on to a new Phase whenever at the end of the scene in which the last fact is set. Phase 4 can also be triggered by all the extra marines being killed.

- The journey to the mission is Phase 1. You should aim to set facts and establish marine personalities.
- Phase 2 is the investigation of what happened.
 - The GM is allowed to kill off extras who are alone or in pairs. If you never send anyone off alone, the GM gains extra Fuel in Phase 3.
- Phase 3 has the enemy attacking in force.
 - From this point on, the GM can send groups of creatures to attack you.
- Phase 4 is the endgame. Finish when the marines achieve both Phase 4 Fact goals or are all killed.