

## **The Basics**

Freelancer has to be one of the most challenging games I've ever played, most of the time (especially early on) you are going to find yourself in situations where you're seriously outclassed, out gunned, and outnumbered. In order to survive these encounters, you're going to have to rely on strategy, cleverness, and skill. By carefully developing your skills at handling tight situations, you'll start to do better than just survive, you'll thrive.

This guide was designed to help you with the "standard" game, not mods, and not cheats. I have nothing against either, but I usually like to beat a game on my own first, and then go back and see what else I can do.

These are just some of the strategies I've come to find useful in playing the game to its fullest. I am certain others have come up with other strategies that work well for them. Take what works for you and disregard the rest. Eventually you'll develop your own "style" that is unique to you.

## **Terminology**

Just so everyone keeps it straight, I've used some terms to clear up any misconceptions:

**SP** (Single-Player) Playing Freelancer all by yourself.

**SPM** (Single Player Missions): The missions you undertake as a part of the official storyline. The "Nomad War."

**OG** (Open Game): Once the Single Player Missions are over, you can go just about anywhere and do just about anything (OG for short).

**Freelance Mission:** The missions you get by going to the local bar and looking at the mission board (depending on the storyline and your faction, freelance missions are available in both the SPM and OG).

## **Making Credits**

Conserve your credits. Unless you're going to use enemy weapons you take in, sell them damaged. You didn't pay anything for them so anything you make on them is pure profit. The objective is to try and bring in more credits than you spend. Fixing enemy weapons is a drain on your finances, and selling them after they've been fixed doesn't make up for the difference. While it's not impossible, it is very difficult to make enough credits to justify shipping cargo in a fighter while still in the SPM (especially early on when your jump access is severely restricted). Once in the OG, there are several cargo runs that pay off handsomely, especially if you use a freighter.

## **Navigation**

### **Jump holes**

Finding jump holes can be a pain. If you get really frustrated, there are plenty of guides out there that will give you the coordinates. Finding jump holes is a matter of carefully studying your system map patrol routes.

For the most part, the areas around jump holes are frequented by the “fringe” organizations, such as: Rogues, Hackers, Outcasts, Mollies, Corsairs, Hessians, Unioners, and the like. While in the SPM, you will normally use the “enemy” or red patrol routes to find jump hole locations. The farther out into the border worlds you get, the more important jump holes really become.

Jump holes are often convenient, but you’re likely to run into enemies at both ends. You’ll have to quickly decide whether or not you should fight or make a run for it.

### **Freelance Missions**

This will be your “bread and butter” for the majority of the SPM. Until you have full jump access to all systems, this will be the best way for you to make credits. They come in five basic “flavors”

1. **Kill Them All-** Go to the waypoint and blow up the enemy ships
2. **Kill Someone Specific-** Go to the waypoint and blow up a specific ship
3. **Bring ‘em Back Alive-** Go to the waypoint, blow up the ships, and tractor a life pod to bring back to wherever you started the mission from
4. **Fetch or Destroy-** Go to the waypoint, blow up the ships, and either bring back the cargo, or destroy it (depends on the mission).
5. **Blow up the Base-** Go to the waypoint, blow up a base, (or weapons platforms), and anything else you can.

Generally speaking, the first two are the most common. The less frequent missions are worth a little more money because there are additional challenges involved. The missions that require you to bring something (or someone) back are annoying, but that’s just my opinion. I like to be able to do a mission and go onto another location.

## **Mining**

Certain systems include minable sectors. If you're low on credits and feel like taking the time, you can make a modest profit. Keep in mind that most of these sectors will also have enemy patrols in them, and you'll be "interrupted" by them frequently. This aspect of the game becomes far more interesting (and profitable) after you've completed the SPM. By that time, you have a well-equipped ship and the firepower to repel just about anything that comes your way.

One of the filter options on your map will indicate whether or not there is anything worth mining in that system. If you're mining scrap metal, (or other goods) you'll be shooting at little metal canisters, if you're mining anything else, they will be small chunks. If you hit these objects with all your weapons, you'll likely blow up both the object and whatever you're trying to mine, so you have to disable most of your weapons. Turn off your most powerful weapons by clicking on them in the lower right hand box of your screen. I find this easier than trying to keep my finger on one of the single-fire number buttons.

Mining can be especially fun if you've got a turret weapon. Shut down (or slow) your engines, unlock your maneuvering options, and toggle the turret mode, and you'll be able to shoot all around you. Blow up objects and hit the tractor beam button to pull in the goods.

It's a good idea to leave your sensor filter on the "!" so you see anything coming your way. You'll also hear "radio chatter" if an enemy ship is about to attack you. You'll have to hurry up and get ready for battle, or hit the cruise engines to escape.

Mostly, mining is an exercise in frustration. You'll do a lot of work for a very small payoff. Better to stick to the freelance missions. Once you've made it to the OG, there are a few places where mining pays off, but there are still some pretty big risks involved.

## **Cargo Runs**

This is another example of an activity that is best left to once you've completed the SPM. For most of the storyline missions, you really need to be in a fighter, and you don't get full access to all the trade routes until late in the story. Running cargo with a fighter is generally not going to make you a whole lot of credits. The cargo hold in most fighters is just too small. As a "rule of thumb," to really reap the profits, you're going to have to buy a freighter.

There is one point in the SPM where having some extra cargo is helpful: when Trent and Juni are involved in the shooting on the landing pad in Manhattan that makes them wanted, grab up all the H-Fuel your ship can carry. You'll be able to

unload it at Mactan base in Magellan for a hefty profit (by that time, you'll probably need most of it to patch up your ship and reload your ordinance).

True, freighters are slow and lumbering, but when fully armed, they can unleash devastating firepower upon even the heaviest of fighters. Of course the whole point of owning a freighter is to be able to run larger amounts of freight between planets and make lots of credits. The highest profits are found in running Cardimine and artifacts, but then you have to avoid all the established jump gates and trade lanes. While this can be a fun and rewarding risk to take, but it can also get you into heaps of trouble with the local authorities if you're caught. Having every ship, base and weapons platform suddenly start firing on you simultaneously, as well as having practically nowhere to run, can really ruin your day (of course, this happens as a part of the SP storyline anyway).

There are also quite a few "legit" items you can trade. Making diamond runs to New Tokyo is a good one. Taking Pharmaceuticals to certain fringe worlds is another. Luxury consumer items are hot out on the fringes too. For most of the SPM, cargo runs should be considered secondary. You'll make most of your money from freelance missions.

### **Treasure Hunting**

The Sirius Galaxy is an awfully big place, and sometimes ships go out and don't come back. Spread throughout the different systems you will find wrecked ships that have either cargo or some very valuable weapons on them (sometimes both). Give these wrecks a quick burst from your weapons and whatever is inside them should "pop" out, so you can tractor them in. Most of the weapons are class 9 or 10, so you won't really be able to use them until after you've finished the SPM, (and maxed out your level) but they are worth some serious cash.

### **Ships and Equipment**

The best ship is one that is equally good at giving and receiving damage. Your best bet then is to conserve your resources so that you can purchase the heavy fighters as quickly as possible in each part of the galaxy you travel to. By the time I'm fleeing New York, I am in a Defender, In Bretonia, and I quickly pick up a Crusader. In Kusari, I usually try to pick up the Barracuda or Dragon. (I usually don't bother with Rheinlander ships and weapons because they consume far too much energy; instead I wait for the Anubis as soon as it's available). After the game, I usually keep the Anubis until I have enough juice to move up to a Hammerhead and then Eagle (if you've been especially naughty, you might be able to get a Titan or a Sabre).

Make certain you have enough credits to handle both buying the ship you want, as well as properly outfitting it, even if you have to fly a few more missions to do so. More than once I was too eager to get into the next ship that I sacrificed some of

my equipment and weapons to afford it. Going into a fight with a ship that is not fully armed or loaded out is like going outside in a blizzard without any clothes on. It is far better to stay with a fully equipped ship and take on a few more freelance missions, so you can afford the next ship with all the extras.

### **Engines and Shields**

Early in the SP missions, you'll go to California Minor. While there, you'll be able to outfit your ship with heavy thrusters, if you've got the credits. I highly recommend you do this, as they do decrease how fast your thruster energy consumption goes down. Thrusters come in handy in situations where you're too close to use your cruise engines, but still outside the effective range of your weapons. A little "burst" of speed can sometimes be enough to save you from taking serious damage too.

Whenever you have an opportunity to upgrade your shielding, take it. Every erg of energy you can conserve while making your ship tougher to kill, is crucial to your survival.

### **Energy-Based Weapon Tactics**

I've played around with different configurations of weapons. For the longest time, I would pick guns with the "most punch," which meant they had a low refire-rate and high energy consumption. This works pretty well if you've only got one enemy to take out, but terrible if you're taking on several enemies, because you'll expend all your weapon energy on taking out the first enemy, and have to wait for it to recharge before you can take on the next one. Sometimes you can make do with mines and missiles until your weapons recharge, but it is far better to split your energy weapons between effective "punch" and recharge rate.

What works better is to do your best to balance your firepower. For every two heavy weapons (low refire, high energy consumption) I have, I try to make certain I have two light weapons (high refire, low energy consumption). The faster firing weapons can track the more maneuverable enemy targets better, not to mention provide more continuous damage, while the heavier weapons weaken shields and hulls. When your weapon energy drains, your heavier weapons will be disabled, but the lighter ones will keep firing because they take so little energy to recharge.

## **Ordinance-Based Weapons: Missiles, Torpedoes, Cruise Disruptors, and Mines**

### **Missiles**

Missiles are great add-on weapons. As soon as you can, outfit your ship with a launcher and load up as many as you can afford. There are two great advantages to missiles- they don't consume any energy, they can do significant damage to enemy hulls and shields. The biggest problem is knowing when to use them. A missile is guided to its target by your targeting sight. In order to hit the target, you have to keep your sights on it until it strikes it. When an enemy ship is maneuvering away from you, it can do all sorts of things to momentarily "duck" out of your targeting sights and your missile will fly uselessly away from the fight.

The best time to use your missiles is when the enemy ship is coming right at you. It is easy to keep them in your sights then, while the missile is inbound, you can also hit them with your own energy weapons. Keep in mind that while you are targeting your enemy with a missile, they can do the same thing.

### **Torpedoes**

Torpedoes are usually used for taking out stations, battleships, and cruisers, but I have also discovered that torpedoes will kill just about any smaller enemy ship in one shot. Given the cost of torpedoes, and extremely touchy timing involved, I wouldn't recommend this as a regular tactic, but it has come in handy in some tight situations. In order to make it work, you have to be practically point-blank with the enemy ship, or they'll be able to maneuver out of the way.

### **Cruise Disruptors**

When I first started playing FL, I didn't think cruise disruptors were worth the time. Given the choice between carrying a cruise disruptor launcher and a torpedo launcher, I generally prefer the torpedoes, (especially in the middle to end of the SP missions, when you'll be up against a lot of enemy bases and capital ships). Having said this, I have discovered that cruise disruptors can be useful. In some missions, you'll have to capture or kill a particular enemy, (as far as I know, you won't be able to get a CD until *after* the mission with Sean Ashcroft) if you don't take them down in the first part of the battle, they nearly always run. If you hit them with a cruise disruptor, they'll drop out of cruise speed and you can pound them into oblivion (a shame that your missiles don't go as fast as CD's do).

### **Mines**

Of all the weapons at your disposal, mines are the trickiest to play with. Releasing mines randomly is wasteful and downright dangerous. Mines are single-minded

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[tanstaaf128@cox.net](mailto:tanstaaf128@cox.net)

devices- they don't care what they blow up. If you release one at the wrong time, it might acquire the wrong target and land you in a world of hurt. (I've actually had a mine hit a "friendly" station, and suddenly every ship, installation, and trade lane turned from either green or white, to red). On the other hand, a properly released mine can pound an enemy ship with devastating force.

Releasing a mine is all about timing. If you release it too soon, it will never catch up to your enemy, (and it might just turn around and catch you instead). If you release it too late, it'll meander about until it acquires the first ship (or station) that happens to be in range. The perfect time to release a mine is just as your target ship is about to pass you. You'll know when you got the timing right because the mine will sort of "spin" in place for a few seconds before exploding (even with this, my success rate with mines released this way is probably about 70%, but it's far higher than any other method I've found so far).

Another cute trick I've done with mines is to do what a lot of the enemy ships do: cut your engines momentarily (or use the "X" key to reverse), drop a mine, and then use your thrusters to hightail it out of there. This can sometimes catch an enemy ship by surprise (once again, this maneuver takes split-second timing to pull off).

One other strategy I've used with mines is sort of a "Hail Mary" that flies in the face of what I said before. If you need to escape in a hurry, you can use your thrusters, drop several mines, and then kick in your cruise engines. I've made some narrow escapes doing this.

## **Battle Tactics**

### **Hacked Trade Lanes**

If you haven't figured this out, while using the trade lanes, you can left click on each lane gate before you reach them (it gets tricky if there are other targets or a mission waypoint in line with the trade lane, but it can be done). Each gate has a blue indicator bar. As long as it's full, the gate is operational, however, if it's completely black, it's been hacked, get ready to drop out of the trade lane and into combat.

The blue indicator bar on a trade lane gate does not have to be at 100% for you to dock with it. If you need to make a quick escape before you're turned to dust, just wait for it to start building back up and hit F3.

Another trick I've learned is that you can manually drop out of a trade lane any time you want by clicking on the free maneuver option at the top of your screen. I've actually used this to drop out just prior to a hacked lane, and surprise the pirates before they were ready. For some reason the F2 key doesn't work while



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[tanstaaf128@cox.net](mailto:tanstaaf128@cox.net)

you're in a trade lane, so you have to click the option from the toolbar at the top. I've used this trick to avoid collisions too.

Something you can do with trade lanes is when you have a ship with a turret. Once you've begun the docking sequence with a trade lane, hit the "H" key and spacebar to unlock your turret view, while in the trade lane, you'll be able to "spin" your view in any direction (of course if the lane gets hacked, you're going to have to jump into combat).

### **Bait and Switch**

Some of the ships you'll fight will do this: they slow or stop for a moment, and wait for you to commit, and then they slam on the thrusters to move off in a different direction. By the time you're bringing your guns to bear, they're already gone. There is no reason why you can't use this trick on your enemies.

### **The Reversal**

This tactic is especially useful early on, when you have limited firepower and a smaller, more maneuverable ship. You can use the "X" key to reverse, and slowly rotate with your target. You'll be able to keep them under fire longer, and quite often blow them away. Keep in mind that while you're slow reversing, another enemy ship might target you, so I don't recommend you use this tactic all the time, (especially when your enemy severely outnumbers you).

## **Freelance Missions**

### **Dogfights: Taking on other Fighters**

When you're out playing "gun for hire" the missions are pretty much the same. You'll contract to go blow some baddies away at the bar, hop in your ship, and head out to the waypoint. With ship attacks, you'll first see your enemy when you're within 2.3 k of them. They'll usually still be in formation. This is a jewel of an opportunity for you to really get in some damage. I like to pick whichever loudmouth taunts me, just because I can. As soon as possible, drop the hammer: fire off a missile, and pour on the firepower. The chances are in your favor that you'll destroy one of them even before they break formation. As a bonus, sometimes the shots that missed your targeted enemy will hit one of the other ships, accelerating their demise as well.

### **Stationary Targets: Blowing up the Base**

While they often provide you with extra credits, base assaults are usually not worth the risk until later in the game. Not only do you have enemy fighters to contend with, but you've usually got weapons platforms and the base itself. That's a lot of enemy targets shooting at you! If the lure of money is just too good for



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you to pass up, here's what works: unless your ship can take a lot of damage, blow up the base as quickly as possible and hightail it out of there. If you try to take on the base, all the fighters, and the weapons platforms, you'll be space dust pretty quickly.

If you are determined to try and kill everything, then take out the base, then the weapons platforms, then the enemy fighters. I've done it, but my ship was pretty much mangled, and I spent most of the extra money I made fixing it up and replenishing my ordinance.

### **Racing Dexter Hovis**

I've only lost this race once: the very first time I tried it. I was late out of the gate, and I had trouble staying within the rings.

The key to winning the race with Hovis is to be ready to jump to cruise speed immediately at the start, and don't try to use your free mouse maneuvering, instead, stick to the "click-and-drag" method. Your ship responds more smoothly when maneuvered this way, especially at cruise speed (in fact, as a general rule, anytime I'm at cruise speed, I'm using the click-and-drag maneuvering).

### **Miscellaneous Tidbits**

- Listen to the radio "chatter," you'll hear when someone is planning to attack you: "Freelancer Alpha 1-1."
- In the SPM, whenever you tractor in cargo from a freelance mission, sell it for whatever you can get. You didn't buy it, so whatever you make on it is pure profit.
- When you visit a bar, always talk to people willing to gossip, you'll find out some interesting things every now and then
- It's almost never useful to bribe anyone to hack your faction (and usually it's mighty expensive). If you are going to do this, wait until you've completed the SPM so you can make enough money to afford it.
- There are some rare opportunities to get map information from people. Rarely is it useful. Why pay for something you can get just by going there?
- When in doubt, conserve your credits.
- When you have time, take all the trade lanes in a system just so it gets marked down in your system map.

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[tanstaaf128@cox.net](mailto:tanstaaf128@cox.net)

- Find a printable copy of the Sirius map and print it out this way you'll have a better idea of how all the systems are connected.
- The amount of credits you can make from freelance missions increases steadily the further away from the New York System you go. This is a flaw in the game: even after you've finished all the single-player missions, all the systems remain at the level of difficulty they were before (I'm certain the developer's reasoning was that it would have taken too long to reprogram and rebalance the game, but it would have been more reasonable to expect everything to be harder at higher levels).
- Another complaint I have with the game is the way the information pop-ups take up the exact middle of the screen. Sometimes while I'm looking for a jump hole, or one of the "treasure wrecks," I want to consult the map while in flight, hard to avoid collisions or enemy ships when any of the information pop ups are dead center in the middle of the screen. Why couldn't they make them so they could be moved to the top left? At least that way I could take a "quick peek" and still see what's coming up straight ahead.