

Beta Station

BY ROCKETSHIP GAMES

A millennium has passed since the cataclysmic end of the first stellar empire. The constellation of great space stations that formed its core and all their mighty technology have long since faded into the darkness of space. Faded, but perhaps not disappeared forever...

Beta Station is a game for 2 to 5 interplanetary relic hunters. After a lifetime of searching, each has finally located Beta Station, the last bastion of the first and so far only stellar empire. Scans have revealed little, except a beckoning hull breach in one of the giant space station's modules. Whatever treasures may await inside though, the relic hunters will certainly not be alone within its long abandoned corridors.

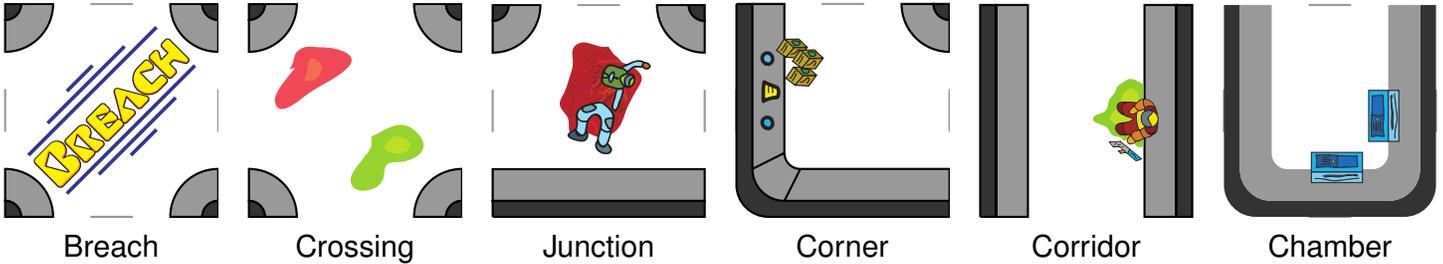
1 Components

Beta Station includes the following components:

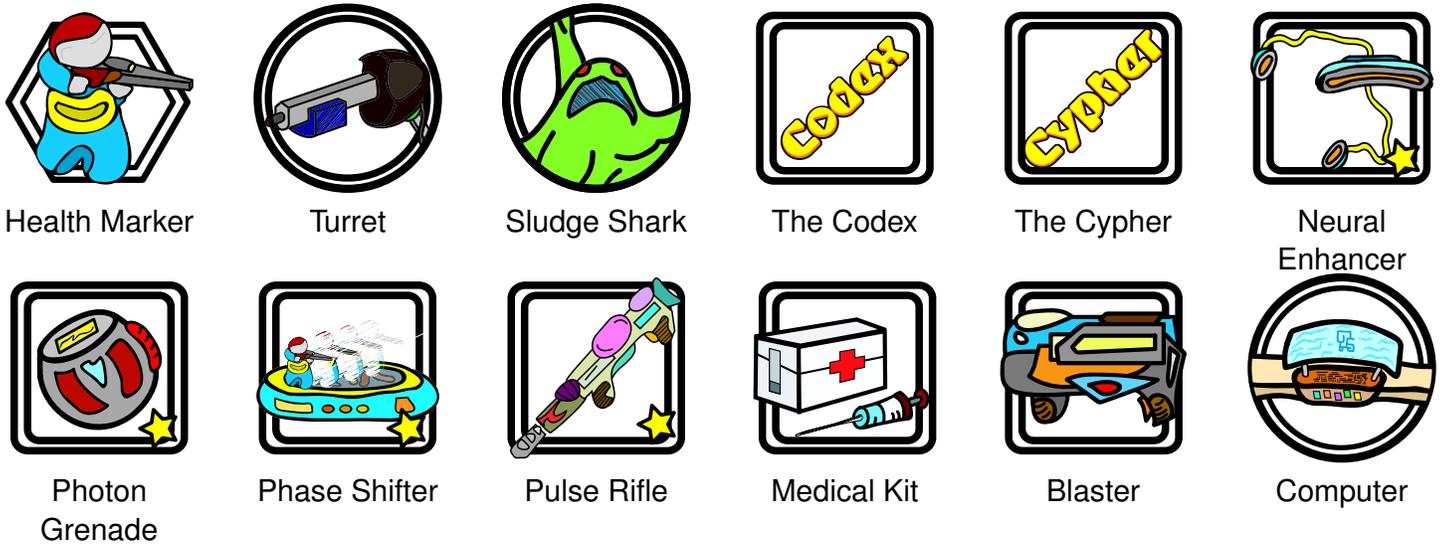
- 5 relic hunter player pawns
 - 5 player mats, capturing each relic hunter's breach pod starting point, personal inventory, shipboard storage, and current health
 - 5 health markers
 - 36 space station tiles, each edge of which is either a walkway or a wall
 - 9 crossings, one of which is the breach;
 - 8 junctions; 8 corners; 5 corridors; and
 - 6 chambers, enclosed station rooms
 - 45 game chits
 - 20 monsters
 - * 7 automated defense turrets
 - * 13 sludge sharks: 5 single strength, 5 double strength, and 3 triple strength
 - 20 inventory items
 - * 2 arcane treasures
 - The Codex and the Cypher
 - * 10 technology treasures
 - 3 neural enhancers
 - 3 photon grenades
 - 2 phase shifters
 - 2 pulse rifles
 - * 4 medical kits
 - * 4 blasters
 - 2 station computers
 - 3 spare sludge sharks
- 1 standard six sided die

(* *Prototype Note: On the player mats, health is "energy," and the breach pod is the hex space in the upper left. Prototypes include 2 sets of health markers; use one for pawns if there are no wood or plastic pieces. **)

1.1 Tiles



1.2 Chits



2 Objective

Players explore the abandoned space station they have discovered, searching for high technology and secrets lost since the waning days of the stellar empire. To win the game, a relic hunter must either:

- Obtain both arcane treasures, the Codex and the Cypher, at once;
- Or, acquire 5 technology treasures and leave the station.

3 Setup

Each player takes a relic hunter pawn, health marker, player mat, and 1 chamber tile. Relic hunters begin the game in their breach pod and with a full 4 points of health; place pawns and markers appropriately.

Shuffle the remaining tiles and deal them out to each player, face down. In a 2–4 player game, include the breach tile. With 5 players, remove the breach tile before shuffling and place it face up at table center.

Set aside but keep nearby the spare sludge shark chits, they will be used as needed. Also pull out the Codex and Cypher chits, then shuffle the remaining 40 chits facedown. Randomly choose 4 chits and set them aside with the Codex and Cypher as chamber chits. Keep these 4 chits face down and the Codex and Cypher faceup. Deal the remaining 36 chits out to each player face down. In a 5 player game one player will receive one more chit than the other players.

Players may look at their own tiles and chits but should keep them secret from the other players.

4 Gameplay

Beta Station is divided into two phases: A strategic building phase in which players use the tiles and chits to construct a space station filled with treasure and monsters, followed by a tactical exploration phase in which players vie with each other to gather the treasures.

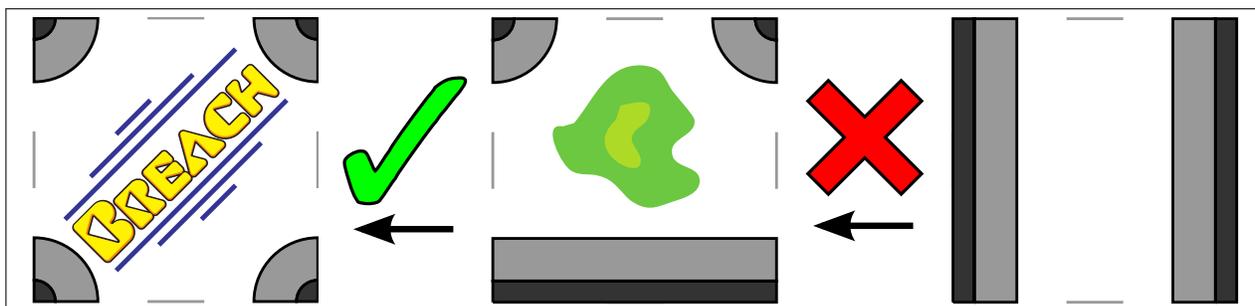
4.1 Phase I: Station Construction

In a 2–4 player game, the player dealt the breach tile goes first in the building phase by simply placing the breach faceup in the center of the playing area; play begins as follows with the player to their left. With 5 players, roll off with the die to determine which player begins station construction as follows, starting from the already placed breach tile. The building phase proceeds clockwise around the players, with each performing the following in sequence on their turn:

1. The player must choose and place a station tile from their hand, adding it faceup to the station anywhere they choose, according to the following rules:
 - At least 1 walkway on the new tile must connect to a walkway on a previously placed tile. Note that other walkways on the new tile may lead into walls of previously placed tiles.
 - A chamber may only be placed if that player has no other remaining tile types.
 - Tiles must be placed such that the next player will have an open walkway to which they may connect a tile. That open walkway does not need to be on the newly placed tile, the current player simply cannot close off the station. The only exception to this is if the current player has only chamber tiles remaining, in which case they may seal off the station in placing one.
2. If the just-placed tile is not a chamber, the player must choose and place exactly one chit from their hand, facedown, on the tile. Chambers receive chits later.

Play continues in this way until either all tiles have been placed or the station has become sealed off, preventing further construction. Any unplaced tiles or chits remaining in players' hands will not be used and may be put away; they should not be revealed.

Once this process completes, count the number of chambers not placed, if any, from the 6 available. From the 4 chamber chits that were set aside with the Codex and Cypher, randomly remove and secretly put away as many chits as chamber tiles were not placed. Together with the Codex and Cypher, there should be as many chamber chits remaining as chambers in play on the station. Turn the Codex and Cypher face down and shuffle all of these chamber chits. Randomly place exactly one face down on each chamber in play. In the extremely rare case that only 1 chamber was placed, place both the Codex and Cypher on that chamber tile and put the remaining 4 chamber chits away without revealing them. Beta Station is ready to be explored!



The junction can be attached to the breach this way, walkways on each connect. The corridor cannot be attached in this orientation because there's no walkway connected to a previous tile.

4.2 Phase II: Station Exploration

Players now roll off to determine who goes first in the exploration phase, with play proceeding clockwise.

4.2.1 Player Turns

On their turn players have 2 action points with which to take any combination of the following actions: Move their relic hunter into, out of, and/or around the space station; pick up or drop items; use any items they currently hold; scan the station computers; teleport back to their ship; heal themselves on their ship.

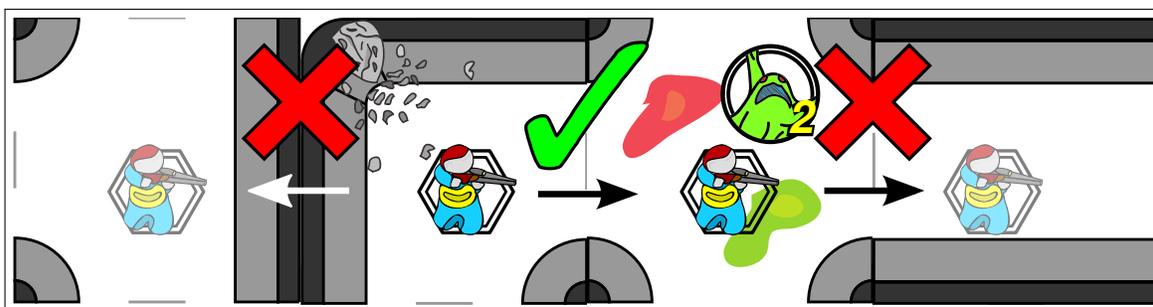
Each possible action is described in detail below. Players may complete each action before declaring their next and may take them in any order. Actions may be repeated, and players need not use any or all of their action points. Unused action points are lost and do not carry over to the player's next turn.

4.2.2 Movement

Players may spend 1 action point to move as follows:

- From their breach pod, relic hunters may move to the breach tile.
- From the breach tile, relic hunters may move to their breach pod. Players may never move to any other breach pod, and may never move to their breach pod with either the Codex or Cypher in their inventory.
- On the station, relic hunters may move through a walkway to an adjacent tile. The facedown chit on the tile, if any, is then revealed. At the end of the player's turn, if that chit was a monster, and the monster and relic hunter are still on that tile, the monster attacks the player, as described later.

There is no limit on how many relic hunters, monsters, items, or other chits may be on a tile at one time. Relic hunters do not impede the movement or other actions of each other in any way. Players may enter tiles with revealed monsters. However, relic hunters on the same tile as a monster are blocked and may only move back to the last previous tile they were on—they can only retreat, not advance. This includes earlier turns, i.e., a player may retreat even if they started the current turn on a tile with a monster. Monsters do block relic hunters from moving to their breach pod (monsters may wind up on the breach, discussed later).



From its starting position on the corner tile, the blue relic hunter cannot move left due to the intervening walls. It may move to the right through the walkway tile edges. The sludge shark there, whether newly or previously revealed, blocks the player from moving again to the right.

4.2.3 Inventory

Players may spend 1 action point to pick up an item, placing it into an empty slot in their inventory. They may not have more than 3 such items equipped at any time. On the station this item may be picked up from the relic hunter's current tile. On their breach pod this item may be picked up from their storage.

Players may drop an item from their inventory at any point in their turn, without spending any action points. On the station the dropped item is placed on their current tile. On their breach pod the dropped item is stored into an empty slot in their storage. If no storage slot is open then items may not be dropped on their breach pod. However, stored items may be swapped with equipped items by spending an action point to pick up an item from storage as usual and simultaneously dropping an item from inventory.

All inventory, storage, and dropped items are kept face up. Once a chit is revealed it is never re-concealed.

4.2.4 Attacking

Several items allow players to spend 1 action point to attack other players, monsters, and station computers.



Relic hunters may always attack a monster or station computer in the same tile as them using the fist-integrated plasma cutter built into their exosuit. However, unlike all other weapon items, their plasma cutter may not be used to attack other relic hunters; they're too slow.



Relic hunters with a blaster in inventory may use it to attack another relic hunter, monster, or computer in the same tile or an adjacent tile directly connected by walkways. If the player has two or more blasters in inventory they may make two attacks for the same action point, double fistfing their shooters. The second attack may target the same or a different player, monster, or station computer. As with the first attack, the target must be in the same tile as the player, or an adjacent tile directly connected by walkways. The second attack and its target must be declared before the first attack is resolved.



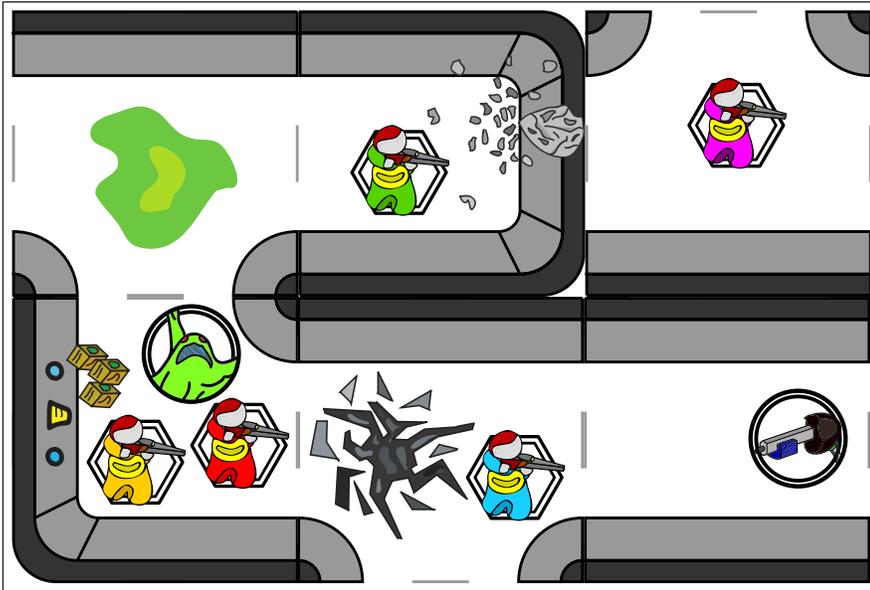
Relic hunters carrying a pulse rifle in their inventory may use it to attack another relic hunter, monster, or computer in the same or up to 2 tiles away, in a straight line along connected walkways. The pulse rifle's advanced targeting scopes and homing ballistics enable its shots to navigate the dense wreckage and poor conditions of the derelict station.



Relic hunters with a photon grenade in inventory may throw it at a target tile, either their own or up to 2 tiles away from their current position. There must be a directly connected path of walkways between the current tile, any intermediary tile, and the target tile, but it need not be a straight line—grenades may of course be thrown around corners. The grenade is placed on the target tile like any dropped item, and an attack made on every relic hunter, monster, and station computer in that tile. Note that photon grenades do not explosively self destruct, so they are not removed from play and may be picked up later and used again!

All attacks are resolved identically: Roll the die, and on a 4 or greater the attack is successful. Successful attacks on other players reduce their health marker by one point. Turrets and single strength sludge sharks are removed from the game when successfully attacked. Double and triple strength sludge sharks are reduced by one strength level by, swapping chits from the available extras and previously removed. Station computers are removed from the game, and additionally cause a successful attack to be applied to every player and monster in the same tile as the furiously exploding equipment! Note that grenades and exploding computers may injure the current player. They may also cause chain reactions of multiple attacks.

Regardless of weapon, no attacks may be made from or into breach pods.



The yellow relic hunter always has a plasma cutter with which it could attack the sludge shark here. Yellow could not attack the red player with that, plasma cutters are too slow to hit relic hunters. If properly equipped, yellow could attack the red or blue relic hunters or the sludge shark with a blaster; any of those or the turret with a pulse rifle; or the green player with a photon grenade.

It would not be possible for the green and pink relic hunters to directly attack each other in any way from this position, regardless of their equipment, due to the intervening tile wall.

4.2.5 Boosts

Other items enable bonuses or special actions when in inventory.



Relic hunters receive a +1 bonus on all of their die rolls for each neural enhancer in their inventory. Note that this bonus is cumulative; multiple neural enhancers cause a relic hunter to move and think with blinding speed! Neural enhancers do not upgrade attacks made by exploding station computers as they are not conducted by the player, but do boost photon grenade attacks—they're thrown more accurately, harder, or spitefully.



Medical kits may be used in two ways:

- They may be discarded from a player's inventory at any point in their turn to accelerate, immediately gaining an additional action point. This may be done after any action, including directly following any action that would otherwise expend the player's action points and end their turn.
- A player may spend 1 action point and discard a medical kit from their inventory to medicate, immediately restoring to maximum health (4 points).

In both cases the medical kit is removed from the game, it is not dropped onto the player's station tile or storage. Multiple medical kits may be used per turn, in either or both fashions.



Once per turn, players on the station with a phase shifter in inventory may spend 2 action points to phase into any adjacent tile, regardless of walkway connections and blocking monsters. The device temporarily distorts the relic hunter's time/space matrix, literally enabling them to walk through walls and enemies! This is otherwise a standard move: Chits are revealed and monsters resolved in the destination tile as usual.

Note that the medical kit may be used multiple times at once. E.g., a relic hunter with two kits and a phase shifter in inventory could move twice, consuming its regular action points, but then expend both medical kits to gain two more action points and finally use its phase shifter to walk through a wall.

A relic hunter using the phase shifter to move into an unexplored tile should also note that they may then be blocked from leaving that tile by a newly revealed monster until their next turn, unless they can expend a medical kit to use the phase shifter again and retreat back through the previous obstacle.

4.2.6 Arcane Treasures

Although their full mysteries will require extensive investigation, merely holding the stellar emperor's treasures are enough to begin yielding powers previously unimaginable!



Players equipped with the Codex are immune to sludge shark attacks. They both suffer no damage from them and are not blocked by them; the monsters make way before the vague echoes of their former lord that now surround the relic hunter.



Players equipped with the Cypher may make rudimentary commands of the emperor's former servants, spending 1 action point to push any revealed sludge shark on the station, of any strength, to an adjacent tile directly connected by walkways. The monster will make its attack at the start of the following players' turns as well as at the end of the current turn if it was just revealed this turn, as usual and described below.

Remember that players equipped with either the Codex or Cypher may not leave the station and enter their breach pod. Complex and indecipherable energy interactions between the devices and the station bind them too closely to be removed from the latter.

4.2.7 Special Actions

Finally, players may also make a few special actions.



Relic hunters on the same tile as a computer may spend 1 action point to scan a tile anywhere on the station. To do so, they choose and declare a tile with an unrevealed chit, including chambers. They then roll the die, and on a 4 or better may secretly look at the chit face. A single computer may be used multiple times per turn. Neural enhancers do boost this roll.

On their breach pod, a player may spend 1 action point to heal, immediately restoring to maximum health (4 points). This does not require a medical kit.

From the station, a player may also spend 2 action points to emergency teleport. All their inventory items are dropped in their current tile, and they immediately move directly to their breach pod.

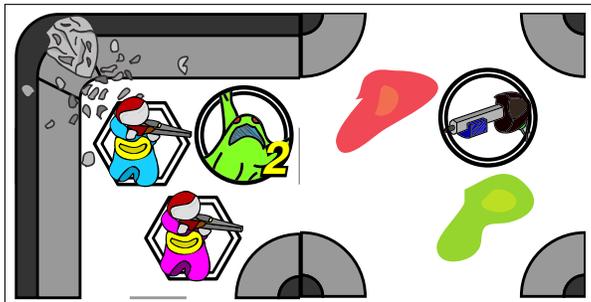
4.2.8 Monsters

At the end of a player's turn, any monster that was revealed that turn attacks any players in its tile, typically only the current player. Remember that relic hunters cannot advance through a monster, they can only retreat back to their last previous tile, provided they have the action points to do so.

Additionally, at the start of a player's turn, all monsters in range attack them. Turrets attack players on the same tile or on adjacent tiles directly connected by walkways. Sludge sharks only attack players on the same tile. Relic hunters other than the current player are not attacked at this point.

Note that by these rules, if a player reveals a monster and does not successfully attack it or retreat from the tile using any remaining action points, they will most likely be attacked twice in quick succession: Once at the end of their turn, and again at the start of their next turn. However, if they're lucky or strike a hasty deal, a fellow relic hunter may take pity on them and eliminate the monster in the interim...

All monster attacks automatically damage relic hunters, reducing their health. Turrets remove 1 point. Sludge sharks do damage based on their strength: Single strength sludge sharks remove 1 point, double strength 2 points, and triple strength 3 points—relic hunters would be well advised to treat these with caution!



If this is the start of the pink player's turn, they will immediately lose 3 points of health: 1 from the turret, and 2 from the double strength sludge shark. Blue is not attacked by the monsters at this moment. Hopefully pink does something about them!

4.2.9 Health

When a player's health is reduced to or below 0 points, the relic hunter has been completely impaired. Fortunately, their breach pod is equipped with an emergency teleport and bio-regeneration system. Unfortunately, it cannot teleport their invaluable newfound treasures. Each of the following immediately happens:

- All of the player's inventory items are dropped on their current tile.
- The relic hunter is moved to their breach pod.
- Their health is restored to maximum.
- If it is currently their turn, the remainder of the player's turn is forfeit and play proceeds to the next player's turn. Medical kits may not be used to overcome this, it is too late for mere bandages! Note that if a player is impaired at the end of their turn or on another player's, they will not miss a turn.

4.3 Endgame!

Exploration of Beta Station ends and the current player wins immediately after either of two events happen:

- The player has picked up both arcane treasures, the Codex and the Cypher. Reuniting the millenia old but still active artifacts rocks the station with unbridled energies as the devices immediately begin evolving the relic hunter, setting them on the hard path toward being the next stellar emperor...
- The player has returned to their breach pod while possessing 5 technology treasures (neural enhancers, photon grenades, phase shifters, and/or pulse rifles) between their inventory and storage. The lucky relic hunter quickly disengages and brackets the station with fusion torpedoes, buckling it to pieces. Fortune gained selling the lost technologies will ensure a long and leisurely retirement...

Please visit <http://rocketshipgames.com/games/betastation/playtest> to submit playtest reports!

5 Credits

Game Design: Daryl Falco and Joe Kopena

Prototype Art: Joe Kopena

Playtesting: Don Corcoran, Lovell Harmon, Jeremy LaCivita, Eric Pancoast, and many others!