

77 Quirks

Adding Character to Starships in the Far Future

This is a method for randomly adding "character" to a particular starship or ship class. As with most such things, it should be used with a large grain of salt, and the referee should feel free to ignore or alter anything that doesn't work well. The phrase "referee's discretion" gets bandied about quite a bit. Either ship-class-based or individual-ship-based Quirks, or both, can be used.

Option: Working Out The Bugs

Any newly designed ship class will generally have 1D3 Quirks which will be common to all examples of the ship produced. For each year the class is in production or for every hundred examples produced, there is a 4 in 6 chance that any given Quirk will be solved, and examples produced subsequently will not have that problem. Obviously, some Quirks such as Infested won't apply to initial production; adapt or re-roll such results. Even beneficial Quirks must make the roll to be "solved"; this represents replacing high performance components with cheaper, standard equipment. This also creates situations where examples from particular production years may be in demand – just after the sensor problem was fixed, and just before they started installing the cheaper warp drives, for example. If a new class Quirk survives 4 or 5 rolls to solve it, then the referee may rule that the Quirk becomes a permanent feature of the class.

Option: Decrepitude

For each 10 years of ship's age, give it 1D3-1 Quirks. If a vessel's annual overhaul is missed for any reason, there is a 50% chance of gaining another Quirk. Obviously, many such Quirks (e.g. Awkward Consoles) don't just appear magically; if such a thing happens to a ship "in play", then the referee should create a plausible situation to explain the Quirk (the existing consoles are failing, but a shipyard has surplus consoles from another type of ship that can be jury-rigged in place), or use the acquisition of the new Quirk as a plot device - this is particularly appropriate for beneficial Quirks.

Starship Quirk Table

For each Quirk, roll 1d100 for Quirk Category, then 2D6 for Quirk Determination.

<i>% Roll ⇒</i>	01-16	17-32	33-48	49-58	59-74	75-84	85-100
<i>2D Roll ⇓</i>	Hull & Structure	Quarters	Drives	Power & Fuel	Bridge & Controls	Weapons & Defenses	Cargo, Vehicles & Miscellaneous

2	Newly Refinished Hull	New Furniture	Fast Starting Warp Drive	Fuel-Efficient	Fast Computers	Heavy Shipboard Arms	Luxury Suite
3	Structural Cracks	Cheap Partitions	Fast Turner	Fast Refuel	Flaky Sensors	Extra Shield Strength	Variable-Environment Cargo Bay
4	Battle-Scarred	Premium Entertainment System	Slow Maneuver Drive	Underpowered	Inappropriate Computers	Scant Shipboard Arms	Unpressurized Cargo Bay
5	Frankenstein Job	Flaky Security System	High Emission Drive	Shaky Power	Foreign Controls	Slow-Recovering Shields	Lab/Workshop
6	Repeatedly Renamed	Noisy Air System	Intermittent Warp Drive	Fuel-Hungry	Archaic Computers	Defensive Weaponry Only	Infested
7	Scrapes & Dents	Funny Smell	Shaky Maneuver Drive	Slow Warm-Up	Awkward Consoles	Unregistered Weapons	Vehicle Quirk
8	Sketchy History	Tacky Décor	Miscalibrated Warp Drive	Slow Refuel	Poor Sensor Processor	Low-Tech Weaponry	Substandard Vehicle
9	Tacky Paint Job	Insufficient Cold Storage	Slow Warp Drive	High Emission Power Plant	Great Ergonomics	Flaky Shields	Bad Cargo Doors
10	Mismatched Landing Gear	Shaky Inertial Compensators	Slow Turner	Collapsible Fuel Tanks	Exposed Wiring	Low Powered Weapons	Sickbay
11	Intermittent Transponder	Clandestine Still	Fast Warp Drive	Low Emission Power Plant	Sensitive Sensors	Fast-Recovering Shields	Theater
12	Variable Transponder	Rich Corinthian Leather	Fast Maneuver Drive	Fast Warm-up	Highly Automated	High Powered Weapons	Advanced Vehicle

Quirk Use

If Quirk definitions don't fit the ship design, or make sense in your campaign, change or ignore them.

Some features have associated with them a number called Confidence Index (CI). The Confidence Indices of all features of which a customer (passenger or cargo shipper) is aware are added together, and this sum is the percentage increase or decrease in typical fees (fares or cargo rates) that can be charged by the vessel. For ship class Quirks, the Confidence Index is the percentage increase or decrease in the purchase price of the ship.

External features are always known to customers; internal features may or may not be. To be effective, a positive CI modifier that isn't externally obvious must either be witnessed during an inspection or tour, or be advertised. To advertise a feature, 0.01 Credit must be spent per CI percentage point per potential customer per month – thus, to advertise a ship's Fast Computers (CI +4%) to a city of 1 million people costs Cr40,000 per month. This may actually pay off if you run a large fleet of similarly-equipped ships, or very large ships. Negative word of mouth somehow manages to spread without being paid for; one idea for a scenario would be for a merchant to hire players to badmouth his competition.

For ship class Quirks, all features are known to starship purchasers -- you don't buy a starship without doing some research.

Features that specify a tonnage (such as luxury suites, theaters, labs, and the like) should be scaled up or multiplied if the ship is over 500 tons or so, at referee's discretion.

Unless otherwise specified, most upgrade options require 1D6+1 days grounded at a starport to perform.

Quirk Definitions

Advanced Vehicle: One small craft or vehicle aboard the ship is more advanced type (higher tech level, more features) than is usual for this type of ship. For example, instead of an civilian air-car, a small ship might carry a high-performance paramilitary reconnaissance sled. CI +2%.

Archaic Computers: The ship's main computer or computers were bought as surplus and are bigger, slower, and cruffier than is standard for the ship type. Most computing tasks, including warp drive navigation, take 50% longer than normal to execute. An upgrade costing half the cost of the standard computer will bring performance into line with the standard machine, though it will still look "quaint" and incur the CI. Replacing the computers completely removes the CI. CI -5%.

Awkward Consoles: Control consoles on the bridge were designed for a different species or by idiots. Important controls are hard to reach. Overhead displays are too low and mounted at bad angles. An upgrade costing 10% of the cost of the bridge will provide decent consoles and eliminate "joystick elbow" and posture problems. CI -5%.

Bad Cargo Doors: Manually removable hull plates are provided in lieu of an automatic cargo door. Heavy lifting equipment and half a day of work are required to open or close the cargo hatch, which is required to load cargo packages larger than about a 1.5m cube, including standard cargo containers. For 2% the cost of the hull, the standard cargo doors can be installed. CI -5%.

Battle-Scarred: The ship shows scorched, warped, and even holed hull plates, patched over where it matters. The integrity of the ship is intact, but it looks terrible. The mess can be cleaned up, eliminating the Quirk, for half the cost of the hull; this will require being grounded for 10% of the normal build time for the ship. CI -10%.

Cheap Partitions: A few of the internal, non-pressure-bearing partitions (such as between cabins) are flimsy, temporary installations. This tends to have a detrimental effect on crew morale. An upgrade costing 10% of the cost of the crew accommodations will eliminate this Quirk. CI -5% for middle passengers, -10% for high passengers.

Clandestine Still: Somewhere in engineering is hidden a still for production of alcohol. The quality is low, and not enough is generally produced for large scale trading or serious alcoholism. Many captains will look the other way if the crew doesn't abuse the privilege. CI -3%.

Collapsible Fuel Tanks: Some part of the ship's internal fuel tankage (1D6 x 10%) is maintained in collapsible tanks. When running with a light fuel load (which means shorter endurance and range), 80% of the space not used for fuel can be used as cargo space. For example, a ship with 50 tons of fuel tankage at 30% collapsible can carry either 50 tons of fuel, or 35 tons of fuel and 12 tons of cargo. No CI.

Defensive Weaponry Only: No offensive anti-ship weaponry is mounted. Missile launchers are loaded with sand canisters. Beam weapons are low-powered, short-ranged point-defense types. If the ship is a warship, then this applies only to one battery of weapons. The weaponry can be upgraded for the full usual cost (though the defensive systems might be worth something as a trade-in). CI -5% to -10% depending on the territory.

Exposed Wiring: Some control panels or wiring access panels on the bridge have gone missing, possibly because the stuff inside needs to be fiddled with on a regular basis. An upgrade costing 5% of the cost of the bridge will tidy all this up and fix the things that want fiddling. At referee's discretion, this Quirk may have detrimental effects beyond the CI: -5%.

Extra Shield Strength: Screens or deflector shields installed on the ship are at least one step or 10% stronger than standard due to excellent tuning. CI +5%.

Fast Computers: The ship's main computers have the latest and greatest CPUs available. Most computing tasks, including warp drive navigation, take 50% shorter than normal to execute. CI +5%.

Fast Maneuver Drive: Due to excellent tuning, the ship's maneuver drive generates 1D6 x 0.1G more than normal. CI +5%.

Fast Refuel: The ship can refuel in half the usual time. CI +1% for layovers (passengers or cargo going further than one fuel stop).

Fast Starting Warp Drive: The Faster-Than-Light drive on the vessel can be started in 50% of the usual time. This is only useful if any navigational information needed can be pre-computed, or in conjunction with Fast Computers. CI +3%.

Fast Turner: The ship has more powerful attitude thrusters or gyroscopes than normal, and so is somewhat more maneuverable. This may have combat benefits at referee's discretion. CI +1%.

Fast Warm-up: The ship's power plant can go from cold to full running output in 50% of the usual time. This can be important if you have to leave town in a hurry. CI +1%.

Fast Warp Drive: The ship's FTL drive is 10% faster than normal. Depending on how your game's FTL drive works, this may or may not imply greater travel range. CI +5%.

Fast-Recovering Shields: The ship's shields regain strength 50% faster than normal. CI +5%.

Flaky Security System: The internal security systems aboard ship do not perform as advertised. Monitor cameras work intermittently, locks fail – sometimes locked, sometimes unlocked. The referee should have fun with this. An upgrade costing 15% of the cost of the crew accommodations will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Flaky Sensors: The ship's sensors sometimes indicate contacts where none exist, or miss obvious contacts entirely. An upgrade costing 25% of the cost of the sensors will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Flaky Shields: 25% chance that the shields won't activate when turned on and 25% chance that they'll deactivate after being breached. In either case, the crew may try again after every combat turn to turn them on. An upgrade costing 25% of the cost of the shield generators will eliminate this Quirk. CI -15%.

Foreign Controls: The controls on the bridge are not labeled in a language spoken by any of the bridge crew. Some of the important controls have handwritten labels on them, but not all. Referee's discretion as to the actual effects (beyond annoyance to the crew). Two weeks of experimentation on the ground and careful labeling will eliminate the problems other than the CI; an upgrade costing 10% of the cost of the bridge will provide consoles labeled in the right language and eliminate the Quirk. CI -5%.

Frankenstein Job: The ship clearly shows that it was built from two or more other ships. This is usually evidence of severe damage sometime in the past. The welds are fine, possibly even stronger than the rest of the hull, but the ship looks terrible. The hull can be replaced completely for twice the cost of a new hull; this will require being grounded for 50% of the normal build time for the ship. CI -15%.

Fuel-Efficient: The ship uses 10% less fuel than normal at all times. This may translate to increased range, or provide an opportunity to reduce tankage space. CI +1%.

Fuel-Hungry: The ship uses 10% more fuel than normal at all times. This may translate to decreased range, or require more tankage space. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the power plant will eliminate this Quirk. CI -5%.

Funny Smell: The classic Quirk of older Scout/Couriers, this is usually the result of a faulty filtration unit. A filter replacement costing 1% of the cost of the crew accommodations will eliminate the problem, but it will come back over a month or two. Replacing the entire air system, at a cost equal to 10% of the cost of the accommodations, eliminates this Quirk. CI -10% for middle passengers, -15% for high passengers.

Great Ergonomics: The bridge and other control stations are a joy to work in, with nice lumbar supports and the like. Not many in-game effects, but it makes the crew happy. CI +2% due to happy crew.

Heavy Shipboard Arms: The weapons locker aboard the ship is home to an energy weapon of some description - not the top of the line, but nothing to be sneezed at. In addition, there are 1D6 other fairly impressive weapons (ACRs, for example). CI +5%.

High Emission Drive: When the maneuver drive is running, detection ranges for the ship are up to 50% greater. Stealth features are useless in such situations. The drive must be overhauled for 50% of its original cost and at least two grounded weeks to eliminate this Quirk. CI -5%.

High Emission Power Plant: When the power plant is running, detection ranges for the ship are up to 50% greater. Stealth features are useless in such situations. The power plant must be overhauled for 50% of its original cost and at least two grounded weeks to eliminate this Quirk. CI -5%.

High Powered Weapons: The ship's weapons are unusually powerful for its type. CI +5%.

Highly Automated: The ship all but runs itself. The crew has more leisure time than usual, and up to 15% of the crew can actually be eliminated. CI +5%.

Inappropriate Computers: The warp drive is being controlled by a hand computer in the engine room, or the captain uses an abacus for bookkeeping, or a Linux box in the galley is running the security system, or some such. It works for the current crew, but new hands take a while to get used to it. For an upgrade costing 25% of the cost of the standard computers, the systems can be integrated properly and the Quirk eliminated. CI -5%.

Infested: There are unauthorized life-forms living somewhere aboard ship. Rats or roaches are the canonical examples. Some of the less socially-capable crew might think of them as pets, but the captain and the customers consider them pests. Fumigate and eliminate the Quirk for 5% of the cost of the crew accommodations. Roll 1D; on a roll of 1, the fumigation was unsuccessful and the critters will reappear in a month or two. CI -5% for cargo or low passengers, -10% for middle passengers, -20% for high passengers.

Insufficient Cold Storage: The refrigerated storage aboard ship is 25% of standard. Fresh food runs out in 25% of the usual time. Crew and passengers eat a lot of canned food. "Beans have very poor stopping power in a tight situation." -- John M. Ford. CI -1%, -15% for passengers.

Intermittent Transponder: Sometimes the ship's transponder shuts down (which most vessels interpret as enemy or pirate) and sometimes it sends the wrong code (which can cause a host of problems). If someone in authority notices the transponder doing the wrong thing, the ship will usually be inspected; if the transponder repeats the misbehavior during inspection, there will be a fine. Fines for improperly maintained transponders range from 0.01% to 0.05% (one to five hundredths of a percent) of the value of the ship. Replacing the transponder must be done by authorized officials, and costs a lot of money. CI -10%.

Intermittent Warp Drive: Sometimes the warp drive doesn't start on command, a la the Millennium Falcon. There's a 10% chance of failure on the first try; if it fails, retry every combat turn with a 25% chance of failure until it starts. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the warp drive and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Lab/Workshop: 1D6+4 tons of cargo space have been configured as a lab or workshop. This may be considered useful, or it may be ripped out and turned back to cargo for the cost of that many tons of ship's hull. No CI.

Low Emission Power Plant: The power plant's emissions are harder than normal to detect. This is useful primarily to stealthy ships. No CI.

Low Powered Weapons: The ship's weapons are of a low powered type. They can be replaced. CI -5%.

Low-Tech Weaponry: The ship's weapons are powerful for their tech level, but of low tech level. They can be replaced. CI -5%.

Luxury Suite: 2D6+8 tons of cargo space or passenger cabins have been turned into a luxury suite. This may be considered useful, or it may be ripped out and turned back to cargo for the cost of that many tons of ship's hull. CI +5% for passengers; CI +15% for passengers who get the suite.

Miscalibrated Warp Drive: The FTL drive doesn't go where it's supposed to. For "jump" type drives, this typically means that travel times from breakout to starport are increased by 1D100%; for continuous FTL drives, this requires corrections which increase travel time by 2d6 percent or so. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the warp drive and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -15%.

Mismatched Landing Gear: Some of the landing gear was replaced with gear from another type of ship. This might mean wheels on one side and skids on the other. The ship lists a few degrees when on the ground. For 2% the cost of the hull, the correct gear can be installed. CI -5%.

New Furniture: The furnishings and fixtures on the ship look ultra-modern. CI +1% for cargo, +5% for passengers.

Newly Refinished Hull: The exterior of the ship looks brand-new. CI +5%.

Noisy Air System: The air system makes whirring and occasional thumping noises. Annoying. Overhauling the air system, at a cost equal to 5% of the cost of the accommodations, eliminates this Quirk. CI -5% for passengers only.

Poor Sensor Processor: Sensors provide raw data to the sensor operator without preprocessing; basic sensor effectiveness is cut in half, but operator's skill counts double, so experts can actually do better this way. For an upgrade costing 10% of the cost of the sensors, the Quirk can be eliminated. No CI.

Premium Entertainment System: The latest interactive audio-visual-tactile gear is aboard. Crew and passengers love it. Morale is high. CI +1% for cargo, +5% for passengers.

Repeatedly Renamed: The ship has had several owners and had its name changed several times. People will recognize it under other names. Seems a bit shady. CI -5%.

Rich Corinthian Leather: The furnishings and fixtures on the ship look classy, refined, and elegant. CI +1% for cargo, +5% for passengers.

Scant Shipboard Arms: Only 1D6 pistols can be found in the weapons locker. Time for a shopping trip? No CI.

Scrapes & Dents: "You came here in that? You're braver than I thought." The mess can be cleaned up, eliminating the Quirk, for 10% the cost of the hull; this will require being grounded for one week. CI -10%.

Sensitive Sensors: The ship's sensors are very good, having 50% better range than normal. CI +5%.

Shaky Inertial Compensators: The artificial gravity aboard ship sometimes partially lags behind gravitational changes for a second or two. During maneuvers, this can make crew and passengers slightly ill. Sudden shocks aren't damped as well as usual. For 2% the cost of the hull, the compensators can be fixed, eliminating the Quirk. CI -5%.

Shaky Maneuver Drive: The maneuver drive tends to jitter between +/- 0.2G off of the desired rate. Overall average performance is normal, but the jitter can be felt even through good inertial compensators. Combined with Shaky Compensators, this doubles the CI of both. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the maneuver drive and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -5%.

Shaky Power Plant: The power plant output tends to jitter between 80% and 100% of rated power. If this is not treated as Underpowered, systems will randomly brown out. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the power plant and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Sickbay: 1D6+4 tons of cargo space have been configured as a sickbay. This may be considered useful, or it may be ripped out and turned back to cargo for the cost of that many tons of ship's hull. CI +5% for passengers assuming a Medic is aboard.

Sketchy History: The ship is known to have conducted illegal activity in the past under its current name. Renaming the ship is possible, which upgrades the quirk to "Repeatedly Renamed", above. Renaming, however, may be a substantial bureaucratic hassle and not-inconsequentially expensive, and involves the bureaucracy running background checks on the ship and its owner, and so may be more trouble than it's worth. CI -10%.

Slow Maneuver Drive: Due to substandard or worn-out parts, the ship's maneuver drive generates 1D6 x 0.1G less than normal. An overhaul costing 20% of the maneuver drive and taking two grounded weeks will bring it up to spec. CI -7%.

Slow Refuel: The ship takes 150% of the usual refueling time. Replacing the fuel feeds will cost 1% of the hull cost and take a few days. CI -3% for layovers (passengers or cargo going further than one fuel stop).

Slow Turner: The ship has fewer working attitude thrusters or less powerful gyroscopes than normal, and so is somewhat less maneuverable. This may have detrimental combat effects at referee's discretion. Repairing or replacing the attitude controls will cost 5% of the cost of the ship's maneuver drive and take one grounded week. CI -2%.

Slow Warm-Up: The ship's power plant takes 150% of the usual time to go from cold to full running output. This can be important if you have to leave town in a hurry. The power plant must be overhauled for 20% of its original cost and at least two grounded weeks to eliminate this Quirk. CI -3%.

Slow Warp Drive: The ship's FTL drive is 25% slower than normal. Depending on how your game's FTL drive works, this may or may not imply shorter travel range. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the warp drive and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -5%.

Slow-Recovering Shields: The ship's shields regain strength half as fast as normal. An upgrade costing 25% of the cost of the shield generators will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Structural Cracks: The ship's central structural frame is flawed. During any stressful maneuvers (including evasion and "pushing" the drive), there is a 5% chance of a fracture. This has serious, serious bad effects at referee's discretion. Decompression, loss of subsections, and general systems failures are all possibilities. This is possibly the worst news a shipowner can receive; the structural frame can be replaced, eliminating the Quirk, for 75% of the cost of the hull; this will require being grounded for 25% of the normal build time for the ship. CI -25%.

Substandard Vehicle: One vehicle or small craft is substandard for the ship type; a design costing no more than 60% as much should be substituted. It can of course be replaced. CI -2%.

Tacky Décor: The living space aboard ship is tackily decorated. An upgrade costing 10% of the cost of the crew accommodations will eliminate this Quirk. CI -5% for passengers only.

Tacky Paint Job: The exterior decoration of the ship shows terrible taste on someone's part. The ship can be repainted, eliminating the Quirk, for 5% the cost of the hull; this will require being grounded for one week. CI -5%.

Theater: 2D6+8 tons of cargo space or passenger cabins have been turned into a theater. This may be considered useful, or it may be ripped out and turned back to cargo for the cost of that many tons of ship's hull. CI +10% for passengers; CI +15% if live entertainment is provided.

Underpowered: The power plant delivers only 80% of its rated power. This generally means that not all systems can be used at once. Typically, maneuvering must be stopped to gain power for FTL drives; this can be very risky in combat situations. An overhaul costing 20% the cost of the power plant and taking two grounded weeks will eliminate this Quirk. CI -10%.

Unpressurized Cargo Bay: There's a leak in the cargo bay; cargoes that require an atmospheric environment cannot be carried. For 3% the cost of the hull, the leak can be fixed. CI -10%.

Unregistered Weapons: The ship has weapons that don't appear on its registration. There will be legal consequences if authorities discover this, at referee's discretion. The CI of this Quirk is highly variable depending on circumstances.

Variable Transponder: The ship's transponder can be set to a number of different identities. Roll 1D; on a roll of 1 or 2, the transponder has one alternate setting besides the "honest" one; on a roll of 3 or 4, it has two alternates; on a roll of 5, it has 1D+2 alternates; on a roll of 6, it has an unlimited number of settings. If someone in authority notices the transponder doing the wrong thing, the ship will usually be inspected; if the transponder is determined to be rigged, the referee must determine the consequences, but they will generally include a fine of at least 1% of the value of the ship. The CI of this Quirk is highly variable depending on circumstances.

Variable-Environment Cargo Bay: 2D6+8 tons of cargo space or passenger cabins is sealed off from the rest and can be adapted to various environments: water, exotic atmospheres, extreme temperatures or pressures, etc.. This is useful for alien passengers or live cargo. This may be considered useful, or it may be ripped out and turned back to cargo for the cost of twice that many tons of ship's hull. CI normally 0%, but possibly up to +100% for specific cargoes or passengers.

Vehicle Quirk: One vehicle or small craft has a Quirk of its own; re-roll to determine what it is; keep rolling until an appropriate Quirk is determined.