

GENERAL ORDER I

When contacting a planet making normal progress toward a technological civilization, an officer of Star Fleet shall make no identification of self or mission; no interference with social development of said planet; no references to space, to other worlds or more advanced civilizations.

GENERAL ORDER II

Under no circumstances, not even to save his own life or the lives of his crew, shall an officer of Star Fleet willfully inflict harm or injury on a being known to be intelligent, unless such action is warranted by General Order I.

*By Charles G.
Weekes*



Gaming with the Prime Directive

A starship is one of the most powerful weapons platforms available to the United Federation of Planets—a Constitution-class starship can eradicate the surface of most worlds in a matter of hours. In peacetime, starships rarely operate in squadrons—they are under the control of a captain, isolated by distance from immediate Star Fleet overview. What then is to prevent a captain from meddling in a civilization with the gentle diplomacy exhibited between Spain and the Aztecs? Enter the Prime Directive.

Throughout the *Star Trek* series, the Prime Directive might require a ship captain to destroy his ship and crew, permit limited interference, or enact General Order 24, all at the whim of a script writer. With so much variation, how can referees reasonably handle Prime Directive violations with some semblance of consistency?

Use the first two general orders as a guide. In the classic *Star Trek* television series, exceptions to the general orders could be applied to a local situation, subject to Star Fleet review at a later period (we may assume Kirk was never seriously reprimanded on any of his decisions on the first five-year mission). Of course, there is no requirement that your players cannot interpret the Prime Directive to the letter, without exception (as demonstrated in the first two seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*). Very few people ever get in trouble going by the book. Then again, this might not be as much fun in a campaign. With the Prime Directive as a framework, add these suggestions for the RPG:

- Create a contact mission leader or officer in charge of the away team (if playing in the *Next Generation* time period). This individual is a senior officer, usually the executive or 2nd officer of a ship, who is trained in the fine points of contact with other cultures. *This is not a job for the captain*, whose task is to command the ship, not become bogged down in the early stages of negotiations.

A contact mission leader should use every method at his disposal to avoid violent confrontations with a native population. If necessary, the team should be considered expendable, but this does not imply that the landing party is expected to meekly walk to its death. Although there is no restriction on using the weapons available to defend oneself, reason should be used. Consider as an example Captain Pike dealing with the Kalars of Rigel 12. While his people were equipped with laser pistols, he relied on Kalar weaponry to free his landing party from an ambush.

• At the discretion of the commanding officer or the senior officer appointed by the commanding officer, modern weaponry can be utilized (subject to later Star Fleet review) if the operation of said weapons would not cause cultural disruption through revelation of advanced technology. As an example, consider Scott's demonstration in "Bread and Circuses."

• In all cases of first contact, every effort will be made up to and including the sacrifice of the landing party to avoid killing the native population. If a native death, attributable directly to Federation personnel, does occur, the incident will be brought before a review board for determination of negligence, if any, and punishment required.

GAMING SITUATION

Now for a practical application of the Prime Directive to a game situation.

Admiral John S. Mendez, commanding officer of Starbase 20, has been forced into a duty he does not enjoy: deciding whether a fellow starship captain should be sent to court-martial for violation of the Prime Directive. He sits down and reviews the log:

Excerpted from contact team leader's log, USS Alliance NCC-1721, Stardate 2/8106.4; Commander L'Iarn reporting.

"...The commodore and I were standing in a glade near the native's gas works. I was discussing the rather good probability that the Romulans had not come to Ariel III as conquerors, but as teachers, when the Arielan walked out from a maintenance tunnel carrying tools and a boxlike device.

"He spoke to us in his native tongue; the commodore replied in Romulan. The Arielan raised the box to his mouth. Without hesitation, Commodore O'Neill drew a slug thrower, fired, and missed. I state for the record that prior to our arrival, slug throwers were unknown on Ariel. The natives had not developed gunpowder, and the Romulans had not disturbed this trend. Commodore O'Neill was made aware of this prior to transporting down, but he disregarded my advice on the grounds that a gun was more effective in dealing with natives than a phaser. His violation of general orders resulted in severe injuries to himself and the death of our chief sociologist, Lieutenant Commander Darlene Kyoto, and prevented the Federation from establishing friendly relations with Ariel at any time in the foreseeable future..."

Mendez considered the data. After a review of the Arielan contact, he determined:

1. O'Neill had pulled rank and superseded the authority and expertise of Contact Team Leader Commander L'Iarn.

2. The commodore had brought an advanced (and illegal) weapon to Ariel that would induce severe trauma, if not death, in most humanoid life forms.

3. His actions directly caused the death of a crewmember.

After the Prime Directive violation has occurred, make it known that the players' ship is to report to the nearest starbase ASAP. Keep notes from various characters—for instance, did others object to the violation? Was unusual behavior noted before, during, or after the incident in question? Was it logged with the referee? If not, give each character a die roll based on Intelligence. If the player comes within 20 points below his Intelligence, he has logged his suspicions with the proper people.

Mendez finds that Alliance's surgeon noticed increased depression and frustration on O'Neill's checkups prior to arrival at Ariel. Dr. Kelso's recommendations for rest leave were ignored, and the ship's surgeon did not press the matter, though it was within his authority. Mendez orders a formal court of inquiry into the incident of stardate 9706.4. If guilty, O'Neill faces a minimum of reduction in rank, loss of seniority, and removal from the Galaxy Exploration Command. A maximum penalty of dishonorable discharge and sentence to Elba II for rehabilitation could apply.

Requirements for a board are no less than three officers of command rank for captains and below, and three officers of flag rank for commodore and above. It is recommended that an NPC run by the referee be the president of the board, with the other PCs filling in as required.

An important person in such a proceeding would be a lawyer. As we have seen

STAR TREK®

from the series, there is a legal branch similar to the judge advocate general's office in today's military. The lawyer could be an NPC or could be played by someone who loves to orate (Daniel Websters and Sam Cogleys should apply).

The stats for a Star Fleet lawyer are listed in the sidebar below. JAGs are *not* line officers. They are eligible for department head training, but they would never go to command school and would never be in a position to command a starship or base.

With the board assembled, next comes establishing guilt or innocence. Referees have numerous options: Was computer evidence tampered with? How can suspicions be verified? Was the accused reacting to exterior motivation, such as drugs, mind control, blackmail—cosmic rays from space? Is it a Caine Mutiny situation? The possibilities are endless.

Remember that my Prime Directive rules are broad to permit characters freedom of choice. Such liberty may encourage cerebral solutions rather than brute force. Remember, the mission is to go boldly where no one has gone before, not to pillage the village. Ω

CONTACT TEAM PERSONNEL

In addition to the normal generated skills, an individual trained for and assigned to a contact team would possess the following:

Negotiation and Diplomacy	35
Social Sciences	2 at 20, 1 additional at 10
First Aid	20
Unit Security Procedures	20
Shuttle Craft Pilot	15
Physical Sciences	Add 10 to one
Personal Combat Armed	35
(archaic, various disciplines)	
Personal Combat Unarmed	30
Planetary Survival	Choose two climate types at 20 each
Bonus points of 1D10+2 each (round up to a minimum of 1 point) are added to Strength, Endurance, Intelligence and Dexterity.	

STAR FLEET JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL OFFICER

Intelligence bonus	+5, all cultures
Charisma bonus	+5, all cultures except Tellerites
Luck bonus	+10, all cultures except Vulcans, who only get a +5

For skills, in addition to regular Academy skills:

Federation Law	35
Federation History	25
Star Fleet Regulations	40
Administration	10
Computer Operation	30
Language	35 (divided among any three)
Any two cultures' laws	20 each
Any two cultures' history	15 each