

Standard Operating Procedures

1. Inbound Activities

- a. Immediately upon entering normal space **perform a sensor sweep** looking for immediate dangers to the ship, and take appropriate actions to ensure the ship's safety.
- b. As soon as safe, and practical, **engage the Ship's Transponder** on all standard frequencies. The transponder should announce ship's name and codes at minimum and in normal circumstances should run at all times while the ship is in operations within normal space.
- c. **Wait for the System Traffic Control's hail.** If no hail is forthcoming in a timely fashion proceed with extreme caution.
- d. In reply to STC's hail, **announce the ship's presence and intentions.** The official announcement should include:
 1. **Ship's Name and System of Registry:** "*Hello, Newton Traffic Control. This is the commercial ship Mae Lee out of Mark...*"
 2. **Optionally, where the ship is inbound from:** "*...inbound from Serbia...*"
 3. **Optionally, a heads up on the ship's cargo:** "*...with cargo, passengers and mail to deliver...*"
 4. **What the ship needs from the STC:** "*...requesting an approach vector and landing instructions for Newton main world...*" Things you might want from the STC:
 - (1) **An approach vector to the main world, a gas giant, or some other point**
 - (2) **Orbital instructions around some planet**
 - (3) **Docking instructions at a high port or asteroid base**
 - (4) **Landing instructions on a planet**
 5. **Optionally, what the ship intends to do in system:** "*...to make deliveries and conduct business.*" Ship intentions might include:
 - (1) **Make deliveries**
 - (2) **Conduct new business**
 - (3) **Refuel** (wilderness or at a starport or base)
 - (4) **Perform an outbound jump** (just passing through)
- e. **After landing, perform a ship checkout.**
 1. The Pilot, Engineer, Captain and other crew need to check the ship's systems, internal and external, for damage or maintenance needs and schedule repairs or maintenance as needed.
 2. A restocking list of stores the ship needs should be prepared by the Medic, Engineer and/or Steward, and filled as soon as possible. **Don't forget the life-support!** Get it taken care of early so you won't forget it when you are rushing to lift later.

2. Trade Activities

- a. If the ship intends to do business in this system it will **post a commercial message on the System's network.** This generally can be done via radio while inbound for mid and high tech

systems, but may have to wait until the ship is in orbit or even after landing. In low tech systems the message may have to be physically posted on the ship or Bulletin Board, or printed in one or more local newspapers. *“The Mae Lee inbound from Mark will land on Newton at approximately 0900 298-998 with passengers, cargo and mail to deliver. The Mae Lee will accept mail freight or passengers outbound for Worthag and Montrose with an expected lift date of 305-998.”* The commercial message might include:

1. **Where the ship is bound next**, if known. Liners have a known route, and will announce it. Tramp ships may know where they are bound next, may have a general idea, or may not know at all: *“The ship may be chartered for the transport of...to systems in the direction of Montrose.”* or *“The ship’s next destination is open.”*
 2. **Whether the ship will accept freight, mail or passenger charters.** Ships which are fully booked, or under private charter, may not be able to accept new custom and should say so. This prevents local agents and brokers from wasting their, and the crew’s, time.
 3. **When the ship expects to lift for the next system**, if known.
 4. **Optionally, a list of passengers, freight, and/or cargos for sale** may be included.
- b. **Upon landing/docking inspections take place.** A Custom’s Agent will usually check the manifest against the cargo in the hold and sign off on it. Until that happens the ship can’t unload. Other inspections could include Safety, Medical, and inspections of the Ship’s Papers, and any of these could result in fines, delays, or even the inability to do business locally. Both the Bribery and Admin skills can really come in handy at this point.
- c. **While “on the ground” maintain security.** Open hatches are an invitation for locals to enter and do know knows what. Unmanned security systems are a good way to lose your ship.
- d. **Contact Local Agents concerning the delivery of freight.** This is optimally done via radio prior to the ship’s landing/docking so freight unloading can be expedited. In lower tech systems the contact may have to wait until after landing, and in some cases the crew will have to *find* the agent to whom the freight is to be delivered. *“Good morning Ms. Peterson, this is the Mae Lee inbound from Mark. We have 18 tons of Godbold appliances on our manifest with you as the receiving agent. We’ll be landing at about 0900 tomorrow morning, when can we expect you over to inspect and take delivery of your cargo?”*
1. Usually the ship was paid before they entered jump with the cargo, but occasionally, payment is upon delivery.
 2. Cargos are sometimes accompanied by “Supercargoes”, a shipper’s agent sent along with the cargo to make sure it is delivered in whole and good condition to the proper receiver in a timely fashion. In these cases, payment is might be split between a down payment prior to jump with the remainder paid out by either the Supercargo or the receiver upon delivery.
 3. Receiving agents generally want to inspect the cargo, to make sure it is all there and in good condition, before accepting it.
- e. **Disembark passengers** from the ship.
1. High and middle passengers are disembarked first.
 2. Low passengers may be “defrosted” enroute to the main world, or upon arrival. Medic skill helps a great deal with reviving passengers safely.

3. Customs Agents may come aboard to clear passengers in systems that have a low volume of ship landings. In higher volume systems, passengers will “clear Customs” at a central location...often the Starport Terminal.
 4. Passengers that are continuing with the ship will need to find local accommodations. Many systems have a “startown” next to the Starport where travelers may stay while temporarily in system. Ship Stewards often arrange transport, accommodation and assist in clearing Customs with “temporary visas” for passengers. **Note, in many cases the crew will also need local accommodations!** Liaison, Streetwise, and Admin skills are useful here.
- f. **Contact a Local Broker concerning the sale of speculative cargoes.** Lines usually have a broker on contract, or at least a working relationship with a local broker, to handle any cargoes owned by the line (or the ship’s crew). Because they are not familiar with the economy of the local system (or often that of the surrounding area) tramp ships will almost always have better luck if they also employ a local broker to buy and sell spec cargoes. Each time a “trader” works a system they will learn more: (1st time -3 DM, 2nd time -2 DM, 3rd time -1 DM, after that no negative DM’s on rolls on the *Actual Value table*), so a PC with Broker skill can be useful, but more so after becoming familiar with this specific system.
 - g. **Unloading (and loading) of cargo is almost always done by local Stevedores.** These may be private employees of companies, union members, or government employees. In many cases, the ship will be contacted by the appropriate organization contracting the job...beware of competing groups...in other cases the receiving agent will arrange for the workers, only rarely will the ship have to go looking for workers, or have to do it themselves. A crewman should always be on hand during cargo handling to provide security, interact with the Agents, and watch out for pilfering and breakage by stevedores and/or other locals! Admin, Streetwise, and sometimes Bribery skills can help here.
 - h. **Inquire with local Freight and Passenger Agents about freights to ship and passengers to transport.**
 1. Local Agents will often approach the ship if they know where the ship is bound next, and the broker(s) you contacted earlier will often have a list of clients looking to ship cargoes out.
 2. If the ship is not approached by local agents the ship’s own Supercargo should seek out Agents, and as a final resort, seek out individual shippers for business.
 3. Inquire about and **make plans for special requirements** for cargoes or passengers now!
 4. Time is money and vacuum won’t pay the bills, so you want to waste as little time as possible lining up passengers and cargo for your next jump. Liaison, Admin, Streetwise and Trader skills may come into play at this point.
 - i. **If you have the space and the money, seek out a speculative cargo.** Again brokers are helpful in finding and buying a good spec cargo in an unfamiliar system, use them! A PC with Trader skill is very handy at this point, and as with selling spec cargo so is the Broker skill if the PC is familiar with the local system.
 - j. **Loading the ship** will be done by the same sort of workers as were used to unload the ship and the same procedures and precautions should be taken.
 1. **Cargo Surveyors** will often inspect the ship before freight is loaded, watch the loading, inspecting the cargo after it is loaded. When they are satisfied they will authorize payment.

2. **Custom's Agents** from the local government will sometimes inspect out going cargoes as well. Again Admin and Bribery skills could come in handy.
 3. **Watch for stowaways!** If anyone is going to try to stowaway this is when it would likely happen.
 4. **Make sure the check clears!** If you are getting paid prior to delivery, make sure your account has been credited, or the cash turned over now. If you wait until everyone is aboard and ready to go, you could be held up while trying to get your money. That's bad for business. If you don't have the money you are owed, unload the cargo now!
- k. **Passengers board** the ship a few hours before it is scheduled to lift.
1. **Low passengers** should board first, often 12 to 24 hours before lift, and be put into the sleepers right away. Any problems can be noted and fixed before the ship lifts. Having someone with Medic skill makes for smoother/safer freezing.
 2. **Middle and High passengers** should board no later than an hour before lift.
 3. **Check papers, inspect luggage and confiscate weapons** from passengers. This isn't a requirement, but will often save a ship from many troubles later on. Many repressive systems have Custom's Agents check outgoing passengers to make sure that they are truly cleared to leave.

3. **Outbound Activities**

- a. **Prior to lift** a number of activities need to take place.
1. **Refueling** should be completed before passengers or cargo complete loading. The Engineer is responsible acquiring the fuel, getting it delivered, loaded, and if needed refined.
 2. The Steward, SuperCargo, and/or Captain should **do a walk through of the cargo area** to make sure everything is fastened down, all required life-support systems are working, and all hatches are closed and secured.
 3. The Engineer, Pilot, and/or Captain should **do a walk around the ship** making sure it is ready to lift. This involves checking internal systems and external surfaces.
 4. The Astrogator, Pilot, and/or Captain needs to **file a "flight plan"** with the System Traffic Control and receive a launch slot on the schedule.
 5. Lift on schedule, remember to leave a nice messages for the locals you've dealt with...especially if you plan to come back this way.
- b. **The Run out to the jump point** is often a dangerous time in frontier and less well protected systems.
1. **Man the weapons and sensors** and don't get surprised by pirates.
 2. **Settle the passengers** into their cabins, and keep an eye out for potential hijackers or other problems that might come from them. It isn't too late to return to the main world until you are in jump, so look for problems and fix them now...even if it means delays.
 3. **Double check the jump plot**, Astrogator, misjumps are not your friend!
 4. **Make the jump!** The pilot, astrogator and engineer should all "sign off" on the jump to the Captain who gives the "Go!" Don't forget to dim the lights!

c. **In Jump Space**

1. **Keep the passengers happy and secure.** Monitor the internal security system. Keep the passengers occupied and in their own area. Don't forget to check on the cargo area from time to time.
2. **Perform internal maintenance.** You can do many repairs and maintenance work while in jump, saving you time when on the ground.
3. **Study a new skill.** If nothing else study up on what you could find out about the next system you are visiting, and those around it.
4. **Crew meeting to discuss future destinations and activities.** This may only be the Captain, Steward and SuperCargo, or it may all of the ship's officers, but it should take place. Liners know their route, so often this is only a review of what is coming up and what to expect and look out for. Tramp ships need to evaluate where they have been and where they might be going from here.