

Section 1: Essential Knowledge

1. The option screens are accessed via the 'Esc' key and allow the Input Control method to be changed, the Video mode to be altered and the user preferences to be adjusted.
2. Ad Astra supports six different control methods described in Section 2.5 of the Manual. Although the default mechanism, 'Pitch+Roll' provides very precise control of the spacecraft, it may not be the most intuitive of the options provided. If a different control method is selected then the sensitivity settings may need to be adjusted to yield the best results.
3. Deuterium is the fuel required to travel between Star Systems and can be bought via the Stock Market at space stations and city landing pads.
4. The 'space key' will pause the game and should be used when things get 'hot' since all screens and systems can be freely accessed allowing time to formulate a suitable combat, or exit strategy.
5. The 'right mouse button' will deactivate user control and allow the windows in the main screen to be accessed.
6. The help screens can be accessed via the 'H key'. These provide information describing the control keys together with weapon and spacecraft statistics.
7. If you are new to the game then you can prevent indiscriminate attacks by 'ticking' the 'passive pirate/alien' boxes in the preferences screen described in Section 2.2 of the manual. Selecting this option will not cause current aggressors to break off their attack; however it should stop any new ones from joining in.
8. The F12 key saves the game without prompting and hardly interrupts the game play – it should be used frequently. Games can be loaded via the option screen and screen shots together with time tags are used to identify particular saved games. Deleting a saved game moves it to the recycle bin and this should be periodically emptied.
9. The Auto Pilot can be engaged via the 'A' key and will cause your spacecraft to fly to the currently selected target. The following types of target can be selected:
 - Spacecraft. Selected via the 'v' key (standing for vessel) or by using the Long Range Scanners. It is also possible to left click on ships from the main screen by holding down the 'right mouse button' in order to disable mouse control.
 - Space Stations. Selected via the 's' key or from within the Solar System screen (F1 Key).
 - Planets. Selected via the 'p' key or from within the Solar System screen (F1 Key).
 - Cities. Selected via the 'o' key or from within the Solar System screen (F1 Key).
 - Any point on a planets surface. Enter to Solar System screen (F1 key) and select the required planet. Zoom into the planet using 'Page Up/ Down' keys and left click on the desired location.

Section 2: Increasing System Performance

Ad Astra will attempt to choose the most appropriate default settings by inspecting the host machines settings at start-up. However if the game continues to run slowly then the following suggestion may be of help:

1. Enter the Video options screen via the 'Esc' key, change the display mode to use a 16 bit palette (e.g. 1240x1024x16) and then press 'Apply'. This will free off considerable amounts of video memory and also mean that less information needs to be written to the video buffers. If the resulting rendering appears to be very coarse then it may be necessary to 'Save' the option and completely restart the game from windows since some video cards seem to do odd things when the palette is changed. Reducing the resolution may also help, but other options should be tried first.
2. Enter the Preferences screen via the 'Esc' key and deselect the 'Hi Altitude Detail' in the Fractal options. This should speed up rendering when in high orbit above a planet.

3. Enter the Preferences screen via the 'Esc' key and deselect the 'Hi Res Textures'. This will free off more video memory and may improve rendering performance when in close proximity to a planet.
4. Enter the Preferences screen via the 'Esc' key and deselect the 'Cloud Rendering' in the Fractal options. This will mean that fewer large objects need to be drawn and should improve performance when within a planets atmosphere or in low altitude orbit.
5. Enter the Preferences screen via the 'Esc' key and adjust the 'Min Vegetation/ Animal size' sliders in the Fractal options. This will adjust the amount of flora/ fauna drawn when in close proximity to a planets surface.

Each of the options 2 -5 will take immediate effect.

Section 3: Making your first kill and claiming salvage

Salvaging space wrecks is the quickest way of turning a profit in Ad Astra and if there isn't enough debris lying around then a spot of bounty hunting may be required. Follow these steps to make your first kill and claim salvage rights:

1. At a space port equip your spacecraft with 'Enhanced Long Range Scanners', 'Enhanced Short Range Scanners' and fill your missile magazine with purely destructive missiles. It may also be worth filling up your hold with Deuterium and pre-selecting a nearby star system in the Galactic Map (F2 key) if a quick escape is required.
2. Use your 'Enhanced Long Range Scanners' to select a suitable victim. This should be either a pirate or an alien as it is not a good idea to attract the attention of the local police force. Also the selected ship should not be much larger than your current spacecraft otherwise the tractor beam will be unable to pick it up. The 'Spacecraft Statistics' in the help screens ('H' key) should be of assistance here. If you are flying a 'Taipan' then each of the following are viable targets :
 - Boomslang
 - Sabre
 - Cutlass
 - Rapier
 - Warlock
 - Gy-Raptor
 - Hornet
 - Reaver
 - Beaufighter
 - Banshee

Larger ships such as the Condor can also be picked up by a Taipan, however they will need to be reduced in size by blasting off their wings and other extremities first.

Another aspect that needs to be borne in mind when selecting a target is the number of engine clusters it possesses. Alien spacecraft such as the Warlock and Gy-Raptor support five sets of engines and if an initial frontal assault on the cockpit is unsuccessful then these vessels can be very difficult to 'disable'.

3. Undock from the Space Port, select your victim and engage the auto pilot. As you approach the ship and the auto pilot disengages you should use the Long Range scanner to find out what it's up to. If it is simply patrolling then it may be best to wait for it to launch an attack on your ship as this will give you a good chance of destroying the vulnerable cockpit leaving most of the ship intact. If the spacecraft is already engaged in combat then you'll need to attack from the rear.
4. If a frontal assault occurs then you should launch a missile when within range (the targeting sights should change colour). If the missile destroys the cockpit and disables the craft (indicated by a quick burst of the 1812 overture) then you should pause the game by hitting the space bar. This will give you the chance to plan your interception course to pick up the wreckage as it sweeps past. You need to prepare to fly just over the stricken craft and engage the tractor beam by repeatedly pressing the '[' key. Once you are ready unfreeze the

game and execute your planned manoeuvre. When the tractor beam secures its target you should hear a buzzing sound and subsequent pressing of the '[' key will indicate that the tractor beam is already in use.

5. If the frontal assault failed or was not possible then you will need to take out the engine clusters from the rear. Swing round onto your prey's tail firing all your cannons and unleashing a missile. Don't fire too many missiles otherwise you risk blowing the ship up completely or leaving very little to salvage. Once sufficient damage to the engines has been sustained then you should hear the sound indicating that the ship is disabled as described previously. The wreckage will gradually slow down and you should be able to catch up with it to pick it up.
6. Once the salvage has been secured then freeze the game using the space key as you now need to determine where to sell it. If you're in the middle of a dog fight with other aggressors then it may be best to open a wormhole via the 'W' key and enter a quieter system. If you didn't select a system while you were docked then you can do so now. If things are relatively quiet however then you should fly towards the nearest space station and once within docking distance you should release your salvage using the ']' key so that it drifts towards the station. Once within range the space station will pick it up and you should be rewarded with a salvage statement and any bounty that was placed on the malefactors head.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Minimum System Requirements

256MB RAM
100MB Hard Disk Space
AMD1900+ Processor or Intel equivalent
ATI 9600 64MB Graphics card or equivalent.
DirectX7

Ideal System Requirements

512MB RAM
100MB Hard Disk Space
UNKNOWN AT PRESENT
ATI X700 128MB or NVidia 6600 128MB Graphics card
DirectX7

Ensure that there is enough RAM

Ad Astra should be able to run on a PC with 256MB of RAM. However this is extremely tight and consequently all other applications must be shut down.

To check that there is enough RAM enter the diagnostics screen as described in Section 2.7 and check that the 'Available Memory' is well above 0 (ideally the order of a few MB). If this value is low then the PC will start swapping onto its hard drive and you'll probably hear this device rattling.

Ensure that the game isn't constantly interrupted by background processes on your PC

If when you enter the 'user options' via the 'ESC' key the Frames Per Second counts constantly fluctuates then this is a sure sign that some other process on your PC is stealing CPU cycles from the game. Check the Task List using 'Ctrl-Alt-Delete' for any processes that are actively using CPU cycles and determine whether you can stop them. Also if you're connected to the Internet then disconnect from it as this can be surprisingly intrusive.