Introduction

Welcome to the Dreamstars 2, an arcade style space combat game. This help file covers two versions of the game, Dreamstars 2 (freeware) and Dreamstars 3 (the incredibly cheap sequel). Version 3 contains more components and a greater variety of enemies however the freeware version is an awesome game in it's own right. To find out exactly what extra features Version 3 contains look under the Dreamstars 3 features item in the help topics list.

Dreamstars is an asteroids clone on steroids.

If you ever played and enjoyed the old asteroids game you will love this modern variation on the old theme.

It contains more features than you can poke a stick at and is beautifully dynamic. Add to this the intuitive graphical interface and smooth sound effects and you have a game that not only oozes style and class but that you can come back to again and again.

If designing a deadly spacecraft is your thing then you will be thrilled by the ship design system in Dreamstars because it never gets old! Each level of each game you will be given a list of different components with which to build your ship and as the game progresses all components become more efficient and new types of components are discovered.

If blowing up the enemy is more your style then you will love the variability of the enemies you face in Dreamstars, no two enemies are alike… and not just in properties but also in behavior.

All in all I'm sure you will be pleased with this game and I hope it brings you countless hours of enjoyable game play.

Getting Started

To get started quickly first go to the options page and make sure the start level is 1. If it isn't then you can right click on the value until it is reduced to level 1. Next press the start game button and you will be shown some tutorial messages to help you get going.

User Interface

The user interface can be controlled either through the mouse or the keyboard.

To control the interface via the mouse use the left mouse button to click on buttons or select items in list boxes. Use the right and left mouse button on option values to

increase or decrease their value. Double clicking on some list items will perform a special function on that item.

To control the interface via the keyboard use tab and shift tab to move the focus around the different visible controls. You can tell which control has the focus because that control will have a different coloured border than normal. When a control has focus you can use the enter or space keys to activate that control, this has a similar effect as the left mouse button. Use the shift key with the space or enter key to have the same effect as the right mouse button. When a list box is selected you can use the up and down arrows to change the list selection. Finally you will need to use the keyboard when entering data in an edit box.

The game can be paused during play by pressing the escape key. This game also supports the use of alt-tab to select another application. This will also pause the game.

The most important feature of the user interface is the menu on the left hand side of the screen. This menu is made up of a number of buttons that can be selected to display various pages, like the help page or perform game actions, like the exit game or start game buttons.

Pressing the refresh game button in the options page will restart the game letting you begin a new game before the current one has ended. Pressing this button will also set options that can only be set between games like the start level option.

The controls in the ship design window will be discussed in more detail in the ship design help chapter.

Ship Design

Your ship needs to be built from a number of components. Each component has a size and a mass. You only have a set number of size units available depending on your ships hull so you are limited in the number of components you can add. Increasing your ships mass too much will make it slower and less maneuverable. You will need an Engine to give thrust and Jets to allow turning. While not vital Subspace Sails increase your ships maximum speed beyond 50 pixels/sec.

Adding an energy generator will allow you to add energy based components. The most important of which is a laser weapon. These weapons will allow you to destroy your enemies and get to the next level. Add a shield to help protect your ship from damage.

Lastly there is armour. This component is added to the outside of your ship and as such has no size. It does however have mass and each additional component added adds more mass than the one before it. There is a limit of ten armour components.

The ship designer is made up of a number of different view panes.

The first one at the top of the screen is titled "Ship Specifications". This gives an overview of you ship and it's statistics as follows –

Mass: This is the weight of your ship, heavier ships are more difficult to maneuver but they also are effected less by collisions. This value starts at 1 but may reach 3 or 4 when lots of components are added to your ship. Armour is probably the biggest contributor to mass.
Space Left: This indicates how much empty space remains inside your ship's hull. This space can then be filled with ship components.
Speed: This denotes the maximum speed your ship can travel in pixels per second. It starts at a minimum of 50 and can be increased with the addition of subspace sails. You will want to get this up around 150 if possible.
Turn Speed: This is the speed at which your ship can turn. Anywhere between 30 and 50 is ideal for this value. Adding Jet components increases your turn speed.
Thrust: This is you ability to accelerate. Try to keep this value over 100 if possible. You engine gives you thrust.
Hull: This is how much damage you can sustain before you explode. It is repaired to full at the end of each level. Adding armour will increase your hull value.
Energy: This is the energy your ship can store. This amount is dependant on your energy generator.
Recharge: This is the speed at which your energy recharges in milliseconds per unit. This value is also dependant on your energy generator.
Shield Strength: This is the strength of your shields, what this means is that you shields will absorb this much damage from an attack if you have enough energy. This is a property of your shield component.
Shield Energy Loss: Also a property of the shield component. This is the ratio of damage to energy that your shield uses such that each point of damage will reduce your energy by 1 * this percentage.

The pane at the bottom left titled "New Parts" displays a list of components that are available to be added to your ship. The pane above it shows a description of the component that is highlighted in this list. The title at the top of the pane reflects the component whose details are displayed.

The pane at the bottom right of the window titled "Your Ship" is a list of components that have been added to your ship. At the beginning of the game this will be empty, as you haven't added any components to your ship. The pane above it is a component detail pane similar to the above the new parts list except this one will only display components that have been highlighted in your ship components list.

These two details panes give you the ability to examine old and new components and compare them against each other.

Components with a + in front of their name can be stacked.

Components in the two bottom lists have been colour coded by technology level. Newer and more advanced components will be a deeper blue colour, they will gradually grow greener and eventual fade to a dull yellowy orange as the game progresses and they become obsolete.

To add components to your ship you can either select the component in the new parts list and then press the → arrow or you can double click on the item or press enter when the new parts list has the focus.

Removing a component is similar but with the your ship list and the ← arrow. Note that components that are removed from your ship will reappear in the new parts list if they are not already there.

Components

All components have three basic properties: size, mass, tec level. The Size of a component is used to restrict the number of components that can be added to your ship. The mass of a component will be added to your ships mass when the component is added to your ship. The tec level of a component is a basic indication of how good that component is; however higher tec items are not always better.

Movement Components

Your ships movement is dependant on the amount and efficiency of three types of movement components.

Engine/Drive: This component give your ship the ability to accelerate the higher the thrust property of the engine the greater the acceleration it gives.

Rudders/Jets/Gravities: These will allow your ship to turn. They can be stacked to give more turning power.

Spoilers/Subspace Sails/Slip Fields: These increase the maximum speed your ship can move at. They are also the only component that isn't affected by your ships mass. They can be stacked for a greater top speed.

Energy Components

Your ships energy systems will need to be powered by an energy generator. The generator is needed to power the following components: Lasers, shields, homing missiles (Dreamstars 3) and EMP bombs (Dreamstars 3). This generator has two properties, storage capacity and recharge rate. The higher the storage capacity the more energy you will start each level with and the more energy you will have to absorb

damage through your shields. The recharge rate is best if it is lower as it is an indication of how many milliseconds your energy generator takes to recharge one unit of energy.

Energy Generator component names: Fuel, Solar, Nuclear and Antimatter.

Unlike other energy based components the Missile Launcher only recharges it's missile after the energy generator has completely refilled.

Defense

Your ship has two basic defense systems, shields and hull armour. Basically you will be destroyed as soon as your hull armour reaches 0, this is the top number next to your ship if you have ship stats turned on.

On the other hand your shields use your stored energy to absorb damage before it reaches your hull. This is very useful to give you more time to escape tricky situations but be careful when attacking an enemy because when you are firing and being hit by bullets your energy level will drop very quickly. Energy level is the bottom value (in brackets) near your ship when you have ship stats turned on.

Armour component names: Skin, Scale, Plating or Shell.

Armour: You can add multiple armour components to your ship to increase your hull strength. Each armour component has an armour value property that will be added to your hull. Armour components have no size as they are added to the outside of your ship, however they do have a weight value and this weight value increases as additional armour units are added. For instance if an armour unit has a weight of 10 then adding a second unit will add 11 more weight to your ship.

Shield component names: Cloaks/Auras or Nimbuses.

Basic Shields: Just called shields, this component will help protect your ship from damage but only if you have enough energy for it to be effective thus it's ability to defend you is highly dependent on the power of your energy generator. It has two components: Strength and Conversion Rate. Strength is the strength of your shields, what this means is that you shields will absorb up to much damage from an attack assuming you have sufficient energy. Conversion Rate is the ratio of damage to energy that your shield uses such that each point of damage will reduce your energy by 1 * this percentage.

Complete Shields (Dreamstars 3): When you reach a high enough technology level you will be able to choose complete shields instead of basic shields, this technology is better than the earlier one in every way. Basically these shields are unlimited in the amount of damage they can covert and the strength value indicates the damage they can absorb without using any energy at all!

Self-Repair Component names: Scrubbers, Nanobots or Genobots.

Self-Repair Systems (Dreamstars 3): Also available at higher levels, this small component will allow your hull to slowly repair itself. This component does not use energy.

Weapons

There are three different types of weapons available in Dreamstars these are: Lasers, Missile Launchers and EMP bomb generator.

Gun/Laser/Beamer/Cannon: These components allow you to fire at and hopefully destroy your enemies. These are the most complicated components and have the following properties:
Pattern -- There are three types of lasers: Parallel, Spread and radiating. Parallel lasers can be split with up to 5 separate bullets but will always fire in a straight line in the direction your ship is pointing. Spread lasers can be split with up to 7 separate bullets with each bullet splitting at an angle from those beside it. Radiating weapons have between 4 and 36 bullets that will travel outwards from your ship in all directions such that the angle between each bullet is equal all the way around your ship and the first bullet is going straight ahead. Radiating weapons have very high delay and damage values making them very useful as a standard laser add on, but not so useful by themselves.
Delay -- The number of milliseconds that you will be unable to fire after this weapon is used.
Energy Use -- is the amount of energy this weapon uses up on firing. Be careful with weapons that have high-energy use and low delay, as firing them will use up your energy reserves very quickly.
Containment -- The number of milliseconds the bullet fired will last.
Damage -- The amount of damage the weapon causes on impact. Note that because shields have a limit on the amount of damage they can absorb high damage weapons will effectively have the ability to penetrate enemy shields.
Speed -- The number of pixels/second the bullet travels. Note speed of a weapon is added to the speed of the ship firing this weapon so a bullets fired while moving towards an enemy when firing will be much harder to dodge than bullets fired when moving away.
Shots – The number of separates bullets fired at once.

Arrow/Projectile/Missile/Torpedo Launchers (Dreamstars 3): These components stores and generates homing missiles for your ship to fire. Each time a homing missile is fired your weapons systems will lock for 1 second so try not to use them when you are being shot by your opponent (thought they work well to draw enemy fire). You missile launcher will only charge and create new missiles when you energy system is totally recharged. Missile launchers have the following properties:
Damage -- The payload of each missile.
Energy Cost -- The energy cost to generate each missile.

Missiles -- The number of missiles that can be stored in this unit. Note at the start of each missiles the number of actual missiles on your ship will be reset to this number.
Sensors -- The distance at which you missiles are able to begin homing in on their target.
Tracking -- The thrust value of your missiles.
Armour -- Missiles can be destroyed just like any other game object. This is the amount of punishment they can withstand. Note missiles have a special energy format that makes them highly resistant to enemy bullets.
Fire Rate -- Number of missiles launched each time, this can eventually reach 3.
Max Speed -- The top speed your missiles can reach when chasing an opponent.
Fire Key -- The key used to fire your missiles; this has a default value of 'D'

EM spheres/bombs/boombers: These energy-based bombs are very useful for disabling the larger enemy laser drones. After being fired they will explode when the hit a solid object or when they reach closest proximity to an enemy drone. When they explode they will damage all energy systems in all nearby ships (including players!). Basically they reduce engine power, thus reducing movement capabilities and they also damage energy generators and shields weakening both the targets attack and defense. USE WITH CAUTION! If they explode near your ship or you partners ship they will damage you for the rest of the level!

Game Objects

Seeker Mine: These small yellow mines will seek out your ship attempting to collide with your and unleash their deadly payload, it is a good idea to destroy these as quickly as possible.
Fragment Mines: These large red mines hold a deadly payload of bullets that will shoot out in all directions when they explode. They will attempt to collide with your ship to inflict maximum damage. Be careful not to destroy these mines too close to your ship.
Laser Drones: These are by far the most dangerous enemies in Dreamstars 3. They consist of a drone that is fully equipped with energy systems, lasers and shields and though in the early levels they have very basic AIs they grow smarter with every level, eventually becoming quite cunning.
Powerups: Powerups will give you a new more advanced component in the next level and heal your ship, healing 500 energy and 100 armour points.
Asteroids: Asteroids are neutral but are quite heavy and difficult to destroy. Asteroids will split into smaller asteroids if destroyed and the two largest types of asteroids sometimes contain powerups.

Game Play

In this help it is assumed you are using the default keys, if you change your keyboard setup then you will need to use the new keys instead of those outlined here.

To play the game control you ships movement with the arrow keys. The up will accelerate your ship forward while the down key pushes you backwards. The side arrows turn your ship around. If you have a laser and energy generator installed you can press the C key to fire you laser. If you have a missile launcher (Dreamstars 3) you can use the X key to fire it. While the Z key will fire your EM bombs.

On each level there will be a constant stream of asteroids. While destroying asteroids doesn't add to your points some asteroids contain powerups. Only the two larger types of asteroids can contain these powerups.

The aim of the game is to destroy all the enemies on each level so you can reach the next level. Between each level you will be given the opportunity to redesign your ship.

There are indicators at the top of the screen that allow you to keep track of your ships energy and hull (top left) as well as how much time is left for the level and your current score (top right).

Every tenth level is a boss level. In these levels the enemy sends through a number of their most advanced drones to end your resistance once and for all. Luckily for you your human allies will build you a friendly turret to help in your battle. You can see how many of these are available by checking number drones in the upper left corner of the playing window. If you are getting into trouble you can call out these drones by pressing the space key. You can only have one drone on the screen at any time and any drones that are destroyed are removed permanently from your store. Drones that survive the level will once more return to your drone store for the next level.

Dreamstars 3 Features

For truly mind blowing fun and epic space combat get Dreamstars 3. It includes loads of additional components with which to design your dream ship and blow away your enemies, challenging boss levels with a whole new class of evil drones, two player co-operative mode and much much more.

To order see the ordering Dreamstars 3 help chapter.

Dreamstars 3 contains additional components for use in building your ship: homing missile launchers, self repair systems, complete shields and EMP bombs.

Dreamstars 3 allows you to choose your ship hull, this means you can choose ships with varying sizes, shapes and colours each with different base properties (like space available, base armour and max speed).

Dreamstars 3 allows you to control a non-directional hull type with the mouse.

Dreamstars 3 lets you play with two players in a multi player cooperative mode.

Dreamstars 3 has new enemies and much more suspenseful boss levels.

Dreamstars 3 allows you to call in friendly drones as reinforcements to help you when you are in trouble.

Future Games

If you liked Dreamstars then please support me by telling your friends about it. I am hoping to continue to develop high quality games but to do this I will need your support.

Some possible ideas for future games include: Akima - A space mercenary game using a similar ship building system as Dreamstars to allow the players to build up a fleet of ships and go on missions, earning money to build up their fleet even more.

Shattered Continuum - Again using the combat system in Dreamstars as the tactical engine in a large space strategy game.

About

This is Dreamstars version 2/3 beta release 1. It does not contain either the limited feature set that will be available in versions 2 nor the full set that will be available in Version 3. It is designed to allow game testing and is not to be redistributed under any circumstances.

If you have any questions please send me an email at:
jais@ozemail.com.au

Dreamstars is copyright, all rights reserved 2001-2002.

About

This is Dreamstars Version 2 public beta release. It does not contain any of the features that will be released in version two but does contain most of the features that will be in the freeware version 2

This beta release is not to be redistributed or sold in any manner without my permission.

Dreamstars is copyright, all rights reserved 2001-2002

Credits

Designed by: Jai Shaw
Lead Programmer: Jai Shaw

Interface Artwork: Sheldon De-keyzer
Game Artwork: Damian Kafe
Story Artwork: Finniesha
Game Music and Sound: David Franco

Beta Testers:
Mark Jewell
Dimitris Evgenidis
David A. Brown, Jr.
Cliff Harris

Contact/Support

Email: jais@ozemail.com.au
Email: Jai_overseas@hotmail.com
Web Page: http://www.icarusindie.com/Dreamstars
Web page: http://members.ozemail.com.au/~jais/ds/ds.htm
Web page: http://jaishaw.tripod.com/ds.htm