

Galactic Tracker 3.0 - Table of Contents

Minor Release version 3.00

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Game Database

The Galactic Tracker Database

The Galactic Tracker Database keeps track of the status of every ship, planet and minefield you encounter in VGA Planets. It saves this information only in the registered version. After you unpack your RST file, you should run Galactic Tracker to update the database. New ship, planet and minefield information is added to the database, but old information is left alone. Over time, the database will contain many ships, including ones that you lost contact with (of course, these ships could still be wandering the galaxy, hiding behind planets or cloaking), and a great deal of information about all the planets you have encountered. Once Galactic Tracker records the ship, its last location and vital specs are recorded. This information could be invaluable when planning attacks or defending your space.

The easiest way to update the database is by clicking on Options/Auto-Save Database. This way, Galactic Tracker will save all new information automatically when you exit.

Galactic Tracker adds ships to the database when your scanners (short or long range) detect them in deep space, when your ships in planetary orbit spot a ship at the same planet, and when your ships encounter them in battle. The following table lists what ship features are detected on different scans. Consult your game's Host settings to determine how far your scanners can detect ships.

Ships

What/When	Your Ships	Short-range Scan	Long-range Scan	Battles
Location	X	X	X	
Mass	X	X	X	X
Heading	X	X		
Speed	X	X		
Hull Type	X	X		X
Owner Race	X	X	X	X
Weapons	X			X

Planets

What/When	Your Planets	Super Spy	Dark Sense	Explore	Battles
Owner	X	X	X	X	X
Native Info	X	X			
Mineral Info	X	X	X		
MegaCredits	X	X	X		
Defense	X	X			
Starbase	X	X	X	X	
Infrastructure	X				
Friendly Code	X	X			
Temperature	X			X	X

Combining Information With Your Allies

One of the best features of Galactic Tracker is that you can combine information with your allies easily. All you need is their RST file. Simply unpack it and load it just like you load your own (you can specify the location of your allies' unpacked RSTs in the Game Properties dialog box). You can even load an old unpacked RST -- Galactic Tracker is smart enough to know exactly what information it can use to compliment the database.

Viewing Database Information

By checking Options/View Database Information, all known information about all known ships will be available for review. If this option is not selected, only information from the current turn will be presented.

Ship Information

Hull Specifications

Lists the ship's hull's specifications, including number of weapons, hull mass, engines, tech level, and crew compliment.

Armament & Special Equipment

Shows the ship's armament and defense capabilities.

Combat Rating

The ship's ability to fight in a battle. It is a rough means by which you can compare two ships. It is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Sqr}((\text{Hull_Mass} - 1) * 80) - 2) * 10 + (\text{Torpedo_Tubes} * \text{TetaWatts}) + (\text{Beam_Weapons} * \text{TetaWatts}) + (\text{Fighter_Bays} * 420)$$

$$\text{A Lizard ship's Hull_Mass} = \text{Hull_Mass} + (\text{Hull_Mass} / 2)$$

The Combat Rating assumes the ship has a full compliment of fighters and torpedoes, and does not take into account crew losses or damage. The Combat Rating is also used to calculate fleet strength in [Fleet Analysis](#). Galactic Tracker assumes Tech 5 weapons for ships in which the weapon types are unknown.

Beams & Torpedoes

Displays the type weaponry installed on the ship. Weapons information becomes available when (1.) You own the ship, (2.) You encounter the ship in a battle, or (3.) is acquired from an allied RST file.

Special Equipment

Displays any special equipment this ship has, including cloaking devices, teraformers, gravitonic accelerators, and hyperdrive engines.

Long-range Scan

The Long-range scan is the area outside the immediate area around your planets, and contains very limited information about enemy ships, most important of which are location and mass. This area typically extends between 200 - 500 LY beyond your planets and ships, although it could be configured to any value (check your game's Host settings).

Location

Displays the last known location of this ship in X,Y coordinates and the name of the nearest planet to that location, or the planet at that location if one exists.

Mass

Displays the current mass of the ship, in kilotons

Last Reported

Displays the turn number in which the ship was last recorded by long-range scanners. This is to help you determine how old the data is. If the information is very old, that ship may have been destroyed or recycled and should be considered for deletion. There are two Last Reported items. One is for the short-range scan (where most of the ship information is gathered) and one is for the long-range scan (where only location and mass is detected).

Short-range Scan

Heading	Displays the current heading of the ship in degrees.
Speed	Displays the current speed of the ship in Warp Factors.
Final Destination	Here, Galactic Tracker tries to predict the ship's eventual destination, based on its heading. Essentially, it is the planet the ship appears to be heading toward.
Location Next Turn	This value is especially useful to the Privateers in conjunction with their Rob mission. Here, Galactic Tracker makes a prediction on where the enemy ship will be in the following turn. Often times this will match the Final Destination, but sometimes the ship will be in Deep Space the next turn. In that case, the Privateers can meet them at that location to rob them. Keep in mind however, this value is <i>NOT</i> 100% accurate, especially for fast-moving ships. And of course, nothing can predict a ship's sudden change in course.
Last Reported	Displays the turn number in which the ship was last recorded by short-range scanners. This is to help you determine how old the data is. If the information is very old, that ship may have been destroyed or recycled and should be considered for deletion. There are two Last Reported items. One is for the short-range scan (where most of the ship information is gathered) and one is for the long-range scan (where only location and mass is detected).

Notes

This is a place you can record your own notes and information about each ship. Your notes can appear on the starmap near the ship if you check the <Display Notes on Starmap> checkbox.

Side Buttons

Delete	Deletes all information on this ship from the database.
Edit	Allows you to edit certain ship database information.
Starmap	Press this button to activate the Starmap. A targeting bracket will appear around the ship.
View Alone	Same as the Starmap button, except it also makes all other ships disappear so you can view this ship without clutter.
Scan Area	Press this button to display the Area Scan dialog, which lists ships within 15 LY; planets and minefields within 5 LY. You can switch to the Ship Details of nearby ships from this dialog.
Hyperdrive	Runs the Hyperdrive computer to calculate hyperdrive jump points. This works only for Hyperdrive-equipped ships.

Planet Information

Colony & Native Population

This section displays information relevant to the colony and native populations. Use the radio buttons to select between Colony and Native mode.

Race	The race of the colony or natives.
Population	The current population of the colony or natives
Tax Rate	The current tax rate of the colony and natives
Government	The native government type.

Defense

This section displays information relevant to the planet's defense.

Defense	Number of defense posts on the planet.
Starbase	YES if there is a starbase in orbit, NO if not.
Friendly Code	The planet's last known friendly code.

Economy

This section displays information relevant to the planet's economy and industry.

Factories	Number of factories on the planet.
Mineral Mines	Number of mineral mines on the planet.

Mineral Survey

This section shows everything you ever wanted to know about minerals, mining, and other economic activities on the planet. In addition to minerals in and above ground, it gives mineral density, and production projections for supplies and MegaCredits. You can change between chart and graph mode using the radio buttons.

Notes

This is a place you can record your own notes and information about each planet. Your notes can appear on the starmap near the planet if you check the <Display Notes on Starmap> checkbox.

Side Buttons

Starmap	Press this button to activate the Starmap. A targeting bracket will appear around the planet.
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Scan Area

Press this button to display the Area Scan dialog, which lists ships within 15 LY; planets and minefields within 5 LY. You can switch to the Ship Details of nearby ships from this dialog.

Owner

Allows you to change the owner of the planet, if you know for certain that a particular planet belongs to a particular player.

Release History

Version 3.00

- * Major overhaul! Lots of new features! See [Whats New in Galactic Tracker](#).

Version 2.11

- * Fixed bug that caused Colony players to get an error that told them files were missing when they weren't really missing. I thought I had fixed this in v2.02, but I guess not.

Version 2.10

- * Added new features.
See [What's New in Galactic Tracker](#)
- * Fixed a series of "Subscript Out of Range" errors related to ships in the long range scan area.
- * Fixed "Subscript Out of Range" when switching between games.

Version 2.02

- * Colony players will no longer get the error that told them they were missing some data files, when in fact, all the files were there.
- * Galactic Tracker will no longer crash when there are zero VGA Planets subspace messages.
- * Galactic Tracker will now work correctly with games that use score blankers, except Fleet Analysis will not be available.
- * Version 2.02 now requires VBRUN300.DLL. All earlier versions used VBRUN200.DLL. You must obtain this new DLL to run version 2.02 and all future versions of Galactic Tracker.

Version 2.01

- * Fixed Starmap scrolling problems.
- * Fixed "Subscript Out of Range" error when switching between races from the Player menu.
- * Clicking on the Location option in a Shiplist combo box now reorders the list in 1/5 the time it previously took. Some people thought Galactic Tracker had frozen up, but it was just taking a very long time. This will greatly help the situation.

Version 2.00

- * Initial Release of version Galactic Tracker 2.0.
See [What's New in Galactic Tracker](#)

Map Display Options

Items

Here, you can select the colors, line style, size and font of various map elements, including the color that represents each player on the map. Select the option you want to change from the list, then click on the colors, font selector and line style/size selectors to the right.

Show Features

These check boxes allow you to customize what you see and what you don't see on the starmap. Almost every element on the starmap can be toggled on or off. These options can also be changed from the toolbar on the [Starmap](#).

Ship List

Summary

The Ship List is where you can review the specifications of all known friendly and enemy ships side-by-side. You can organize the list in many ways to help you look for specific information.

Viewing Different Information

You can adjust the combo boxes at the top of the Ship List to display different combinations of information. You can also use one of the two filters to display ships owned by particular races or particular types of ships, such as freighters, carriers, torpedo ships and beam weapon ships. The filters are available from the View menu. You can also use the race button bar to change what is displayed in the Ship List.

Sorting the Ship List

The first combo box allows you to sort the list by race, mass, ID number, name, class, speed, location or Combat Rating. Using this feature, you can organize ships into an order that can be easily referenced, depending on what you are looking for.

Deleting Ships

You can delete old ship entries from the database by pressing the Delete key when you have highlighted the entry on the list. (You can also delete ships from the [Ship Information](#) dialog.)

Starmap

Using the Starmap

The Starmap is where you can view the galaxy as a whole. You can see the locations of ships, planets and minefields and see the direction and speed of ships. Using the Zoom In and Zoom Out buttons, you can increase or decrease the Starmap's level of detail. You can navigate the starmap by clicking on where you want to go, or by using the scroll bars. The map grid marks off 100-square LY areas of space and is useful for estimating distances.

The Starmap is useful when you need to determine the approximate location of enemy ships. Each race's fleet is represented with a unique color, allowing you to quickly see their position in space. In VGA Planets, if you are not careful, it is possible to miss enemy ships while they sneak behind one of your planets. You can either check the ships in orbit around each and every one of your planets every turn, or do it the fast and easy way with Galactic Tracker's Starmap.






Only ships and planets that have been specified in the Race and Ship Filters will appear on the Starmap. Use the race button bar and the Starmap toolbar to customize what is shown on the starmap.

How to use the Starmap










Left Mouse Button Clicking the left mouse button will center the map on the point you clicked.

Right Mouse Button If the mouse cursor is over a planet, ship, minefield, or explosion, then a pop-up menu will appear showing you all of the objects in the area. You can then select which object you want to view.

Popup menu symbols:

-  Explosions
-  Minefields
-  Starbase planets
-  Ships
-  Planets

Toolbar

-  Zoom in.
-  Zoom out.
-  Display bracketed ship by itself (no other ships are displayed).
-  Display all ships.
-  Toggle targeting bracket on/off.
-  Toggle minefields on/off.
-  Toggle ships on/off.
-  Toggle course pointers on/off.
-  Toggle planets on/off.



Toggle hyperdrive ranges on/off.



Toggle course history on/off. These lines show the history of the ship's course throughout the game (up to 100 turns).



Toggle planet ownership brackets on/off. These squares surround planets and are color-coded to represent the players that own those planets.



Toggle warp lanes on/off. Warp lanes are lines connecting planets that are less than 81 LY apart (84 LY with gravity wells). This is a good way to help you plan which planets to go colonize, since you will be able to easily determine large clusters of planets.



Toggle planet names on/off.



Toggle notes on/off. Whether or not you should display notes that were specified in the planet and ship information dialogs.



Toggle grid on/off.



Toggle explosions on/off.

View Course History Since This combo box contains the turn number in which you want to start to show the course history lines. For example, if this combo box displays a "1" then the starmap will show course history lines for all ships since turn 1.

Detecting Minefields

Galactic Tracker must read the messages you receive from your ships to detect minefields. It does not record them in the database since they are always changing. You should always keep several of your ships on the Minesweep mission. Also, if your Host is using custom race names, you **MUST** put the custom RACE.NM file in that game's directory. Otherwise, Galactic Tracker won't be able to determine who owns the minefields.

What's New in Galactic Tracker?

Version 3.0

- * Complete planet and minefield database, including a sortable Planet List, and planet and minefield details viewers. Galactic Tracker collects information from Exploration, Super Spy, Dark Sense, and your own player's information for the ultimate in galactic knowledge.
- * Enhanced ship database records the history of each ship's movements, and displays the historical path of each ship on the Starmap.
- * Improved Starmap shows ship course history, hyperdrive ranges, the locations of explosions, warp lanes (areas between planets less than 81 LY, or 84 LY with Gravity Wells), and ownership of planets and gives you the ability to display ship and planet notes on the Starmap. Pop-up menus allow you to quickly list the ships and planets in a particular area of space.
- * Starmap toolbar allows you to zoom in/out and quickly change what is displayed on the map, including the ability to display one ship at a time (the Starmap can get very cluttered). The race toolbar can be used to quickly toggle which ships/planets are shown in the Starmap, Ship List and Planet List.
- * Hyperdrive Computer that lets you compute the jump point and waypoint for your hyperdrive-equipped ships to arrive precisely at its intended destination.
- * Greatly improved printing, including access to Print Setup, and the ability to print detailed starmaps of up to 4 x 4 pages.
- * Ability to save the Starmap to a Paintbrush-compatible bitmap (BMP).
- * Ability to load more than one player's game (Unpacked Results) at a time. This is the best way to share information with your allies.
- * Improved Combat Rating is more accurate and accounts for beam weapon and torpedo types.
- * Display options are highly customizable. Also, the position of the Starmap, Ship List and Planet List are remembered when you exit so you can customize the layout of Galactic Tracker's desktop.
- * Support for custom starmaps.
- * New document-based game setup. Galactic Tracker databases are now stored in files with the extension *.GTD. This makes setup easier and these files are more portable.

Version 2.1

- * Improved game setup. Each game has its own main VGA Planets directory as well as a game directory. Map settings are now stored per game, so you can customize the

settings for each game.

- * Improved Ship Details dialog. It is now easier to read and contains two new additions: Final Destination and Location Next Turn, useful in predicting the future locations of ships (This is especially useful to the Privateers' Rob mission!).
- * Ship Destination Prediction. This is useful in predicting the future destinations of enemy ships (especially useful to the Privateers for robbing ships!). Check out the Final Destination and Location Next Turn displays on the Ship Details dialog.
- * On the Starmap, course lines on moving ships point in the direction the ship is moving.
- * Improved Allied Databases can now be password protected to better keep information out of the hands of your enemies.
- * Map has 3 more levels of zooming in and the zoom level is now saved when you exit.
- * More 3D effects. Zowie!
- * Improved on-line documentation.
- * Other new features include: faster load time, status information on status bar.

Version 2.0

- * Interactive Starmap. It is now fully resizable and contains many configuration options. You can zoom in and out and click on the ships on the map to activate the Ship Details dialog. It can also reside on the desktop side by side with the Ship List, so you can better analyze the information.
- * Enhanced Galactic Tracker database now records ships you encounter in battle and ship armament. You can also save your own notes with each ship in the database.
- * Automatic minefield detection. Minefields detected by your ships will be graphically displayed on the Starmap.
- * Flexible Ship List sorter. The first combo box now acts as a ship sorter. You can sort the entire list by ID, ship class, ship name, race, speed, total mass or Combat Rating. From the menu you can filter out different types of ships, including beam weapon ships, torpedo ships, carriers and freighters.
- * Enhanced Ship Details dialog. It now lets you list nearby ships and the nearest planet. It also tells you how many turns ago the ship was recorded (in addition to the turn when it was recorded) so you can see how old the data is at a glance. Combat Rating and ship armament are also displayed.
- * Galactic Tracker now looks at data from only one race's perspective. This is to prevent accidental mix-ups with old or unwanted game information. If there is more than one race in the same directory, you may switch between them from the Player menu.
- * Ability to combine databases from other races for more complete, accurate information about the enemy fleets.

- * Starmap prints the starmap exactly how you have it on the screen, including ships and minefields as well as planets.
- * Ability to choose the color that represents each race.
- * Faster execution. Often-used dialogs stay in memory and are displayed much faster.
- * This Help file.
- * Supports custom race names. Simply put your custom RACE.NM file into your game directory, and Galactic Tracker will use it instead of the one in the VGA Planets directory.

Game Properties

- Main VGA Planets Folder** Enter the folder (directory) that contains your VGA Planets installation. This is usually c:\planets. This is the folder that contains the main VGA Planets program, PLANETS.EXE.
- Player Folders** Enter the folder that contains each player's unpacked results (RST). There is a space available for each player. You should leave the spaces for enemy players blank. Ask your allies for their RSTs so you can view them with Galactic Tracker.
- Title/Description** Enter a title or description of the game. This is up to you, and is used to identify the game on the Games menu and title bar.
- Host Version** Select the Host version you are using 3.0, or 3.1. For Host version 3.1, you have the option of configuring Host settings by clicking on the <Configure Host...> button. You should double-check these Host settings to make sure they match the ones in use for your game. Host version 3.2 users should select Host 3.1.
- Password Protection** If you want your database password protected, click here and enter a password.

Hyperdrive Computer

The Hyperdrive Computer accurately calculates the correct jump point and way points for hyperdr-ve capable ships. Use this when making precision jumps to other planets. Enter the starting and destination coordinates and press the <Compute> button to display the results.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Starting Coordinates | Enter the ship's current coordinates. These coordinates will be used to calculate the closest jump point. |
| Destination Coordinates | Enter the planet or X-Y coordinates of the location you wish to go to. |
| Results | Displays the X-Y coordinates of the nearest jump point and the waypoint to set once the ship has arrived at that jump point. |

Fleet Analysis

Technology

Calculates the average warship hull technology of each race. This can be used to compare your enemies' technology with your own.

Fleet Strength

The total firepower of each race's fleet. This is calculated by finding each race's average Combat Rating and multiplying that times the number of warships in the fleet. The more enemy warships you have recorded, the more accurate this will be.

Warships & Freighters

The number of warships and freighters that belong to each player.

Troubleshooting

Won't load; Windows displays a "missing one of its components" error.

Galactic Tracker requires a special file called VBRUN300.DLL to run. It can be found at many BBSs, on-line services, and networks.

If you have VBRUN200.DLL installed, you will need to obtain the new version, VBRUN300.DLL.

It seems to run OK at first, but eventually pops up an Error message and quits.

This is not supposed to happen, but if it does, I goofed somewhere. If possible, contact me via Internet or Compuserve and I will try my best to fix it.

The Database contains incorrect values.

This can happen when an enemy ship is destroyed or recycled and a new ship appears with the same ID number. In this case, you should decide if it should be deleted to purge it of incorrect information. If the ship is visible in the current turn then the new information will put the deleted ship back into the database with the correct values.

The Starmap isn't displaying some or all minefields.

Before Galactic Tracker can detect minefields, your ships must detect them using the Minesweep mission. Galactic Tracker reads these reports in the VGA Planets messages. Also, make sure you are using the same RACE.NM file that Host uses. You should put the custom RACE.NM file in your game directory (where you unpack your RST file).

General Overview

Before You Begin

You must have VBRUN300.DLL in your Windows system directory before you can run Galactic Tracker. If you do not have this file, you may acquire it from many BBSs, on-line services or networks free of charge. Please note that earlier versions of Galactic Tracker (2.01 and earlier) used VBRUN200.DLL. You must have VBRUN300.DLL (a completely new file) to use Galactic Tracker 3.0.

What is Galactic Tracker?

Galactic Tracker will allow you to record the location and specification of every ship, planet and minefield you encounter in VGA Planets and provides an alternative viewer as well as a new scoring method and a hyperdrive computer. You must register Galactic Tracker to save ship and planet information to the database.

Before I wrote Galactic Tracker, I resorted to trying to write down everything I could about every ship I encountered. I wanted to keep a complete record of all of their ship types and location, so I would always be able to know approximately where enemy ships were, even those that were now behind planets or out of range of my scanners. Galactic Tracker does more than you could practically write down on a sheet of paper, and does so with almost no effort on your part. Simply run Galactic Tracker after you unpack each RST file to record the ships in the database (provided you registered the program). Once ship and planet information is recorded, Galactic Tracker never forgets its specifications and last location, even when it goes behind a planet or leaves your scan range. You can then use Galactic Tracker's powerful tools for a comprehensive analysis of the enemy fleets' strengths and weaknesses and the location of important planets. You can also print out the complete listing of ships and planets and the starmap, just like you have formatted it on the screen or combine your database with that of an ally's for more accurate information about the enemy fleets.

Also provided is a tool for analyzing each enemy fleet's Technology and Fleet Strength. This is useful when comparing what really counts -- how many and how powerful are your warships. In many ways, this is a much more accurate way of keeping score than VGA Planets' scoring method. In VGA Planets, planets and starbases are counted much higher than they should be. Just because an empire has many planets does not say much for their offensive abilities. VGA Planets also counts all warships the same, when in fact, a warship may be as much as 200 times as powerful as another. Counting a small scout the same as a huge battleship does not make sense. Galactic Tracker tells you the real story.

Technology displays each empire's average hull technology. You can compare this with your own to determine where you stand in the galactic technology race.

Technology and Fleet Strength are based on Galactic Tracker's knowledge of the enemy fleets. The more it knows, the more accurate these values will be. These values will never be very accurate until Galactic Tracker is registered. Otherwise, these values will grow increasingly accurate as you near the "front lines" and encounter more enemy ships.

In addition, Galactic Tracker also provides a Hyperdrive calculator. This is used to accurately plot the course and destination of hyperdrive-equipped warships, so now pinpoint hyperdrive jumps are possible.

Getting Started

Copy the unarchived files to the directory of your choice (you do not have to put it in the main VGA Planets directory if you don't want to). If your game uses custom race names, copy the RACE.NM file with the custom names into the game directory, where you unpack your RST files. Galactic Tracker automatically looks for a RACE.NM in the game directory. If one is not found, it will use the one in the main VGA Planets directory.

Run GALTRAK.EXE. To create a new database, go to the File menu and click New. It will present you with a setup screen that will allow you to configure which game(s) you want Galactic Tracker to monitor. The player folders are the ones you unpack your RST file to and the main VGA Planets folder is the one where PLANETS.EXE is located. Press <Close> and you're done!

How to Register Galactic Tracker

If you find Galactic Tracker useful in helping you to play your favorite game, VGA Planets, please register. By registering, the database will be enabled, and Galactic Tracker will start recording ships, planets and minefields. Until you register, ships and planets won't be recorded! Your registration code will register all future versions of Galactic Tracker should they become available. You can register by filling out the registration form (REGISTER.TXT) and sending \$5 US (All orders outside the U.S. and Canada add \$2 US). All checks and money orders must be in US currency. Send it to:

USA:

Karl Eric Beisel
1965 Fountainbrook Ct.
Woodbridge, VA 22192

Europe:

The Survival BBS
P.O. Box 1538
DK-2700 Bronshoj
Denmark

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, or any problems running Galactic Tracker, please contact me at one of the following addresses:

Internet: kbeisel@osf1.gmu.edu
Compuserve: 73223,612

Questions and information about registration in Europe should contact Henrik Moerk at one of the following networks:

The Survival BBS: +45 38 89 52 53 (9600-n81)
FIDONet: 2:231/306

The latest version of Galactic Tracker will always be available at one of the following official distribution sites:

The Tim Continuum (California): (209) 877-4921 (14400-8-N-1)
Compuserve: PBMGAMES, LIB 6
Internet (FTP): <ftp.snafu.de>

