

# ASCENSION AFTER THUNDER

## Game Design Document

Version 1.0 • 2026

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<b>Developer</b>	InternCG (Solo Developer, Student, Hungary)
<b>Platform</b>	PC (Windows)
<b>Engine</b>	Unreal Engine 5 (Blueprints)
<b>Genre</b>	Free-to-Play Multiplayer Space Combat
<b>Status</b>	Active Development
<b>Document Version</b>	1.0 — February 2026

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# 1. Overview

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## 1.1 What Is AAT?

Ascension After Thunder is a free-to-play multiplayer space combat game for PC. Five factions, each based on a real-world nation, fight over orbital and deep-space territory using fleets of 14 different ship classes. Combat is session-based and real-time, with a focus on weapon selection, fleet composition, and tactical positioning.

The game is being built solo in Unreal Engine 5 using Blueprints. Multiplayer replication is functional. It's a one-person project developed part-time alongside school.

## 1.2 Goals & Intentions

The main goal is to make a game that feels good to play and rewards players who learn it — without any pay-to-win elements getting in the way. Ships are earned through gameplay. Progression reflects time and skill, not spending.

The design also aims to give each faction a distinct feel, so that choosing a faction actually means something in how you play.

## 1.3 Who Is It For?

AAT is aimed at players who enjoy vehicular or fleet combat games like War Thunder or World of Warships, but want a space setting and a bit more tactical depth in how weapons interact with defenses. It's also for players who bounced off EVE Online's complexity but like the idea of faction-based fleet warfare.

## 2. Setting & Lore

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### 2.1 Background

The conflict in AAT did not start in space. It started on Mars.

As Earth's nations expanded into the solar system, Mars became the flashpoint. Beneath its surface lay enormous reserves of water ice, rare minerals, and resources that every major power wanted. Negotiations over who had the right to claim what went nowhere. Eventually, the tensions boiled over into the First Galactic War — a full-scale military conflict fought across orbital space and the Martian surface.

The war didn't end with a winner. It ended when the nations turned their weapons on each other back home. Earth was hit hard. Cities were destroyed. Populations were devastated. The planet survived, but barely.

In the aftermath, the surviving governments signed the Earth Accords — a mutual agreement that no further nuclear or orbital strikes would be permitted against Earth itself. The planet was off-limits. Whatever grievances remained would be settled elsewhere.

That didn't stop the fighting. It just moved it.

### 2.2 The Factions Today

The Second Intergalactic War is ongoing. The same five powers that nearly destroyed Earth are now fighting for control of orbital zones, resource corridors, and strategic positions throughout the solar system. The Accords keep Earth safe, but nothing else is protected.

Each faction fights with its own doctrine — shaped by its history, its military tradition, and what it learned from the first war. The American Space Force relies on precision and range. The Russian Space Federation overwhelms with raw firepower. The Japanese SSDF disrupts and disables before ever engaging head-on. The Chinese Space Navy uses sustained energy output to grind down defenses. And the European Space Coalition controls the battlefield itself, making entire corridors impassable.

*The war has no end in sight. Players enter it somewhere in the middle.*

## 3. Game Concept

### 3.1 Genre & Platform

<b>Genre</b>	Free-to-Play Multiplayer Space Combat
<b>Platform</b>	PC (Windows, via Steam)
<b>Perspective</b>	Third-Person Space Combat
<b>Engine</b>	Unreal Engine 5 (Blueprints)
<b>Multiplayer</b>	Real-time, session-based, replicated networking
<b>Business Model</b>	Free-to-Play — cosmetics + Premium Ships (Steam DLC)

### 3.2 Inspirations

Game	What AAT Takes From It	How AAT Is Different
War Thunder	Nation-based factions, vehicle variety, session structure	Space setting, fleet scale, strictly no P2W
EVE Online	Faction identity, fleet doctrine, large-scale conflict	Session-based, no spreadsheet complexity
Infinite Lagrange	Faction aesthetics, ship class variety	Real-time action combat, not idle/RTS

## 4. Core Gameplay Loop

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### 4.1 Session Loop

Each session follows the same basic cycle:

Step	Phase	What Happens
01	Deploy	Pick a ship from your fleet and enter a battle.
02	Fight & Capture	Engage enemies and contest map objectives. Damage dealt, captures, and assists all contribute to your score.
03	Earn RP	Research Points are awarded based on performance. Winning earns more, but contributing in a loss still gives something.
04	Research & Buy	Spend RP to research new ships. Once researched, buy them with in-game Credits. No real-money purchases for ships.
05	Take it to battle	Bring the new ship in. Try it out. Add it to your fleet strategy.

### 4.2 Win Conditions

Exact match modes are still being finalized, but the planned objective types are:

- Capture and hold strategic positions on the map
- Deplete the enemy team's reinforcement pool by destroying ships
- Protect or destroy a high-value target (a flagship, station, or supply line)
- Time-limited territory control — highest score at the end wins

## 5. Factions

### 5.1 Overview

Each faction is built around a specific combat doctrine. Choosing a faction determines which ships and weapons you have access to. The idea is that no faction is strictly better than another — they just approach combat differently, and player skill within that doctrine matters more than the faction itself.

### 5.2 Faction Breakdown

Faction	Doctrine	Weapons	Playstyle
American Space Force	Kinetic Dominance	Railguns, Precision Missiles	Long-range precision. Good at picking off exposed targets before they get into range.
European Space Coalition	Area Denial	Minefields, Heavy Torpedoes	Controls space rather than fighting through it. Punishes advances and forces enemies to detour. Some EU ships sacrifice their shields entirely in exchange for significantly thicker armor.
Japanese SSDF	Electronic Warfare	EW Suites, EMP, Cruise Missiles	Strips enemy sensors and systems before committing to a direct engagement.
Chinese Space Navy	Directed Energy	Laser Beams, Blasters	Sustained pressure at medium range. Particularly good at burning through shields.
Russian Space Federation	Brute Force	Heavy Rockets, High-Caliber Projectiles	Close-range brawling. High armor, high volume of fire. Doesn't rely on finesse.

## 6. Ship Classes

### 6.1 Class Roster

There are 14 ship classes, ranging from expendable drones to large capital ships. Each occupies a specific role in fleet combat. Weapon loadouts are fixed per hull, but the Tech Tree and Variants (see 6.2) allow for some build customization within each class.

Class	Category	Role
Drone	Strike Craft	Small and expendable. Good for swarming and screening. Can be deployed from Carriers.
USV	Strike Craft	Unmanned Space Vehicle. Can be operated remotely or deployed from a Carrier.
Fighter	Strike Craft	Intercepts other strike craft. Fast and maneuverable, but limited against larger ships.
Attacker	Strike Craft	Hybrid between a fighter and a bomber. Works against a wider range of target sizes.
Bomber	Strike Craft	Deals heavy damage to capital ships but needs escort. Struggles in direct fights.
Corvette	Light Warship	The first real warship tier. Armed with turrets. More durable than strike craft.
Destroyer	Light Warship	Protects the fleet from missiles, torpedoes, and incoming strike craft.
Frigate	Warship	General-purpose warship. Decent firepower and survivability. Good starting point for fleet building.
Cruiser	Capital Ship	Mid-weight capital. Balances firepower and speed. A solid backbone for most fleets.
Battlecruiser	Capital Ship	Heavy guns, cruiser speed. Hits hard and moves faster than a Battleship.
Battleship	Capital Ship	Maximum armor and firepower. Slow, but extremely hard to kill. Fleet anchor.
Carrier	Support Capital	Deploys and recovers strike craft. A force multiplier rather than a direct combatant.
Combat Engineer	Support	Constructs field structures, repairs allied ships, and handles battlefield logistics.
Auxiliary / Command	Support	Handles jamming, fleet-wide buffs, and can serve as a mobile spawn point for allies.

### 6.2 Variants

Each ship hull has multiple Variants — different configurations of the same hull that shift its role focus. A Frigate might have a fire-support variant focused on range and reload, and an anti-

strike variant built around point defense. Variants need to be researched separately but don't count as separate ships in the roster. They're build choices within a class.

## 7. Combat System

### 7.1 Triple-Layer Defense

Every ship has three defensive layers. To destroy a ship, all three have to be depleted in order. Each layer responds differently to different damage types — choosing the wrong weapon for the current layer wastes a lot of potential damage.

Layer	Name	How It Works	Notes
01	Shield	Energy barrier. Depletes under fire, then slowly regenerates over time.	Some European Space Coalition ships sacrifice their shields entirely for significantly heavier armor. These ships have no shield layer at all.
02	Armor	Physical plating. Doesn't regenerate passively. Absorbs and reduces incoming kinetic force.	EU ships that trade shields get substantially more armor HP and resistance to compensate.
03	Hull	Structural integrity. Zero means the ship is destroyed. No passive recovery.	The most vulnerable to explosive and thermal damage. Losing hull also risks system damage at low percentages.

## 7.2 Damage Types

There are four damage types. Each interacts with the defense layers differently, and understanding these interactions is a core part of combat.

Damage Type	How It Works
Kinetic	Deals high damage to Hull, normal damage to Armor, and low damage to Shield. The go-to for finishing off a stripped ship, but not ideal for working through shields.
Energy	Deals high damage to Shield. Each hit has a 30% chance to bypass the shield and deal damage directly to Armor instead — but that bypassed damage is only 75% of its normal value. Makes Energy weapons less predictable but more versatile than pure shield-strippers.
System Damage	Targets a ship's internal systems — propulsion, bridge, weapons, and others. Each system has its own System HP pool. As System HP drops, that system becomes less efficient. Systems can repair themselves over time, but continuous incoming damage can prevent or slow recovery. No system can be fully destroyed, but a heavily damaged weapons system fires slower, and a damaged propulsion system cuts speed. System Damage is not the same as Hull damage — a ship can be fully operational at low Hull, or nearly immobile at full Hull if its systems are crippled.
Thermal / Nuclear	Deals a large burst of damage on impact, then continues to deal smaller damage over time for a period afterward. Multiple hits stack the damage-over-time effect. Effective against all layers but especially punishing when the target can't disengage.

Weapons use one or more of these damage types. For example, a railgun deals primarily Kinetic damage, while a laser beam deals Energy damage. Some weapons — like nuclear warheads — deal Thermal/Nuclear damage. EMP weapons from the Japanese SSDF deal System Damage.

## 7.3 Weapon Types

Category	Weapons	Notes
Kinetics	Bullets, Shells, Railguns	Primarily Kinetic damage. Railguns punch through armor better than standard shells.
Explosives	Missiles, Rockets, Mines, Torpedoes	Mix of Kinetic and Thermal damage depending on warhead type. Thermal warheads add damage-over-time.
Energy	Laser Blasters, Laser Beams	Energy damage. High shield damage with a 30% armor-bypass chance per hit.
Specialty	Magnetic Bombs, EMP	Magnetic Bombs attach directly to hulls and deal Kinetic damage bypassing deflection. EMP weapons deal System Damage.

Compatible weapons allow ammo swapping mid-battle. There's a brief delay on the switch, so it's a deliberate choice.

## 7.4 Abilities & Tactical Skills

## Command Skills (High Impact — Long Cooldown)

Skill	Effect
Stationary Defense	Lock in place. +50% tracking accuracy, -12.5% incoming damage. Good for holding a position.
EM Blockade	Deploy a zone that slows enemy ships and disables incoming missiles inside it.
Target Sharing	Broadcast all your spotted enemy positions to the entire allied fleet at once.

## Battle Strategies (Active — Shorter Cooldown)

Strategy	Effect
Anti-Spacecraft	Load specialist ammo for extra damage against lighter ship classes.
Improved Cruising	+25% speed across all thrust axes. Short burst of afterburner.
General Quarters!	+30% tracking speed and faster reload. Useful when a fight gets close.
Evasion Sequence	Auto-countermeasures and +40% turn speed. For getting out of a bad position.
Air Cover	Provides anti-strike protection for nearby allied ships.
Fire as you Bear	Engage targets as they enter firing arcs rather than waiting for optimal position.
Mark Target for Strike	Coordinate a bomber or missile strike on a specific enemy ship.

## 8. Progression

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### 8.1 Research & Acquisition

Ships are unlocked through gameplay, not purchases. The process has two steps: first you research a ship using Research Points (earned in battle), then you buy it with Credits (also earned in battle). There's no option to skip this with real money.

- Research Points (RP) are earned based on battle performance — damage, assists, captures, and match outcome
- Credits are a secondary currency, also earned through play, used to actually buy a researched ship
- Neither currency can be purchased directly with real money

### 8.2 Ship Mastery

<b>What it is</b>	A per-ship experience level that tracks how much time you've spent in a given hull.
<b>Effect on combat</b>	None — it's cosmetic only. No stat changes.
<b>What it shows</b>	Other players can see your Mastery level. It's a way to show investment in a ship, not power.

### 8.3 Tech Tree & Ship Builds

Each ship has its own Tech Tree. You earn Tech Points by playing that specific ship, then spend them on upgrades. The tree has more nodes than you can fully unlock, so you have to make choices — lean into speed, survivability, firepower, or a mix. Choices aren't permanent: you can Respec at any time using in-game currency.

Upgradeable stats: Speed, Armor, Shield, Evasion, Reload, Repair, Signature, Range, Power.

The goal is that two players in the same ship class can still have meaningfully different builds. A heavily armored Frigate and a fast, low-signature Frigate are both valid — they just do different things.

## 9. Maps & Environments

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### 9.1 Setting

Battles take place in orbital and deep-space environments. The visual tone is grounded but stylized — realistic enough to fit the military faction themes, but designed for readability during fast fleet engagements. Maps are built with multiple ship classes in mind: there should always be something for Fighters to do, something for Destroyers to protect, and room for Battleships to fight.

### 9.2 Environment Types

- Orbital: Near a planet or station. Debris fields, orbital platforms, and tight corridors. Lots of cover.
- Deep Space: Open void. No cover. Favors longer ranges and capital ships. Formation discipline matters more.
- Contested Zones: Dense fields of asteroids or wreckage. Smaller ships have an advantage. Capital formations get disrupted.

### 9.3 Design Goals

- At least 3 viable approach vectors per side
- Objectives that naturally require different classes to cooperate
- No map should completely shut down any specific faction
- Readable at every scale — from a Drone skirmish to a Battleship standoff

## 10. Technical Overview

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### 10.1 Engine & Setup

<b>Engine</b>	Unreal Engine 5
<b>Scripting</b>	Blueprints (no C++ — solo developer)
<b>Multiplayer</b>	UE5 replication — functional
<b>Platform</b>	PC / Steam
<b>Steam Integration</b>	In progress
<b>Developer</b>	InternCG — one person, student, Hungary

### 10.2 Networking

Multiplayer replication is working. The game uses UE5's built-in networking. The goal is server-authoritative gameplay to keep competitive integrity intact. Steam integration is in progress for lobbies, matchmaking, and auth.

### 10.3 Art & Assets

10+ ships are modeled. Scale differences between classes are reflected in the actual models. The fleet viewer on the website shows the current state. The aesthetic targets something in between realistic and stylized — the ships should feel military and grounded, but readable in a chaotic fight.

### 10.4 Current Status

- Multiplayer replication: Working
- Steam integration: In progress
- Ships modeled: 10+
- Ship classes designed: 14
- GitHub commits: 80+
- Development time: 1+ year, part-time alongside school

## 11. Development Roadmap

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### 11.1 Right Now

- Finish 3D models for the full ship roster (70 ships across 14 classes and 5 factions)
- Complete Steam integration
- First playable map with a working capture-point loop
- Research & Acquisition system implementation
- Ability system and balancing

### 11.2 Short-Term

- Closed playtesting through the Discord community
- Public gameplay trailer
- Tech Tree per ship
- Basic cosmetic system (skins, nameplates)

### 11.3 Long-Term

- Steam Early Access release
- Ranked matchmaking
- Seasonal content — new ships, maps, events
- Community involvement in balance decisions

### 11.4 Community

The game has active channels on Discord, Reddit, YouTube, and Twitch. Development is shared openly — the community sees updates as they happen and can give feedback that shapes the direction of the game.

## 12. Glossary

Term	Definition
RP (Research Points)	Earned through battles. Used to research new ships.
Credits	Earned through play. Used to purchase already-researched ships.
Tech Points	Per-ship points used to unlock nodes in that ship's Tech Tree.
Mastery Level	Cosmetic experience indicator per ship. No combat effect.
Variant	An alternate configuration of a ship hull with a different role focus.
USV	Unmanned Space Vehicle. Strike craft deployed remotely or from a Carrier.
Triple-Layer Defense	The Shield / Armor / Hull system that defines how ships take damage.
Doctrine	A faction's core combat style and weapon specialization.
Command Skill	High-impact ability with a long cooldown.
Battle Strategy	Active combat skill with a shorter cooldown.
Respec	Reset a ship's Tech Tree to reallocate Tech Points. Costs in-game currency.
Earth Accords	Post-First-War agreement preventing further attacks on Earth itself.
First Galactic War	The original conflict that sparked over Mars. Ended with mutual nuclear strikes on Earth.
Second Intergalactic War	The ongoing conflict that forms the backdrop of AAT's multiplayer battles.
Kinetic Damage	Deals high damage to Hull, normal to Armor, low to Shield.
Energy Damage	Deals high damage to Shield, with a 30% chance per hit to bypass shield and deal 75% damage to Armor instead.
System Damage	Targets internal ship systems (propulsion, weapons, bridge, etc.), reducing their efficiency. Systems repair over time unless continuously attacked.
Thermal / Nuclear Damage	Large burst damage on impact plus damage-over-time that stacks with multiple hits.
System HP	The health pool of an individual ship system. Depletion reduces that system's efficiency, not the ship's hull.
Premium Ship	A ship sold as Steam DLC. Balanced to be different rather than strictly stronger than free ships.
Premium Time	A tentative subscription feature. Would only tick down while the game is running. Not yet confirmed.

# Ascension After Thunder

Game Design Document — v1.0

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