

The Captain: Advice and tips

At first glance, the job of the captain seems odd or unimportant. The captain doesn't have their own computer screen, keyboard, or mouse. Any experienced Artemis player will tell you, however, that the job of the captain is one of the most important and critical components of the ship. Your ship is a complex entity, and each interlocking role played by the other officers needs the guidance and control of a single mind. The captain makes decisions and provides the overall vision of what the Artemis is doing, while relaying critical information between each of the stations.

The role of the captain is both outward facing and inward facing. To meet the demands of the mission, a captain must be calm, decisive, and strategic, but they must also be equipped to meet the interpersonal demands of commanding a crew; they must be a clear communicator and an authority figure, especially with a new crew. The crew needs to follow the captain's lead at both an intellectual level (on account of the rank hierarchy aboard a vessel) but also on a gut level, so the captain must be--or be able to project--a strong personality and an appearance of control over the situation on both sides of the view screen. In a sense, the bridge crew is playing the game via their stations, while the captain is playing via the bridge crew. The captain must therefore be as deft, accurate, and decisive in controlling their crew as they expect their crew to be in controlling their stations.

If this is your first few times playing with an inexperienced crew, make sure everyone is on the same page with regard to bridge procedure and communication norms. Effective bridge chatter functions according to principles of brevity that omit superfluous elements, etiquette among them. Saying "please" and "thank you" wastes valuable time when dreadnoughts are blasting your shields away. Become--or at least act as if you are--comfortable in your role as the Word of God aboard your ship. Deliver your orders as orders, rather than requests. This will require that both you and your crew buy into the roles you have chosen; while you may feel a bit guilty about ordering your friends around (or, conversely, feel strange to be ordered around), efficient and effective communication is as much a part of the game as beams or warp. Developing a command style and ability to unapologetically sit in the Big Chair can be one of the most enjoyable aspects of the game.

Work with your crew. Play some easy games at first, and then do a post-mission debriefing on what worked, and what didn't. A crew member might need some critical instructions from you that you aren't giving them, forcing them to guess. You might be telling engineering things they don't need to know. Open communication solves these issues, and streamlines your efficiency. Remember, after every mission, after the high fives, is "What worked, and what didn't?"

Communication and Brevity:

"Aye, Captain" : Ask your crew to acknowledge orders. If you tell Helm to turn to bearing 180, and they don't say anything, you have to devote your brainpower to figuring out if they are following your order, doing what they think is best, or slipping into a coma. A simple, standard acknowledgement of your order allows you to trust that they are doing their job, and that they aren't doing it if you don't hear them say it. Have everyone agree ahead of time.

"{Station}, {Order}" : Call your crew by their station name, and **only** give orders when preceded by their call sign. They are looking at their screen, not you, so they might not be sure if you are talking to them or not. I've shouted "Full power to impulse" before, intending my helm to floor it, but the engineer thought I was talking to him, and diverted a bunch of resources to the engines, which I was not intending. Simply preceding every order with the station it is intended for solves this issue.

Roles and Efficiency Strategies:

Presets: Work with engineering to develop agreed-upon, named presets for power and coolant allocation so you don't have to micromanage. Even simple settings for Travel (high efficiency and cooling to warp, impulse, and maneuver) and Combat (increased power to shields, beams, tubes) can save time and increase your ability to maintain the ship in the appropriate readiness state. Additional valuable configurations might increasingly specialized, such as Dogfight (high maneuver and beams) or Bombing (high shields, tubes, and warp).

Maneuvers: Similarly, work out (or at least explain) flight maneuvers with your crew beforehand, so that everyone knows what needs to be done when you want to do something difficult under pressure. This is especially important when multiple stations need to co-ordinate quickly and efficiently.

Main screen control: Unless you're looking over someone's shoulder the whole time, an important tool for you is the main screen. Ask your Weapons Officer to control the main screen outside of combat, and the Communications Officer to control it during combat. The Weapons Officer doesn't have a lot to do when they aren't firing missiles at people, but is pretty busy during a dogfight.

Next-step planning: Work with your Science and Communications Officers to plan ahead. Have science identify the bearing and shield frequency to the target or destination while combat is wrapping up, saving time and energy. Check in with them frequently for information to inform your decisions. Monitor energy usage and plan for when you'll need to dock, and where.

Micromanagement: Not all your bridge officers will respond well to micromanagement. Others will require it to be effective. Figure out which of your officers you can trust to do their jobs without interference, and concentrate on making sure that you're giving the right orders to the right people at the right time.

Take care of the big picture: While everyone else's heads are buried in their consoles, it's your responsibility to pay attention to higher-level objectives. Remember to communicate your intentions along with your orders, though; don't just say what you want the crew to do, but let them in on your plan - it should be a surprise to the enemy, not your people. The captain that "had a plan all along" is for the movies. Your crew might have suggestions for improving your plan, or might point out a critical flaw in your logic.

Above all, have fun!