

MAPPING THE STARS

Updated Rules Outline

1. Game Overview

Mapping the Stars is a drawing and guessing game where players complete Missions by creating pictures from fields of stars.

On each turn, the Artist receives a secret word. The other players are told only the **Mission Category**.

The Artist chooses how difficult they want the Mission to be, selects the matching Star Map, and attempts to create the secret word by connecting the stars.

Successful Missions move the Artist's spaceship along the **Universe Track**.

The first player or team to reach the final destination wins.

2. Objective

Be the first player or team to move your spaceship to the final space on the Universe Track.

Players move by successfully completing drawing Missions.

Harder Star Maps provide greater movement rewards.

3. Components

The current game concept includes:

- Mission Card deck
- Easy Star Map booklet
- Medium Star Map booklet
- Hard Star Map booklet

- Expert Star Map booklet
- Universe Track board
- Spaceship pawns
- Star Power cards or tokens
- Bonus Finishing Star tokens
- Timer
- Pencils
- Rulebook / Quick Play Reference

Exact quantities will be finalized after playtesting.

4. Mission Cards

Each Mission Card contains:

Mission Number

Identifies the card.

Mission Category

This is the **only clue given to the guessers**.

Examples include:

- Creature Feature
- On the Move
- Home Sweet Home
- Out of This World
- On the Farm
- Under the Sea
- Wild West
- Food Frenzy
- Jungle Journey
- Legends & Monsters

Secret Word

Only the Artist may see the word.

Example:

Category: Creature Feature

Secret Word: Giraffe

Mission Boost

Some or all Mission Cards may include an optional bonus objective.

Examples:

- Get guessed before using Finishing Stars.
- Use at least 1 Boost Star.
- Use no Star Power.
- Complete the Mission on Hard or Expert.
- Complete the Mission on Expert.
- Use exactly your standard number of Finishing Stars.

Mission Boosts can award additional movement, Bonus Finishing Stars, Star Powers, or other rewards.

5. Mission Categories

Before drawing begins, the Artist announces the Mission Category to all guessers.

The secret word remains hidden.

Example:

The Artist draws:

CREATURE FEATURE — GIRAFFE

The Artist announces:

“The category is Creature Feature.”

The guessers now know the general type of answer but receive no other clue.

The category remains available as a clue throughout the Mission.

6. Choosing Difficulty

After seeing the secret word, the Artist chooses one of four difficulty levels.

The secret word does **not** change.

Difficulty is determined by the Star Map selected.

Difficulty	Star Field	Base Movement
Easy	Many stars	1 space
Medium	Fewer stars	2 spaces
Hard	Sparse stars	3 spaces
Expert	Very few stars	4 spaces

This creates the central push-your-luck decision of the game.

The Artist may decide:

“Can I draw this safely on Easy, or can I risk Expert and move four spaces?”

7. Star Maps

Each difficulty level has its own Star Map booklet or pad.

Every Star Map contains a unique arrangement of stars.

As difficulty increases, the number of available stars decreases.

Easy

Dense star field with many possible connection points.

Medium

Moderate number of stars.

Hard

Sparse star field requiring more creative interpretation.

Expert

Very limited stars. Every connection becomes important.

Star Maps should vary from page to page so players cannot memorize drawings.

A possible production format is:

- 20 sheets per difficulty
- Double-sided
- Multiple drawing areas per sheet

Final quantities will depend on production and playtesting.

8. Boost Stars

Certain stars printed on a Star Map are noticeably larger.

These are **Boost Stars**.

If a Boost Star is incorporated into a successfully guessed drawing, it provides additional movement.

Current Prototype Rule

Each Boost Star used = +1 space

A Boost Star must be an actual connection point in the drawing.

Simply passing near a Boost Star does not count.

The Artist may therefore choose between:

- Creating the easiest recognizable drawing, or
 - Taking a more difficult path that incorporates Boost Stars for additional movement.
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9. Beginning a Turn

The active player becomes the **Artist**.

The Artist:

1. Draws one Mission Card.
 2. Secretly reads the word.
 3. Announces the Mission Category.
 4. Chooses Easy, Medium, Hard, or Expert.
 5. Takes a fresh Star Map matching that difficulty.
 6. Studies the Star Map for the allowed planning time.
 7. Begins the Mission when the timer starts.
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10. Core Drawing Rules

During the connected portion of the drawing:

Start on a Star

The pencil must begin on a printed star.

Connect Star to Star

Every line must connect one printed star to another.

Do Not Lift the Pencil

Once drawing begins, the pencil must remain on the page.

Do Not Cross Lines

A line may not cross another line already drawn.

Do Not Reuse a Star

Each printed star may normally be used only once.

Do Not Erase

Once a line is drawn, it remains.

No Letters or Numbers

The Artist cannot write words, letters, numbers, abbreviations, or similar clues.

No Communication

The Artist may not:

- Speak
- Gesture
- Make sound effects
- Mouth words
- Give hints

The drawing must provide the clue.

Star Powers may temporarily allow the Artist to break specific drawing rules.

11. Guessing

Guessers may call out answers while the Artist is drawing.

There is no penalty for incorrect guesses unless a future variant introduces one.

A Mission succeeds when a guesser correctly identifies the secret word before time expires.

The category may remain visible or be repeated during the Mission.

12. Completing the Connected Drawing

The Artist decides when the connected portion of the drawing is finished.

Once the Artist ends the connected drawing:

- No additional normal lines may be added.
- The Artist proceeds to the Finishing Stars phase if the word has not yet been guessed.

Before Finishing Stars are added, guessers may have one final opportunity to identify the drawing in its pure connected form.

13. Finishing Stars

Finishing Stars are individual stars or dots added **after** the connected drawing is complete.

They are used to provide small visual details.

Examples include:

- Eyes
- Nose
- Buttons
- Headlights
- Spots
- Facial details
- Decorative points

Finishing Star Rules

Finishing Stars:

- May be placed anywhere.
- Do not need to touch a printed star.
- Cannot be connected with lines.
- Cannot be used to create letters or numbers.
- Are added only after the connected drawing is complete.

Current Starting Allowance

Difficulty	Finishing Stars
Easy	2
Medium	3
Hard	4
Expert	4–5

The Expert value remains subject to playtesting.

14. Pure Constellation

If the Mission is guessed correctly **before the Artist uses any Finishing Stars**, the Artist may earn a **Pure Constellation Bonus**.

Current proposed reward:

+1 space

This can either remain a universal rule or become a Mission Boost appearing only on certain cards.

That should be determined through playtesting.

15. Bonus Finishing Stars

Players may earn **Bonus Finishing Star tokens** during the game.

These tokens are saved and may be spent on future Missions.

Each token allows the Artist to add one additional Finishing Star beyond their normal allowance.

Example:

A Hard Mission normally provides 4 Finishing Stars.

The Artist spends 2 saved Bonus Finishing Star tokens.

They may now add up to 6 Finishing Stars.

A storage limit may eventually be added for balance.

16. Star Powers

Star Powers are special abilities that allow players to temporarily break normal drawing rules.

Possible Star Powers include:

Shooting Star

Lift your pencil once and restart from another printed star.

Wormhole

Cross one existing line.

Create a Star

Add one new connectable star anywhere on the Star Map.

Unlike a Finishing Star, this star becomes part of the connected drawing.

Meteor

Draw one free line that does not need to connect two printed stars.

Supernova

Remove or ignore one previously drawn line.

Warp Speed

Gain additional drawing time.

Telescope

Gain additional planning time before drawing begins.

Exact quantities, timing restrictions, and hand limits will be established through playtesting.

17. Mission Boosts

Mission Cards may include a special optional challenge.

Completing the Mission Boost provides an additional reward.

Possible Mission Boosts include:

Use a Boost Star

Successfully incorporate at least 1 Boost Star.

Possible Reward: +1 space

Pure Constellation

Get guessed before using Finishing Stars.

Possible Reward: +1 space

No Assistance

Complete the Mission without using a Star Power.

Possible Reward: Gain 1 Bonus Finishing Star

Deep Space Challenge

Choose Hard or Expert and successfully complete the Mission.

Possible Reward: Gain 1 Star Power

Expert Mission

Complete the Mission on Expert.

Possible Reward: Star Power or additional movement

Precision Finish

Use exactly your standard Finishing Star allowance.

Possible Reward: +1 space

Mission Boosts should add variety without making each card overly complicated.

18. Successful Mission

If the secret word is guessed before time expires, the Mission succeeds.

Calculate movement in this order:

1. Base Movement

Based on chosen difficulty.

- Easy = 1
- Medium = 2
- Hard = 3
- Expert = 4

2. Boost Stars

Add +1 space for each qualifying Boost Star incorporated into the drawing.

3. Mission Boost

Add any reward earned from the Mission Card.

4. Other Bonuses

Apply any additional effects from Star Powers, Universe Track spaces, or future rules.

Move the Artist's spaceship forward the total number of spaces.

19. Failed Mission

If nobody correctly guesses the word before the timer expires:

- The Mission fails.
- The Artist receives no base movement.
- Used Star Powers remain spent.
- Bonus Finishing Stars already spent are returned to the supply.
- The Mission Card is discarded.

The next player becomes the Artist.

Whether Boost Stars or Mission Boosts can provide rewards on a failed Mission should default to **no** unless a specific ability states otherwise.

20. The Universe Track

Each player or team controls one spaceship pawn on the Universe Track.

Successful Missions move spaceships toward the final destination.

The track may include planets, galaxies, space stations, wormholes, asteroid fields, and other cosmic locations.

Special spaces can provide rewards or effects.

21. Possible Universe Track Spaces

Star Cluster

Gain 1 Bonus Finishing Star.

Supernova

Gain a larger reward, such as 2 Bonus Finishing Stars.

Space Station

Choose from two or more rewards.

Example:

- Gain 1 Star Power
- Gain 1 Bonus Finishing Star

Wormhole

Jump forward along the track.

Asteroid Field

Trigger a risk, challenge, or temporary setback.

Planet / Checkpoint

Gain a reward or unlock a special benefit.

The final board design should determine whether special spaces trigger when a player **lands on** them or **passes them**.

22. Resolving Movement

After calculating total movement:

1. Move the spaceship forward.
2. Resolve any qualifying Universe Track effect.
3. Collect any earned rewards.
4. End the turn.

Multiple spaceships may occupy the same track space unless later playtesting suggests otherwise.

23. Turn Order

Play continues clockwise.

Each player becomes the Artist once per round.

For team play, teammates may alternate who serves as Artist.

The exact team structure can be refined after early testing.

24. Winning the Game

The first player or team whose spaceship reaches the final destination wins **Mapping the Stars**.

There is no separate victory-point calculation.

The Universe Track itself determines the winner.

A player does not need an exact movement number to reach the finish unless testing shows that exact landing creates better tension.

25. Current Turn Summary

DRAW

Draw a Mission Card.

REVEAL THE CATEGORY

Tell everyone the Mission Category.

CHOOSE

Select Easy, Medium, Hard, or Expert.

MAP

Take the matching Star Map.

PLAN

Study the stars.

CONNECT

Create the secret word without lifting your pencil or breaking the drawing rules.

GUESS

Other players try to identify the Mission.

FINISH

Add Finishing Stars if needed.

BOOST

Count Boost Stars and Mission Bonuses.

LAUNCH

Move your spaceship along the Universe Track.

26. Current Core Game Loop

Mission Card → Category Clue → Secret Word → Choose Difficulty → Select Star Map → Connect Stars → Guess → Add Finishing Stars → Calculate Boosts → Move Spaceship → Collect Rewards

The central decision on every turn is:

“How difficult do I want to make this Mission?”

The word remains the same.

The stars determine the challenge.