



Destination Neptune Strategy Hints

by Ian Brody

Destination: Neptune is an optimistic look at space exploration over the next century. Unlike most space games on the market, Destination: Neptune is not so much science fiction, but what I like to call *science extrapolation* - it's only fiction if it doesn't come true!

Players assume the role of a large organization looking to explore and exploit our solar system. Let's assume you can come up with some good ideas to add flavor - I like to call myself Branford Richardson.

Some of you wonder about all the ways to get Victory Points. Some have even asked, "Why can you buy Victory Points?" For me, buying a private island in the South Pacific sounds a lot like buying Victory Points. But to get to that sandy beach, you'd better have a strategy.

Strategy Overview

There are many avenues to victory in Destination: Neptune, a game that requires you to carefully plan while remaining capable of taking advantage of unexpected opportunities.

In Destination: Neptune, something can happen for everyone on almost every card play. Be willing to let other players play cards that are of lower interest to you. For example, if you have decided not to compete for technology control, you may want to plan your moves around waiting for technologies to be developed by other players, who will look to receive fame bonuses.

Having said this, you need to be prepared for your opponent's card play. Having some extra credits and a fuel lying around is usually a good idea. You need to be flexible. Your opponents' card play and building will both restrict and expand your possibilities.

Speaking of your opponents...don't neglect to do so. Although only one player can win, temporary alliances and deals are part of any multi-player game. Remember, if you're sitting at the table and don't know who the patsy is....

Broad Strategies

Looking at the ways to earn victory points, players can look at a few broad strategies, keeping in mind the need to be flexible:



- **Go where the victory points are:** This is a Colony-heavy strategy. You'll need plenty of cash and fuel, so the Fuel Broker card makes more sense for you. Attract Investors may stay interesting throughout the game as you cash Fame for more money to buy colonies and Victory Points.
- **The Dirty Fuel Cash Cow:** Build factories on the most lucrative locations, cash your Fame for credits to buy more credits. You'll need to earn your victory early, playing Factories Produce and other scoring cards. You'll want to wait until late in the game before attaining Fusion power, to ensure your fuel supply is cheap and consistent; an important early move is attaining access to Improved Gravity Slingshots.
- **Fusion Power with Fame:** This strategy includes securing Fusion Power Fuel locations early while working on getting the Technology in place. You're likely to be competing for Fame, since you'll have an interest in forwarding Technology. Remember to ensure that no one takes your prime building spots while you're gaining control of Technologies. Build bases in multiple locations so you can ensure you are ready for opportunities that arise from Technology gains. In the late game you should receive the best result from Factories Produce.
- **The Fame Game:** Here you're focusing on winning the Fame awards consistently. You'll need to balance the pursuit of Technology and Research Missions to ensure whenever these cards are played, you'll bank more Fame. You have to be very careful not to compete too hard, as there may come a time you may realize that you can earn more Victory Points by cashing your Fame.
- **Research and Speed:** This is a variant on the Fame Game. Here, you try to control the pace of the game by dominating Research. Your hope is to earn a lot of Fame. You're going to want to push the speed boundaries, to continue to move Research beyond, and you're likely to be a good candidate for the Diversification and Intrepid Spacefarer awards.

As you can see, there are no purely one-dimensional strategies. Again, players who remain flexible and have the resources to take advantage of opportunities can often eke out victory over a player who dogmatically sticks to a plan.

Thoughts on the Cards

- **Technology:** Technology cards are popular early as they provide a large amount of Fame, and you are likely to get payback early from the other players. Also, as Technology cards are played later, controlling technologies will yield more Fame, rewarding players who started early. You want to be careful not to setup another player's build card by opening up a new technology unless you knew you would also benefit.
- **Attract Investors:** Early in the game, these cards will help players ramp up for a space race. Later in the game, the greater benefit of these cards is often to convert Fame into cash. The Fame race has an unusual dynamic, as players try to balance the possibility of gaining victory points for fame versus the use of credits in the game.
- **Research Missions:** If you launch research, you must be prepared for the inevitable Build card that will follow. The play of these cards tends to become concentrated to a couple players, since there are recurring Fame awards.
- **Build:** You especially need to be prepared for a Build card, which is far and away the most complicated card play of the game, and takes the longest to resolve. One big mistake to avoid is not having enough credits and fuel available after playing a Research Mission to be able to profitably participate during the inevitable Build card that generally follows research. Take your time when resolving a build card and think through what the other players are likely to do.
- **Factories Produce:** For some of the players, this card will replace the Attract Investors card later in the game. It's important to keep the consequences of a Factories Produce card during build phases. You don't want to this card to help everyone but you.
- **Fuel Broker:** The *Fuel Broker* card is best saved for when everything else seems worse. Make sure you spend as much cash as makes sense on Fuel and you won't have to worry about it for a while. It isn't



unusual to see someone spend 7-10 credits. A lot will depend on how much other players buy. When another player uses a Fuel Broker, don't be afraid to spend as bit, especially if that player is behind the others. You might always have better cards to play and you're likely to need fuel.

- **Scoring:** Not lightly do the scoring cards appear on the opportunity track. Remember, selling a scoring card is inviting other players to use it – only sell these when you feel no one could gain an advantage of the period it remains on the track, or if you would gain the greatest advantage but that advantage is too small to waste a card play.

Game Play

In the opening moves, usually one or two players will play preparatory cards before someone plays a Research Missions, including Technology, Attract Investors, and perhaps even a Fuel Broker. When you play a Research Mission, you absolutely need to know that you won't be shut out of the build phase, so don't go to too few locations and don't leave yourself with too little cash.

At times, your hand may seem to provide you fewer options than you might wish. However, since the deck is split into the four generations, the card you need is extremely likely in the hand of another player. Be prepared for that other player to use the card! Or, be proactive and try to make a deal with another player to ensure their play is to your maximum advantage.

You should be looking to sell a card almost every turn. It may seem a tough choice as to what to sell, but remember there are only limited types of cards, and you can only play one per turn. Aside from scoring cards, it is especially easy to sell a card if one of the same is already on the Opportunity Track, or if you have two of the same card. The situation will change and having a few extra credits can make all of the difference.

End Game

At the very end, the last few rounds may be slowed down as the lagging players attempt to catch up with the Victory Point leader. Always know how many cards are left in a generation before the scoring catches you by surprise. During any, scoring, don't pass up the chance to buy Victory Points, at least one. You won't find a cheaper Victory Point.

If you've remained flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities, and anticipated your opponents Build card play, you should be in the running for victory. Always keep in mind the two bonus awards for Diversification and Intrepid Spacefarer, as these are often the deciding factor in victory in close games. Building some extra bases, even where the factory and colony are locked up, is often a good thing to do when a Build card doesn't help you too much. They may reduce your travel speed, better position your construction crews, and keep you in the running for the Diversification Tile. Colonies become more valuable at the end as credits invested in factories will have a lower payout.

I hope you're enjoying playing Destination: Neptune as much as we have had bringing it to you! See you on Triton!

