"Converting" Ships from Cards

It's only natural that in order to play the Pirates RPG, you might have acquired several plastic card ships from the *Pirates of the Spanish Main* (or, now, *Pirates of the Cursed Seas*) PocketModel game. Let's say you're running a session of the Pirates RPG; your privateer or pirate heroes are looking for merchant ships flying the wrong flag.

You dig into your collection of plastic-card ships and pull one out. It's the Darkhawk II. You could just make it a standard 4-masted ship, granting it an "Extra Cargo Space" Edge. But what if the information printed on the baseplate could be "converted" to the Pirates RPG?

What to Do With This Conversion

Well, these rules don't necessarily deliver something that easy, let alone that perfect, but they're an attempt in that direction.

House Rules

Before starting into the conversion, there are a few house rules that are necessary to enact when using ships "generated" in this way.

Adjusted Speeds

Top Speeds generated for ships using this method are slower than ships generated using the Pirates RPG rules. Please make the following adjustments to any ship profiles from the book, for use with these house rules.

- All ship profiles in the Pirates RPG book should start with a Top Speed of 3 (the equivalent of "L" in this system). This Speed is then modified appropriately by ship types (+1 Top Speed for a sloop), having a Helmsman on board, or Edges/Hindrances (such as Swift Topsails).

- Galleys have a base Top Speed of 2.

- Ships traveling by sweeps (non-galley ships with the Oars Edge) have a base Top Speed of 1.

Masts

"Masts" are used as a measure of ship size. While this is usually equal to the number of Wounds a ship can take, this is not always the case (e.g., Catamarans and Turtle Ships).

Ship vs. Crew

In the Pirates PocketModel game, a ship and its sailors are inseparable, with a single point value given for the whole package. (Aside from, of course, special Crew such as Helmsmen, Oarsmen, Captains, et al.)

If a ship (or, really, its crew) has a special hated for the English, translated into a +1 to attack rolls against the English, this is reflected in the point value. If some English privateers capture and use the ship, the GM might be reasonable to assume that it no longer keeps that property ... but how should this affect its point value (and, as follows, its calculated Cost)?

The simple answer? It doesn't. If the PCs choose to sell the ship off, calculate its Cost as follows. Maybe it's worth more because of its notorious reputation - not that any crew will somehow "inherit" the former crew's antipathy toward a particular faction. Wherever possible, though, it should probably be assumed that any special ship abilities carry over to new crew somehow.

Control vs. Handling

Use the ship's "Control" rating instead of Handling when determining whether a ship goes out of control as a result of taking a hit that equals or exceeds the ship's Toughness rating. In all other cases where Handling would normally be used (making tight turns, avoiding reefs, etc.) use Handling as calculated below.

The reason for this distinction is that larger ships may have a rougher time making tight turns, but it's harder to knock them off course, due to inertia.

Basic Conversion

Masts

As listed on the baseplate.

Wounds

Equal to Masts (modified by keywords).

Top Speed

2 for every "S" plus 3 for every "L." E.g., "S+S" becomes 2+2, or 4. "L" becomes "3."

Control

+2 for every segment of the ship's move on the baseplate. E.g., "S+S" becomes +4, while "L" becomes +2.

Handling

Use Control, as noted above, minus the number of Masts the ship has. So, a 1-mast ship with movement "S+S" has Handling of +3, while a 4-masted ship with a move of L has a Handling of -2.

Acceleration

Equal to the number of move segments.

E.g., "S+S" equals 2. "L" equals 1.

Travel Speed

Divide Top Speed by 2, rounding up.

Guns

Number of Masts x 4.

Gun Quality

The die types on the masts indicate the quality of cannons associated with that Mast. Assume that all cannons (unless specified otherwise) are 8-pdrs and that the average gunner has a Shooting skill of d6.

- 5-cannons are wretched quality, -2 to Shooting rolls; Cost $1,000 each.

- 4-cannons are poor quality, -1 to Shooting rolls; Cost $2,000 each.

- 3-cannons are standard, +0 to Shooting rolls; Cost $3,000 each.

- 2-cannons are superior, +1 to Shooting rolls; Cost $4,000 each.

- If any Mast has a red (long) die instead of white (short), it has Long Range Cannons for that Mast only. Range bands are increased 50%; so is the Cost. (E.g., a red 3-cannon has range bands of 12/24/48, and has a Cost of $4,500.) This is a feature of the cannon, and does not count as a ship Edge.

Cargo

Cargo on baseplate x 2.

Toughness

Equal to 10 + (Masts x 2). Of this, Armor constitutes 1 point per Mast.

Crew/Passengers

See Crew and Passengers ratings for equivalent-sized "base" ships from the RPG.

Cost

Point value on baseplate x $3,000 **or** combined cannon Costs + $1,000 per Mast, whichever is higher. (Some ships have a bad reputation or are in such sorry shape that their cannons would be put to far better use on just about any other ship.)

Edges/Hindrances

As per special abilities marked on the card, or for special keywords. Suggestions follow, though GM discretion is (of course) required.

Special Keywords

Broadsides Attack

When this ship makes a broadsides (or "crossing the T") attack, its gunners gain a +1 bonus to Shooting and damage against the chosen target.

Catamaran

Add +1 to the ship's Wounds.

Double Catamaran

Add +2 to the ship's Wounds.

Galley

This ship may travel under oar power, even if rendered derelict. It has space for 10 rowers per Mast (and these crew members are required if it is to travel by oar). See the Pirates RPG for rules on galleys moving under oar power, but do not otherwise alter the ship's statistics. (That is, don't increase the Toughness, etc., as you normally would for a galley in the Pirates RPG.)

Ghost Ship

As per the ghost ship special ability in the Pirates RPG. If such a ship can possibly be caught by a mortal crew, it either loses this status (becoming a normal, if rather run-down, ship - probably with the Ghost Crew Hindrance), or mysteriously vanishes at the first opportunity.

Junk

This ship gets the Shallow Draft Edge; this does not count toward the number of Edges the ship may have.

Schooner

When this ship makes a tight turn (greater than 45 degrees), the helmsman gets a +2 bonus to the Boating check to handle the maneuver.

Turtle Ship

Add +2 to the ship's Wounds. Until these two "extra" Wounds have been lost, the ship is not subject to crew or passenger hits due to grape shot or critical hits. This ship also has the option of moving under oar power (see Galley, above) even if rendered derelict.

Special Abilities and Penalties

Note that some of these abilities are pretty close to existing Edges or Hindrances. In that case, you can't add another Edge to this ship that "stacks" with the same (or practically the same) benefit.

After this ship resolves a shoot action, she may move as a free action

Stable Platform. This ship's cannon rolls are not subject to the Unstable Platform penalty to hit.

Crew of any nationality can use their abilities...

Recruiter. When recruiting new crew in port, double the number of available new hires you can find each week of your stay.

Eliminate one of this ship's masts when she rolls a 1 on any cannon roll

Luddite's Revenge. On a roll of 1 on the Shooting die (ignoring the Wild Die) when using any cannon on this ship, that cannon malfunctions and is unusable for the remainder of the combat. It can only be fixed by a Gunsmith with a Repair check and an hour of work.

Fear

Fear. Crews of ships within 10" of this ship must make a group Guts check (once per encounter), or suffer a -1 penalty to all attack rolls against it. Wild Cards roll separately.

Forts cannot shoot at this ship.

Windjammer. Any cannon shots from forts (or other fixed emplacements) against this ship suffer double the normal range penalty, with a minimum range penalty of -2 (even within Short range).

If derelict, this ship gains a base move of S

Galley. As per the keyword (see previous).

If this ship has a captain crew...

Abilities starting with this prerequisite apply only if the ship's captain has the Captain Edge.

If this ship ends her turn in a fog bank...

Fog Ship. Cursed power (presumably lost if this ship is captured by mortals). The complete text reads: "If this ship ends her turn in a fog bank, on her next turn she may use her move action to move out of any other fog bank in play." This can be used the same way in Pirates RPG, if distinct fog banks are in play. Otherwise, if a wider area is caught in fog, the ship may move 2d6" in any direction (and change its heading however desired) in lieu of its normal movement, as long as the new destination is still in fog.

If this ship isn't assigned a helmsman crew...

Abilities starting with this prerequisite apply only if the ship is not already benefiting from a helmsman with the Helmsman Edge (which would grant a +2 bonus to Top Speed).

On a result of 4–6

Abilities with this prerequisite are randomly determined each turn, as described.

Once per turn...

Abilities starting with this prerequisite can only be used once per turn when in combat.

Other ships do not block this ship's line of fire

Mortars. This ship can trace line of sight through other ships (friendly or enemy) to its intended target.

Ramming cannot eliminate this ship's masts

Shock Resistant. This ship takes half damage from collisions when other ships (or similarly large objects) slam into it, and the captain gets a +4 bonus to any Boating rolls required to avoid going out of control as a result.

Please note that this only applies when other ships slam into it - not when it slams into other ships. For the latter, you need the Ram Edge.

Two hits from the same shoot action are required to eliminate one of this ship's masts

Ironsides. This ship has +4 Armor.

When this ship carries no cargo...

Abilities with this prerequisite only apply if the ship carries no more than 2 cargo spaces of cargo (usually provisions and gunpowder).

When this ship hits another ship...

Abilities with this prerequisite only apply if the ship succeeds at scoring a wound against the target ship.

When this ship sinks another ship, you may repair one of this ship's masts

Give this ship the Shipwright's Workshop ability (c.f.).

When this ship succeeds at a boarding party...

Abilities with this prerequisite only apply if the ship succeeds at a boarding attempt against another ship.

You own any derelict this ship explores

Skeleton Crew. This ship has double the normal Passenger capacity (and presumably takes advantage of this by carrying enough extra crewmen to provide a skeleton crew for any captured prize ship).

L-Range cannons can't hit this ship

Hard to Hit. Double range penalties when Shooting at this ship. (This has no effect at Short range, since zero, doubled, is still zero.)

S-Range cannons can't hit this ship

Low in the Water. There is always at least a -2 range penalty to hit this ship, even at Short range.

...+1 to her boarding rolls...

Your crew gains a +1 bonus to all attack

rolls when fighting enemies in shipboard skirmish (melee and small arms) combat. (This doesn't apply to brawls that break out during shore leave, for instance, and has no effect upon cannon attacks.)

...+1 to her boarding rolls against...

As above, but only applies against a particular faction (even if the ship's crew changes).

...+1 to her cannon rolls

Apply this bonus to all Shooting rolls using cannons when the condition is met.

...+1 to her cannon rolls against...

Hated Foe. As above, but only against ships of the faction indicated. This applies even if this ship is under a new crew. (Perhaps they're influenced by the spirits of previous, now-deceased, crewmembers.)

...+S to base move

Add +2 to this ship's Top Speed, and +1 to Travel Speed when the condition is met.

...+L to base move

Add +3 to this ship's Top Speed, and +1 to Travel Speed when the condition is met.

...base move becomes S

Sluggish. This ship's Top Speed drops to 2, Travel Speed to 1, Control to +1 (and Handling modified accordingly), and Acceleration to 1.

...can't be pinned

Unpinnable. Enemy boarding attempts against this ship are at -2 to the roll. This ship gains a +2 bonus to Handling when making tight turns (maneuvers for turns greater than 45 degrees).

...can't load the last treasure from an island

Poor Crew. Any crew on this ship gains the Poor Crew Hindrance as long as they stay on board. The tight quarters, lousy accommodations, strange noises at night ... something about it inspires discord in its crewmembers.

...can't shoot when she carries treasure

Crowded Decks. This ship can carry up to two cargo spaces (usually provisions and gunpowder) with no penalty. However, this ship has to use its decks for additional cargo, and it's so poorly designed that cannons have to be rolled aside to make room; if it carries more than two spaces of cargo, it cannot fire cannons.

...cannons can't be eliminated

Armored Gunwales. Any Critical Hit results that would result in the loss of a gun are ignored.

...cannot carry crew

Communal Quarters. As per the Hindrance.

...capture the crew with the highest point

cost instead of eliminating it

Ransom Ship. If you succeed in a boarding attempt against another ship, you get a +2 bonus to any Persuasion or Intimidation attempts against the opposing crew (for instance, to encourage them to surrender).

...choose which mast is eliminated

Cannoneer. Treat cannon attacks as if the firer had the Cannoneer Edge. If the firer already has this Edge, then the Critical Hit result can be modified by up to 2 on the table.

...crew can't be eliminated unless she sinks

Fortified Ship. Grapeshot is useless against this ship, and any Critical Hits from cannon fire that cause crew or passenger hits are ignored. However, hand-to-hand combat during boarding actions may still result in casualties as normal.

...dock and explore a wild island using the same move action

Scout Ship. The ship's lookout gets a +2 bonus to Notice checks.

...dock at an enemy home island and load one treasure

Smuggler's Hold.
This ship is cleverly designed to hide an entire cargo space in its hold from easy detection by inspectors. Finding it requires a successful Notice check at a -1 penalty for every cargo space currently filled with cargo (as the clutter helps to obscure things) - and even then, it won't be found unless someone is specifically looking for such a thing.

...dock at an enemy home island and take as much treasure as she can carry

This ship has the combined benefits of Smuggler's Hold and Looters.

...double the range of this ship's cannons each turn, but you must roll a - to hit

Artillery. As the ship's Edge.

...eliminate all of the other ship's crew

Boarders. Any boarding attempts by crew of this ship get a +2 to the Throwing roll. Your boarders gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls while taking the battle to the opposing ship.

...eliminate one cargo...

Sour Grapes. Upon scoring a wound against an enemy ship and rolling for Critical Hit result, you may choose a Cargo hit result instead of whatever result was rolled.

...eliminate one crew...

If made in reference to hitting another ship, upon scoring a wound against an enemy ship and rolling for Critical Hit result, you may choose a Crew or Passenger hit result instead of whatever result was rolled.

If made in reference to boarding actions, apply 1d6 crew hits to the opposing ship if the prerequisites are met.

...eliminates two masts with one hit

Heavy Mountings. This ship has mountings such that 16-pdr cannons only take up 1 Gun slot (instead of 2) - and it takes full advantage of this, mounting 16-pdr instead of 8-pdr cannons.

...get +1 to their cannon rolls against this ship

Hunted. Enemies of the faction listed get +1 to all Shooting rolls against this ship, even if it's under new ownership. (Such is its bad reputation!)

...has all of her masts

An ability with this provision only applies until the ship takes a Wound.

...ignores the first hit she takes each turn

Ironsides. This ship has +4 Armor.

...ignores terrain

This ship gains a +4 bonus to Handling when avoiding stationary hazards and obstacles, such as running aground, navigating reefs or Sargasso sea, or avoiding collisions with icebergs. If this bonus is enough to beat the target number alone, then no roll is necessary.

...look at one face-down treasure on any island

Treasure Maps. The captain's cabin contains a library of old charts, purported treasure maps, locations of long-lost settlements, and more. This crew gets a +1 bonus to any Survival and Tracking rolls when visiting a deserted island, and the captain gets a +2 bonus to any Common Knowledge rolls to determine any interesting details about an island encountered.
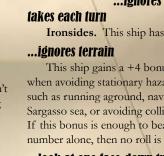
...look at one face-down treasure on any ship

Stolen Shipping Manifests. This ship has a veritable library of information on shipping lanes, old shipping manifests, spies' notes, and other references that can be used to guess at

what cargoes might be hauled at any given time by an encountered ship. When encountering a ship, one crewman (presumably the most literate one) may make a Common Knowledge roll; on a success, he is able to guess at any normal cargo carried by the ship, the amount of plunder, and likely relics. (The GM can make exceptions, of course, for things there's just no way anyone would ever "guess" about.)

...mark the island as explored without docking at it

Navigation Suite. The ship's navigator can reroll any "1s" that come up during a navigation check (but he must keep the new result).

...move S after unloading cargo

When traveling, double the ship's Travel Speed on its first day out of port.

...one crew or ship within S of this ship cannot use its ability that turn

Wary. Whether the ship has some sort of blessed protection, or its crew is just especially alert, the crew gains a +2 to group rolls to Notice rolls against a special attack or trick used by an enemy ship within 10" - or to any roll to resist a supernatural attack. (For supernatural attacks that are targeted and offer no resistance, the spellcasting or targeting roll is at a -2 penalty.) This ability is usually prefaced with "once per turn," so in that case, this resistance can only be used against one enemy trick or supernatural attack type (captain's choice, as it happens) per turn.

...randomly trade one treasure...

Trader Ship. This ship is good luck for getting the best deal. Add a +2 to all Streetwise rolls to buy goods when in port.

...repair at sea or at any island

Shipwright's Workshop. Thanks to a devoted workshop on board, a regular crewmember can act as if he had the Shipwright Edge. If the ship has an actual Shipwright, then this workshop grants him a +2 bonus on Repair rolls when working on the ship.

...reroll any die roll you make for this ship

Lucky Ship. Once per encounter, this ship has a benny that can be spent on any one skill roll made by a member of its crew when operating the ship (such as a Boating roll, a cannon Shooting roll, or even a group Throwing roll to board another ship - but not an individual's rifle shot or sword attack.) It's

up to the GM to determine what constitutes an "encounter," but it's at *least* once per day and once per session.

...sinks when her last mast is eliminated

Powder keg. This ship is a disaster waiting to happen. When it loses its last wound, the ship immediately starts sinking.

...take as much treasure from the other ship as she can carry

Looters. If you succeed in a boarding attempt on another ship, if you devote 1 crewman per point of the opposing ship's base Toughness to "looting" duty, you can automatically unload one Cargo Space worth of cargo to your own ship, per round. (This happens in the background, while the battle is still raging.) Exception: You can't make off with the opposing ship's magazine (that's just asking for too much trouble), and you can't nab relics or pieces of eight of plunder this way - just regular cargo.

...take one treasure from any ship she touches

Greed. This ship is equipped with cleverly obscured hatches that make stealthy egress from the ship possible ... as well as surreptitious looting of a ship that the vessel comes alongside. Over the course of one (naval) round, if this ship is alongside another vessel, and if you can devote 1 crew per point of the opposing ship's base Toughness to "looting" duty, you can unload one randomly-determined Cargo Space of cargo to your own ship. As with Looters, this can't be the gunpowder. The crew must make a group Stealth check versus the other ship's crew's group Notice check to avoid notice. Only one cargo item can be stolen in this way per encounter.

...this ship can move L

Extra Movement. Unless the ability has been superceded by something else (such as "move S after unloading cargo), an ability like this basically means an extra bit of movement that can be added, regardless of the ship's Acceleration rating or what speed it was going last turn. "S" translates into 2" (naval), and "L" translates into 3" (naval), as usual.

...this ship may be given an extra action

Motivation. This ability generally comes in the form of "Once per turn, roll a d6. On a 5 or 6, this ship may be given an extra action." Each turn, the captain should make the roll as indicated. On a 5 or 6, for that turn he gets to reroll one skill check made by regular crew, and take the better result. For instance, this could be used to reroll a cannon roll (similar to the Rapid Reload Edge), or a group Boating check. It cannot be used to reroll checks made by Wild Cards.

...trade any one treasure from that island for a random treasure on any other wild island

Gold Luck. Whenever rolling for loot, the captain of this ship may reroll the result when determining the amount of money found, and the chance of finding a relic, taking the better result. (And if a relic is found and randomly determined, he gets two choices.)

...unload cargo at your home island if she's within S of it

Trader Ship. See above.

...within S of this ship

For any abilities that apply to ships "within S" of this ship, assume that it's within a radius of 10" (naval combat scale).

...when she reaches her cargo limit

When all cargo spaces are filled on this ship, this ability (or penalty) applies.

...worth +1 gold

Profitable Ship. There are various special abilities that increase the value of unloaded treasure. A ship with any of these abilities has a well-appointed money-counting room with precise scales (or perhaps some tricked scales), a jeweler's scope, and various books and resources valuable for determining the true value of odd items. When selling cargo from this ship, your crew gains a +2 bonus to Streetwise rolls to determine final price.