

Ground Work

The issue with running a Gundam style game isn't with the Mecha, it's with character interaction. Gundam is a character driven story, with villains you can empathize with, and an underlying plot that isn't apparent from the beginning, yet sets the stage for the final battle in the end.

I find Gundam base games to be best run in the OVA style, with a set number of events that lead up to a known outcome.

Other things to consider are the mid-season upgrades, as well as the end-game upgrades. This includes not only Mecha, but ships, NPCs, plot lines and political events. Also, there is always a super-weapon that requires the entire party to defeat, with maybe one of the villains sacrificing their life to stop an atrocity. There should be love interests for at each player character, which may be an enemy, a past rival, or even a mysterious stranger that holds a piece of the puzzle. Sacrificing one of them in a random act of wartime violence will galvanize the players, making the game more real!

Don't let it throw you off if the players choose to seek other interests in the game, as this can lead to a more dramatic story!

The battles may seem daunting to run, however, I find that describing the action going on around the players paints a better portrait than actually trying to run a battle on the scale normally seen in Gundam. Stick with dynamic description over rules. The only action that truly matters is the player characters' interaction with the villains and storyline.

Also, it may come to a point when splitting the party becomes a necessity. Some players will want to side with a specific faction, while others will choose to stay with the side they started on. While difficult at first, it can be rewarding to allow this to happen. I only recommend waiting until after the turning point of the story arc before suggesting to your players that switching allegiance is an option.

That said, you will want to have two major factions in conflict, a third faction that forms to end the fighting, and a fourth faction that has always existed and that is using the conflict for their own purposes. Let the players choose the factions they will fight for or against, as they discover that the faction they started the game fighting for is real aggressor.

Know that Gundam is gritty. It is war story about people, and how those people cope with the loss of their homes and families. Not only do player characters die, but major villains die heroically, saving a player character's life because it was the right thing to do at the time.

Think dynamic! Everything else will fall into place.

Gundam History

Historical Setting

Universal Century 0078. An era in which huge artificial satellites float around the Earth, and almost ten billion people already make their homes in space. One of these space colonies, calling itself the Principality of Zeon, has raised the flag of rebellion against the Earth Federation.

The Principality carried out two waves of unilateral attacks, one known as the Three Day Battle and the other as the Battle of Loum. In these two battles, humanity lost almost fifty percent of its population, and many space colonies were destroyed. Zeon and the Federation had also suffered severe damage to their forces, and with the balance of power deadlocked the fighting turned into guerilla warfare. Meanwhile, no avenue to peace could be seen between the two nations.

In this story young people living at the new space colony of Side 7, which is currently under construction, are unavoidably drawn into the war. It takes place in space, where the guerilla war continues, and on Earth. The story begins in the year 0078 of the Universal Century.

Space Colony

An artificial space colony which houses 36 million people inside a cylinder 32 kilometers long and 6.3 kilometers in diameter. 35 to 40 of these colonies float in a single region, and these clusters are numbered Side 1, Side 2, and so forth in order of construction.

Colony Schematic

Illustration: A diagram of a typical space colony.

Colony Location Setting

One Side is made up of 36 to 40 colonies. With 36 million people in each colony, 1.3 billion people can inhabit a single Side.

Luna II is the asteroid Pallas (diameter 608 kilometers), which has been brought from the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. It was moved here to supply the rock and soil used in colonies.

Colony Locations

Illustration: A diagram of the Earth Sphere. This diagram roughly matches the map used in Zeta Gundam and subsequent series, with Side 4 in front of the moon at Lagrange point 1, Sides 2 and 5 around Lagrange point 4, and Sides 1 and 6 around Lagrange point 5. Sides 1, 2, 4, and 5 are marked with an X to indicate that they were destroyed at the start of the war. The diagram also gives the names of each Side--Zam, Hatte, Mua, and so forth.

Zeon Attack

Zeon Zum made his declaration of independence sixteen years before the outbreak of war. But the Earth Federation, which controlled the Sides, didn't recognize Zeon's independence.

Zeon, believing that the excessive human population was too large to be sustained by Earth's mineral resources, took a position opposed to the Federation's pacifism. But without special minerals such as mercury and platinum,

which existed only on Earth, the Sides could never achieve complete independence.

After Zeon Zum's death, his successor Degwin Zabi actively began preparations for war against the Earth Federation. Ten years later, in the year 0078, Zeon destroyed four Sides and exterminated almost 50 percent of humanity with its unilateral attacks. But by the spring of the following year, the ongoing war had reached a stalemate, as both the Principality of Zeon and the Earth Federation had exhausted their fighting strength.

Gundam

The reason why the Principality of Zeon went to war with the Federation was the development of the mobile suit. Battles aren't decided only by combat between spaceships, and victory or defeat are determined just as in ancient times, starting with the capture of enemy territory by infantry. The development of armored powered spacesuits (mobile suits) thus gave Zeon confidence that it could surpass the Federation.

The Federation has developed new mobile suits of its own based on the combat experience of the Three Day Battle and the Battle of Loum, reference to Zeon mobile suits, and the results of previous research. The development code was VX78. Three types were developed, and the story begins as they are completed.

"Gundam" is a nickname created by the main characters. When fully equipped, its destructive power rivals that of a contemporary cruiser-class vessel.

Group of 26

With the outbreak of war, the construction of Side 7's first colony came to a standstill, and the colony is currently only one-third completed. This is a frontier region populated only by two or three hundred households of colony construction workers and their families.

Amuro and the other main characters have come here to the Gundam's final testing ground. As the newly constructed warship White Base, designed for use with the Gundam, arrives in its port, Side 7 is attacked by a Principality of Zeon special forces ship under Char's command. At this point, with the adults dead, the children of Side 7 board the White Base and attempt to fight off the Zeons using the Gundam.

There are 26 of these boys and girls, from 19-year-old Bright Noa down to 4-year-old Kikka, and this group of 26 is the focus of the story.

White Base

(Or Pegasus, Cosmo Pegasus, Space Pegasus...)

A movable base designed to carry six Gundam-type mobile suits, as well as support fighters and transport craft. It's an attack landing ship.

With the construction of this new ship, future combat formations will be mobile corps centered on the Pegasus class. Throughout the story it will be the sphere of activity and base of operations for the group of 26.

Space Carrier White Base Side View

Illustration: A profile view of the White Base.

Character Summaries

- Amuro Ray: Male, age 15.
- The son of one of the Gundam's creators. Because the Gundam's final adjustments were conducted at Side 7, he settled here with his father. His father, who was once a colony construction engineer, had Amuro accompany him in order to broaden his horizons. His mother, who lives primarily on Earth, is a typical housewife who looks after her work-obsessed husband.
- Amuro is a lonely child with a mother complex and a fondness for computers, books, space cars, et cetera. His friendship with Fraw Bow draws him toward human relationships.
- Translator's Note: The summary goes on to discuss Amuro's development during the story and his relationships with the other main characters, but I'll skip that part here.

- Bright Noa: Male, age 19.
- An idealist who has been drafted after completing one year as a space officer cadet. It appears he was a part of the original White Base crew. He came to Side 7 after being ordered on a new mission, but he doesn't know anything else about it.
- His parents were Side construction workers who were killed during the war. He has extensive knowledge and talent as a strategist, but his involvement with Amuro becomes a source of constant irritation.

- Mirai Yashima: Female, age 18.
- An elite from a privileged background, who plays the mother's role. Since she's accustomed to space gliders, she becomes the pilot of the White Base. She is a girl with good instincts.
- Her father was a high official of the Federation government, but he opposed the government's policies and emigrated to Side 7, and was then drafted and killed in the war.

- Ryu Jose: Male, age 18.
- A soldier and a survivor of the White Base's combat crew. His family was killed in a Zeon attack. He has less than three months' experience as a fighter pilot, but he has a good personality and holds the group of 26 together, growing into his role as chief of the combat crew.

- Kai Shiden: Male, age 17.
- The son of a doctor who fled from Side 3. An opportunist and a braggart, but in the end he can't do much by himself. He is extremely unlucky, and has a tendency to lapse into a battle frenzy.

- Hayato Kobayashi: Male, age 15.
- A good person with some ability, impaired by his weak spirit. He can easily outmaneuver Ryu Jose in judo, but... He is a good big brother to the younger kids, and initially dislikes Amuro. His own family has been killed in the war.

- Sayla Mass: Female, age 17.
- The daughter of Zeon Zum. When the Zabis assumed control, she escaped the Principality of Zeon and took up residence on Earth. She then emigrated to the new territory of Side 7 as a Federation citizen, hoping for a peaceful life, but as a result of her encounter with the White Base she becomes one of the greatest warriors of the group of 26. She dislikes resistance to authority.

- Fraw Bow: Female, age 15.
- Amuro's friend. She acts as a sister to him, but isn't conscious of herself as a girl. After losing her entire family, she proves to be quite self-reliant.

- Katz: Male, age 8.

- Letz: Male, age 6.

- Kikka: Female, age 4.
- Members of the White Base's life support crew. They serve to get in the way of the other crew members.

Main Character Organization

Illustration: A diagram of the White Base crew structure, showing the eleven characters listed above. A note explains that there are another fifteen crew members including engineers, mechanics, electronic warfare specialists, and support crew.

Earth Federation Forces Military Outline

- Mobile Space Forces Magellan-class battleship Nelson-class carrier Salamis-class heavy cruiser Pegasus-class light cruiser (landing ship) Papua supply ship
- Defense Forces tanks armed with missiles anti-Cui low-altitude defense craft one-man helicopters, et cetera

White Base Mecha Organization

- Original Pegasus Equipment (Although there are still no fully-equipped Pegasus-class ships in the Federation Forces.)
- Core Fighter x 7 Gundam x 3 Guncannon x 2 Guntank x 1 bomber x 3 Gunperry x 2

White Base Mecha Organization Chart

Illustration: A diagram of the White Base mecha organization, listing three Core Fighters, one Gundam, one Guncannon, one Guntank, two support bombers, and one Gunperry transport plane.

Principality of Zeon

A principality which became independent when Zeon Zum put Side nationalism into practice. After Zeon Zum's death, Degwin Sodo Zabi introduced a monarchical form of government, and his family then imposed a military dictatorship.

Principality of Zeon Main Character Organization

Illustration: A diagram of the Principality of Zeon command structure. Sovereign Degwin Sodo Zabi is at the top, with Supreme Commander Gihren Zabi directly beneath him. Reporting to Gihren are Rear Admiral Kycilia Zabi of the Mobile Assault Force, and Vice Admiral Dozle Zabi of the Space Attack Force. Captain Garma Zabi reports to Kycilia, and Commander Char Aznable to Dozle. A second Zabi daughter, identified as Miharū Zabi, also appears on the diagram.

Establishment of the Principality of Zeon

The Earth Federation government constructed the space colonies as a means of solving Earth's population crisis. The Principality of Zeon is an independent nation which arose in the third colony cluster, Side 3.

Side 3 has a population of one billion. Under the leadership of Zeon Zum it began evolving into a principality, but its independence was not recognized by the Earth Federation. The Federation, dedicated to the notion of

centralized government based on Earth, refused to recognize any form of autonomy.

After Zeon Zum's death, Degwin Zabi tried to put Zeon Zum's ideals into practice--in other words, the two goals of regulating the excessively large human population, and putting the Federation under Zeon control. Meanwhile, the Zabi family intensified their system of military dictatorship and carried out preparations for the outbreak of war.

In one stroke, the conflict broke into full-scale war with the Three Day Battle and the Battle of Loum. At first glance the Principality of Zeon appeared to have huge military power, but both Zeon and the Federation quickly expended their strength in these devastating space battles. For the following reasons, the fighting then turned into guerilla warfare...

- The resource-poor Zeons found themselves at a disadvantage as the conflict grew longer.
- The Federation's democratic system of government--its parliamentary system, in other words--was supremely inept at making any kind of political decision.
- Both sides were afraid that continued fighting would simply lead to the extinction of humanity. (This led to a treaty prohibiting nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.)
- Due to the combination of Zabi dictatorship and the Federation's parliamentary system, peace efforts proved futile.

Character Summaries

- Sovereign Degwin Sodo Zabi: Age 62.
- The man who instituted the monarchical system in order to realize Zeon Zum's ideals. An ambitious dictator who has now retired.
- Supreme Commander Gihren Zabi: Age 35.
- The sovereign's eldest son, and effectively the leader. Has an IQ of 240. An idealist who advocates the survival of the fittest and the elimination of the incompetent. His ideology is horrible because it is based on rational science taken to the point of cruelty.
- "We are not gods, and this population control operation was not of our own choice. Logically, humans do not have the right to take human life. But henceforth, things will be different. The capable species will be selected."
- Vice Admiral Dozle Zabi: Age 28.
- The sovereign's third son. The commander of the Space Attack Force, who has extremely high instinctive combat ability. Hot-blooded, but has a weakness for women.
- Captain Garma Zabi: Age 20.
- The sovereign's fourth son. A sensitive young man who is being used by Kycilia. He dies early in the story.
- Rear Admiral Kycilia Zabi: Age 24.
- The sovereign's elder daughter. The commander of the Mobile Assault Force, she is as cold as Gihren is determined and single-minded, and has greater political ability. The measures that made Side 6 neutral, for example, could be considered the work of Gihren's rival Kycilia.
- Miharu Zabi: Age 17.

- The sovereign's second daughter.

Principality of Zeon Military Outline

- Space Attack Force Ship Types Sodon-class heavy cruiser (main attack ship) Valkyrie-class carrier attack craft x 14 (two squadrons) fighter craft x 24 (two squadrons) reconnaissance craft x 4 transport craft x 2 Musai-class destroyer (attack landing ship, holds 12 mobile suits)
-
- Model Types new mobile suit (three parts?) improved mobile suits (close combat type, artillery type) early mobile suit (only one type)
-
- Supply Ships Rabia Medea
-
- Mobile Assault Force (for land warfare in gravity regions) Gaw attack plane, Gaw transport and landing plane Magella Attack (attack tank that performs attack pass and docking) Gouf amphibious attack craft (land warship developed by space forces, used with mobile suits) Cui attack craft (machine which advances to front lines while protecting infantry) one-man helicopter and other infantry weapons

Minovsky Particle

The most vital electronic weapon of both the Zeon and Federation forces. This is a tiny particle with a powerful electrical charge, discovered by Minovsky, a Zeon of White Russian descent. When different types of Minovsky particles are scattered, they have the effect of reflecting and absorbing electromagnetic waves over a wide area. In relation to mobile suit operations, they were used in the fighting within the Earth and moon system that took place during the Battle of Loum.

Massive use of nuclear weapons during the Three Day Battle and the Battle of Loum released large quantities of plasma into space in satellite orbit. The combination of this plasma and the Minovsky effect has made it impossible to use radar and wireless communications over long distances.

At present, laser communication is normally used for long-distance transmissions. Of course, communication (including TV images) is still possible at extremely short ranges of ten kilometers or so, but overall conditions are close to those in effect at the beginning of World War II.

Beam Cannon

Laser cannons aren't used in this story. Since the light beams of lasers aren't visible in a vacuum, beam weapons are used instead.

Because the system that uses magnetism to fire charged particles can draw on the power of a nuclear fusion engine, these systems are installed on spaceships and fighting craft as main and secondary cannons. They can be made as light and compact as the Guncannon's sniper rifle. The installation of charged particle beam cannons has become standard partly because it results in lower weight and easier maintenance than loading large quantities of warheads.

These weapons require a five-second interval between uses to accumulate electrical and magnetic power. A warship can fire a volley from each cannon in turn, making rapid fire possible, but its speed is reduced as a result. Moreover, this can only be sustained for one minute because the electromagnetic accumulation mechanisms will explode as the "magnetization" of ship combat exceeds its limits.

These beams are limited to a range of twenty to thirty kilometers in atmosphere due to their reduced speed. Likewise, in space, atmospheric strata (not necessarily made up of atmospheric particles) can be deployed as a barrier. Although this serves as something of a cushion against direct beam attacks, it doesn't amount to anything more as a defensive weapon.

Due to these restrictions, long- and short-range missiles remain in service, as well as more compact and lightweight weapons which are used as small arms in the current fashion.

Incidentally, the beams from charged particle cannons can be seen even in a vacuum.

Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons

The use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, dreaded since ancient times, came to pass in the Three Day Battle and the Battle of Loum. Due to these massacres, humanity proved itself capable of total suicide. In all, five billion people were exterminated in ten days of actual fighting. This was nothing like a normal war of hegemony, and the Zabi family required no further slaughter to ensure the continuation of the Principality of Zeon.

After the Battle of Loum, Zeon and the Federation, horrified by their own power, concluded a treaty prohibiting the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. This was the Antarctic Treaty.

Learning Computer

The computer installed in the White Base and the Gundam. Naturally, the basic operation, steering, and control systems are set, and basic data appropriate to the various functions of the computer has also been recorded. But the difference in this learning type is that it later learns from and remembers the events it has "experienced."

This system excels in learning from the Gundam's battles, and depending on the situation it can even react before its operator. However, the system that is meant to exclude mistaken actions is far from perfect, and the development of the erasing mechanism is delayed. Thus the peculiarities of its various operators remain in the computer, which could be considered a weakness.

As space settlement begins, the year becomes Universal Century 0001.

U.C. 0001: Total population of Earth is 9 billion

U.C. 0040: 40 percent of the total population (about 5 billion) have emigrated
Rise of Ere-ism, the belief that Earth is sacred as the source of life.

U.C. 0041: Establishment of Luna II

U.C. 0045: Zeon Zum advocates Contolism
Ere-ism and Side-ism (Side nationalism) are hereby combined.

U.C. 0050: Total population is 11 billion
9 billion have emigrated to space.

U.C. 0052: Zeon Zum moves to Side 3 and puts Contolism into practice

U.C. 0062: Principality of Zeon announces independence
The Principality of Zeon and Federation are in opposition. Zeon Zum begins working behind the scenes to acquire special minerals.

U.C. 0068: Death of Zeon Zum
The Federation launches a political offensive.

U.C. 0069: Degwin Zabi becomes sovereign
Degwin secretly prepares for war.

U.C. 0075: Development of Zaku mobile suit completed

U.C. 0078: Zeon attacks
The population is reduced by 50 percent due to the Three Day Battle and the Battle of Loum.

- Zeon attacks: The attack is launched on the tenth anniversary of Zeon Zum's death.
-
- Three Day Battle: Roughly 40 colonies of Sides 1, 2, and 4 are destroyed in a three-day period, resulting in the deaths of 3 billion people. Zeon employs a strategy of crashing roughly 40 colonies onto the Earth, and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons are widely used.
-
- Battle of Loum: This conflict between Zeon and the Federation takes place at Side 5, or Loum, hence the name. The Zaku demonstrates its power. Most of the colonies of Sides 2 and 5 are crashed onto the Earth, and 3.5 billion people are killed. Nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons are widely used.
-
- Zeon's final ultimatum: The Federation succeeds in rescuing General Revil from Zeon captivity. Thanks to his speech, "No soldiers in Zeon," the Federation rejects this ultimatum.
-
- Era of guerilla warfare begins
-

U.C. 0078.12.31: Antarctic Treaty concluded
The treaty prohibits the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

The reason colonies must all be the same size is because of the difference between gravity and cross-coupled angular accelerations the pseudo-gravity simulates.