

# Light Speed

A real-time game for 2-4 players  
By Tom Jolly and James Ernest

**Light Speed** is a lightning-fast card game of space combat about identical teams of spaceships dropping out of hyperspace to do battle over an extremely important asteroid. This game is fast: each round takes less than a minute to play!

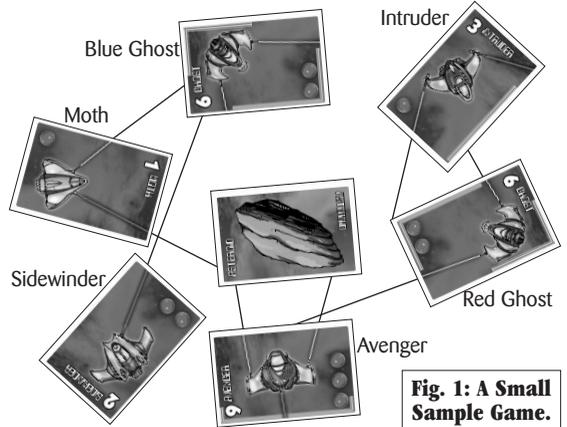
**What Comes with this Game:** Four matching armies of ten ships, in Red, Green, Purple, and Blue, plus two Asteroid cards.

**What You Need:** About 15 “damage” counters for each player, and 12 more “rock” counters in another color. If you are playing with 3 or 4 players, the colors of the counters should match the team colors. With 2 players, the color of the damage counters doesn't matter.



# Light Speed

Real-Time Card Game



**Fig. 1: A Small Sample Game.**

The Moth fires first, mining 2 points off the Asteroid and damaging the Blue Ghost for 1. Next, the Sidewinder shoots and kills the Blue Ghost. The Intruder nicks the shield of the Red Ghost, and fires its other laser into space. The Blue Ghost is gone before it shoots, but the Red Ghost fires. It hits the Intruder's shield and damages the Avenger. Finally, the Avenger mines for 2.

## Before You Play:

Choose a large, open table for Light Speed. The bigger your playing surface, the better. Also, it's important to have a cloth on the table, because these cards will slide on a polished surface. We really like playing on a pool table, but any table with a tablecloth will do.

To help check your laser shots, you will need something straight. A rubber band, broken into a single strip, works well. You can use either the rubber band itself or its shadow to help judge straight lines. Be careful not to disturb the cards in play, as their position will probably matter later.

These rules are for the 2-player game. The 3- and 4-player games use basically the same rules, but scoring is slightly different. There is a section describing the differences after the 2-player rules.

## The 2-Player Game:

### Setting Up:

Each player needs about 15 “damage” counters.

Place one Asteroid card in the center of the table, as shown in Figure 1. Put 12 “rock” counters on the Asteroid. These counters must be distinguishable from your damage counters.

Each player takes the 10 cards of one team and shuffles them. With only 10 cards, the best way to shuffle your deck is to spread them on the table and mix them up. A riffle shuffle will bend them.

Hold your deck facedown in one hand so that you can draw cards off it with the other. Now you're ready to play.

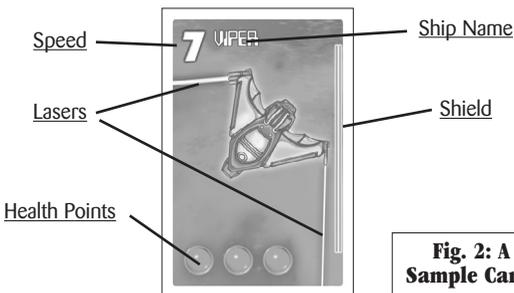
### The Fast Round:

Both players start at once. Draw one card off your deck and play it faceup anywhere on the table, pointing in any direction, but not touching or overlapping another card.

There is no discarding. You must play this card somewhere on the table before you can draw the next one.

Once you have played a card, you can't touch it again. Don't take your finger off a card until you're done positioning it!

When one player has played his last card, he immediately calls “stop.” The other player has two options: to drop the card in his hand exactly where it is, or not to play that card. At this point the fast round is over and scoring begins.



**Fig. 2: A Sample Card.**

## The Scoring Round:

All ships will fire their lasers, faster ships first. When a laser hits the Asteroid, it will “mine” rocks off the Asteroid. When a laser hits a ship, it will damage or kill it. Dead ships go into the “kill pile” of the opposing team, regardless of whose lasers killed them.

## Speed:

The number in the corner of a ship is its speed. Lower numbers shoot first, and ships of the same speed fire at the same time. So, every Moth (speed 1) fires at once, then every Sidewinder (speed 2), and so on. Slower ships are often killed before they can shoot.

## Shooting:

There are three sizes of laser beam. The thin white laser is worth one point, the medium red laser is worth two points, and the thick green-and-white laser is worth three. These values determine how much damage a laser does, either to a ship or to the Asteroid.

When you fire a laser, extend the line of that weapon until it hits any part of another card. All ships and the Asteroid are assumed to be the entire size of the card, including the white borders. (Yes, they are all rectangles. Go figure.)

When you shoot the Asteroid, remove rocks equal to the value of your shot and put them on the ship that made the shot. This is called “mining” the Asteroid. (Simultaneous mining is covered below.)

When you shoot a ship, whether it's your ally or not, you put damage counters on that ship equal to the value of your shot.

## Health:

Health points are represented by 1 to 4 red dots on each card. When a ship takes damage equal to or greater than its health points, it explodes. This happens only after all simultaneous lasers have been fired. This means that a ship that is killed by another ship of the same speed (a Moth killed by a Moth, for example) does get to fire before it explodes.

To time this properly, you must fire all lasers from every ship at the current speed, then check all ships to see if they have taken lethal damage. Remove the dead ships from the board and put them in the appropriate kill pile. Any rocks on these ships are vaporized.

## Destroying the Asteroid:

When the Asteroid loses its last rock, it goes away.

If multiple ships are shooting at the Asteroid simultaneously, and if they are trying to remove more rocks than the Asteroid has left, you distribute the rocks as follows: First, each laser pulses once. Give one rock to each laser, or vaporize all remaining rocks if there aren't enough to go around. Then, the red and green lasers (the 2- and 3-point lasers) fire again. Divide the remaining rocks the same way, vaporizing the rest if there aren't enough. Finally, the green lasers fire once more, and presumably there aren't enough rocks to distribute among them, since that's what led to this problem in the first place. In any case, the Asteroid card remains on the table until all these laser pulses have fired, no matter how few rocks it had left.

## Shields:

Some ships have shields. Though they are not printed to the edge, shields are assumed to extend straight out to the edge of the card. A laser that hits a shield does no damage whatsoever.

## Winning:

Every ship that dies goes into the opposing player's kill pile. This is true no matter who killed it. Each ship in a kill pile is worth one point for each health point.

Every ship that mined rocks and is still alive at the end of the game adds those rocks to its team's score. If a ship mined but was then destroyed, its team scores nothing for the mining.

**Scoring Example:** If you have a Moth and a Sidewinder in your kill pile, that's 3 health points, so you score 3. If you also have 5 rocks scattered among your surviving ships, that's 5 more points for a total score of 8.

## Scoring The 3- and 4-Player Game:

When you play with two players, a ship that dies always goes into its opponent's kill pile. This is not the case with more than two players. To determine who scores every ship, you must use color-coded damage points.

The fast round works exactly the same as the 2-player game, and ends as soon as one player has played his last card and called “stop.”

In the scoring round, when you put damage counters on a ship you will use a different color of damage for each army.

Once a ship has received lethal damage, whoever has put the most damage counters on that ship takes it. This is true even if this player is the owner of the ship, but if you take your own ship, its point value is negative. (This is functionally identical to the 2-player game, where the value is added to your opponent's score, but in this game you have more than one opponent.)

If there is a tie, the ship is usually vaporized and the points go to no one. However, a player's own damage counts slightly higher than others, so if the owner of the ship is tied with other players he always kills his own ship, subtracting those points from his score.

**Scoring Example:** a Red Viper has 3 health. Previously it was damaged by Blue for 2 points. Now Green hits it for 3 points with a shot from his Destroyer. It is killed. Green has put more damage on the ship (count all 3 points, even though it took only 1 more point to kill it!), so Green takes the Viper.

## Variations:

You can make a large Asteroid by putting the two Asteroid cards together face down. You can also use a larger object, like a coaster. This Asteroid is still worth 12 rocks, although in a larger game you might want to make it worth 16 or 20 rocks.

You can also play with two small Asteroids several inches apart. For this, put 6 rocks on each Asteroid with 2 players, 8 rocks with 3 players, and 10 rocks each with 4 players.

“Piracy” is our favorite variant rule. In this, you can steal rocks from other ships. When you shoot a ship that's carrying rocks, you will mine it as you damage it. If several ships are mining another ship simultaneously, use the mining rules to distribute the rocks.

**Credits:** Light Speed was designed by Tom Jolly and James Ernest, with art by Eduardo Müller colored by James Ernest. ©2003 James Ernest and Cheapass Games, Seattle WA. Learn all about the Hip Pocket line as well as other great Cheapass Games at [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com).