Ultimate Fleet Builder
Version 1.0

QUICK START

Please refer to the full instructions on the following pages if you need further details.

1) When the spreadsheet workbook first opens, click on "Enable".

2) Click on the "Fleet Builder" tab. Click the "Clear Fleets" button.

3) Build your fleet. Check the notes for each ship for special information. Check the sheet for any boxes that are Red (illegal), and adjust. Check for boxes that are Yellow and adjust as necessary. Green boxes mean your fleet is legal.

4) Click on the "Armoury" tab. Click the "Clear Ship Missiles", "Clear Fighter Missiles", "Clear Mines" & "Clear Special Weapons" buttons.

5) If your fleet consists of more than one race, select the one you are buying for. Select the type and quantity of each armament you want. Check for any Yellow or Red Boxes and adjust as necessary.

6) Click on the "Mod Shop" tab. Click the "Clear All Enhancements" button.

7) For each enhancement you want, choose the ship it will be placed on and the type of enhancement. Fill in any extra information required in the two boxes. If the enhancement is legal, and the notes do not show any contrary information, select how many of the enhancement you want.

8) Click on the "Print When Done" tab. Review all the information given. If you are satisfied, then print out the sheets, you are done. Otherwise go back and modify your information as necessary.

INTRODUCTION

I'll make this as short as I can, but want to tell you "why" first. Babylon 5 Wars is, of course, a great game system. You know that obviously, or you wouldn't be reading this. It also takes an incredible amount of time and brain power just to get a game going (with the exception of published scenarios). Years ago, a player created an Excel based fleet building system to help aid players in basic ship construction. The system worked great for what it was, but it was simple and failed to take into account many qualifiers in fleet building, and had no support whatsoever for any other costs or rules.

It was actually my friend Rich, who while setting up for a battle one night, casually tossed out the words "It's a shame it doesn't support enhancements and officers". Well how could I pass up such a challenge? I realized that there was no point in entering the data for all the newly released ships if the program was still limited in its capabilities. Lacking an update by the original creator, I set out to create a better one on my own.

The first attempt was simply to enhance the one he had made. However there were many limitations in the version of Excel I had at the time, and I ran into all of them. The one that finally broke my spirit was the fact that any cell could only have 2 lines of characters in it (approximately 256 characters rough guess). Anyway the formulas needed for this system are much larger than that. So I abandoned it and moved on to designing a program using visual basic. Trouble with that was that I had to learn a whole new program system and language. Quite frankly had I persevered it would be a much better program than the one I have here. Yet real life intervened, the project fell by the wayside, and the visual basic edition remains in the splash screen stage.

Years have now passed, and while going through my bookmarks I saw that B5Wars.net was still up and running (albeit with a much smaller community, but a very faithful one). I was also annoyed to learn that everyone was still using [or not] the old, lame fleet builder, or some simple variation of it. Well that, and the fact that some of the rules supplements long lost have one way or another, at long last been making themselves available, re-inspired me to finish what I had started. Now here at long last is a fleet builder that is actually really useful.
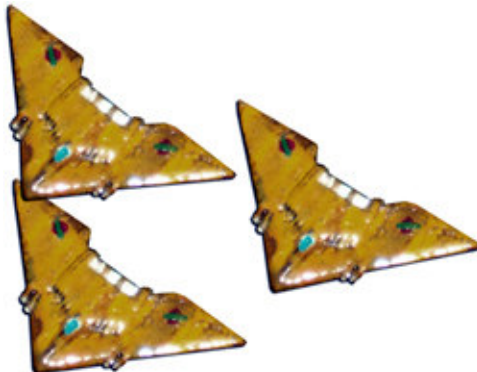
FEATURES

- Build a fleet of 13 different ship types, and up to 150 of each for a max fleet of 1950 ships.

- Full support for 95% of all standard rules & costs involved in purchasing your fleet.

- All legal ships from every supplement including Showdowns 1-11, Variants 1-6 (inc. 6 bonus material), and all titled supplements through The Great Crusade.

- Dynamic updating based on year of battle (will automatically give you refits & upgrades).

- Legal checks for variant limitations, deployment restrictions, Special Deployment, in & out of service dates, hanger space, Rules Compendium & Supplement.

- Auto re-allocation of hanger space & necessary relevant costs.

- Missile, mine & special weapon purchases and allocation checks.

- Add up to 6 different types of enhancements (50 of each), including weapon upgrades, expert crewmen & pilots.

- A Printable summary of all you've purchased, complete with special notes and warnings about your fleet, and without all the junk you don't need.

- Partial support for composing fleets consisting of multiple races.

- Works off standard Excel program. No add-ons or plug-ins needed (created in Excel 2000).

KNOWN BUGS AND LIMITATIONS:

1) Any rules and weapons included in Showdowns 5 may not be included, as it is the only book I do not own. The ships however, are all there.

2) Standard rules not supported yet.
- Purchasing extra marine contingents
- Mine Enhancements
- Upgrading a shuttle/ship to minesweeper status
- Upgrading Shadow ships from "Ancient" to "Primordial".
- Converting Dilgar fighters to fighter/bombers.
- Preparing a carrier for a bombing mission in a campaign.

3) When purchasing extra Breaching pods, the "per ship class" limitation is not supported yet.

4) Some ships have restrictions on what type (or how many of a specific type) of Mines they can carry. The program does not currently check for legality after purchase.

5) Race specific limitations (Dilgar carry 1/2 pods in free-form battle, Raiders have economic campagin costs, etc.) are not supported.

6) Fleets for races with "factions" like Brakiri are not checked for race restrictions (though they are noted). Any additional costs associated with factions are not supported.

7) Out of service dates are incomplete for most ships. Also note: All first ones ships labeled "Ancient" have an OoS date set at 2261. "Primordial"s leave service at year 2.

8) Most ships do not have the "weapons" information filled in.

9) Cascor Caccar fighters currently fit double fighters into all size bays. They should not be allowed if the bay is Ultra-light in size (a reminder is listed in the fighter notes).

10) If you have a Dilgar Mishakur-B and a Garasoch in your fleet, you must currently do the CPV calculation yourself to see if the ship is allowed.

11) "Optional" rules are currently not supported. ("Super Ancients", Hyach-like crew specialists for other races, etc.)

12) Hyach specialists are supported, but roughly. I'll refine it later.

13) When using enhancements, there is a possibility that some costs will become inaccurate when purchasing more than 1 for the same ship. In this case, simply use a new enhancement pod for the second upgrade. Check for this on upgrades where the second upgrade multipliers are based on the result of the first level.

14) If corrections were made in rulebooks or the FAQ, and not updated on SCS's, then I may, or may not have included the updated info.

15) If you add a civilian ship to a fleet of 1 restricted vessel, it will become valid. This is an error.

16) The program currently does not know the difference between bays and external rails, so it will mistakenly let you re-allocate those as well. However ships with rails have them noted in the ship notes.

17) Expert Navigators round normally, rather than dropping fractions. So you have a 50% chance of being 1 point off if you happen to use this enhancement.

18) I'm sure somewhere in the ship data I entered a wrong number or two.

19) Enhancements: The Kirishiac 'Improved Gravitic Converters', Mindrider 'Improved Thought Shield', the Vorlon 'Asure skin coloring' and Shadow 'Additional Tendrils' are not yet working properly.

20) Weapon lists for ships are not dynamic, and do not change with upgrades or refits.

21) Most campaign related costs (repairs, etc.) are not supported.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

- Microsoft Excel 2000 or later. (the program may work with earlier versions or with other spreadsheet programs, but I have not checked them and cannot gurantee compatability.

- Windows XP. (I'd say "or Vista" but right now there's no telling if anything running on Vista will work as it should). I see no reason why the program shouldn't work on Windows 98, but I haven't tried it either.

- A widescreen monitor, or dual monitors is recommended, but not essential to the running of the program.

DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS:

When the spreadsheet workbook first opens, it will ask you if you want to enable Macros. You must choose "enable" for the program "Clear" buttons to work properly. Be assured however that I have scanned the files with an anti-virus and two malware scanners to ensure that there are no problems. You should also use a reliable set of programs to regularly scan your copy of Office and Excel (along with the rest of your computer) to be sure you remain free of potential problems. You can check my website for recommendations on free system scanners and other maintenance programs.

1. THE FLEET BUILDER

A. **Clear the screen:** To erase all past data, hit the "Clear Fleets" button.

B. **Select A Battle Date Range:** Drop-down menus have been included to help you narrow down the time scale of your battle, so if your battle has a date of occurance, start there. These dates also prevent selecting ships that were not built yet or were out of service at the time of your battle, or races that have ceased to be spacefaring for one reason or another. Selecting a date also dynamically updates all ships for any upgrades or refits. If you want all ships and races from any era, select 0 and 2334. For most ships seen in the series, select about 2233 to 2263. If a ship was never written as having a decommission date, the program will assume the last date possible (currently 2500). For ships of the month, joke ships, etc. that were never in service, set the out date to 2500.

C. **Choose Your Fleets:** Use the Drop-down menus to select the types of ships that will make up your fleet, and the arrow buttons next to them to select how many of each type you want. *(Note 1)* You should include any and all fighters, pods, shuttles, flyers, etc. that are not "included" with the given ships. Each ship's "Notes" will tell you if any such included ships exist. Do not include these in your ordering. In order to simplify the worksheet, any "lifeboats", "Cargo Shuttles", etc. are all just listed under "shuttles" (not that you usually have to purchase them).

D. **Check for legality:** Many of the cells change color as you build. If any are red, you are out of legal bounds for that ship. If the "Legal Re-allocation of berths" cell is red, for example, you have more fighters/shuttles of a given type than can be legally carried by the ships in your fleet. You must reduce the number of fighters or add ships with more of that type hanger space. The three colors of legality are Red, Yellow, and Green.

Green: You are within legal limits for this attribute. Yellow: The program needs more information, or there are specific instances where the particular attribute may or may not be legal. Though the program recognizes this, it cannot account for it. You should research the issue in the rulebook and decide if you are in legal limits. Red: You are outside legal limits for this particular atribute. **Note also that while the program will notify you if a given value is illegal, it will not stop you from continuing. This is so you can override any bugs, limitations or rules modifications.**

E. **Check Point Value:** Assuming all the players have decided on a maximum point value for each side, check the "Fleet Points" and make sure you're not over or way under. If you're a little under, that's ok, since you can use the extra points to buy weapons payload and ship enhancements. Note that If you are just playing straight ships, and have no armaments to purchase, you can skip right to step 4 and print. It is a good idea, however, to at least click on each of the other tabs and make sure everything is cleared so you don't get charged extra for something you didn't want.

2. THE ARMOURY

A. **Clear the screen:** Click the "Clear Armaments" button to start arming from scratch (Don't worry, this will not effect the fleet you have chosen).

B. **Select a race to work with:** If your fleet consists of multiple races, you must select one from the drop-down menu that you wish to buy for. If you are using only one race, it will be selected by default.

C. **Arm your ships:** On the left is a summary of relevant information based on the ships you chose in the "Fleet Builder". Use the drop-down menus to select the types of each armament you want and the counter dials to choose quantity. Once again, if you are not allowed any given armament, the system will notify you of the problem with a red highlight. If all the lights are green, and you are satisfied with your selections, then you can move onto the "Mod Shop". Once again though, If you are skipping over the enhancements, make sure you clear them before you go to print so you aren't mistakenly charged extra combat points.

D. **Is your fleet multi-race?:** If so you can keep track of arms point values for each race by turning on the multi-race feature. Unfortunately this will record points of each race, but will only print the current race during output. You must write down the other race armaments yourself or print out the "Armoury" sheets as you go.

3. THE MOD SHOP

A. **Clear all enhancement calculators:** You are allowed to choose six different types of enhancements, and up to 50 of each of them *(note 2)*. To clear the processors, you may click all the individual "Clear This Enhancement" buttons, or hit the "Clear All Enhancements" button which is located way down on row 45 to help prevent accidental pressing. Pressing either will not effect the fleet you have chosen, or the armaments you have equipped.

B. **Choose the ship to enhance:** The drop-down menu contains the ships you chose back in the "Fleet Builder", select the ship type you want to enhance in the first calculator.

C. **Choose your enhancement:** Use the second drop-down menu to choose the enhancement you want. You may be prompted to enter extra information or data in the boxes below. The information should just be typed directly into the boxes to the right. Note any color changes and adjust accordingly. When all is green, you are once again within legal limits. Any cells that are yellow denote warnings that you should take note of, but may or may not put you outside legality. You must decide before proceeding.

4. REFINE, TUNE AND OUTPUT

A. **Finalize Your Fleet:** At this point you will probably have to go back and forth between the worksheets figuring out how you're going to shave off those few points that you are over. Instead of going through all the tabs, click on the "Print When Done" tab to see a detailed overview of your fleet. This sheet contains all the information you will need to output and update your SCS's as well as reminders of all notes you should be aware of during the game.

B. **Output:** You should print the "Print When Done" worksheet when you're Finished. Printing can take as many as 5 pages if you use all 13 slots, so consider printing double-sided if your printer supports that function. If you don't want to print, you should at least save the Excel sheet for reference if you need it later. Know that the printer will spit out 5 pages regardless of the slots you use, but will only print on pages where slots are used, so you can just re-use the blank paper. With that in mind, it is helpful to use slots in the fleet builder that are next to each other, with all the un-used slots grouped at the end or beginning.

Note 1: You can have up to 150 of any given ship type. Enhancements allow 50 of each type. I put in these limitations to prevent ramping the number too high by mistake, but you can choose more by using multiple slots.

note 2: I would have included more but how often does one have enough extra points for more than six enhancements? If you have that many points, go buy another ship. Adding more processors is a big hassle, and I will only do so if there is a huge outcry.
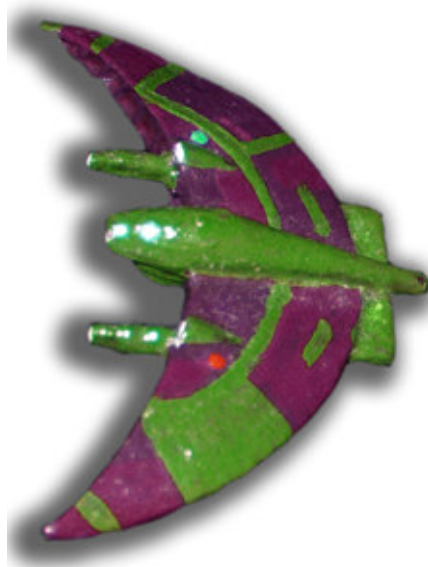
MAKING CORRECTIONS:

To prevent accidentally changing anything that shouldn't be changed, I have "hidden" the worksheets that hold data and perform calculations. Unfortunately, this also prevents modifications, and corrections. If you want to add ships, download the add-on excel sheet from the website and enter the data there, then email the sheet to me and I will incorporate the fixes for everyone. (Please do not send partially completed data for ships. I'll only include it if all information is there). If you feel a correction to the program is in order, let me know and I will look into it as soon as I can. If you want to modify or improve on the program, I'm all for it. Let me know and I'll email you the code to unlock the other spreadsheets. Be forewarned however that you do so at your own risk and I will not help you if your program stops working properly.

PLEASE HELP

I would love help proofing my data and filling in the blanks. It may take an hour out or your life, but would save me an eternity on something to which I have already put in countless hours. If you could, please download the ship data sheets. Then, choose one or two major races, or a few smaller races. Double-check the data and fill in the blanks for Out-of-Service dates, weapons, etc. Pay particular attention to the sections noted in the bug list above. Please highlight any row where you have made a change or addition. When you're done, email it to me.

As an alternative, you could add any fan-made races or ships, or double-check the weapons or enhancements data for any erroneous or missing data. Anything would be a huge help. The less typing and skimming through books I need to do, the more free time I will be able to devote to building new features and bug fixing.

Finally if you have open office or another operating system, try it on there and let me know how well the program functions.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

I fully intend to refine & improve this system at least until all standard rules are included and working perfectly. How soon this happens will depend on how well it's received, feedback and interest, real life interventions and other projects that may take priority. As of now, here's what I have planned, which will be completed in whatever order I feel like:

- Re-arrange some of the hidden processors, & general program clean-up.
- Re-make the enhancements system & include those that aren't working.
- Add any missing info that is not contributed by anyone else.
- Dynamic updates for weapons.
- Add a "choose your race" combo box to pre-sort the ship lists, weapons and enhancements, so you don't have to sort through hundreds each time. This would be added already, but I can't see a remotely simple way to make it happen. If I don't do this, then I will publish separate fleet builders broken into categories (ie. Major Races, League Worlds, Ancients, etc.)
- Add support for campaigns.
- Add support for any other standard rules that are not currently included or working properly.

SPECIAL THANKS:

…to Steve A. for contributing his ship lists. It saved me a ton of typing.

…to Rich B. for all the games, and starting me on this venture. Check out his web comic www.giantitp.com

…to B5Wars.net & it's members past & present, for keeping the game alive.

…to my Dad, for passing on a ton of "logic & reasoning" genes. Without them, my work would not have been possible.

…to JMS, for being such a writing and creative influence.

…to Agents of Gaming, for that game-thing they made. You may have heard of it.
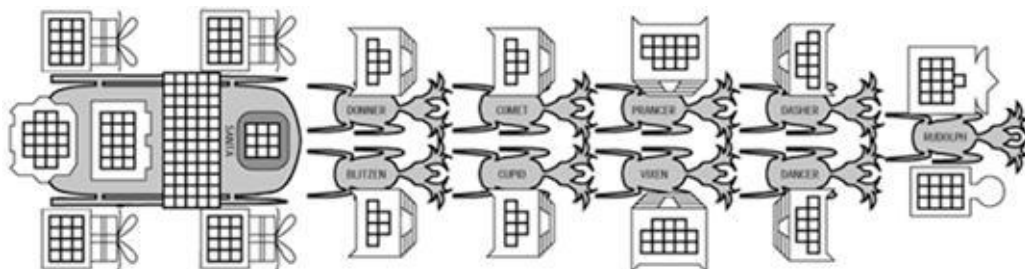
OTHER PROJECTS I'VE DONE

HouseQuest! – A pathetic text adventure game where the on-line instruction manual is probably more fun than the game itself. But I'm proud of it for what it is, and what it was supposed to achieve. Who knows, it just might amuse someone… someday… for about 20 minutes.

E-Visiclues – A Javascript hint system for your web pages & programs.

Babylon 5: I've Found Her (Flight Simulator Freeware) – "The Un-official Custom Mission Building Guide", "Tactics Guide", and many other things on the forum (moderator).

Many projects on the **Commodore 64**. – Email me if you want to know more.

Dr Who Game Icons – Created for Civilization II, but can be used elsewhere just as easily. Email me if you want to know more.

 A handful of **websites**.

Many **short films & videos**. – Email me for more info. Many I will gladly send a copy for free.

Many, many, many **short stories**. Soon to be published in a compilation.

More that I'm sure I'm forgetting.

IN THE WORKS

- At least 5 other projects for B5Wars.
- More Documentation and a custom mission for B5: IFH.
- A Warcraft II based board game (in testing – available soon as a free download)
- Two books, one on computer gaming, one fiction.
- A script or two.
- A page that reviews free-to-download audio dramas. Mostly Dr. Who, but some other genres will be included as well.
- A guide to making your own quality audio/video recordings, at home.
- Tons more.

TRIVIA

Who? - I'm just a fan of the game, and of the Babylon 5 Universe.

Why? - To make the game easier to prepair, and to say thanks.

How Long? - Not including my original attempt years ago, I have worked on this about a year, averaging approx 5 days a week for about 2 hours a day. So about 520 hours.

How? - Lots of trial and error. The hardest part to figure out was the variants check. After that was the Hanger allocation. The thing that took the most time by far though was entering all the data.

When? - This program will continue to be developed for a little while longer if there is enough interest. I have a few refinements I would like to make. Look for one more major overhaul. After that I will only tweak if something is not working correctly.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Ultimate Fleet Builder is GNU Pzunitch (Shalbatana)
B5 Wars is the property of Agents of Gaming.
Babylon 5 is the property of Warner Brothers.