Shifting Sands Strategy Guide

Overview

Shifting Sands is a low-resource game with a shifting map and a shifting economy. The map can shift because you start the game with map-altering techs like engineer, doomsday, and builder. The economy can shift because you sorely need both colony and terraformer techs but cannot have both at the same time. For the endgame (BR 4 or 5), a final shift to jumpgate is possible, but only at a terrible cost. Not only are jumpgates expensive (consumed after a single jump), but taking jumpgate tech will usually halt your prospects of further economic expansion.

> **The Design Story** Part of the impetus for this series was the overwhelming power of the jumpgate in v3 games that do not limit its range. I asked myself, what could possibly serve as an appropriate trade-off for that kind of power? I concluded that you would need to give up something fundamental to the game like 1) colonizing, 2) or exploring. After much revision and rebalancing, these two ideas ultimately became Shifting Sands and Smarmy Purgatory, respectively.

Game Specifications

For ease of reference, the series design is listed below.

Format Two-player daily grudge with 11 systems each on a random map with no peeking allowed
Homeworld 100 Agriculture, 175 Minerals, 175 Fuel
Average System 10 Agriculture, 35 Minerals, 35 Fuel
Initial Tech 1.00
Tech Advance Rate 1.50
Max Ships 100
Max Ag Ratio 175
Minimum Pop to Build 50
Prohibited Tech Minefield, Minesweeper, Satellite, Stargate
Developed Tech Science, Engineer (Loss 0.25), Doomsday, Builder (Build Cost +25, Maintenance Cost +4, Planet Create Cost 60)
Unrestricted Tech Attack, Carrier (Loss 0.25, Build Cost +50, Maintenance Cost +8), Cloaker (Built Cloaked), Morpher (Loss 0.25, Build Cost +50, Maintenance Cost +8), Troopship
Restricted Tech Colony, Terraformer, Jumpgate (Loss 4.00, Infinite Range, Build Cost +150, Maintenance Cost +16)
Restricted Techs Allowed 1
Trade-Ins Allowed 2

Lesson 1: Restricted Techs

The heart of this series are the three restricted techs (Colony, Terraformer, and Jumpgate). You can only have one of these techs at a time, but two trade-ins are possible. Given enough time, you can access all three techs. All three are highly desirable, so the question becomes **when** and **in what order** do you want these techs?

Lesson 2: No Early Jumpgates

Take a look at the Jumpgate Loss setting. At 4.00, it has been described as "catastrophic"—meaning that no jumpgate will function below BR 4, and even then, each is consumed after a single use (unless the game somehow reaches BR 8, which is not expected). We will return to the implications of jumpgates several times in this guide. For now, it is enough to know that it won't be one of your early techs.

Lesson 3: The Tortoise and the Hare

Of the two restricted techs that you might select below BR 4, Colony is the Tortoise and Terraformer is the Hare. I don't mean that one is better than the other. I just mean that colonization produces slow and steady growth limited only by the size of the map and your access to it, while terraforming produces rapid and dramatic growth tightly limited by the number of systems you already possess. To see why, let's examine Ag.

Lesson 4: Agriculture

Agriculture is by far the scarcest resource.

- You start with 100 Ag at your homeworld.
- If you somehow manage to colonize 10 systems (your "fair share" of the map), you have another 100 Ag to show for your efforts (10 ships).
- You can snag a quick 75 Ag with amazing ease just by terraforming your homeworld. At BR 3, the cost is a mere 3 ships.

Again, the lesson isn't that one tech is better than the other, because the truth is, you get far more Ag from mixing the two techs than from using either one alone. Given enough time, you want them both.

Lesson 5: Tortoises Before Hares

The Standard Strategy is to take Colony as your first restricted tech. It is an excellent strategy and much discussed in this guide. For now, the lesson is simply that the further you are from your opponent, the better the Standard Strategy works. A colony is a significant investment that requires defending and typically pays few dividends until you terraform the system. If the enemy is too close, you may not have the time required to do so.

Lesson 6: Hares Before Tortoises

If your first restricted tech is Terraformer, you are using the Reverse Strategy. It works well if you are fairly near your opponent and need an immediate boost to your economy without hurting your tech level too badly. If the enemy is too far, your growth will peak too soon—after rapidly reaching an economy rating of 5, further increases will likely be slow and painful.

Lesson 7: At Very Close Quarters

If the enemy is exceedingly near, you may not have time for either colonies *or* terraformers. You will need to prepare for the possibility of a massive fleet of BR 2 attacks (or even cloakers) ending the game in short order. Building such a fleet yourself is certainly an option, but you should be aware that a BR 1 engineer can potentially delay the fleet long enough to get a little terraforming done. If you still have access to other systems after closing links to your enemy, all the better.

Lesson 8: Selective Colonization

In the Standard Strategy, you want to colonize, but attempting to grab every system available to you is almost certainly a serious mistake. Because your opponent terraformed sooner than you, his economy is larger. Because he built fewer total ships and moved them a smaller distance, his tech level is higher. He probably has a map advantage as well—by owning fewer colonies, he presents fewer targets for you to attack. The targets he does present probably all builders, something you are unlikely to manage for all your systems.

Lesson 9: Good Colonies

You know you want to colonize selectively, but what are you looking for exactly?

- Natural builder systems in controlling positions. By natural builder, I mean a system with at least 50 minerals and 50 fuel (regardless of the Ag rating). A controlling position is one that enables map access for the owner and constrains it for the opponent. If you are very fortunate, you will find such a system. Grab it and pop-trick at first opportunity.
- High Ag systems in protected positions. In Shifting Sands, high Ag means anything approaching or exceeding 20. A protected position is one that the enemy is unlikely to explore or attack. If you have a system or two of this nature, it will greatly improve your prospects for pop-tricking.

Most likely, you will find several systems that show some merit without quite meeting either criteria. In these cases, you need to be flexible. Any system in a controlling position can convey a map advantage, regardless of resources. A natural builder in your backfield is still a treasure, because it can help terraform your back planets efficiently. A high Ag planet in an exposed position presents a target to the enemy, but may be worth the trouble of defending if it is very near your homeworld or a natural builder.

Lesson 10: Colony BR

In the Standard Strategy, you can start building colony ships at BR 1, but depending on what your science ships find, you may want to wait for BR 2. By sending out colony ships with a mix of BRs, you can greatly improve your prospects for pop-tricking. Send a BR 2 to the controlling position where you want the ability to build ships. Send BR 1 ships to decent sources of Ag (13 or better). Unless you locate unusual amounts of Ag, this is the only way you can perform a two-turn pop-trick involving multiple colonies without terraforming first.

Lesson 11: Good Terraforming

A good terraformer is one that moves as little as possible and then terraforms a system that has nearly equal minerals and fuel. As a ship flies around, it consumes resources and slows your tech growth. One of the potential advantages of terraformers is their speed and efficiency in quickly increasing your economy with little impact on your tech level. Don't squander that advantage. If your colonies are widely spread, consider pop-tricking so that you can build the terraformers as near as possible to their destination. Luckily, pop-tricking is relatively easy once you terraform your homeworld.

Lesson 12: Developed Tech

You start with an unusual set of known technologies. Let's take a moment to review them:

- **Science** The more territory you explore, the better choices you can make for economic development (e.g., selective colonization). In addition, the more enemy territory you can see, the greater the threat you will pose if you decide to develop jumpgates at BR 4.
- **Engineer** Engineers are an important defense against jumpgates. In addition, they can convert an exposed system to a protected system, convert a builder system from an ineffective position to a controlling position, or simply deny the enemy access to a portion of the map. At the very least, an engineer can slow an enemy down for a turn or two.
- **Doomsday** The surest defense against jumpgates is a thick wall of annihilated planets that your opponent cannot see beyond. In addition, if you have already swapped out colony tech but your opponent is still colonizing, consider annihilating planets to deny those resources to the enemy.
- **Builder** Though unlikely to greatly contribute to your economy, builder ships can still be used to penetrate enemy territory with created systems, or to sniff out hidden links more cheaply than an engineer.

Lesson 13: It's Smaller on the Inside

The map consists of 22 systems in total. That might seem moderately large for two players, but due in part to selective colonization (Lesson 8), the game often plays smaller and faster than the map would otherwise suggest. But just because you don't want to colonize a particular system doesn't always mean you should ignore it. Don't forget the possibilities of an engineer or doomsday tech (Lesson 12)!

Lesson 14: Other Tech

Your initial tech is 1.00 and the nominal advance rate is 1.50 (i.e., if you do not build anything). The game is often decided at BR 4 or 5—typically 25-40 turns. By this point, you have certainly spent two and possibly three of your tech selections on restricted tech, leaving between one and three tech selections that you might spend on unrestricted tech (Attack, Carrier, Cloaker, Morpher, and Troopship). We will cover each of the available choices in turn.

Lesson 15: Attack Tech

Attack tech is a likely choice if you meet the enemy early. The advantage of the attack—its cheapness—is most pronounced at low BR. It remains valuable at any BR if you are keen to destroy enemy ships (an important goal if you want to prevent said ships from nuking your systems or opening hidden links). There are no satellites or minefields in this series, so the attack ship is the ship best capable of defense.

Lesson 16: Carrier Tech

Carrier tech is seldom used below BR 5—the first point at which the carrier has slightly more "survivability" than an attack ship when measured against the minerals and fuel required to build and operate the ship. At BR 6 and up, the improvement in survivability becomes more and more pronounced. The ability to survive is a particularly useful trait when you are trying to achieve "active objectives" in a combat zone. By an active objective, I mean orders like nuke, open, close—but the concept conceivably extends to any order that takes place after one combat and before the next.

Lesson 17: Cloaker Tech

While less common than attacks or carriers, cloaker tech is a decent alternative if you are at BR 1 to 3 and can see a lot of enemy territory. It is particularly devastating if you can nuke a defenseless colony after the enemy has lost the ability to build new ones. With no minefields in this game, your cloakers will be relatively easy to use. On the other hand, the next best defense against cloakers—the engineer—is available to any enemy that thinks to wall you out. At BR 4 and above, jumpgated attacks, carriers, or troopships will often prove superior to cloakers, because they provide very nearly the same degree of surprise. However, even at BR 4 and up, cloakers can be a great aid to certain double threats.

Lesson 18: Morpher Tech

The main niche for morpher tech in Shifting Sands is creating morpher-jumpgates at BR 5. At this BR, the morpher version is cheaper to operate than an actual jumpgate, even including the extra turn that the morpher requires maintenance and fuel. In addition, if you are attacking enemy colonies that are widely spaced, you can save considerable time by bringing a morpher with your attacking fleet and using it to gate the fleet to a new target (the Tempo Trick).

Lesson 19: Troopship Tech

At any BR, the troopship offers some hope of growth to the player that lacks (or has traded away) colony tech. It works best if the enemy has colonized extensively but only just started terraforming. Pick off freshly terraformed systems that haven't yet had time to grow large enough to build ships or resist invasion.

Lesson 20: First Transition [Standard Strategy]

You took Colony as your first restricted tech and have worked that for a while. By now, you are most likely BR 2 or 3. At some point, you **must** switch to terraformer or risk having an opponent that is both larger and higher tech than you. But how do you know when to make the switch?

- If you have exhausted your access to worthy or even semi-worthy systems as discussed in Lesson 9, you should probably switch immediately. No matter how grim your situation appears, it is not going to improve by delaying the act of terraforming.
- Keep an eye on what your opponent is doing. If your opponent terraforms before you, you probably shouldn't wait more than a small handful of turns before doing the same thing yourself, unless the enemy has very poor access to your systems. Conversely, if a terraformed enemy has excellent access to your systems and you can't conjure some sort of delaying action, don't wait at all—make the switch immediately.

If your transition isn't desperate, you may be able to afford a "last hurrah" of colonization. Build a last colony ship (or two or three), switch to terraformer, and on the same turn, build some terraformers in key locations. This will be an overbuild, but should repair to full strength on the next turn, when your terraformers actually do the work you built them to do.

Lesson 21: First Transition [Reverse Strategy]

You took Terraformer as your first restricted tech and have finished terraforming your homeworld. The question of *when* to change modes is obvious. The only question is *what mode* to adopt. In general, you have three choices:

- Immediately launch an attack
- Wait for a new BR and then launch an attack (consider walling off while waiting)
- Build a few "spare" terraformers (for planned colonies), then switch to colony tech

You will choose one of the first two options if you believe you have an econ and tech advantage as well as good access to enemy systems. You will choose the third option if you are too weak or your access too poor to launch an effective attack.

Lesson 22: Second Transition [Jumpgate]

You've reached BR 4. Should you take jumpgate? Probably, but carefully consider the following factors:

- Has your opponent mounted a strong defense against jumpgates? If you are faced with a well-defended doomwall, cannot jump to unexplored links, and the enemy presents few targets for you to attack, you may prefer a different approach.
- What are your remaining prospects for economic growth? If you do select jumpgate tech, you are betting that the offensive power of jumping will outweigh the benefits of growth.

If you do select jumpgate, remember that a gate cannot perform jumps unless you keep it at BR 4 or higher. If you order a jump, but combat or an overbuild drops it below BR 4, it will be consumed to no purpose.

Lesson 23: Second Transition [Turnbuckles]

For whatever reason, you've rejected jumpgate technology and elected to try to keep increasing your economy. You have a couple choices:

- Continue plugging away using your current restricted tech, whether Colony or Terraformer. By doing so, you preserve the option of switching to Jumpgate at some future date.
- Switch back to your *original* restricted tech. I call this maneuver a turnbuckle, and it can take two forms: Colony-Terraformer-Colony or Terraformer-Colony-Terraformer. If you make this election, you are permanently eschewing jumpgate technology. As with your First Transition, consider stockpiling extra ships of the type you are about to trade in.

Lesson 24: Colony-Terraformer-Colony

This turnbuckle can win games, but it can also prove frustrating. The best spots for colonies are probably already taken or nuked. Your best option may be to create new systems, but this is slow and saps tech. Still, it may eventually grant needed momentum to your economy. To make the most of the attempt, consider using the created systems to secretly penetrate enemy territory.

Lesson 25: Terraformer-Colony-Terraformer

Compared to the other turnbuckle, this one gives your economy a short, rapid boost. You likely have several places where terraforming could make a significant improvement, and your BR is high enough to do it very quickly. This can result in a second renaissance for your economy. Your enemy will take notice.

Lesson 26: Jumpgate Overbuilds

In Lesson 22, we saw that that it can be difficult to jump an overbuilt fleet because your jumpgate will malfunction if it dips below BR 4. Here are a couple ideas:

- The first idea can work even if your economy is relatively small. Build the jumpgate and the fleet together and let them repair to BR 4 or better. Your opponent will notice the increase in your military rating and likely guess what is about to happen. You are wagering that your fleet is powerful enough that no forewarning will save him. On the turn of the actual jump, you may be able to add a ship or two to the fleet.
- The second idea requires an economy rating of roughly 9 or better. First overbuild the fleet. Build exactly as many ships as will leave you just barely enough minerals on the next turn (after paying maintenance on the fleet) to build a functional jumpgate. You will need at least 214 minerals at BR 4 (or 185 at BR 5). The cost of building the jumpgate keeps the fleet in an overbuilt state, thus preserving surprise.

Additional variants are possible with the considerably cheaper morpher-jumpgate (Lesson 17), but you will need to account for the extra turn it takes to set the jumpgate up.

Lesson 27: Prohibited Tech

There are four standard ship types you'll never see in Shifting Sands. Because prohibited tech is a rare thing in Stellar Crisis, an inattentive player can mistakenly assume these ships are allowed. Ironically, it's an experienced player that is most prone to this form of inattention! It can be a hard lesson when you ignore an oncoming fleet that "forgot" to bring a minesweeper, "knowing" that you can easily take it out with a minefield. Here are some of the consequences of the four missing techs:

- **No Satellites or Minefields** Homeworlds and builder systems are more difficult to defend, all ships now require fuel, attack technology becomes more attractive since it is now the cheapest ship, cloakers need less support, engineer and doomsday become the best delaying tactics.
- **No Minesweepers** In a standard game, a winning empire is usually forced to burn a tech selection on Minesweeper. In Shifting Sands, you essentially have an "extra" tech selection that can go towards something more interesting.
- **No Stargates** Overbuilding at the front becomes more dangerous, minor colonies are more difficult to defend, jumpgates become more tempting despite the cost.

Lesson 28: Bad Maps

In Shifting Sands, the game is almost never decided by the map. Instead, what matters most is your response to it. As a series designer, I am very proud of this feature. In a normal series, an eleven system tunnel with you at the foot and your opponent at the head is a dismal map indeed—but it is *very good* in Shifting Sands *if you respond correctly*. For this reason, I recommend keeping your strategy flexible until you learn something of the map. If you enter the game with a fixed preconception of the best way to play, you are relying on luck to get a map that works for that strategy.

Lesson 29: Doomwall Engineering

When combined with the right sort of engineering, a wall of annihilated systems can be a formidable defense.   Use engineers incorrectly, however, and you can negate the effectiveness of your own wall. An effective wall allows you to achieve at least one of the following objectives:

- Destroy enemy science ships before they can explore past the wall
- Delay the enemy so long that you can make effective attacks elsewhere

The key to any doomwall is the part that the enemy wants past—the last line of annihilated systems. I call this area the Gatehouse. If access to the Gatehouse is easy for you and hard for your opponent, your wall has a good chance to function properly.

A lot of players seem compelled to seal off their own access to the Gatehouse. This a unhealthy impulse. The opponent can just walk across with as little as one engineer and one science ship. If he does, *you'll* be the one struggling to enter the Gatehouse quickly enough to destroy those two ships.

What your fortress needs is a murder hole—an open link from the Gatehouse to one of your hidden builders. At need, you can quickly pour boiling oil into the Gatehouse to turn it into a killing zone.

Lesson 30: Probing a Doomwall

You've found an enemy doomwall, but you don't know its quality at first. Some ideas:

- **Poised Science Ship** When you first explore an annihilated dead end, consider just parking your science ship there for a while. If the doomwall is poorly constructed, it will be awkward for the opponent to remedy that defect without opening a link and allowing you to explore something new.
- **Science and Engineer** As mentioned in Lesson 29, this simple combination can confound an opponent with a poorly constructed doomwall. Watch how the enemy reacts. If he jumps a fleet to *your side* of the wall just to chase after your ships, or has to *open the link for you* just to attack them in time, you have likely found a vulnerability that you can consider attacking more forcefully—or more sneakily—next time.
- **Cheap Sniffer** A BR 1 builder can provide a lot of information for a small investment. If you find voids, you have narrowed the location of the enemy homeworld. And no matter whether you detect voids or hidden systems, the data will help you analyze the doomwall itself.

All doomwalls have weaknesses. The next three Lessons discuss various methods of exploiting them.

Lesson 31: Defeating a Doomwall with Builder Tech

Builder tech is often the easiest way past a doomwall, particularly one that is properly engineered. Some techniques:

- **Sneak Around** By secretly creating a series of systems bypassing the doomed area, you can often achieve a significant degree of surprise if you manage to open onto enemy territory. Your builder ships probably won't get in a fight, so use the minimum required (pairs at BR 3, or singles at BR 6).
- **Create a Landing Zone** Because it is expensive and even risky for the defender to fill them all, you will often find voids near the business end of a doomwall. If you can create just one system there, you can use it as a jumpgate destination, thereby gaining improved access to the area. Because your attempt to create such a system is visible and might meet resistance, you may want to bring more or stronger ships than the minimum required.
- **Punch Through** Sometimes you are merely trying to Create a Landing Zone and actually end up creating a system that adjoins enemy territory! Of course, you don't know that until you open up the links and explore.

Lesson 32: Other Ways Past a Doomwall

Additional techniques to think about:

- **Brute Force** If you larger than your opponent, you might consider just rushing the doomwall with enough force to break through. Your attack will be time consuming, and you run the risk of being attacked elsewhere while your forces are bogged down. To lessen the risk a bit, you can set up a BR 5 morpher-jumpgate inside the doomwall, allowing rapid escape if needed.
- **Exploration Fork** An exploration fork is a double threat where your science ships, plus support, can move to two different annihilated systems with unexplored links. To stop the threat, the opponent requires double your force—or a certain amount of luck. Even a well-constructed doomwall can permit exploration forks, because the designer faces a peculiar dilemma. He can either leave voids (which you can exploit with Lesson 31), or fill them. If he fills them, you can often create an exploration fork with a pair of engineers.
- **Fleets of Unpredictable Strength** If the doomwall is broad or has several distinct channels, send two fleets such that the opponent can only guess the strength of each. For example, a ghost fleet in one direction and a full strength fleet in the other, or any mixture in between. The opponent cannot defend against both fleets with his full strength.
- **Mixed Threat** A mixed threat is any double threat where one arm of the threat is aimed at penetrating the doomwall and the other arm is aimed at nuking an important enemy system that you can see.

Lesson 33: Unorthodox Ways Past a Doomwall

The following methods are a bit like bunting in baseball. An opponent who is on his guard will have little trouble dealing with the threat they pose. However, the defender will have difficulty distinguishing an actual threat from a feint. If the defender overreacts to a feint and is drawn out of position, the attacker can gain opportunities elsewhere.

- **Cloaker** If you have found what looks like a murder hole—the opponent keeps killing your science ships in a particular annihilated system with unexplored links—you might be able to slip past with a science ship by uncloaking at the Gatehouse just as your science ship arrives.
- **Morpher** Your opponent might not bother building a defense fleet if you didn't bring the necessary tools to penetrate the wall—engineer and/or science. Unknown to him, one or two or your useless-seeming ships is a actually a morpher.
- **Cloaked Morpher** See if you can get a cloaked morpher into the Gatehouse. Later, when you suspect the enemy has no ships on the other side of the murder hole, uncloak the ship. A turn later, change to Science. If it survives, the enemy cannot stop it from exploring. If it doesn't survive, well, at least it was a fun distraction.

Many sneaky variations are possible. In addition, you can multiply the effect with one or more of the double threats from Lesson 32.

Lesson 34: Jumpgate Resources

In Lesson 2, we saw that a jumpgate of less than BR 8 is consumed when used. So, it uses *no* fuel on the first turn that the transported ships can actually fight — the turn following the jump. As a result, minerals are often a greater constraint on a jumpgated fleet than fuel. Fuel is still important, since it determines the *maximum size* of your attacking fleet (not counting the gate itself), but minerals will speed *the arrival* of that fleet (see Lesson 26). When colonizing on a map that you believe will allow you to take Jumpgate tech, consider leaning toward minerals if you find uneven systems. How far to lean? I have had good results with total minerals 10-20% higher than total fuel.

Lesson 35: Double Jumps

In Shifting Sands, even a single jumpgate is expensive. Attempting to operate two of them simultaneously is not an easy task. For that very reason, it can take an opponent by surprise if you do. With two jumpgates, it is easy to set up a double threat if you have access to suitable targets. Just jump two fleets to adjacent targets for a fork, or jump fleets of unpredictable strength to two separate targets (e.g., ghost fleet). The jumped fork works especially well if you put at least one carrier in each target— and *any* form of jumped double threat can be intensified with cloakers.

Lesson 36: The Enemy Gate is Down

By now, we surely know that a jumpgate can malfunction if it dips below BR 4 (Lesson 22). It is therefore very risky to build a jumpgate in a location that is visible to the enemy. Besides negating much of the surprise that a jumpgate can provide, a visible gate—if exactly BR 4—is exceptionally vulnerable to "ping attacks". The best ping generator is a nest of BR 1 cloakers striking one at a time. Each one that uncloaks will impair a BR 4 gate for two full turns—the turn that the gate takes damage, and the following turn while it repairs. If you don't have Cloaker tech, any old ship can serve the same purpose, though it will be much harder to maintain a steady ping rate for any length of time.

If the enemy gate is stronger than BR 4, you can still impair it, but you'll typically need a lot more firepower than suggested above—more of a *ram* than a ping.

Lesson 37: One Exposed Homeworld

If you have Jumpgate tech, discover the opposing homeworld, and aren't facing a deadly threat yourself, you can nuke an enemy roughly twice your size, provided that you can manage some combination of the following:

- Catch the enemy out of position
- Mount a series of double threats
- Win the race to BR 5 or 6
- Use carriers at BR 6, if not BR 5

Of course, if you are bigger than the other empire—or more precisely, if you have more *force potential*, or BR times fuel—the problem is much simpler. Just build to max fuel, minding Lesson 34 and also accounting for any systems you are likely to lose before your nuke order. Then repair, jump, and nuke.

Lesson 38: Two Exposed Homeworlds

The situation is more complicated with mutually discovered homeworlds. The game often comes down to timing. Some very general observations:

- If both sides jump at the same time with no reserves for defense, the game is a coin toss favoring the side with more ships
- If one side jumps and the defender can't mount an adequate defense, the jumper wins
- If one side jumps and the defender just barely manages an adequate defense, the jumper usually gains the advantage for the next volley
- If one side jumps and the defender defends easily, the defender gains the advantage and can possibly counterattack

Lesson 39: Exposed Homeworld—Jumpgate Location

If your homeworld is exposed, you should ask yourself whether you want to build a jumpgate right away. You may need all of your resources for defense. If you do build a gate:

- Build it out of view (Lesson 36)
- Build it one or two moves from your homeworld. You can now threaten *and* defend with a single fleet. In addition, if the jumpgate is two moves away with the fleet in between the gate and your homeworld, the gate gains some degree of protection against interloping science ships.
- If you have no hidden builder near your homeworld, consider setting up a morpher-jumpgate

Update Log

5/22/2011   Lessons 1 through 26 first published

5/29/2011   Lessons 27 and 28 added, thanks to input from SWOC and Blitz Jester respectively

7/4/2011   Lesson 8 is now more concise

Lesson 11 now mentions the benefits of even resources when terraforming

Lesson 16 now mentions the increasing value of carrier tech at higher BR

Lesson 16 now defines "active objective" in more general terms

Lesson 17 now mentions the lack of minefields as a positive factor for cloaker tech

Lesson 17 now mentions the value of cloakers for high BR double threats

Lesson 24 now uses a less pessimistic tone

Lessons 29 through 39 added