

DarkHelm

User Manual

DarkHelm is a cooperative, server-authoritative **sci-fi bridge simulator**. A crew shares one warship, each player taking a console, and works together to fly, fight and survive across a galaxy of star systems. This manual covers getting into a game, every station, and the core ship systems. Everything is point-and-click first; keyboard and controller bindings are optional shortcuts (see the separate **Keybindings** sheet).

Getting into a game

Hosting

One machine runs the ship (it is the authoritative simulation). From the launcher choose **Host**, then **LAN** (same network) or **Online** (Steam relay). In the lobby you set the galaxy, the scenario (Freeplay or a mission), and your ship and loadout, then start the server. The host also plays — choose which stations you will man.

Joining

Choose **Join** and connect to the host: a LAN game on your network, an Online game via the Steam browser or a friend's invite, or a direct address. Then claim one or more open stations. Several players can crew the same ship, and a game can run more than one player ship at once.

Multiplayer rule: everyone — host and joiners — must be on the **same game version**. Restart Steam to pick up an update.

The eight stations

Helm

Flies the ship: heading, pitch and roll, throttle (twelve presets plus a slider), docking, and engaging or dropping out of **hyperspace**. Turn and acceleration rates scale with available engine power, so a brown-out at Engineering will sluggish your helm. Full keyboard and controller support.

Weapons

Brings weapons online, manages the **six shield arcs** (reinforce a facing under fire), locks targets, and fires beams, missiles and — with the crew's authorisation — **nuclear ordnance**. A solid lock plus a Sensors scan unlocks aimed shots at specific enemy subsystems.

Sensors

Cuts through the **fog of war**. Contacts appear as blips within range; an **active scan** identifies a target (name, faction, allegiance, shields and hull) and a deep scan reveals crew, weapons and condition. Ships squawking a transponder are identified automatically; ships running silent must be scanned. Runs ECM and hands the shared target to Weapons and Helm.

Engineering

The heart of the ship. Routes power across the buses to every system, manages **heat and cooling**, repairs **battle damage**, and keeps the reactors alive. Over-draw a bus or overheat a loop and systems brown out or trip offline — balance is the job. Power presets can be saved and recalled.

Comms

Hails contacts and reads their **transponder / IFF**, works the comms channels (a free-text radio with a keyword responder, no AI chat), authenticates friendly ships against the registry, runs **shuttle operations**, and can sound the alert.

Command

The captain's overview: **alert condition** (Green / Yellow / Red), which stations are manned and crew status, the mission **objectives**, and a tactical map. Command sets the alert posture and authorises nuclear launches; it directs rather than drives.

Flight Operations

The carrier air boss (only on ships with a hangar). **Launches, directs and recovers** the wing of fighters, bombers and shuttles, assigns each craft an order — escort, defend an asset, patrol an area, intercept a threat, attack, tow — and **services** the hangar (repair / refuel / rearm). Craft burn fuel and run out; recover or tow a stranded craft home.

Main Viewscreen

The shared 3D window on the void — the view out the bow, the big screen the whole bridge watches: celestial bodies, ships and stations, weapons fire, missiles and hyperspace warp.

Not every ship carries every station — Flight Ops only appears on ships with a hangar, for example.

Core concepts

- **Power & heat:** every system draws power on a bus and produces heat; Engineering balances supply, draw and cooling. Damage degrades reactors, cooling and systems.
- **Shields:** six arcs (fore / aft / port / starboard / dorsal / ventral) regenerate on power; reinforce the facing taking fire.
- **Fog of war:** you only know what your sensors and transponders reveal — identify before you commit.
- **Hyperspace:** jump between star systems; sub-light combat happens within a system.
- **Carriers & small craft:** launch and command a wing from a hangar; they fly, fight and refuel.
- **Alerts:** the alert condition coordinates the crew and readies (or stands down) weapons and shields.
- **Game Master & missions:** a GM can run live scenarios and spawn forces; missions script objectives.

Getting help

- In-game: the  **Help** button on every console.
- Online manual: <https://dark-helm.com/manual/>
- Support & bug reports: <https://dark-helm.com/support/>
- Community & finding a crew: <https://discord.gg/Mg8X35tD>