

5.0 STRATEGY & TACTICS

5.1 General Information

CTF2187 is designed to be a very simple game to play but a very difficult game to win. The biggest mistake you can make is to assume that the strategy of the game is as simple as the game mechanics. For example, at first glance it would appear that all you need to do is MOVE TOWARD THE NEAREST ENEMY BOT and ATTACK THE NEAREST ENEMY BOT. Good plan, right? Wrong. Remember that when moving toward the nearest enemy Bot you only make 45-degree turns, which means if the nearest enemy Bot is beside you or behind you then you will make a slow gradual turn toward him. Meanwhile he is blasting away at your lightly armored back. Likewise firing at the nearest enemy does not work well when the nearest Bot is behind you, and out of the Fields of Fire of your main guns, and another enemy Bot is in front of you but farther away.

All Move and Attack orders can be broken down into two categories: Assertive Orders and Responsive Orders. Assertive Orders are those with which you directly control the actions of your Bot and know exactly what it will do. Such orders include Move Forward, Move Backward, Face Specific Direction, Attack Specific Enemy Bot. With these orders it is easy to plot out your turn and know exactly what you will do where and when. Responsive Orders are those where your on-board computers are given general directives and they make the tactical decisions. Such orders include Move Toward Nearest Enemy Bot, Face Toward Specific Bot and Attack The Last Enemy Bot to Target Me. With this type of order you begin to lose control of your Bot and it becomes difficult to predict exactly what your Bot will do or where it will end up. Both types of orders have their advantages but be careful how you mix them together on a turn. It's usually best (though there are exceptions) to do the Assertive Orders early in the turn and Responsive Orders later in the turn. Responsive Orders are also best for Standing Orders.

5.2 Bot Tactics

Bot tactics concern the individual maneuvering of your specific Bot independent of the actions of your teammates. The basics are somewhat obvious but are nonetheless very important and should never be forgotten.

Rule 1: The best way to win and earn a lot of Victory Points is to attack enemy forces whenever and wherever possible. Remember Command Post hits are worth twice as many Victory Points as hits on enemy Bots. As for enemy Bots, remember that the bigger the Bot the more damage it can take before it blows up and thus it provides more points than a Light Bot. Heavier Bots, being larger targets, are also easier to hit.

Rule 2: As a general rule it is best to hit enemy targets with the biggest weapon possible at the best (optimum) range possible as often as possible. It sounds simple but is often difficult to put into practice. Normally your biggest weapons are located in areas with the smallest Fields of Fire such as the Front Torsos.

Rule 3: Know and use the terrain around you to your advantage. Remember: watch for terrain that will block your Line of Fire as well as other Bots and Command Posts. Terrain such as Woods and Buildings offer the best protection from enemy attacks. Also, during movement, rapid changes in Ground Elevation greatly increase the likelihood that your Bot will stumble and fall. This can be a real problem, especially if your Bot is already difficult to control due to high Heat Levels or excessive damage.

Rule 4: Watch your Heat Levels and Action Points. They have a major impact on your Bot's performance. A hot Bot loses Action Points, falls down more often and doesn't dodge or fire as accurately. Your Action Points help determine how well you dodge and more importantly who goes first in the Sequence of Events. The Bot with the most Action Points per Phase not only moves first but it also attacks first. This is often crucial in many tactical situations.

Rule 5: Pay attention to where your Bot has been seriously hit and where you have hit your opponents. Try to maneuver so as to reduce the chances of taking additional damage in your weak areas and increase the chances of hitting your opponent in his damaged areas. The more internal damage you can inflict on an enemy Bot the better.

5.3 Team Tactics

Cooperating with your teammates, while not necessary, can prove to be a big advantage for you and your team. At the very least it is helpful to exchange scanner reports and visual sightings of the surrounding terrain. Something you see may be very useful to your teammates and vice versa.

Of course, it is the coordination of actions that provides the most benefit to you and your teammates. The following are a number of basic rules for team cooperation:

Rule 1: Watch and try to anticipate the movements of your teammates and note how they affect your Fields of Fire. There is nothing more frustrating than going after an enemy Bot and having a teammate in front of you doing exactly the same thing, blocking your Line of Fire and thereby canceling all or part of your Attack Orders.

Rule 2: Coordinate your movements and try to maneuver your opponents into a position where one or more of your teammates can get a shot at the enemy's Rear. If you can get an enemy Bot between you and a teammate then that enemy is in trouble. If the enemy is inexperienced you should be able to blow off his backsides, if not, well... there is a way out of such a trap.

5.4 What to do if...

Often times during the course of play you will find yourself in a difficult tactical situation. As you gain experience through play, you will gain a greater understanding of the game and will be better able to deal with these tactical dilemmas. Until then here are a few examples of tactical problems and some common solutions:

Problem: It's the first turn of my first game and there are no enemy Bots in sight. What should I do?

Solution: From your map you should be able to determine what direction the enemy is (usually straight in front of you). Move toward the enemy, taking advantage of any useful terrain in the area. Even though you don't see any targets be sure to issue Attack Orders (such as ATTACK NEAREST ENEMY BOT) anyway with your long-range weapons. If there are no targets in range then the on-board computers will simply cancel your Attack Orders. If there is a target then you will probably get off the first shot and therefore have an advantage.

Problem: What should I do if my Bot is in the middle of an intense firefight and my Heat Level is dangerously high?

Solution: The most common way to deal with a case of excess Heat is to not move and use only the Face commands to face your target. This tactic not only reduces Heat Levels but conserves Action Points so that your Bot will dodge better and take less damage (and ensuing Heat) in combat. However, the effect of this strategy, by itself, is limited. You may also want to switch some of your attacks from your main weapons to those that generate less Heat. Of course if there is a Lake nearby you should try to enter it as the water will help accelerate the cooling process.

Problem: My Bot ended its last turn in a bad position. I have one enemy Bot in front of me and one behind me. How can I escape without getting my backsides blown off?

Solution: Take your map and draw a straight line connecting the two enemy Bots. Now draw a line perpendicular to the first line through your Bot. This is your line of escape. With your first Move Order, face your Bot so that it parallels this line. Now spend the rest of your move backing up. Initially the enemy Bots will be firing on your sides (which is not good, but much better than your back) but eventually they should be only hitting your front. Next turn you should be in a better position to maneuver.

Problem: I have a Heavy Bot in front of me and the armor of my Right Arm and Right Front Torso has been blown away. If I take him head-on I have a good chance of losing a lot of internal systems in these damaged areas. What should I do?

Solution: If the enemy is four or more sectors away and you have some good weapons in your Left Arm you should turn and face two sectors to your right (if facing the enemy puts you at Direction 1 then you should turn to face Direction 3). This way your right side is protected and you can open up with the weapons located in your Left Arm and Head.

Problem: Help! I'm surrounded by enemies and have no friends in sight. What do I do?

Solution: If you think you are going to die and don't want to Eject then go out in a blaze of glory and open up on the easiest enemy Bot with everything you've got. Not only is this a fun way to go but it will also help out your teammates by inflicting more damage on the enemy. If you think you have a chance then try to conserve Action Points (to save them for dodging) by either not firing your weapons or only firing those with a low mass. If there is any cover nearby, run for it. Try and use nearby terrain to block Fields of Fire. If there is no cover in the area try to maneuver among the enemy Bots so that they block each other's line of fire. And, of course, there's always the Self-Destruct button.

Problem: My Bot is heavily damaged. Several weapons are destroyed, most of my armor has been blown away and I have few Action Points left due to multiple Engine hits and excessive Heat Levels. What should I do?

Solution: Don't give up! This happens a lot. As the old Bot Pilot adage goes, "If you're not getting hit, you're not fighting hard enough." Virtually no one gets through a game unscathed. If your Bot is heavily damaged then probably so is everyone else's. You may want to try to move back toward your Command Post. That way you can mutually support each other and, besides, an attacking enemy would probably go after the CP (because it is worth more Victory Points) before a crippled Bot.



