



THE LOST ADMIRAL

THE SABLE STRAITS

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Player and developer manual

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A turn-based naval strategy game fought down a narrow channel of harbours. Buy a fleet against a points purse, then spend a season taking anchorages and holding them, because every harbour you hold pays its value into your score at the end of every turn.

What wins

Every harbour you hold pays its value into your score at the end of every turn. A harbour worth five points, taken on turn four of a thirty-turn season, will pay you a hundred and thirty before the season closes; the same harbour taken on turn twenty-five pays twenty-five. Sinking a ship pays you once, what it cost to build, and the flagship pays thirty. Nothing else scores at all.

That single rule is the whole game. Destroying the enemy fleet is a way of holding harbours, not a substitute for holding them, and a squadron chasing a destroyer it cannot catch is a squadron earning nothing. When the season closes the higher score wins, and the margin decides your rank.

The season

Choose a water and how heavy an enemy you want, buy a fleet in the dockyard, and weigh anchor. You move first every turn. Order as many ships as you like in whatever sequence suits you, then end the turn: the enemy moves, harbours change hands, both sides are paid, and the next turn begins. If one fleet is destroyed outright the action ends there and the survivor is paid for the turns remaining.

Buying a fleet

Your flagship sails free and cannot be declined. She adds a point of gunnery to every ship of yours within two hexes, which is worth more than it sounds when six hulls are in range, and she pays the enemy thirty points if she goes down. Everything else is bought against the purse, and every class has a limit so that a fleet cannot be one good idea repeated.

	CLASS	COST	MOVE	GUN	RANGE	HULL	ARMOUR	SIGHT	NOTES
FS	Flagship	free	4	8	3	26	4	5	flagship; rallies friends within two hexes
BB	Battleship	26	3	11	3	30	5	3	limit 2
CA	Heavy cruiser	17	4	7	3	20	3	4	limit 3
CL	Light cruiser	10	5	5	2	15	2	5	limit 4
DD	Destroyer	7	6	4	2	10	1	5	sonar, sweeps mines, works the shoals, torpedoes, limit 6
PC	Escort cutter	4	5	2	1	7	1	4	sonar, sweeps mines, works the shoals, limit 6
SS	Submarine	10	3	9	1	7	0	4	runs submerged, torpedoes, limit 3
ML	Minelayer	8	4	1	1	10	1	3	sweeps mines, works the shoals, 6 mines, limit 2
AP	Transport	6	4	0	0	12	1	3	works the shoals, landing party of 3, limit 3

Read the table as a set of trades rather than a ranking. The battle line hits hardest and soaks most, but it is slow, short-sighted and cannot work the shoals. The flotilla is fast enough to choose its fights and cheap enough to be everywhere, and heavy guns are poor at hitting it, but it dies to anything it cannot run from. Only destroyers and escort cutters carry sonar and sweep gear, which makes them the only answer to submarines and minefields. A transport carries the only landing party in the fleet, and without one a garrisoned harbour has to be bombarded down the slow way.

The chart

Each water is generated fresh for every command and then reflected through its own centre in hex space, so both fleets face identical terrain, identical harbour values and identical opening income. Neither admiral has better ground; the only asymmetry in the game is the purse you chose to give the enemy.

Dark hexes are deep water and pale blue hexes are shoals, which only shoal-draught hulls may enter. Buff hexes are land and block both movement and line of fire. A harbour flies a pennant in the colour of its owner and prints its value, or its value and its battery as 5/2 when a shore battery still holds it.

WATER	SIZE	HARBOURS	PURSE	TURNS	CHARACTER
The Sable Straits	25 x 19	11	110	30	A long channel between two crowded coasts. Every road to the enemy runs past somebody's guns.
Kesteven Narrows	21 x 15	9	90	26	Close water, heavy islands, short sight lines. Torpedo country, and the shoals matter more than the belt.
Verrin Deep	27 x 21	13	130	34	Open ocean with scattered anchorages. Speed and gun range decide it; there is nowhere to hide a slow fleet.

What the sea hides

You see only what your ships and harbours can see, and sight ranges differ sharply by class: an escort cutter sees further than a battleship. Water you have seen before stays on the chart in a dimmer shade; water you have never seen is blank.

A submarine is invisible until she comes within one hex of anything of yours, or two hexes of a hull with sonar. Firing shows her periscope until her next turn. Only destroyers and escort cutters can engage a submerged boat at all, so a fleet without either has no answer to one and must simply accept the losses.

The turn

Each ship has steam for a number of hexes and one turn of gunnery. Firing ends that ship's turn, so move first and shoot last. Ships cannot pass through one another, so a narrow channel can be corked, and the gold dot on a hull means she still has orders left.

Gunnery

Damage falls off with range, at about seven-eighths at two hexes and seven-tenths at three. Armour soaks a share of every hit, and fast light hulls are hard for heavy guns to hit at all, which is what keeps a flotilla alive in front of a battle line. Torpedoes, carried by destroyers and submarines, double against armoured hulls but only at one hex, and are poor against thin-skinned ones. Anything you engage that can reach you answers at reduced effect, so choosing the fight is most of the skill.

Harbours and batteries

An open harbour falls the moment one of your ships steams into it. A garrisoned harbour must be silenced first: bombard the battery from range, which chips it down a point or so at a time, or bring a transport alongside and put the landing party ashore, which silences up to three points in one stroke. A harbour you hold slowly rebuilds its battery while no enemy is alongside, so an early capture becomes harder to take back.

Mines and refits

A minelayer lays a field in the hex she occupies. Fields are invisible to the enemy until something steams onto one, and a ship that does takes five to nine points of damage and stops dead. Destroyers, escort cutters and minelayers detect fields within one hex and can sweep them. A damaged ship that lies still in one of your own harbours, without firing, makes good about a sixth of her hull overnight, takes on a fresh landing party if she is a transport, and refills her racks at your home harbour if she is a minelayer.

The enemy

The machine admiral buys a fleet with a temper — the gun line, the flotilla, the raiding squadron, a balanced fleet — drawn for the season, so the same water can bring a battle line one command and a swarm of destroyers the next. In the action it assigns the whole fleet at once: transports to garrisoned harbours, submarines to prey, minelayers to its own water, then harbours by value to the nearest free hull, and whatever is left over to the line. It sees only what its own ships can see, and remembers where it last saw yours for three turns.

LAYER	ENEMY PURSE	ENEMY HAND	YOU WIN	CHARACTER
Quiet water	86%	novice	82%	The enemy sails with a thin purse and a nervous hand.
Contested sea	97%	adept	53%	Equal purses. An even fight decided by seamanship.
Fleet action	102%	veteran	32%	They outbuild you and they know their business.
A lost cause	113%	ace	18%	A heavier fleet, handled well. Hold what you can and make them pay.

The win column is measured, not estimated: thirty-four seasons a layer, machine against machine, with a competent hand on your side, spread across all three waters. Two things about it are worth knowing. Moving second is worth roughly ten points of score at equal purses, because the second mover reacts to the position it can actually see; the purses carry that difference so the middle layer sits near even. And the four tempers finish inside fifty per cent give or take twelve against one another, so the temper the enemy draws changes the shape of the fight rather than the odds of it.

Rank

The margin between the scores decides the rank you are given at the close. It runs from the beached post captain up to Lord of the Sable Straits — and the worst of them is the one the game is named for.

MARGIN	RANK
+55% of the total or better	Lord of the Sable Straits
+35% of the total or better	Admiral of the Fleet
+18% of the total or better	Vice Admiral
+5% of the total or better	Rear Admiral
-5% of the total or better	Commodore, confirmed
-20% of the total or better	Commodore, on half pay
-40% of the total or better	Post captain, beached
anything worse	The lost admiral

Controls

KEY OR ACTION	EFFECT
W E D X Z A	steam north-west, north-east, east, south-east, south-west, west
Click a ship of yours	select her
Click open water	steer the selected ship there, as far as her steam allows
Click a sighted enemy	engage her, if she is in range and in line
Click a garrisoned harbour	bombard the battery
Tab	the next ship that still has orders
F	engage the best target in range
Enter	end the turn
Escape	deselect
C, or double-click	recentre the chart
Arrow keys	pan the chart
Mouse wheel, or pinch	zoom the chart
Drag	pan the chart
Sound on / Sound off	toggle the synthesised audio; the choice is remembered

Saving

The action is written to browser storage after every order, under the single key `tronsoft_lost_admiral_save`, and the opening screen offers to resume it. Sound preference is kept under `tronsoft_lost_admiral_prefs`. Only one action is kept at a time. No other storage is used, no personal data is collected, and the game runs normally when storage is refused.

For the developer

The package is a flat-root Tronsoft Games package built to Package Specification v1.4. It makes no network requests of any kind, ships no third-party code, no web fonts and no audio files, and needs no build step: the entry file loads six deferred modules and runs.

FILE	WHAT IT HOLDS
<code>index.html</code>	the page; no inline script, no inline style, no absolute paths
<code>css/game.css</code>	the whole interface; one stylesheet, no imports
<code>js/data.js</code>	ship classes, waters, difficulty layers, ranks and name pools
<code>js/game.js</code>	the rules engine: hex geometry, map generation, movement, gunnery, fog, harbours and scoring. Touches no document, so it runs headless

FILE	WHAT IT HOLDS
js/ai.js	the machine admiral: purchase, fleet-wide assignment, per-ship orders
js/save.js	the only module that touches storage
js/sound.js	Web Audio synthesis; fails quietly when unavailable
js/interface.js	the chart canvas, the dockyard, the tote board and the orders panel
validate.js	the shipped validator; run it from the package root with node
sounds/README.txt	why a game that declares audio ships no audio files

Every module uses the same dual-path wrapper, so the rules and the machine admiral load under Node for the harness and as globals in the browser, and the tested path is the shipped path. `node validate.js` from the package root checks specification conformance section by section and then replays the full rules harness against the shipped modules: hex algebra on both row parities, map symmetry and harbour reachability across seeds, movement, gunnery, sighting, harbours, landings and minefields, determinism from a seed, and a save round trip. It exits non-zero on any failure and needs no dependencies.

Balance was measured rather than asserted. The instruments used to do it — a difficulty ladder, a skill and temper matrix pooled over both seats, a single-knob probe for the machine admiral and a seat-bias probe — are not shipped in the package, but the assertions they produced are, and the ladder figures in this manual come from the same runs.

Licence and source material

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This game is inspired by *The Lost Admiral*, published by Quantum Quality Productions in 1991. It is an independent work and is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or licensed by that publisher or any successor in interest. What is inherited here is a category of mechanics that no one owns: buying a fleet against a points purse, moving it on a grid, and scoring by holding harbours over a fixed number of turns. Everything protectable is original to this work — the rules as written, the ship classes and their figures, the waters, the harbours and their names, the ships' names, the ranks, the interface, the artwork and every line of text and code. No assets, data, text or code from the original were used, examined or reproduced. *The Lost Admiral* is a trademark of its respective owner and is used only to identify the work that inspired this one.