

This is the cheat-sheet version of the *Mass Effect* universe, for players who are not familiar with the games. This will cover the basics so you can understand and hopefully appreciate some of the flavor.

Some of this is taken wholesale from the Codex, which is from the games themselves¹

1 Setting

The *Mass Effect* universe is firmly in the genre of space opera. It takes place in the future and spans the entire Milky Way galaxy.

Many standard sci-fi tropes are in full effect.

The Citadel is the cultural and political center of the galaxy, and is located in the Serpent Nebula. The Citadel Council is the political body that controls galactic politics. Membership into the Council is limited to races that have proven to be able to handle responsibility for the rest of the galaxy. As of 2182 CE, the Council is made of representatives from 3 races. Other races can petition the Council; the Citadel is home to the embassies of many races.

Humans are the new kids on the block, having discovered Prothean ruins and archives and FTL on Mars in 2148 CE.

FTL and other technologies are based around something called the "mass effect", which due to some handwavy science, gives things higher or lower mass². The mass effect is a property of something called Element Zero that when subjected to an electrical current releases dark energy that can be manipulated into mass effect fields³.

Some individuals have the ability to manipulate these mass effect fields. This is called biotics (both the individuals and the skill). Basically, this is space magic.

The galaxy is connected via a portal network of giant structures known as mass relays. Mass relays are approximately indestructible, and basically slingshot ships from point-to-point at huge FTL speeds. Travel in-system is done by a less-awesome FTL drive in the ship.

2 Races

2.1 Council Races

- **Asari:** Long-lived, blue-skinned monogendered race (they use female pronouns). They are known for their biotics. They are also known for their odd method of reproduction, which involves attuning their nervous system to that of another individual of any gender, and of any species. They tend to serve as diplomats or other such positions due to their longevity.
- **Turians:** Armored avian/lizard race. Society is an autocratic one that values discipline and possesses a strong sense of personal and collective honor. All Turians serve in the military starting at age 15. Turians serve as the military might of the Council and have the largest fleet in Citadel space.
- **Salarians:** Warm-blooded amphibians with hyperactive metabolism. Relatively short-lived⁴ Tend to have an aptitude for research and espionage. Salarrians were responsible for uplifting the krogan and for developing the Krogan Genophage during the Krogan Rebellions.

Addendum - Humans: Humans become a Council race in 2183-4 CE. Humans were introduced to the rest of the galaxy in 2157 CE during the First Contact War, a three-month conflict with the Turians (also known as the Relay 314 Incident to the

¹BioWare explained it well enough themselves.

²Really, do NOT think about this too hard.

³I told you not to think about this hard.

⁴Think fast, move fast, die young.

Turians).

2.2 Non-Council Races

- **Krogan:** Aggressive, turtle-ish race. The krogan evolved in a hostile and vicious environment. Until the invention of gunpowder weapons, "eaten by predators" was still the number one cause of krogan fatalities⁵. Uplifted to fight the Rachni. Now suffering under a genophage to drop their birthrate to 1 in 1000.
- **Quarians:** Race of bipedal nomads, having been driven from their home system by the geth 300 years ago, who live aboard the Migrant Fleet. Quarians have an incredibly weak immune system, to the point where they must live their entire lives inside full-body environmental suits.
- **Geth:** Humanoid race of networked AIs, developed by the quarians 300 years ago as tools of labor and war. When the geth showed signs of self-evolution, the quarians attempted to exterminate them. The geth won the resulting war. This example has led to legal, systematic repression of artificial intelligences in galactic society. They now rarely leave the Perseus Veil.
- **Drell:** Reptilian race, saved from an environmental extermination by the hanar two centuries ago. As a result, the drell are the fanatically loyal assistants of the hanar. Possess an eidetic memory.
- **Hanar:** Look like giant, floating jellyfish. Excessively polite and they speak with scrupulous precision, and take offense at improper language. All hanar have two names. Hanar never refer to themselves in the first person in conversation with someone they know on casual basis. To do so is considered egotistical, so instead they refer to themselves as "this one", or the impersonal "it"⁶.
- **Batarians:** Four-eyed bipedal race. They are rather disreputable species, because their government is isolationist and paranoid to the point that anyone who leaves their territory is an outlaw. The ones the galaxy sees are pirates, slavers, and other such individuals.

2.3 Extinct Races

- **Protheans:** Race that went extinct 50,000 years ago under mysterious circumstances. The ruins of their civilization and technology are the basis of most of the tech level of the galaxy.
- **Rachni:** Insectoid race that nearly took over the galaxy 2000 years ago. Some explorers opened a relay, ran into the hive-mind, and then the Rachni Wars happened. The krogan were uplifted to deal with the threat, as they were the only ones who could attack the rachni on their home turf⁷, and proceeded to exterminate them.

⁵Afterwards, it was "death by gunshot".











⁶Now you know why the "Blasto the Hanar Spectre" jokes are funny.






⁷The rachni homeworld is toxic. The krogan laugh at toxicity.

3 Corporations

There are a number of corporations in the galaxy that provide weapons, armor, and gear for purchase. Of course, not all equipment is made equal. There are sometimes trade-offs in manufacture quality, quantity, and capabilities.

This is a list of the publically-known companies.

Logo	Corporation	Descriptor
	Aldrin Labs	cheap equipment
	Ariake Technologies	high quality equipment
	Armali Council	very nice equipment
	Armax Arsenal	very nice equipment
	Asari Republics	standard equipment
	Batarian State Arms	standard equipment
	Devlon Industries	standard equipment
	Elanus Risk Control	cheap equipment
	Elkoss Combine	cheap equipment
	Hahne-Kedar	standard equipment

	Haliat Armory	standard equipment
	Kassa Fabrication	very nice equipment
	Rosenkov Materials	very nice equipment
	Serrice Council	very nice equipment
	Sirta Foundation	cheap equipment, heavy on medicinal

Of course, there may be equipment manufacturers not on this list. The galaxy is a constantly changing place⁸.

⁸And corporate espionage is very much A Thing.