

CHAPTER 3: THE HOLOCRON INTERFACE

Your Majesty, before you can embark on your civilization-reclaiming strategy, it may be wise to have an understanding of how you go about it. Fortunately, you have ol' Crassus to help you along your Imperial learning journey.

The first thing to understand is that when you sit in front of your Holocron, you are looking at a virtual representation of the quadrant. Therefore, models and stars, planets, etc. will not be to scale. So please remember that when you're wondering how New Terra is a quarter the size of Neo Sirius (the star it orbits), eh?

Now, the most important thing to understand when it comes to navigating the holocron is the idea of command modes.

COMMAND MODES

The designers of the holocron software, long ago, studied the best ways to assimilate a large amount of information. What they decided upon was the concept of 'command modes'. This is an easy way, in one click, to change the entire program to one mode depending on what you are trying to accomplish. For example, if you are trying to colonize a planet or send a survey probe, you would want to be in military mode. The Projects, UI, and map filters available to you will change depending of which command mode you are in, and they will stay the same throughout the program. In other words, you will see Military Information regardless of whether you are in Planet Governance Level, System GL, etc. You can change modes at any time without penalty – it is simply a way to organize like information when you are trying to do a specific thing.

In other words, think about what you're trying to do. Am I trying to start a war? Probably want to be in military mode. Am I trying to figure out what planets and systems might be best to colonize? Overview mode would be good. Planets rioting and I need to fix in a hurry? Better check the demographics mode.

Here are a list of the Command Modes, and their general use:

OVERVIEW MODE: Allows general, top-level information about systems and planets, No Projects in this mode, more of an information mode. Zoom into the system to see more information about each planet.

MILITARY MODE: Allows military info, including military forces and where your fleets are in the quadrant. Used to Probe, Survey, and send expeditions into unknown Systems for exploration purposes.

ECONOMIC MODE: Allows Economic Projects, shows Trade Hubs and Trade Convoys moving between systems, flow from hubs, and System/Planet trade needs.

DEMOGRAPHIC MODE: Allows Pop-friendly Projects in order to raise Public Order, shows migration on a system and planet level, and primary culture as well as ideas.

POLITICAL MODE: Allows Political Projects such as colonization and claiming/forming Provinces and star systems. Shows ADM of systems, Ideologies for the culture mix in a system/planet, and Culture info.

GOVERNANCE UI LEVELS

Remember that you are always at the top of the Imperial food chain, so to speak, but at each level of your empire you have different options and people who manage your affairs. You have 3 primary levels of governance that you can access at any time: Province Level, System Level, and Planet Level. At each level you can access information that is valid for that level; for example, at System Level you can access the overall system's Ideology levels, while at Planet Level you can see each individual planet's levels. You can also access the Governor or Viceroy that oversees that level.

UNIVERSAL UI CONCEPTS

There will always be the same way to do things regardless of where you are in the Holocron UI. If you want to 'zoom in' on a piece of information or object, like a star, planet, etc. you simply tap the left pressure pad of your carpal navigation unit (I still can't believe this was called a 'mouse' back on Old Earth! Imagine!) and to 'zoom out' you tap the right pressure pad. This is also how you can leave windows that are open by themselves like the character dossiers and the House info.

To zoom in, you can use the central pressure wheel of your CNU to zoom in and out, and to move around the galaxy mode, you can either move the tracking symbol (aka. Cursor in Old Earth) to the edges of the map or use the holographic keypad. The symbols are WASD.

To exit the game from anywhere, simply tap the ESC symbol on your holographic keypad.

MAIN UI TOUR

Regardless of which command mode you are in or governance level, you will always see certain parts of the UI. I will now go into a bit more detail of what they mean, since you will see them at all times (and because they are pretty darn important!

Without further ado, clockwise from the upper left of the main screen:

a) TOP-LEFT: INFO SCREEN BUTTON BAR

This row of buttons will take you to screens that you will use often, such as the House info screen and the Intel screen (where you can access and sort all planets, systems, characters, etc). Left-click any button to open the modal window of choice.

b) TOP-CENTER: EMPEROR STATUS

This is most likely the most important part of the UI for you, Your Majesty! This shows from left to right, your PoSup (you can move your tracking symbol and hold it there to pull up more information), your Action Points remaining (AP), and your current location. Remember, if your PoSup fall below 20% you are in danger of being deposed, so keep a close eye on this number always!

c) TOP-RIGHT: EMPIRE RESOURCE STOCKPILES

This is where you can see the Empire's stockpiles for materials and energy. These resources are used both for Projects and to send to planets and systems who are lacking. From left to right, the resources are energy, basic materials, heavy materials, and rare materials. The bottom number is the change in resources from the prior month. Green means we added to the stockpile while red means we reduced it by that amount.

d) RIGHT SIDE: PROJECTS BAR

This multi-functional bar serves 2 purposes: to show the status of any existing projects and to start new ones. Any existing projects will show as a box with a filling green radial inside. The closer the radial is to filling the box, the closer the Project is to being completed. On Province Level and more granular, you may start Projects by clicking the box on the top with a '+' symbol AS LONG AS you have at least 2 AP. If you do not, the Start Project box will not appear. When you do so, a list of available Projects will show on the left-hand bar depending both on your current Governance Level selected and your Command Mode. To start a Project, left-click on a desired Project box.

e) BOTTOM-RIGHT: NEXT TURN/CURRENT DATE ACTIVATOR

On the lower-right, Your Highness, is where you tell the holocron to initiate activation of your no-doubt-gloriously chosen orders. Once you left-click this, your fleets will move, Pops will migrate, people will revol... no, of course they won't do that! But your glorious Empire will move forward through the month and resume again at the start of the next month. As a handy bonus, also shows you what the current date is in month.year format in case you have amnesia! On rare occasion, such as when you have to confirm or set the yearly budget, this button will take you to what you need to do instead before it lets you complete your month.

f) BOTTOM-CENTER: STELLAR INFO BAR

On the bottom-center, Your Highness, is the SIB (Stellar Info Bar). It will not show on the Galaxy Governance Mode but will show in any other. Basically it shows the primary information of the current object, be it the province, system, or planet. Generally it will always show the name and location information, owner, and additional relevant information.

g) BOTTOM-LEFT: COMMAND MODE SELECTION BAR

Here is where all of your Command Modes can be selected. To move between modes at any time, simply left-click the Mode you desire.

h) LEFT SIDE: ALERT BAR

Finally, on the left-hand side is where alerts will pop up. Initially if an alert happens, you will see just a square with an icon designating what that alert was, but if you hover your mouse over the alert, more information will appear to the right. You can left-click on the alert to go to the alerted area, and right-click to remove the alert. Filter buttons will be on the top of the alert bar as the program increases in complexity to allow you to filter alerts from other Characters, severity of alerts, etc.