

GUIDE TO EARLY-GAME STRATEGIES

Although I've only been playing AE for about 2 months, I've learned a lot. Based on my own experience of having been occupied twice almost as soon as I went over level 10, my scouting and reading battle reports, the mistakes I realize, in hindsight, that I've made, and--most importantly--reading the guides on the wiki (I REALLY wish I'd done more of that at the beginning), I think I've figured out some important, early-game strategies and concepts. These strategies and concepts—i.e., for the EARLY GAME--are intended for players *under level 20*. I haven't precisely done the math on the economic aspects of these strategies. But, again, based on my own experience, I think they will work. I repeat: EARLY-GAME = <LEVEL 20.

Base Selection:

DO NOT colonize *any* astro with Fertility <5, including asteroids. *This is a hard and fast rule.* Do not be tempted by astros with crystals <2; crystal mines aren't otherwise worth it. Do not colonize bases with <3 metal and <3 gas or solar. In my opinion, Metallic and Rocky moons that meet the above criteria are best. I'm aware of the conventional wisdom that planets should be avoided because of the high cost of P-Rings, but I think 2 or 3 good planets are worth it for the area they provide. DO NOT clump all your bases together. As soon as you can build scout ships, build several and start looking around. Select quality astros spaced well apart. Because of the long travel times (even if you're in a guild with a nearby jump gate) I suggest building all of your initial bases in a single galaxy. And, if you've not followed the "10 bases in 7 days" guide, then I suggest only building about 7-8 bases at first, with no more than three of them being asteroids.

Research Labs:

You only need research labs on 4 bases. These should be on moons or planets--NOT on asteroids. Build them up one at a time--not all at once. The early-game goal is to have one lab at 20 (for disruptor tech), one at 16 (for photon tech), one at 12 (for ion tech), and one at 10 (for shielding tech). You can research the lower-level techs while you're waiting for your labs to upgrade.

Technologies:

Energy and Computer: You need to get energy and computer tech to 10 as soon as possible so you can terraform. After that it's a matter of choice. You'll need computer 20 to build orbital bases (a very good structure for asteroids with their limited area). You'll need energy 20 to build antimatter plants (again, good for asteroids) and a jump gate (too expensive and mostly worthless in the early game, in my opinion).

Armor: You'll need armor 10 for ion turrets, armor 14 for photon turrets and armor 18 for disruptor turrets (as well as for fleet carriers and battleships, but those are not early-game units).

Laser: You need laser 1 for fighters and laser turrets, and laser 2 for corvettes and recyclers. But don't stop there. Laser is the weapon of the fighters and corvettes, and every level of laser increases the power of these units. Don't concentrate on laser, but dump some credits into laser research when you have an idle lab and not enough credits for more advanced research.

Missiles: I suggest you completely eschew researching missile technology in the early-game. Missiles 1 gives the bomber and missile turrets—both worthless in the early-game; missiles 6 gives the frigate and the fleet carrier—also worthless early-game units. Why these missile-dependent items are worthless for the early-game will be explained later.

Stellar Drive: Research stellar to 1 for corvettes and recyclers, and maybe to 2 for destroyers. These units are already very fast; you don't need to beef up their speed with increased stellar research. Forget about stellar 4 for frigates; those ships are worthless in the early-game.

Plasma: Research plasma to 6, for heavy cruisers, and stop. You'll need plasma 14 for heavy bombers, but I do not consider those to be early-game units.

Warp Drive: Research warp to 4, for cruisers, and stop. (You'll need warp 8 for fleet carriers and battleships, but I do not consider those to be early-game units; and you'll need warp 12 for a JG, but that's not an early-game structure you need).

Shielding: You need shields 4 for the heavy cruiser. But, more importantly, you need shields 6 for photon turrets and shields 8 for disruptor turrets. While units and structures beyond this are not for the early game, increased shield research enhances your shielded units, so dump some credits into shields whenever you can.

Ion: You really only need ion 1 for ion turrets. Forget about ion 10 for ion bombers and ion frigates in the early-game. (You could increase research to ion 4 for the battleship, and this will enhance your ion turrets).

Photon: Like ion, you only need photon 1 for photon turrets. But, since these will be your main, early-game base defense, you should continue spend credits on photon research. (Photon 6 gives the dreadnaught--definitely not an early-game unit).

Artificial Intelligence: You need AI 4 for android factories. But that level of AI is so costly that it is a borderline early-game tech. If you have some good farms or good economics, maybe you can swing it.

Disruptor: Like AI, disruptor tech is so expensive that it, too, is borderline for the early- game. I think resources should be spent on enhancing photon turrets, instead.

Cybernetics: While cyber gives the orbital shipyard, the cost to research it to that required level 2 (which requires AI6), as well as the cost of an OS, itself, is too prohibitive for the early-game.

Base Defenses:

I'm always dismayed when I see a guild member lose a base with no base defenses. But I'm even more dismayed when I see a mate lose a base to a mediocre attack because it was guarded by worthless base defenses. **DO NOT BUILD UNSHIELDED BASE DEFENSES. PERIOD.** These are barracks and laser, missile, and plasma turrets. Below level 10, you can't be attacked, so don't waste time, precious credits and scarce space on these defenses. Instead spend "defense" credits on fighters and/or corvettes. Once you hit level 10, start building ion turrets as soon as you can, followed by photon turrets as soon as possible. Beyond 5, photon turrets start to get pretty expensive, and you may want to start building a few disruptor turrets. Take down the ion turrets to make space and have the needed energy for disruptors. However, I consider disruptor turrets to be a borderline early-game defense because they are so expensive. I think funds are better spent on enhancing the tech for photon turrets (photon, armor and shielding). If you get to the point in the early-game where your choice is disruptor turrets or deflection shields, I think the better choice is disruptors. Both require the same amount of energy and credits. Although shields give twice as much armor and shielding, their power is miniscule compared to disruptors

Fleets:

I think that in the early-game, unit production should be for base defense rather than warfare and pillaging (absent, of course, nearby easy pickin's from inactive or other, weak-player bases). Do not waste your defensive fleet to attack someone just because you can. And, keep in mind that fleet size is factored into your level, whereas base defenses (turrets) are not.

From everything I've read and the other advice I've gotten, except for fighters and corvettes, **do not** build unshielded units for base defense. This means that until you have the ability to build cruisers (and, later, heavy cruisers), forget about bombers, ion bombers, frigates and ion frigates; these are not defensive units. Destroyers are kind of an enigma. The charts say they're good against destroyers, frigates (both regular and ion) and cruisers (both regular and heavy). The wiki articles indicate that destroyers are more of an attack unit, so they probably shouldn't be built for early-game base defense.

I think the premier, early-game unit should be the heavy cruiser, and that you should eschew the battleship, based on bang-for-the-buck for credits. Consider what is required and what you get for each unit:

	<u>Heavy Cruiser</u>	<u>Battleship</u>
Shipyards	12	16
Warp tech	4	8
Armor tech	12	16
Shield tech	4	8
Weapons tech	6 Plasma (cheaper)	6 Ion (costlier)

Thus, you can obviously start building HC's sooner than BS's. But, there's more. Consider what you get for spending 2000 credits:

	<u>Heavy Cruiser</u>	<u>Battleship</u>
Cost:	500 (x4 = 2000)	2000
Power:	48 (x4 = 192)	168
Armor:	48(x4 = 192)	128
Shields:	4 (x4 = 16)	10
Speed:	3	3
Hangers:	8 (x4 = 32)	40

Four HCs are clearly better than 1 BS in all respects except hanger space. And since your goal in the early-game is defensive fleets--and not hauling a bunch of fighters or bombers around for attacks--the HC is clearly the ship of choice. [And, when you do decide to transport hanger ships around, the carrier and fleet carrier are superior to the BS for that purpose.]

Structures:

Obviously you have to start by building up your bases' economy and production. The rules are pretty simple: Build structures that give the most yield for the cost. Take down inefficient structures to provide space and population for more efficient ones. Build research labs on moons or planets, not on asteroids where space is dear. I question the value of building spaceports—they only give 2 economy, whereas shipyards, while only giving 1 economy, also give 2 production; economic centers give 3 economy; nanite factories likewise give 2 economy, but also give 4 production and construction. I realize that shipyards allow increased income through trade routes, but I'm not convinced they're worth it.

End of the Early-Game:

As you approach Level 20, take stock of your situation. Do you have adequate base defenses to fend off the higher-level players around you (those within 10 of your level)? If not, stop building structures that increase your economy, stop producing units, and cease whatever research you can. All of those activities make your level go up. Be patient, and pour your resources into base defenses—ion, photon, and—hopefully—disruptor turrets, which do not affect your level. Spend time scouting your galaxy, looking for inactive and weak player bases that you can farm at little cost. Don't lose your newbie status by hitting a higher-level player just because you can.

Conclusion:

As I said at the start of this article, I'm still a pretty inexperienced AE player. Still, I think the conclusions and observations I've expressed herein are basically sound and rational. Unfortunately, I did not read the "10 bases in 7 days" article when I started to play AE--although I wish I had. What I've said here is not intended to argue with, dispute or contradict what is contained therein. Still, I think what I've expressed in this article is a little more comprehensive and easily understood. Rather, this article is intended to help players at <Level 20 get and stay on the right track.

Happy hunting.

Earlia.