Step By Step SSO Challenge Phase Guide

In the interests of saving box space, the SSO main rules are extremely dense. As such we have created a series of step by step guides for first time players with more in depth explanation. The following guide lays out how to play through the Challenge Phase.

Step 1:
What – Flip any Pods without Solar Arrays attached face down.
How – Check to see if any of the Pods have their Solar Arrays face down, if so flip the Pod face down if it is not already.
Why – Pods need their attached Solar Arrays to provide sufficient power, since they do not contain central systems their operation was not considered vital by the Omega's builders. Remember firstly that face down Locations lose all qualities except colour so face down Arrays are no longer Arrays and secondly that Pods with face up Arrays attached flip face up at the start of each step. Sadly since Crew in face down Locations die at the end of each step if a Pod with an Array attached with Crew in it is flipped face down it will remain so exactly long enough to kill the Crew within.

Step 2:
What – Try to reduce all Mission Guides by 1.
How – Move tokens on all face up Missions down 1 space on their Mission Guide (to a minimum of 0).

Step 3:
What – If there are 0 face down Challenge cards all players with living Crew win, the game ends.
How – Look at the Challenge Deck, if it has no face down cards in it and you have face up living Crew celebrate, because you just won the game.
Why – Remember, this is when you win. If you flip the last Challenge card in Step 5 but suffocate during the Check Phase you do not win. Also that the game ends at this point if there are no Challenge cards whether you have living Crew or not, so it is entirely possible to neither win nor lose.

Step 4:
What – If there are 0 face up Crew cards all players lose, the game ends.

Step 5:
What – Flip the next Challenge card face up.
How – Flip the topmost face down card of the Challenge deck face up, it covers all previous face up Challenge cards.

Step 6:
What – Follow the instructions of the most recently flipped face up Challenge card.

How – Read the most recently flipped face up Challenge card. It will consist of 4 parts; title, instructional text, Mission activation and flavour text. Firstly, follow all instructional text then only once it is complete activate Missions. If the card contains the permanent key word (not present in the SSO base set) remove it from the stack, it remains in play for the rest of the game.

To activate a card's stated Mission, flip face up any Mission still in the game that it lists. Listed Missions that are already face up or have been removed from the game due to success are ignored. If a Challenge card lists multiple Missions either all of them need to activate or none, if one or more are unable to activate for any reason ignore the activation of all Missions by the card.

Why – The Challenge Deck drives the narrative threat of the game, it tells a story of peril and danger. Each Mission connects to a Challenge card and visa versa in a narratively intelligent fashion.

Remember that this is the only point in the game when Challenge cards are activated so that any cards flipped prior to Step 5 of this Phase are effectively skipped and should be considered a player reward and a significant advantage. Players win SSO by exhausting the Challenge Deck and generally lose it by experiencing the effects of too many Challenge cards, as such the more cards that can be flipped outside of this Phase the better.
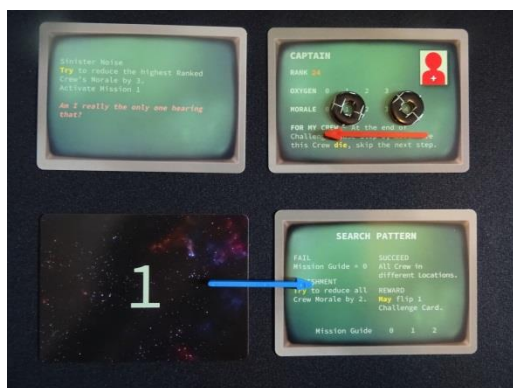
"Sinister Noise" reduces the highest ranked Crew's Morale then activates Mission 1.

"Maintenance Report" moves a rank token then activates Missions 3 and 4.

"Airlock Shutdown" flips the Main Airlock face down then activates Mission 4.

Step 7:

What – If a face down Mission is activated in Step 6, flip it face up and place a green token on the highest number of its Mission Guide. Players place all of their Crew's rank tokens that are on their matching Crew cards in their closed left or right hand in any ratio. Reveal all hands simultaneously, add up all values in all left hands then all values in all right hands. Return the lowest value group to their Crew cards.

How – Crew vote to engage Missions or not. Only rank tokens on their matching Crew cards can be used to vote, players cannot vote with other Crew's tokens that happen to be on their Crew cards nor can they reclaim tokens from other Crew's Crew cards or Mission cards. After voting there should be 2 group scores, return rank tokens belonging to the lower group to their Crew cards, irrespective of which side they voted for. When playing in solo mode or fully co-op players may elect to vote openly, but its rather more fun not to.

Why – Players discuss the viability of the Mission plans and then Crew vote to enact them or not, opinions can differ even when playing totally co-operatively, if they do then ensure disagreements do not drive an unfortunate wedge between players. Note that the values of rank tokens are totalled and compared, not the number of rank tokens, meaning that a higher ranked Crew member is able to out vote potentially several lower ranking Crew members.

A note on rank tokens:

Rank tokens are best thought of as representing what is on a Crew member's mind at any given point, what they are giving their personal thought or attention to. If they vote for a Mission they will then be giving that Mission their personal attention and will be against committing to additional Missions until it is dealt with; if they use the Computer Module or Medical Pod to do down another Crew member their thoughts will be on that Crew's potential reaction to their treachery and filled with guilt such that they will be unwilling to work as a team on Missions or focus on voting; if Mission Control asks Crew to report on each other their concentration will be on the individual they are asked to report on. They can calm their minds by dealing with the source of their concerns or by consulting Mission Control via the Radio Pod.

Step 8:

What – If the left hand total is higher or both are equal Try to reduce all Crew's Morale by 1, flip the Mission card face down and return the voting rank tokens to their Crew cards.

How – If the left hand total, voting against engaging the Mission, is higher or both totals are equal (note that a total of 0 in both groups is equal) reduce all Crew's Morale by 1 to a minimum of 0. Flip the Mission face down, return any tokens on it to their source and return any rank tokens used in the last vote (which should still be in player's hands) to their own Crew cards.

Why – If a Mission is voted down all Crew suffer Morale loss for failing to attempt to deal with an obvious problem. Note that Morale is only lost if a Mission is voted down, not if a

Challenge card fails to activate a Mission. If all voting tokens are unavailable for voting due to over commitment to Missions or being on the wrong Crew cards Missions will be automatically voted down resulting in Morale loss, as over stretched Crews feel the effects of creeping panic.

Step 9:
What – If the right hand total is higher place the voting rank tokens on the Mission card.
How – If the right hand total, voting for the mission, is higher place the remaining voting tokens on the mission.
Why – Voting tokens committed to a Mission remain committed until the Radio Pod is used to reclaim them or the Mission is completed. Remember that if a Mission fails crew with rank tokens still on it suffer additional Morale loss, this combined with the loss of Morale from voting down Missions without voting tokens available means there is a distinct benefit to minimal mission commitment even when engagement is desired. Note that once a Mission is engaged by voting it will remain face up irrespective of whether the rank tokens used to vote for it are removed or not. A Mission with no rank tokens on it does not automatically fail or flip face down.
If other Missions were activated in step 6 return to step 7 and vote for them now.

Step 10:
What – End the current turn, start a new turn, return to Step 1 of the Activation Phase.
Why – Effects can last until the end of the turn (none in the base set do), this step simply clearly sets out the end of a turn.