

Traveller in Depth -The Shipboard Steward

(sweet cover art here)

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Wait, the Steward?

An Introduction

The ship-board Steward.

According to most versions of the Traveller rules, if your starship carries High or Middle passengers, you need someone aboard with the Steward skill at a certain proficiency to attend to these passengers. Most ships outfitted for this list “Steward” as a crew position; someone’s main job on the ship.

All Traveller games are different, certainly. Your ship might not need a Steward because you’re not carrying the passengers, or not enough or the type that cause the requirement to manifest. Or as a GM you might just handwave the idea of a Steward and the various duties, unless they bear on current play as a useful detail or plot turn.

And really, in more than one place in the great Traveller internet conversational diaspora, I’ve come across the question: *Why do we need Stewards? What do they do, anyway?*

What indeed?

I did some thinking, some research, a little guessing, some vetting, and then some writing. This IMTU supplement is the result of that effort, and likely it’s got more detail than you’ve ever thought possible about the ship’s Steward. Take what useful detail you may want and leave the rest, to paraphrase the great Egg Shen. Who as it happens would have made a hell of a Steward. Hopefully with this supplement you’ll have a slightly richer game experience. That’s the bar, here.

It’s not canon. There’s no art.

Well, except this: \,,/(^_^)\,,/

Peter Simon
Chicago, 1/17

Conventions

In this supplement I capitalize the term “Steward” and other crew positions, to facilitate scanning.

When referring to the Steward I use the male pronoun “him,” for almost everyone else I use “her.” This in no way implies all/most Steward characters are men. Or Human, Gendered, Sophonts, or that “him” and “her” are the only two choices.

Throughout I’ll be referring to a *shipboard Steward*, that is, a crewmember of a ship that takes on passengers, and *not* the attache/valet/manservant/body man of a noble, dignitary or high-ranking officer. That’s some other kind of guy, in some other kind of supplement.

Stewards may serve on many different types of ships, but here I use a Far Trader and the passenger class divisions typical on such as my reference.

I try to be rules-agnostic, but I make frequent use of the Mongoose 1st and 2nd Edition rules for inspiration.

What would you say... you do here?

The various versions of Traveller rulesets tell us that if a ship carries High passengers, it is *required* to have a certified Steward staffed on the crew to look after the needs of these well-appointed and high-spending sophonts. There's also the strong implication that if a ship carries Middle passengers, you'd also need to staff a Steward, though if you carry no High and only a few Middle passengers, the numbers are a bit sketchy. Also, the required ranks-to-passengers ratio blurs a bit between versions of Traveller.

But what does the Steward *do*, really? The monthly pay for this position is around 2000 Imperial Credits. What exactly do they do to earn this?

Lots of important things, as it turns out. Let's use an example of a Steward for a dt200 Far Trader. One of the five crew members, along with the Captain, Engineer, an Astrogator and a Medic.

First and foremost, the Steward manages the precious cargo of guest passengers, of all travel classes. He finds them and helps book their passage aboard his ship. During the voyage he maintains their comfort in line with (or perhaps exceeding) their booked passage class and he keeps them out of the crew's way. In general he presents the human face of ship and crew to them.

Dovetailing these duties, the Steward is responsible for preparing and serving High and Middle passage meals, providing entertainment, and rendering general service to them during the voyage. The Steward is also the primary screen against hijackers and other malcontents gaining access to the ship by posing as passengers.

In flight, if the passengers need anything they can't easily secure themselves during the voyage, they ask the Steward. A bump in the night, a strange smell, another shot of whiskey to cure what ails, ask the Steward.

As it happens, a lot of the ship's crew probably does the same thing, but this is more because a Steward has the traits that make him the best person to call all things being equal, not because it's part of his duties to serve the crew (it's usually not). Often by gentle but sometimes overt action, the Steward often keeps the *feel* of the ship smooth.

Beyond caring for its passengers, the Steward is the traditional keeper of the ship's master account, and handles all ship bookkeeping. Further, he is responsible for the ship's life support systems, as well as for maintaining the Library data, media collections, and various softwares that keep the ship flying and earning those Imperial Credits. Or whatever.

One thing worth noting: for our purposes, the Steward does *not* see to ship's cargo. The finding, brokering, transporting, selling, customs-clearing, or receiving receipts for cargo is assumed in this supplement to be someone else's job on the ship.

The Steward's job: a little more detail

Saying "the Steward sees to the passengers, the ship's books, the life support, and keeps things running smoothly" is a short sentence, but it's really saying a mouthful.

The facets of these duties keep a Steward busy at every point of a ship's journey from system to system which includes: its time portside, its ascension and being underway to the jump point, the week spent in transition through jump space, the exit and making way to port, and finally when the ship docks.

Throughout the journey there are numerous conversations, checks, interviews, inventories, and preparations to be made, as well as adjustments, reviews, housekeeping tasks, restocking, reports to other crewmembers, preparing documentation, and log entries to be seen to.

Further, during all of this a Steward is constantly representing the ship in the eyes of the passengers; he does good service to his ship's *brand* with his interactions (and beyond, but we'll touch on that later), and through any duties that carry him into port. During the outbound journey and jump transit he helps calibrate the ship for the next port by adjusting the shipboard environment by setting life support air, time schedule, and gravity to match the destination when appropriate. Further, he typically prepares writeups on the ship's next port of call for the passengers and crew, noting peculiarities for laws, immunisations, visas, TAS details, and other noteworthy points.

A good Steward also develops intelligence as a matter of course, noting details that might be of interest or use to the captain, crew, and ship at some point during the journey or beyond. This passenger has a noble relative in the local Imperial fleet? Noted. That passenger occasionally oversees license transfers in a nearby cluster? Good to know. Such tidbits are filed away, and possibly presented during crew briefings if they seem relevant or interesting. Another important reason for the watchful eye - sometimes pirates or other nefarious types seek to gain access to a ship by boarding it under the guise of a passenger, or group of passengers. While the Steward is being pleasant and establishing rapport, he's also checking for tell-tale signs of malicious intent.

In his capacity as the custodian of the passengers, the Steward liaises with the Medical Officer in regards to Cold Berth accommodations, checking in on the Medic's preparations, answering any final questions and verifying all Ts are crossed, Is are dotted. After everyone in Low Berth is under and secure, he also maintains the Low Lottery.

If Cold Berth passengers are being shipped through to another destination, the Steward will be responsible for the current step of the routing and handling during the removal of passenger freight and mail, as well as insuring a proper hand-off to the Port Authority for storage until through passage is made.

Along these lines, he sees to the disposition of passenger freight, and also keeps the ship's general Inventory and sees to the upkeep and stocking of the Ship's Locker. Need another power cell? See the Steward.

Stewards often sees to the shipboard housekeeping of common spaces, but not workstations, crew staterooms, vehicle bays and Engineering spaces. Crew are typically expected to maintain their own work and living spaces, although some Captains (and thus ship's policy) differ on this. If housekeeping duties are split among the crew, the Steward typically sets the schedule of tasks.

The Steward keeps the ship's books, reconciles the accounts, sees to the disbursement of pay, tends to most ship expenses, and keeps up with the ship's budget. The Captain or First Officer can do any of this, but typically such regular duties are in the Steward's purview.

The Steward also traditionally manages the software used to operate the ship, Library files that inform crew and passengers, and media files that entertain or distract everyone during downtime.

Finally, by default the Steward is usually assigned responsibility for the upkeep of morale on a ship. When this is not an official duty many Stewards feel compelled to take it on anyway.

Clearly, the ship's Steward is rarely idle.

During the jump transit - the dog and poni show

Regardless of how far a ship is going there's a set period of time aboard for the passengers consisting of the day or so heading out to the jump point, the week in jump itself, and the day from jump exit to the next arrival. This can seem much longer than 9 days. During this time, people need to be seen to, fed, answered, and entertained. If a passenger is in "steerage" or "working" passage they need not be so attended. Also, the Steward does not see to cold berth or "low" passage patrons; they are attended by the ship's Medical Officer and have no need of food or engagement during their voyage.

Any ship carrying passengers is well-advised to stock a recent Library instance along with other media and entertainment files for the self-distracted. It's common to set up an instance of the ship's persona (personality tweaked to the one's taste) to serve as a sort of "cruise companion" to the potentially bored passenger. With all these technical marvels there still seems to be no superior substitute for giving a lecture, an entertaining performance, or just a bit of skillful storytelling over a suddenly-produced flask of Deneb single malt scotch, evenings in the common area.

Live shipboard entertainment can take a variety of forms, and almost always falls to the Steward to provide it. The types of such entertainment could include:

- Lectures or educational talks (see aside)
- Telling stories of former exploits, doing impersonations, or re-creations of historical or contemporary events
- Spreading and analyzing celebrity/nobility gossip, complete with imagery
- Performances of various kinds involving cards, balls, knives, or live geese
- Making selections of holo or musical entertainment, playing them, and then discussing
- Libations and commiserations or various and sundry kinds
- Running games of chance "purely for entertainment purposes" where there's always the air of chance and risk of loss... but where the house always seems to give up a just a little bit for the passenger's entertainment.

Aside - teaching and educational lectures

Lectures are a particularly favored style of entertaining passengers, and the serious Steward will have a whole portfolio of stock lectures and lessons on hand. Emphasis is on fairly light or compelling topics that steer clear of controversy and have light material requirements. Perennial favorites include:

- The benefits of Vilani- or Solomani-styles of meditation with practical exercises
- How to play a basic music instrument - like recorder or harmonica

- Introductory basic defensive tactics/aikido (in reduced gravity)
- Origami

Ship-relevant topics are also favored, especially with the first-time Travellers

- Introduction to life aboard a starship
- The long and sordid history of the Beowulf-class far trader
- Emergency equipment - how to use everything
- Vacc suit operation basics, with practicum

Destination lectures are popular, extolling the virtue of beautiful places, the dangers of vile places, or the little-known curiosity of the mostly-boring places

- recent and ancient history
- language & customs
- Local politics of the destination system, especially tensions with the Imperium
- Local arts and culture
- Geography & flora and fauna
- Food, wine, and hotspots

The following enrichment lectures are also very popular, and are expected to be available from any certified Steward

- Herbalism/hydroponics, particularly with a Vilani skew
- Astronomy & spacefaring history
- Archaeology of Ancient sites
- Jump technology - an introduction

Interfacing with the passengers during the trip - an overview

There are numerous points at which the Steward would check in with passengers on a voyage. Much of this information exchange could be available via the ship's computer or by asking the persona, but a good Steward knows that personal contact with a passenger might leave a better impression. Here are some examples:

- That first quick interview to orient the passenger to the ship and gather a bit of intel. An initial check for weapons is done at this time.
- To advise passengers of the ship's schedule, for jump specifics, arrival times, such as approximate out of jump or docking/planetfall
- The timing of the next meal, and gathering preferences
- Happy hour, lecture, or other "event" scheduling
- Reconfiguring the staterooms in the morning for daily activity and lounging and at night for sleep
- Checking in before sleep period, to see if there's anything else required
- To advise of any changes, any strange sounds, odors, or ship activity the passengers might become aware of
- To do a journey interview, a discussion entered into the ship's log where the passenger talks about themselves, their trip, and how they find the ship and the journey so far.

Aside - about the division between types of passage

Not all passengers are created equal. If a ship contains High, Middle, Working, "Steerage," and Cold Berth passengers, they all have different levels of contact with the Steward, from "frequent" to "none after check-in." Between High and Middle passengers, there's the expectation that 1. High passengers are paying the ship more for passage and 2. With that higher fee comes better service. Specifically, "better" here means service that not only meets a certain level of high expectation but also that this level is different than that received by Middle passengers.

As a rule, High Passage travellers can expect a variety of fine meals, immediate responses to inquiries or requests, accommodations that flex within reason, and a general sense of luxury throughout their journey. It could very well be that the Steward's ship has a high quality of service across the board; this is certainly to be strived for. But if one group of passengers is paying more, there should be clear divisions between those levels of service.

Middle passengers receive service, but not in line with that received by a High Passage booking. A Steward is polite to the Middle Passenger, responds to inquiries, but perhaps doesn't work to establish the same rapport or feeling of accommodation enjoyed by the High passenger.

Working Passage or Steerage assumes very little if any interaction with a Steward - "Here's your stateroom, food may be vended from the galley," and so on.

Cold Berth passengers receive even less attention, most likely just an interviewed before being placed in storage. They normally do not interact with the Steward again for the rest of the voyage.

These divisions, particularly between High and Middle passage, can be expressed in a variety of ways, and the skilled Steward makes such division palatable for all. He doesn't rub the difference in the noses of

the Middle passengers, but he definitely lets the High passengers know they're receiving preferential treatment and effort.

Sometimes this can require a bit of effort to bring off, but here are a few ways beyond those listed that a Steward can effect this division of passage:

- The Steward can consult the High passengers about what entertainments to schedule for the evening, giving them the choice of public lectures, performances, and so on.
- The High passengers can have increased access to the crew, particularly the Captain. This is common at meal times.
- Access to amenities can be broader for High passage patrons; more access to the galley and observation spaces are typical.
- High passengers are attended first in matters of records processing, boarding, and disembarking.
- Those little details such as an extra course of desert, a mint on pillow, or occasional hot hand towels are a memorable treat for Middle passengers, but expected trimmings for those paying for High passage.

All of this being stated, there should be no demarcation between the classes of passage when it comes to safety, emergency response, companion treatment, or details of life support or environmental accommodation. High Passage compartments can be more functional, fancier, and certainly larger; this is what patrons pay an additional fee for. But per law and convention in Imperial space, High passage must *not* provide more access to safety features, environmental controls such as air, temp, or gravity, and cannot be shown favoritism in emergency situations.

Also, it is considered bad form to "promote" Middle or Working/Steerage passengers to High Passage without the accompanying fee or some other extraordinary circumstance. Such action degrades the value of the ship's High passage amenities when word gets out - and it will certainly get out - whether a paying High passage patron sees it happen or a promoted lower passage patron later gossips about their experience.

Working or Steerage passage options are rare on tramp freighters, as it takes little effort to bump a space up to "Middle" quality, and if the Steward is present anyway it usually makes more sense to have only Middle passage (and thus earn more per passenger) since most of the requisites are probably already in place. If such accommodations are present, Steerage passengers see a Steward at some point prior to liftoff for check-in, and possibly for intake, although this is not a universal practice. The Low passenger will likely have little planned contact with the Steward after that; this service class is "no frills" and there's no crew accommodation included in the passage fee.

As mentioned previously, Cold Berth passengers see a Steward once for check-in and then if all goes well perhaps once more, during revival at their destination.

A further breakdown of the Steward's shipboard duties

These can be seen as passenger-related, coming into play when the ship takes on passengers, and ship-related, which are independent of passenger bookings.

Passenger related...

Seeing to passengers' needs and concerns. The Steward never wants to be bothersome or omnipresent, but wants to just "appear" at the right moment to ask if anything else is needed, to just check on the day, or to verify the trip is going well

Cleaning and upkeep of passenger spaces. The Steward sees to the housekeeping of passenger spaces and common areas. Whether he does the upkeep himself or delegates this duty to the ship's robot, the skilled Steward times the housekeeping so that it's invisible as possible.

Acquiring "special" items. If the passenger needs something special - a bit of scotch, a spare powercell, or whatnot - the Steward usually fulfills the request if it's within reason. More effort is exhibited for High passengers.

Passenger laundry. Again, especially common for High passengers, the Steward sees to the laundering needs of those booking passage on the ship.

Keeping a constant, subtle eye out for trouble. During a voyage part of the Steward's responsibilities involve spotting certain telltale signs that might point to trouble with a passenger. Beyond the "gut feeling," certain traits always raise a Steward's suspicion: any unusual interest or knowledge of the crew, the ship, its route or cargo. Evasive answers about travel, a working knowledge of interstellar piloting are also possible tip offs.

Meal prep, and maintaining meal spaces. It falls to the Steward to prepare all passenger meals, and to maintain the galley spaces and stocks. He also might see to the access of these spaces, though typically they're open during the jump transition.

Attending to passenger/stateroom/persona maintenance. Along with housekeeping duties, the Steward can see to any required maintenance, environment adjustment, persona adjustment, and any troubleshooting need that may arise.

Keeping records of all the above and passenger related activities. As a matter of ship policy the Steward will keep records of all passengers taken on; this needs to be at least minimally detailed, but some ships require more information be kept.

Briefing the Captain as needed on ongoing state of passenger morale and voyage. The Steward regularly briefs the Captain on any relevant point concerning the current passengers. This can be done at the general ship's briefings or privately with just the Steward and the Captain, depending on ship policy and the nature of the information being shared.

Making initial arrangements ashore / liaison / concierge. Especially for High passengers, the Steward can act as a go-between and first point of contact for all station- or planetside arrangements. He can either see to such details himself, or oversee the ship's persona in these duties. These tasks might include arranging visas, looking into through passage to other systems, scheduling initial ground transportation, negotiating with recommended housing or security interests. As mentioned previously the Steward is also responsible for handing off cold berth capsules to the the Starport Authority for through-transport.

Preparing passenger staterooms for sleep. Although reconfiguring most staterooms is a simple matter, it is traditional for the Steward to convert the space from day use to sleep configuration. This is usually an

opportunity to perform a bit of housekeeping, and to add small touches such as mints, or to change the scents or lighting.

Liaising with the ship's Medical Officer in non-emergency medical matters. In emergency situations, the passenger calls for medical attention directly via the ship's comms, but in non-emergency situations such as questions or medical maintenance, the convention is to speak to the Steward, who then arranges a conversation with the Medical officer. During the patient/Medic conference they might make further details going forward, but the Steward is also a sort of "buffer" between the passengers and the crew, keeping the latter somewhat isolated and free from distraction.

Accounting for passengers during inspections, damage reports. In situations of ship inspection or damage, the Steward is directly responsible for the well-being of all passengers. He gives necessary instructions, renders aid, and performs checks during adverse situations, as well as reporting status to the Captain.

Other duties not relating to passengers...

Seeing to the ship's locker. The Steward is responsible for the stocking and upkeep of the ship's locker, and along with the Captain (and possibly the first officer) controls access to this space. The Steward is also traditionally responsible for issuing and tracking gear aboard the ship. Further, any cleaning, maintenance, or upgrading that needs to be done to this space is the Steward's responsibility.

Conferring with the ship's officers about necessary supplies. It generally falls to the Steward to provision the ship, so any necessary supplies are requested through him and acquired by him.

Managing the ship's accounts. This duty goes hand-in-hand with the above; the Steward manages the ship's general funds, sees to payment disbursement, and collection of monies due. There are almost certainly guidelines in the ship's charter about how this aspect should be executed - amounts that may be done freely, what needs to be cleared with the Captain, who else may use ship's funds for what purpose, and cash-on-hand requirements. This is particularly salient with a ship that makes frequent stops at new or rarely-visited ports of call; cash will be the rule, in such instances.

Maintaining common/lounge spaces. The Steward keeps up the common spaces and lounge areas aboard ships, including configurations and housekeeping. Whether this also includes weapon turrets/bays that double as viewports is always a point of contention between Stewards and the crew...

Maintaining ship's Library. The ship's Library (most commonly a recent version of the *Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin*, or AAB) is usually the go-to source of general information accessible on the ship. Planetary sources of the AAB or similar supplements might be biased, censored, illegal, hopelessly out of date, or non-existent so it makes sense to keep a copy aboard. The Steward makes sure the local copy is as up-to-date and uncorrupted as possible; sometimes life hangs in the balance of an answer found within. When heading towards dockside or planetfall one of the routine automatic interrogations a ship normally sends is a bundle of inquiries about updates to the Library.

Maintaining the ship's software. As above, ship's systems are all supported by software and it falls under the Steward's auspice to maintain these, from acquisition, updates, versioning, to troubleshooting.

Notably the systems that govern astrogation, jump drives, powerplants, life support, gunnery, flight, and any medical equipment are all mission-critical, so keeping them up-to-date is a serious undertaking.

Maintaining the ship's media files. Also as above, but less mission-critical, the ship's media files include music, performance, lectures and tutorials, newscasts, interactive games, movies, and series recordings. Many different formats are supported, of course.

Setting up paperwork, equipment, and staterooms for passenger arrival. Before the passengers arrive, proper documentation should be cued up, staterooms made ready, and related equipment resupplied and briefly checked.

More on the Steward's portside duties

Although rarely idle during a journey, the Steward also has many duties when the ship is docked:

Disembarking passengers...

Handling passenger records packages for SPA & local customs. The passengers may be required to present these themselves, but it's common that the SPA ask for these from any ship looking to disembark passengers. Records include identification, any additional records that might be relevant for local travel including medical, background, or other archival.

Dealings with Planetary agencies on behalf of passengers...

This service will vary according to travel class and the offerings of the particular ship in question, but it's not unusual for the Steward to see to ongoing process paperwork involving customs, visas, customer freight, medical approvals, local transportation/security and other services. Obviously High Passage travellers get more depth of service than others, with the Steward serving as a first point of contact to get the necessary processes for easy portside transfer rolling.

Dealing with system media agencies on behalf of the ship...

If the Steward's ship takes on passengers, past travellers may have left commentary on various review services detailing their experience with the Steward's ship. Part of the Steward's duties likely include reviewing this commentary, responding when appropriate, and providing "profile" information about the ship. None of this is usually required, but effort here in the different media systems at the various ports of call the ship frequents can pay serious dividends in passage fares.

On ship...

The Steward resets all cabins, returning all aspects to like-new. This involves a thorough cleaning, erasing of all personal media, re-absorbing the personal instance of the ship's persona (if any was instantiated), collecting and cataloging any personal effects left behind, and readying the compartment for its next occupant.

Quick re-inventory for supplies. On the journey certain things were consumed: food of course but also water, cleaning supplies, one-time media licenses, medical supplies, and a host of other items. All of these are cataloged into a list for acquiring portside.

With the Starport Authority...

Passenger cargo release. The Steward gives a final inspection and releases all passenger cargo to local customs agents for any required inspection.

Mail handoff. The Steward is in charge of handing off the mail to proper recipients, whether this is the physical transfer of any media or the beaming of digital information. Identities are verified, batches of mail origins and integrity are checked, and transfers are validated under the watchful eye of the Steward.

Inquire about and arrange for passengers. The Steward contacts the port warden's administration to see about anyone looking to book passage off-world. According to SPA guidelines anyone booking in an SPA starport needs to go through SPA channels to arrange passage. This can be as informal as stopping by the Port Warden's office and letting her know you're looking for passage, or can involve complicated form completion and ID assessment.

Inquire about and arrange for mail. The Port Warden's office will have information and points of contact for any local mail outbound for the Steward's ship's future destinations.

Resupply runs for ship's locker, library, systems, and cabins. Resupply runs are just as important, or more so, than acquiring paying passengers for the next leg of a journey.

Before liftoff...

Accepting outgoing mail. If the ship is registered to carry Imperial (or other) mail, the Steward checks with the appropriate agency (typically the Port Warden's office or IISS) to see if there is any mail available for delivery to the ship's next destination. If so and the ship is eligible, the Steward sees to the transfer whether it's physical or digital.

Bringing ship's locker cargo aboard. In much the same way the Steward handles the mail, ship's locker material is also brought on board, inventoried, and properly stored by the Steward.

Meeting and doing intake with passengers. The initial meeting includes verifying the identity of the boarding passenger and making sure their payment is either in cash or has cleared accounts, and doing a weapons check. The Steward also briefly reviews ship policy, access to passenger cargo, and other such important tidbits.

Performing the initial interview. Here the Steward covers basic topics every passenger should be passingly familiar with while on board and under way. These include: a document review, travel and medical (if necessary), a review of ship's layout, procedures, and schedule. A basic assessment of the passenger's needs during the voyage - food, persona, medical, environmental, and stateroom configuration. The Steward also helps square away the passenger's carried gear.

The passenger's shipboard interview with the Steward

Let's say you're a passenger on this Far Trader. When there's about 15 minutes free either before you board or just afterwards, the Steward will either come to your stateroom or suggest heading to the lounge to conduct a brief interview with you. He'll smile and say it's a formality really, not serious at all, just to get acquainted with you and to orient you to the ship.

Even though it will sound like a casual briefing, along with passing necessary information to you during this chat the Steward is also subtly gathering information *from* you. The conversation sounds like just a friendly orientation, but throughout the interview there are subtle questions about your spacing experience, where you grew up, if you've served, and so on. The Steward typically will be a very light touch in this, having conducted hundreds of such interviews, and very well-versed in noting details from you. Later, you may not even recall having given such information. But before this interview, the Steward has certainly reviewed all your documentation that the SPA forwarded, and anything that he could find in the ship's library or the port's network in preparation for this "casual chat."

This talk establishes rapport; the Steward answers any questions you may have about the ship, or space travel in general but were always afraid to ask. He'll review the ship's rules & schedule with you, go over where coffee is. He'll talk about where your cargo (if you have any) is stored, and how you can access it.

He'll guesstimate your size for a vacc suit. Any Steward worth his salt can eyeball this, and never needs to come out and ask. He'll offer to move any of your valuables to secure storage, and make a note on anything you might need in particular during the voyage.

He'll gently remind you that passengers need to surrender all weapons during the voyage. This will be done with a "they're just making me say this" gesture and expression, but the Steward will be particularly noting your body language here, on the lookout for clues of something amiss or concealing.

Different sophonts have different environment preferences, so during the this first interview the Steward will find out your configuration preferences for your stateroom including temperature, humidity, gravity, and layout. He'll also review these controls with you, noting any little... quirks about your stateroom.

He'll demonstrate how to access the ship's comms - that part of the system that you have access to, that is - whether manual, by voice, or through your own personal comms. If you want a stateroom-specific Persona instantiated, a sort of virtual "friend" and guide during your voyage, the Steward will gather a few of your preferences ("female, Vilani accent, slight snark, got it") and see to this.

And lastly the Steward will orient you with the all the ship and stateroom amenities: the galley, recreation options, lecture/class schedule, happy hours, available entertainment media, stateroom configuration modes (open, lounging, sleeping, exercise), and various safety features. "The primary rescue ball is stored in this compartment right here. The backup is behind this panel, over the entry. You probably won't be needing those. Probably."

During this interview he'll also be sizing the passenger up for an estimate of how much handling they'll require during the voyage.

Regular reports

The Steward regularly meets with the Captain to brief her on the passengers, their cargo, and any noteworthy details of their boarding. He'll submit passenger reports and accompanying documentation to her with more depth including brief biographics, travel and destination paperwork, specific accommodation requests, Library entry summaries (if any; celebrities,nobles,persons of note could easily have entries in the AAB), and a short personal summary on each. This is to give the Captain an understanding of who is on board her ship, and to provide advance warning of any possible drama, wrinkles, publicity, or attention that might be forthcoming. The Steward also consults with the Captain in reference to the ship's account and disbursements, the disposition of supplies in the ship's locker, the upkeep and management of ship's software, media files, and Library data.

The Steward meets with the ship's Medical Officer to report on High or Middle passenger medical status if there are any points of note or concern for that passenger or for the crew during the voyage. If a passenger requires special medications or has a peculiar condition or allergy a good Steward would have sussed this out before leaving port, conferred with the Medical officer, and acquired any required "what if" supplies the Medic felt were necessary. Further, the Steward also confers with the Medical officer about required software any equipment and kits the Medical officer uses.

The Steward confers with the Engineer to convey any atypical environmental needs or calibrations of ship's systems that passengers request or need, as well as software the Engineer needs to run, maintain, or repair the ship's systems and equipment. Likewise, her confers with the Astrogator on matters of required software.

Once passengers were squared away, during the initial underway briefing It would be normal for the Steward to report to the crew any relevant or interesting details about the passengers - any important family links, connections, celebrity or notoriety, any points of interest with shared service, related families, birthplace, ports or ships of duty, etc. "One of the High passengers also grew up on Regina, and one of the Middles is a retired Scout who served in Exploration about the same time you did..."

The Steward also contributes to the ship's Log along the lines of his duties: passengers, travel arrangements, passenger cargo, mail, ship's Inventory, the ships finances, life support system details, and general perspective.

Additional day-to-day details

The Steward is the passenger's first stop for any contact with the crew. Unless a given ship has a culture and standing orders that say differently, passengers are forbidden from directly contacting any member of the crew except the Steward. The reasoning is simple: the crew's time and attention during the voyage should be dedicated first and foremost to ship's business, and then after duties are complete a crew member's personal time should be held sacrosanct. Bored, agitated, well-intentioned but distracting passengers should not be afforded opportunities to pester the crew. There is an intentional "buffer" between the passengers and the ship's working crew, and the Steward is a key expression of this separation. There are also valid ship security concerns for maintaining separation between passengers and crew; as noted above it's not unheard of for pirate or other criminals to pose as passengers with the intent of hijacking the ship. The buffer is another line of defense against this possibility. If for some reason

a passenger wants to speak to a member of the crew, they must go through the Steward to make arrangements for this contact.

Of course exceptions exist.

Sometimes the crew willingly mix with passengers. Swapping Scout stories with fellow detached veterans, student engineers spending time in the drive spaces with the ship's engineer learning during the voyage, and so on might not be discouraged, but such conversations are always at the discretion of the crew member. Crew may share meals with passengers as the ship's articles allow, and regulations for social fraternization on a ship that carries passengers is usually spelled out in detail. And certainly during a medical emergency a passenger may reach out directly to the Medical Officer.

Following along these lines, the Steward should be available to all the passengers at any point throughout the voyage, at least by comms but in person when practical. Certainly sometimes various duties will bring the Steward into areas of the ship the passengers are restricted from, or some duties will keep him out of touch for spans of time. But these should be exceptions, not the rule. The Steward should be available and present professionally at all times, even in the middle of the sleep period.

Although the Steward is responsible for the upkeep and arrangement of passenger staterooms and common areas, they are definitely *not* the ship's housekeeper. New starship crew members learn very quickly that they're responsible for the upkeep of their own personal and work spaces, and that the remaining areas of the ship are usually cleaned and kept up by assignment in rotation. This assignment might be handled by the Captain or First Officer, but also might be handled by the Steward.

The Steward is not normally under arms, that is, does not normally carry a sidearm during the course of his duties. Of course this can vary with ship policy, Captain's discretion, and consideration by the relative safety of the places travelled to. But as a matter of course the trader starship doesn't take on passengers it'd be good to take up arms against, and few trader Captains want the reputation of their ship being overly martial or militarized. Of course, your mileage may vary.

Another detail about time spent around passengers: the Steward typically bunks in the same area as the passengers, if practical. This facilitates most duties and general availability, and also serves to subtly reinforce the buffer the Steward provides between the passengers and the working crew. When it's practical, the Steward bunks closer to the High passage areas of the ship, though almost certainly the quality and size of their personal accommodations will be in line with the crew, and not High Passage.

Tools of the trade

The Steward uses a number of different devices, objects, accounts, and other intangible tools to do his job. Far from restricted to shipboard duty, the Steward's responsibilities often take him into the starport, the startown, even planetside. A Steward with quality tools can do a better job.

Personal comms - the Steward is certainly linked to the ship's communications system, both to converse with the passengers on their channels and the crew on theirs. The Steward also typically has access to the ship's arrays for making communications port- or planetside and seeing to waiting or arriving passengers, getting supplies in line for pickup, or squaring away last minute travel documentation updates.

tablet/pad - sometimes you need more than your voice. Documents must be created, reviewed, and sent. Ledgers need to be analyzed, requirements listed out, tables verified. Also when you need to talk to someone (virtually) face-to-face and there isn't a ship's panel nearby, a ready tablet is just the thing. A tablet connected to the ship's Library makes displaying graphics, diagrams, or tables for curious passengers easy.

Ship's persona - not all the Steward's tools are tangible, and few are more useful than the ship's persona, or rather its *personality interface program*, if it has one. The ship's persona overlays the powerful ship's computer system and provides a "personality" through which to access or task ship systems. With a persona you can "talk to the ship" just as you might a fellow crew member. A persona is different than a true artificial intelligence; the former being merely an overlay that does an exceedingly good job at mimicking an intelligent personality. Various studies demonstrate that accessing ship systems through a persona increases efficiency and lessens the occasion of important details being overlooked. A ship's persona can be an indispensable tool (companion?) in a Steward's duties.

Hand scanner - this is used in conjunction with any ship-installed anti-piracy software to detect weapons or other contraband passengers are prohibited from carrying aboard.

Imperial ID - sensitive areas of the ship such as the ship's locker sometimes require a locking protocol of not only voice identification but also a swipe, tap, or near presence of the Steward's Imperial ID. This is a safety precaution, an insurance line item, and double protection against the battery packs, ammo magazines, and best scotch mysteriously going missing.

Off-ship accounts & memberships - A ship that makes regular calls into the same ports certainly benefits from the Steward setting up accounts with the various material suppliers, world government travel agencies, SPA information outlets, review channels, and merchant societies. It only takes one rushed visit to a starport where the Steward has no contacts, no local accounts set up, and a mountain of trouble securing necessary supplies and information to make one pine for the more familiar ports and the "local hookups."

Ship's robot - it's an article of faith that if the ship has a robot in inventory and that robot can conceivably be made to do housekeeping, then that robot is the responsibility of the Steward and it is, in fact, used for housekeeping. Regardless of other task assignments, be they assisting in power plant calibration, ammunition store verification, or second-verifying the jump plots... the ship's robot will *also* be changing sheets and cleaning freshers.

Contacts - a well-developed digital rolodex can be the Steward's most effective tool at bypassing trouble, cutting through red tape, or procuring that hard-to-find item. A list of friends, associates, acquaintances, and friends-of-friends in the ports a Steward calls in is as treasured as any family heirloom.

A well-stocked media library - a truth as ancient as the storyteller's craft: if you have agitated babies, passengers, crewmates, or a hybrid of all of the above, few things can distract and disperse stress faster than the latest entertainment holos. Movies and series, event coverages, documentaries, academic treatises and lectures, music and interactive games round out any Stewards cache of shipboard distractions. A cunning Steward always keeps something secret in reserve "just in case."

Cash on hand - as the saying goes, nothing buys bygones quicker than cash. It's also a superior tool for greasing wheels, helping motivate officials, and simply procure necessary items on places where the ship's credit is no good. The Steward and the Captain will usually have an understanding bordering on telepathy about how much and how far the Steward can flex this particular ship's resource as a tool.

Presentation

For a typical far trader plying the space lanes and taking on passengers, no uniform is required for crewmembers. Usually the crew is informal in such expressions, but if anyone is mandated to wear some sort of uniform or ship-related clothing, it will be the Steward. More common is the idea that the Steward should reflect the ship's "brand" favorably to passengers, and good grooming and a charming disposition is all that's required for this.

Aside - a typical portside shopping list

The Steward is typically responsible for restocking the ship's stores inventories so any docking or planetfall is a chance to replenish. Depending on the TL of the world being visited, resupply could mean anything from beaming requests and payment arrangements ahead for pre-arranged meeting at the docking facility to leaving the ship after planetfall with shopping lists in hand. Below are typical items that make a regular appearance on such lists:

- Foods
- Library/News/Media updates
- Various ship's locker gear
- Random workshop supplies
- Medical restocking items
- Ammunition restock

Things that can wreck a Steward's day

As a GM you may need a good "Steward emergency." Something that doesn't necessarily threaten the overall mission (or does it?) but that the Steward can rise to the occasion and be the hero can make for an interesting gaming session, or just added drama in the background. Here are a few crises that bring a Steward front and center and require a skillful touch.

- Food poisoning
- Glitch in gravity controls
- Travel paperwork screw-up
- Discovery of forged travel docs
- Suddenly short in ship's funds, or an unexplained serious overage
- Weapons gone missing from the ship's locker
- Fraternalization between crew and passenger, leading to ship problems
- A fist fight between passengers, not cooled by initial words
- Passengers that were mandated by someone the Captain must agree with
- Sudden very inconvenient bugs in ship's software

- Missing passenger valuables from the ship's secure storage
- Passenger murdered or seriously injured during jump transit
- Discovering that a current passenger is wanted by the authorities either at the origin or destination system
- Discovering a potential hijacker in the boarding passengers
- License audit of the Steward's credentials

Traits of a successful Steward

The following traits come to mind when you think about Stewards, but may be even more interesting in their absence, or against Steward archetype.

- Good with people
- Good with the books
- Access to various networks and contacts
- History of and skill at reading people
- Deft at establish rapport
- Detail oriented list maker
- Resourceful scrounger - "I have just the item; I've been saving this for just such an occasion..."

Aside - Imperial Cooperative of Certified Stewards ("I2CS")

The "Eye Two-See Ess" is the Imperial-chartered organization that oversees Steward certification throughout Imperial space. Stewards expecting to work on licensed starships must receive their own license and certification from an organization favorably recognized by I2CS. The governing board requires tri-annual recertification, describes minimum requirements for the various levels of licensure, provides materials for continuing education, and supports a network of current and former Stewards to share stories and current conditions of various areas within the Imperium. The I2CS typically negotiates with local businesses to provide or refer services that are conducive to Stewards' work, and also maintains listings of locally-available positions. In a pinch the local office (if it exists) might be a place to start for insight into cutting through some local red tape.

Typical guidelines for Stewards shipping out in Deneb

Although each ship has different requirements from its Stewards, and these needs might vary within the different cultural regions of the Imperium, the Domain of Deneb serves as a good template here. Some of the following points are seen as non-negotiable for this position:

- Skilled and appropriately licensed
- Be loyal to the captain and the ship; always have their best interest in mind
- Knowledgeable - know the ship, regulations, etc. Maybe more than any other crewmember save the Captain
- Be available to the passengers at all times. You might sleep, but as long as there are passengers on board you're always on duty
- Be versed in various etiquettes and social requirements of the cultures you come into contact with
- Bridge-building between passengers and crew, and between crew members. Because of their required skillset and duties, Stewards are natural go-betweens on the ship, ideal for easing stress and tensions.
- Be prompt - so much of the Steward's job depends on schedules and timeliness. Stewards and Marines both have the same rule - "being on time is late; being five minutes early is on time."
- Don't fraternize - this ancient pitfall causes shipboard drama and problems in all corners of space. The smart Steward knows how to keep this kind of stress off the ship.

Many stewards are “former” somethings

Most Travellers don't grow up wanting to be Stewards, or actively pursuing the career. Many just come to it as a result of prior experience, affinity for the required skills, or the opportunity to leverage learning a new career after leaving another. Some common sources of Stewards include:

- Navy - especially former attaches to officers
- Scout - jacks-of-all-trades with wanderlust and resourcefulness already honed to a fine edge
- Commando - typically resourceful generalists who learn very quickly, if a former commando wishes to leave a violent past behind, they can find the transition to Steward quite a different kind of challenge.
- Musician - skilled entertainers who can learn the more administrative skills associated with the job can make excellent Stewards, and bring their art to a large variety of people in a much more close-in setting.
- Noble's attendant - few careers prepare a Steward like attending on the staff of an Imperial noble. High stress, attention to detail, on-a-Coyne turns of events are the meat of a noble attendant's existent, old hat by the time they arrive for Steward duty aboard a ship.
- Mercenary - a warfighter who can leave violence behind can use their inner calm, ability to learn various skills quickly and their ease with irregular schedules to great effect as Stewards.
- Artist - as musicians, artists can also make excellent Stewards, being more naturally in touch with empathy and the motions of mood over time.
- University professor - a small ship's crew probably doesn't staff a scientist specialist, but a professor willing to pick up a few necessary skills can make an easy transition to the starfaring and Travelling life of a Steward, as well as provide field expertise when the need arises.
- Criminal - the holovid dramas of criminals in hiding under assumed identities registering as Stewards to start new lives might not be too far from the truth.

Skills in Traveller - the highly successful Steward

In the various Traveller game systems, Stewards acquire levels in a variety of skills to do their jobs more effectively. Below I've listed out desirable skills for the Steward from the Mongoose Traveller ruleset, but it's easy to see how other skillsets in the game could translate over based on the previous descriptions of the Steward's duties.

Job skills

- Steward - This is obvious, and is often a catch-all for all other things a Steward does that they might not have actual levels of skill in. It definitely includes the profession-based activities a Steward engages in such as cooking and prepping meals, calling up random factoids, various tricks of the trade, smoothing ruffles that always seem to arise aboard ship, and so on.
- Admin and/or Advocate - A chief part of the Steward's job is working the various systems, both aboard the ship and port- or system-side. A Steward also handling the ship's books and manages the ship's accounts.
- Engineer/life support - Seeing to the ship's life systems in general is part of the Steward's egis. Passengers expect their spaces to be tuned to their liking, but the Stewards expertise and responsibility extends ship-wise when it comes to such systems.

People skills

- Carouse and/or Diplomat - Settling disputes and subtly manipulating people is part of a Steward's stock and trade. Conflicts will inevitably arise in the passenger areas of the ship, but certainly are not limited to there. In his role of the keeper of the good flow of a ship, these skills are paramount.
- Investigate and/or Recon - Part of the Steward's duty is notice small details and read body language of passengers, not only to insure all is done to insure their comfort but also to spot danger and to read scenes and situations.
- Persuade and/or Streetwise - A Steward with these skills can be instrumental in settling disputes, but also move deals to better terms, find their way around starports and star towns, and navigate the places he'll sometimes have to go.

Entertainment skills

- Science/history-archaeology-philosophy-psychology-sophontology - these all come in very handy when preparing or reciting lectures. They aren't necessary, but come in handy when fielding questions from passengers about these topics. Also, a knowledgeable Steward so versed can also aid the crew with his specialized knowledge.
- Art/performer-instrument - as above; a great performer can do much to create a favorable impression of voyage and ship with the passengers he's captivating.
- Tactics and/or Gambler - these skills also enhance the Stewards ability to entertain with games of strategy or chance. These skill are particularly useful in dicey situations.

Shipboard skills

- Electronics/comms-computer - a sizable part of the Steward's duties are handled by interfacing with a computer on the ship (or dock- or portside). Navigating the labyrinth of networks hosted in different systems or tweaking personas to a fine gradation requires finesse and skill.
- Medic - file this under "it never hurts to have a backup." One point in Medic can be a lifesaver.
- Vaccsuit - a single point in Vaccsuit is enough to teach passengers anything they need to know during the journey, plus in an emergency it could help save a life.

Roll-playing - the Steward's skill rolls

So the 2nd edition of the Mongoose rules specify two uses of the “Steward” skill, one for preparing a meal and the other for settling a dispute. I’ll refrain from listing version-specific bonuses, but consider these other potential uses of the Steward skill:

Scrounging

Making travel arrangements - also making deals, cutting through red tape, etc

Spotting trouble or other strangeness from a passenger

Making a useful contact at a certifying agency in a given starport/downport/startown

Negotiating for “better” passengers, more in line with whatever the crew is seeking.

Improving morale/reactions temporarily with a great suggestion of media, food, joke, etc.

Verifying cold-berth vitals

Anticipating and affecting future rolls - a Steward who makes a spectacularly successful roll using his skill here or a series of successes might receive a bonus on further rolls.

The following bonuses might also apply to rolls against the Steward skill in specific circumstances:

Luxurious starship +1 to Steward rolls

Amazing Library +1

Great ship reputation +1

Aside - Roleplaying the Steward mindset

There is such a thing as keeping “a Steward mindset,” that is, keeping certain things forefront in one’s mind during the execution of duties. A venerable Steward might impress the following points upon someone he is mentoring:

- Be the face of the ship and crew for the passengers
- Some Stewards are invisible except when needed or helping; more are very visible
- A great Steward is great at rapport and quickly bonding
- It is very valuable to be an astute judge of character and situational need
- Resourcefulness and a bit of scotch can solve most problems
- Keep safety, orderliness, cleanliness, the good of the ship, and morale forefront in mind
- Always keep an eye out for useful things
- Anticipate needs, of passengers and crew

The Steward as a character archetype in the game

If you’re looking for inspiration for a shipboard Steward, there are plenty of basic “types” that come to mind. Having a theme in mind when creating your character or NPC can help bring him to life. We’re all familiar with the “Alfred” or “Jeeves” stewards from Central Casting, but below are some different archetypes to start your creative flow. Further, including a trait that goes against type (see “Traits of a successful Steward”) can make him even more interesting. They all bring value to any crew beyond their passenger-related duties.

The Fixer - a scrounger, face-man and talker with plenty of contacts, slick and streetwise in equal measures, he's a serious "problem solver."

Medic. A caretaker and healer as well, he's a natural at taking care of people and safeguarding the precious cargo of the ship's passengers.

Heart of the ship - A spiritual center, moral rudder of the crew, this archetype sees more to emotional (and possibly spiritual) care and well-being of all aboard.

Detective - an intel reader, diviner, gambler, and player of odds, this archetype is in touch with the ebb and flow of human nature.

Scientist - on sabbatical or retired, a student of systems and cause and effect, he's also a philosopher, vagabond, tinkerer, and the moral compass of the people he takes care of.

Retired operator - he's underground, maybe broken and glued together by the details of a job and life so far removed from his former self, the healing has finally started.

//////// Notes - don't forget //////////

Future topics?

Other kinds of Stewards:

Liner stewards

Military stewards

Senechels

Attaches

Stewards that sell passengers stuff? Timeshare, discounted passage

Paths to Steward-hood-ness: Citizen, Entertainer, Merchant

Fiction and dialog snippets, "Old Timer" text

Useful implant list

Clone and Robot Stewards

Psion Stewards