Beginners' guide to Shattered Horizon tactics

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Introduction

Welcome to this beginners' guide to Shattered Horizon strategy and tactics.

Firstly congratulations on choosing a great game! Shattered Horizon (SH) is a very different game to most first person shooters (FPS), and beginners can really struggle to get to grips with it especially in the first few hours. This guide aims to help you get up the learning curve quicker and give you a few good tips from more experienced players along the way to hopefully make you a better player.

All controls mentioned in the guide are default key settings, if you've changed them then only you know what you changed them to.

Principles

These are a few points worth noting before we begin…

Firstly, read the Game Manual. It is very helpful in understanding what's going on, it may be quite a large PDF file, but it really sets the scene and lays down the basics.

Game manual - http://www.shatteredhorizon.com/media/ShatteredHorizon_GameManual.pdf

Secondly, you won't become elite straight away in SH. Don't worry about it – no one does. The game has a fairly steep learning curve and some of the better players have a lot of playtime logged and have been playing for many months. If you see someone in game who seems to be indestructible and pops up everywhere to kill you, they're probably a very experienced player who has put a lot of time and effort into becoming that good. Don't call them a cheat or insult them, instead try following them to see what they do, watch how they move, learn from their strategies, and feel free to politely ask them for help.

Thirdly, the Shattered Horizon (SH) community is very active, and has a lot of interaction with the development studio (FutureMark). The community forums are quite active and you will find a lot of the development team on their reading the posts, so if you want to talk to the developers then that's the way to do it. Just remember to be respectful and check whether your question has already been asked/answered by someone else.

Community forums - http://futuremark.yougamers.com/forum/forumdisplay.php?f=93

With all that said, do remember that SH is a very rewarding game to play (once you're up to speed on flying and shooting), and well worth the effort. So, if you're ready then climb into your space-suit and let's play Shattered Horizon…

Movement and flight

Your first steps into space will probably be difficult and awkward. You are strongly recommended to take these steps on a beginner or flight-only server. When you see the server list look for servers that have a points limit in the server rules, this means you will be playing against other beginners like yourself. In the below screen grab you can see a points limit set at less than 2700.

In these servers you will be much less likely to be killed whilst you are still trying to stand up.

For your first few games the F key will be your friend. This will ground you on the surface that you are looking at, not necessarily the one you are above.

Once grounded moving around in the standard directions (forwards, backwards, side to side) is all fairly standard. But be aware that moving whilst you are grounded is slow – this makes you an easier target.

Being grounded also tends to make you orientate yourself about a particular horizon. This is a false concept in zero-gravity and consequently you will become disorientated and less able to respond should enemies appear from unexpected angles and in unfamiliar positions. Your brain will be trying to pattern-match an upright person moving in a traditional direction, when you are being faced with someone on their side flying in an unfamiliar trajectory – this can make you slow to notice and respond to events.

So, when you're ready press the space bar and float away, experiment with moving. You will find you naturally try to orientate yourself correctly to a floor, no matter what angle you end up at. This is okay for beginners as it will help you learn the maps better, but be aware that once you reach an intermediate skill level you are actually making yourself a better target for people as you will look more like what they are expecting to pattern-match and your vulnerable faceplate (head) will be right where they expect it to be.

Take your time flying round, don't be afraid to use the F key to sort things out if you get mixed up, and practice moving in and around obstacles.

When you've got the hang of things – start using the third dimension more – SPACE BAR moves up and SHIFT moves you down. Learn these keys they are very useful to you. In a fire-fight moving to the nearest cover may save your skin, and that cover may be immediately above or below you.

Once you've got the hang of moving, find an open space and try using boost (C key). Boost as they name suggests will propel you forwards more quickly. It is useful but short lived and takes a while to recharge, so you will want to use it sparingly in real life combat. It also has the disadvantage of producing extra bright jet pack flares highlighting your position to the enemy.

As an advanced tactic you can land on the ground without using the F key and showing up your jets. Align yourself as though you were walking on the ground, get really close and then a short burst of downward thrust (Shift key) will land you. .opTi demonstrates in this video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-O7Apz8r3I

Combat

Now the fun part! Combat in SH is fast and furious, and as a beginner you should expect to die, frequently. *Don't despair*. For the first few hours of play, most new players are pretty much cannon fodder. You will get better.

Do make sure you are on a beginner server though (see flight section) otherwise you'll be killed even more than most.

Basic tactics

If you do nothing else, follow these basic tactics and you'll not be the worst player on the server!

- Don't fly too high off 'the ground'. If you fly too far into the open without any cover then you tend to be visible to a lot of players from many angles and distances. Enemies with long range weapons will pick you off in no time. Hug surfaces and cover whenever you can. This is where being a good mover really helps.
- Fire in bursts. It's all well and good in the thrill of the fight to hold down the mouse button and spray wildly at the enemy. If you're close and using the Sub-machine gun you might even get away with this, but not for long. Your accuracy diminishes with every moment you hold down the trigger. For most weapons you should learn to fire in rapid bursts of 4-5 bullets. You'll kill more quickly because more of your shots are hitting the target.
- Lead the target – SH used to be hitscan but not any more, so lead your target if they are at a distance and gauge the range.
- Don't stay still. Stop in one place for too long and not only will you get killed you'll probably get a mining-axe to your spine. Remember if you kill someone their screen will show them where you are, so if you don't move they can come straight back and get you.
- Choose one weapon and become good with it. The weapons in SH are all very different and require different play styles – few people can master them all. You are much better off as a beginner to pick one weapon and get used to it, at which distances it works best, its magazine size, rate of fire, etc. See the weapons section.
- Sniping is not the easy option – in many FPS games you can gently ease into the game by hanging back behind friendly lines and sniping enemy targets. This doesn't work in SH. The 3D playing world means there aren't really friendly and enemy lines, and Silent Running capabilities means enemy players can almost always infiltrate defensive positions and get to you almost anywhere on the map. If you're going to snipe, be prepared to keep and good look-out and grab your pistol (Q Key) or axe (V Key) at a moments notice.
- Fly near the surface, and when you encounter a firefight, land on the ground, stay still and focus on aiming and firing in short bursts. This is one of the most accurate and non-disorienting approaches, and will help you get used to the gun faster. (FM_codarki)

Weapon Choice

SH has a number of weapons. It is highly recommended that as a beginner you try them all, but then pick your favourite and learn it really well. Press F1 to get the weapon selection screen and you will get your new weapon next time you die.

Standard Weapons

Everyone gets 3 standard weapons no matter which weapon you choose as your primary. These 3 standard weapons are:

- **Pistol**

The pistol is one of the more accurate weapons in the game and packs a fair punch too. If you are in a fight and your main weapon runs out of ammo, switching to the pistol (Q key) is faster than reloading. Use it to finish the target then reload both weapons.

- **Moon-miner's pick-axe**

The pick-axe is incredibly slow to swing, but it is an instant kill. If you turn a corner and stumble into an enemy player in SH, this is what you should be reaching for. The only other weapon that can kill as fast at close range is the shotgun. If the other player isn't wielding a shotgun, you can bet they'll be trying to axe you, so don't hesitate - rip their suit open with your axe first (V key).

The axe is also your weapon of choice if you've successfully snuck up behind someone. It is very satisfying to swing a mining axe through someone's jetpack.

If you're moving towards an unsuspecting enemy gauging the distance at which to swing your axe can be tricky. You have a distance indicator on your HUD if the enemy is highlighted and you can use this if needed. If you are both grounded and fairly static you should swing at 4metres, if you're flying towards the other person then 15metres is about right. If you're both flying towards each other then you should start swinging even further away. Don't rely too heavily on the distance gauge, you'll want to get used to doing this by sight, and you'll still need a lot of practice as many factors can affect this. (Teal'c)

There is a video here showing a good stabbing distance for two combatants approaching one another with boost on.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhmYhFAHJpY

The screenshot above shows a static target and a good distance from which to axe them assuming you're moving normally (with a medium weight weapon).

- **Grenade pistol**

This is a slow weapon and you should almost never use it if you are in a fire-fight. It has six grenade types (EMP, MPR, PULSE, DECOY, FLARE, ICE) and as you get more experienced you can develop additional uses for the grenade pistol and each of the grenade types, but for now these are the main uses:

1. If you see an enemy and they haven't see you then EMP and MPR grenades can be very useful for disorientating them whilst you close in for the kill.
2. Mask your approach or capture a control point behind a cloud of ICE
3. Finding the enemy (PULSE)

Main Weapon

There are five main weapon types in SH and each has its uses. The full details of each weapon are available in the user manual and on the selection screen, but a very brief summary of each is below. It is highly recommend you find your favourite, and worth remembering that on some maps some weapons may be more effective than others.

- **Shotgun**

Extremely powerful up close weapon. Good in tight spaces and allows you to fly quicker than medium and heavy weapons.

- **Sub Machine Gun**

Good at short-medium range. This is a spray and pray weapon. It is light and so allows you to fly quicker than medium and heavy weapons.

- **Assault Rifle**

A good all-round weapon, and the recommended weapon for beginners. It is a medium weapon in terms of weight.

At really close range progressive constant fire is okay normally. Medium range, it's best to start shooting in bursts, and sometimes single fire shots. At long range, the gun is a lot more accurate firing single shots, don't burst. Even though it's most accurate in flight, it can still be very accurate mounted on the ground with bursts or single shots depending on the distance of the enemy. (DarkN0ize)

- **Machine Gun**

This is a heavy weapon making you slow to move, and is only really usable when you are grounded on a surface. But it has a very large clip and is good for defending a position.

- **Railgun**

This is a snipers weapon, you'll want to be grounded and scoped to hit someone with this. It is a very powerful weapon though and can kill with just one or two hits. If you're using it expect to get axed a lot. It is a medium weapon in terms of weight.

Scoping

To hit a target at a distance you'll want to use the scope or ironsights on your weapon. The distance where it becomes better to scope/descope as the target moves towards or away from you varies between primary weapons and you'll need to learn this as you gain experience in the game.

Your field of view is reduced whilst scoped, so don't scope unless you have a reason.

Strategy

You may be a great player at standard FPS games, but the third dimension really makes a difference. The third dimension forces you to think differently and provides a number of different solutions to any problem. The maps in SH are really well constructed and there will always be different routes to take to get to your objective.

If you're getting repeatedly killed taking the same route to a goal, find a different route. Plan your attack.

Don't rush, as a new player take it easy at slow paced fight and movement. Stay on the ground a lot. After you get better at the game mechanics, then you can go for the surprise rush and close combat. (FM_codarki)

Game Types

SH has three game types, with differing tactics and strategies worth knowing for each.

Skirmish

Skirmish is a real free for all, and without a central focus you may come across enemies appearing anywhere on the map. On the bigger maps you can sometimes struggle to find the action, so feel free to ask your team-mates where the action is if you're struggling to find a target.

Alternately, if you're feeling brave you can stand on the ground in an open space, fire a flare grenade right above you and then get ready for incoming attackers. Aim at anyone who's trying to figure out what's going on there. (Tokamax)

Skirmish games tend to be all about movement – keep moving and constantly look for enemies appearing all around you.

Assault and Battle

Assault and Battle both involve attacking and defending control points. Here are some simple suggestions to help with these.

When you first go into combat proper in an assault or battle match just try to follow one of your team-mates. The chances are they know where to go, or if not the worst case is you're teaming up against loners in 2v1. (FM_codarki)

Capturing a Control Point

If your team is capturing a point, look for the control point indicator on your HUD. This will show you which direction to head in. Expect a strong enemy defence around the control point so a stealthy approach is always best.

The capture zone is a 360 degree sphere around the point, so make use of this to be in cover as much as you can whilst still being close enough to the point to capture it.

The more of your team at a control point the quicker you capture it.

You are unlikely to capture a control point single-handedly. So, it will probably require one or two of your team-mates alongside you to capture the point quickly enough that the enemy won't swoop in and kill you.

You will probably need to take out a couple of defenders before your attack if you are to be successful in capturing the point.

Defending a control point

To defend a control point you should:

- Check you are defending the correct control point. In Assault the attackers can only attack one control point at a time, so make sure you're at that control point and stopping them!

- At the very start of the game if you are defending you should rush to defend your control point as quickly as you can. If you dawdle and the enemy rushes the point your team may lose it straight away. This is especially true on larger maps like Flipside.

- Stay close to the control point. This is where most defenders will be, and you will benefit from safety in numbers. You are also most helpful to your team here as your presence near the point alone is enough to stop the other team being able to capture it.

- Remain calm. This can be tricky when there are grenades and bullets going off all around you and ice clouds are making it difficult to see, but be aware that at the defence point you will be surrounded by your own team-mates as well as attackers, do try to make sure the person you are shooting is on the other team. You'll hear a grating noise if you are shooting your own team, so ease off if you are hearing that too often.

- Once you are happy that you know the layout of the point and that it is safe for the time being, you may want to back away from the point itself a little and start to cover the approach routes that you think the attackers will take. Do try to remain within emergency flying distance to the point if the attackers get past you or come from another direction though.

- Always consider your surroundings when holding a point, try not to get stuck somewhere enemies can come from too many directions (can be difficult in space). (spiffmeister)

Game wide strategies & advanced tactics

- Don't get caught alone. No matter how good you are, getting caught on your own by 3 or 4 enemies is pretty much a guaranteed death. Stay near the bulk of your team if you can.

- Check your 360. Attacks can come from anywhere, remain vigilant to remain alive.

- Teamwork – can be incredibly effective in SH. Unfortunately very few players work together, preferring to enjoy the space death frenzy in silence. A team working together will wipe out an uncoordinated team every time. There is voice chat in SH feel free to use it, sensibly. No one wants to hear you sing, swear or playing your favourite music selection. Also keep in mind that a lot of SH players are not English-speakers.

- In enclosed areas or even where there is a surface, you will see the reflections of people's thrusters (matching the colour of the team they're on). Use this to locate the enemy and remember whenever you thrust they can see the same reflections for you.

- You have momentum in SH so you don't need to thrust all the time to get somewhere – use bursts of thrust to set the direction you want to go and then drift there to hide your thrusters.

- Learn to use your radar. It is a bit weird to get used to at first, but it will soon become vital to you. Get using it as quickly as you can, since that large red dot means an enemy is about to get you!

- In open space, don't shoot unless you can kill fast. The first thing to realize is that when you shoot and your suit is turned on you will show up on enemy radar; it doesn't matter if they can see you or not. Ironically, shooting is the number one reason you die. As soon as you show up on someone's radar, the enemy will hunt you and you will get shot from more angles than you can return fire. (EssFerret)

- Cover your head. This is a complete departure from other FPS's, so it will be a habit you have to break. Remember in this game players can very easily be shooting at you from directly above. In most FPS's this isn't an angle you have to worry about but in this game not only is it viable, it is the most important angle to protect because your head is the quickest place to die. When you are attacked from your head's direction, the softest place on your toon is the ONLY THING BEING SHOT AT! If you find yourself dying VERY FAST a lot, it's because you aren't covering your head. If someone is above you, DON'T SHOOT. Use your "F" key to boost to a wall that corrects your angle so you show more of your body, THEN shoot. (EssFerret)

- Use your 'Sound' (Turn it up). The '360' of this game is just that, 360. The better you get to know what the sounds are, the better you can, for example defend. You're travelling and you hear the sound of boosting near you, you are busy looking at the Red spot in front of you, not paying attention to that sound... and bam, you've been stabbed. But if you did pay attention, what do I do? Boost fast and turn towards your opponent. If it's a stab battle between you two... go for it, be a return stabber... scared, shoot. Keep in mind that a lot of players look for a 'one on one' stab battle, to break up all the shooting and, well... stab. Play back, it's a game, and the battles are fun, one on ones make the round, competitive and fun. Yeah, we live, we die. (Panther)

- If a fight leaves you in open space with no cover do two things fast if you don't want to die: Boost towards cover (C Key), and turn off your suit (Home Key). By turning off your suit (silent running mode) you take the big red dot that was you shooting your gun off the enemy's radar. Now you at least have a fighting chance. (EssFerret)

- If someone is shooting at you, you will see a 'Red' curved identifier on your HUD... look where it is showing you. Attack or get to cover... decide as it is happening. (Panther)

- If you see someone trying to snipe you, be sneaky and unpredictable. Move in strange and weird ways. Up a bit, then left, boost up quickly, stop, etc. (techwg)

- ICE grenades aren't just for attackers. You can give attackers a false sense of safety if you deploy ICE clouds around an objective while waiting for them inside in stealth. The so called 'Ant lion' tactic. (Tokamax)

- Use your booster only about half way or less. It is way enough to get you going and thus will regenerate quicker for you so you can escape or chase after someone (Techwg)

- Practice shooting your grenades different distances by holding your grenade key down a tiny bit each time. The longer you hold it down the further it will go when you let the button go. (techwg)

- Rushing in when you're underpowered is a suicide, wait for a teammate and just harass the enemy from a distance. And keeping enemy marked on radar for your team is always useful. (FM_codarki)

- If you are shooting someone and they vanish from your view, reload, because every chance you can safely reload will increase your chances to make the kill when they surface again because you have more ammo to use. (techwg)

- After a successful gunfight, evade to reload and defend yourself. Stay low a while. Chances are someone has seen or heard the fight and you're on everyone's radar, they'll try to hunt you down. (FM_codarki)

- Dodged someone's fire and out of his sight? Good, turn down your suit and turn it on again (HOME key). This will remove the persistent HUD from his screen and he won't be able to track you. (Tokamax)

- When you are on a high ping to the server, and you, or an enemy is approaching at MPR boost speed (see Examples section), go to his side, and keep his body in the UPPER RIGHT HAND corner of your screen, when enough of his body fits in to the square shoot or stab and make sure you time it right. This is effective for high ping, because he isn't where you see him, he's actually right in your crosshairs when you see him in the upper right hand part of your screen. (Danson Delta-40)

- If you get shot from out of your Field of View, DON'T PANIC. The best tactic is to use your boosters and fly a big Circle (or behind the nearest cover). Because leading you becomes quite hard if you're using boosters you have a chance to find your shooter and fire back! (.opTi)

- If you're being chased and you do get into cover, then turn around and be ready for your attacker (you can use an EMP grenade to make your hunter immobile). (.opTi)

- You can use the F-key ground attaching for surprise attacking, because with the F-key you will move pretty fast. So if you know there is an enemy around a corner you can use this to surprise him. (.opTi)

- It is possible to land without using the F key. If you are aligned correctly with the ground and are already touching it or are very near you won't light up the surroundings when you press the "down" key. But you have to make sure you are at the right angle to the ground and near enough, it takes a bit practice. (.opTi, Spanner_, Inertia Creep)

- Make sure you're in cover before you reload so enemies can't catch you midway through your magazine change. (spiffmeister)

- Always be careful of how much ammo you waste in a fight, you might not get a chance to reload before the next enemy is upon you. (spiffmeister)

Remember, with every death you should be learning something. You will be learning and absorbing information on how to be more successful, even if you are not aware of it. On an unconscious level you absorb more than you consciously can grasp.

Available at: http://www.bestrouter.co.uk/files/shguide.pdf

Examples
There are some great places you should look to see some of this in action or learn more.

Many players have posted videos of themselves playing, some of the better examples are below. These can be useful to beginners to see how they play, and also to see what those getting killed are doing (hint: avoid doing the same).

.opTi on Slingshot - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8roVGCvsrMo

.opTi on Flipside - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOh-1LcARnM

MadTom's tutorial with teaching notes - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL0AWZYbViQ

There is a 3 part guide to becoming an expert stabber (before the miners pick-axe was introduced the weapons had a bayonet attached) written by Deebz on the forums.

Stabbers guide - http://www.yougamers.com/forum/showthread.php?p=1258433

MPR Boosting is an advanced tactic to move around the map very quickly – it takes a lot of practice and is only suggested once you've become fairly good at the game.

MadTom's guide to MPR Boosting - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ4VBkKpL8E

Other sites with great help for beginners
The forums are also a good place to hang around – if you have questions here is a great place to ask.
http://futuremark.yougamers.com/forum/forumdisplay.php?f=93

The Shattered Horizon Wiki
http://shatteredhorizon.wikia.com/wiki/Shattered_Horizon_Wiki

Arconauts.com
http://www.arconauts.com

Thanks
Thanks obviously to all at Futuremark for creating and maintaining such a great game.

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