

SESSION 0

The Table Before the Stars

A Beginner-Friendly Traveller Teaching Campaign

REFEREE USE

Before the Travellers receive a ship, a Letter of Marque, or the freedom of the Trojan Reach, the table itself must be prepared. This session builds the crew, explains the tone of Traveller, defines campaign boundaries, and creates the ledger that will track every debt, favor, rival, and consequence to come.

Field	Briefing Detail
Campaign	Book One: The Drinax Training Arc
Session Type	Session 0 Setup
Target Play Time	Three Hours
Audience	New Traveller players and a new Referee
Rules Goal	Teach Traveller gradually through play
Campaign Goal	Prepare the group to enter the larger Drinax sandbox

DESIGN NOTE

This is an original teaching session document for personal table use. It is designed to be compatible with the tone and campaign frame of Traveller and The Pirates of Drinax, but it does not reproduce or replace official rulebooks or published adventures.

2. Session Snapshot

Item	Session 0 Detail
Session Number	0
Session Title	The Table Before the Stars
Target Play Time	Three hours
Primary Teaching Focus	Traveller tone, table expectations, crew roles, campaign ledger, and sandbox mindset
Primary Story Focus	The Travellers receive a discreet summons connected to Drinax and decide why they would accept such a dangerous opportunity.
Main Traveller Mechanics	Character roles, basic task-check vocabulary, campaign resources, and consequence tracking. No full rules module is taught yet.
Main Drinax Concept	Drinax is a fallen power offering dangerous patronage. The crew may become useful tools, trusted agents, or future liabilities.
Expected Session End-State	Characters are ready, crew roles are assigned, tone is agreed, and the campaign ledger is created.
Recommended Prep Time	Thirty to sixty minutes if characters are prebuilt, longer if creating characters from scratch.
Difficulty for New Referee	Low to Moderate. The challenge is guiding expectations, not running complex rules.
CAMPAIGN SETUP NOTES	
This is the only session that does not begin with continuity from a prior adventure. Instead, it establishes the table, the characters, the crew, and the campaign ledger that later documents will reference.	

3. Referee Overview

Session 0 is a table-building session. It is not a lecture and it should not become a rules seminar. The main job is to make sure every player understands what kind of game Traveller is, what Drinax is offering, and why their character would step into a dangerous political opportunity.

The Referee should emphasize risk, consequences, debt, money, reputation, and the importance of player choice. Traveller rewards planning and caution, but it also rewards bold moves when the crew accepts the cost.

Avoid explaining every subsystem. New players do not need full trade rules, starship combat, law rules, character advancement, and ship design before the first scene. They need to know that checks are simple, choices matter, and the campaign remembers what they do.

This session points directly toward Session 1, The King's Test. By the end, the players should know who their characters are, who does what aboard ship, what lines the group does not want crossed, and what sort of privateering campaign sounds exciting.

REFeree NOTE

The best Session 0 result is not perfect rules knowledge. The best result is a crew that has reasons to work together, a Referee who knows the table's preferred tone, and a ledger ready to record consequences.

4. Teaching Goals

Player Learning Goals

- Understand that Traveller is a game of choices, risks, consequences, resources, and reputation.
- Understand the difference between a character sheet, a ship role, and a campaign goal.
- Learn that combat is not the default answer and may be costly when it happens.
- Understand why a crew needs trust, procedures, and clear decision-making.
- Know the campaign premise well enough to explain why their character accepts Drinax's summons.

Referee Learning Goals

- Practice setting expectations clearly without overloading the table.

- Help players build characters who can work as a crew.
- Establish safety, tone, and campaign boundaries.
- Build the campaign ledger and explain how it will be used.
- Create useful hooks from character histories, debts, rivals, contacts, and ambitions.

Campaign Learning Goals

- Introduce Drinax as opportunity, patron, threat, and political symbol.
- Frame the Trojan Reach as a place where law, trade, piracy, culture, and politics collide.
- Make the players understand that the campaign will not follow a fixed path forever.
- Prepare the crew to move from guided teaching sessions into sandbox play.

5. Rules Introduced This Session

Rule or Concept	Why It Matters	How It Appears in Play	Teach Detail	Beginner Mistake to Avoid
Basic Task Check Vocabulary	Players need to understand that Traveller usually resolves uncertainty with 2D plus modifiers.	Explain check, skill, characteristic DM, difficulty, and Effect in plain language.	Concept only. Do not drill edge cases.	Do not make every conversation require a roll.
Crew Roles	The ship needs jobs beyond captain and pilot.	Assign primary and backup roles for pilot, engineer, sensors, medic, gunner, broker, and security.	Practical table role only.	Do not let one player own all ship decisions.
Campaign Ledger	Traveller consequences accumulate across sessions.	Create shared tracking for credits, ship status, contacts, reputation, favors, and trouble.	Use a simple table.	Do not turn the ledger into homework.
Tone Agreement	Piracy, privateering, and violence need table boundaries.	Discuss what kind of crew the players want to be.	Table contract level.	Do not assume everyone wants the same level of ruthlessness.

6. Rules Intentionally Avoided

Rules or Subsystem	Why It Is Delayed
Full Combat	The first play session will introduce basic checks before danger and combat pressure appear.
Starship Combat	Ship combat needs crew roles first, then basic ship familiarity, then tactical pressure.
Trade and Cargo Rules	Money matters later. Session 0 only establishes that resources will be tracked.
Jump Travel	Travel has more impact once players understand the ship and crew responsibilities.
Law Level Procedures	Legal consequences matter after the players begin visiting worlds and ports.
Aslan and Major Faction Detail	Faction depth is introduced gradually so the Trojan Reach feels discovered through play.
Ship Construction and Upgrades	The crew should first understand the ship as a shared tool before customizing it.

7. What the Players Should Learn

The players should leave Session 0 with a clear understanding that Traveller is not built around balanced fights or guaranteed victories. It is built around competent people making dangerous decisions in a large universe that remembers what they do.

- Their characters are not blank beginners. They have past careers, useful skills, and baggage.
- The crew is a political and practical unit. They need trust, procedures, and shared priorities.
- The ship will become the center of play, even before the group fully understands all ship rules.
- Drinax offers opportunity, but Drinax also uses people.
- The campaign ledger is not bookkeeping for its own sake. It is how the campaign remembers debts, favors, enemies, repairs, and reputation.

TEACHING MOMENT

Tell the players that the safest answer, the most profitable answer, and the most honorable answer will not always be the same answer. That tension is the heart of the campaign.

8. What the Referee Should Practice

- Guide a table conversation without turning it into a lecture.
- Ask character questions that create future hooks.
- Help players connect character skills to shipboard or campaign roles.
- Set campaign boundaries before piracy, violence, prisoners, and betrayal become active topics.
- Create a ledger simple enough to use every session.
- Listen for player interests that can become future missions, rivals, contacts, or temptations.
- End the session with an immediate hook into Session 1.

REFeree NOTE

The Referee should collect usable hooks during Session 0. A player debt, enemy, old contact, or career failure can become a future Drinax complication.

9. Three-Hour Session Timeline

Time	Segment	Purpose	Referee Notes
0:00 to 0:15	Opening Brief	Explain the campaign frame and Session 0 goals.	Keep it practical and exciting.
0:15 to 0:40	Traveller Tone	Discuss risk, consequences, money, reputation, and dangerous combat.	Use examples, not rule lectures.
0:40 to 1:20	Character Review	Finalize characters or review pregens.	Tie every character to the campaign.
1:20 to 1:55	Crew Roles	Assign shipboard and mission roles.	Make backups for every key role.
1:55 to 2:25	Table Agreement	Set boundaries for piracy, violence, betrayal, and tone.	Record agreements clearly.
2:25 to 2:45	Campaign Ledger	Build tracking sheets for resources and consequences.	Keep the first ledger simple.
2:45 to 3:00	Court Summons Hook	Introduce the Drinax invitation and set up Session 1.	End with a choice and a reason to show up.

10. Required Materials

Checklist	Checklist
■ Traveller core rules or quick reference	■ Tone and safety checklist
■ Character sheets or pregenerated characters	■ Drinax premise summary
■ Blank ship role cards	■ Sector or subsector map for visual reference
■ Campaign ledger sheet	■ Folder or binder for the future packet
■ Blank contacts and rivals list	■ Pencils and highlighters
■ Scratch paper or index cards	■ Optional name list for NPCs
■ Two six-sided dice per player if available	■ Optional campaign calendar sheet
■ Session 0 player handout	■ Optional crew charter sheet

For Session 0, a detailed ship record is not required, but it is helpful to show players that the ship will eventually have condition, fuel, debt, cargo, and repair concerns.

11. Opening Situation

READ OR PARAPHRASE

You are between lives. Some of you have debts, some have old enemies, some have skills that respectable employers do not ask about too closely. A discreet message reaches each of you by different routes. It names no employer at first, only a destination, a time, and one promise: a dead kingdom has use for people who still know how to take risks. The message is marked with the old seal of Drinax.

The players are not yet at court. Session 0 frames why they might accept the invitation, what they expect, and what they fear. Session 1 begins when they arrive and are tested.

12. Key NPCs

Name	Role	First Impression	Wants	Knows	Helps	Complicates	Skills
King Oleb	Distant Patron	Loud, grand, impossible to ignore.	Glory, restoration, daring agents.	Drinax needs leverage and stories as much as money.	He can offer authority, spectacle, and opportunity.	He may make reckless promises or judge caution as weakness.	Admin, Advocate, Carouse, Diplomat, Persuade
Princess Rao	Political Patron	Calm, sharp, observant.	Competent agents who do not ruin her plans.	Drinax cannot survive on bluster alone.	She can provide intelligence, restraint, and realistic missions.	She may withhold trust or impose conditions.	Diplomat, Investigate, Persuade, Steward, Streetwise
Court Functionary Varris Sen	Original NPC, Gatekeeper	Polite, tired, precise.	Order, clear records, fewer scandals.	The summons is real, but the court is divided.	He can brief the crew and smooth introductions.	He can delay access if insulted or ignored.	Admin, Persuade, Advocate
Old Spacer Jalen Mor	Original NPC, Crew Advisor	Weathered, direct, suspicious of nobles.	Keep new crews alive.	Shipboard discipline matters more than speeches.	He can explain practical crew roles.	He may challenge arrogant players.	Mechanic, Pilot, Engineer, Carouse
Unknown Rival Listener	Original NPC, Hidden Observer	Not seen directly.	Learn whether the Travellers are useful or dangerous.	Someone at court is already watching.	None at first.	May leak, twist, or weaponize their choices later.	Investigate, Recon, Stealth, Streetwise

13. Key Locations

Location	Description	First Notice	Useful Details	Complications	Relevant Checks	Campaign Connection
Player Starting Points	Each character receives the summons wherever they currently are.	The message is careful, indirect, and old-fashioned.	Lets each player describe their character before the crew forms.	A rival, debt collector, or former contact notices the message.	None required, or Streetwise to understand discretion.	Shows that Drinax reaches people through favors, rumor, and quiet channels.
Session 0 Table Space	The real-world play table becomes the first campaign tool.	Character sheets, notes, and maps begin to form the crew identity.	Use this space to build roles and expectations.	Too much rules talk can drain energy.	No checks.	The table agreement becomes the foundation of later Drinax decisions.
Future Drinax Court	Not fully played until Session 1.	A fallen royal power preparing to test the crew.	Foreshadowed through the summons and briefing.	Players may assume patronage means safety. It does not.	History, Diplomat, or Carouse may reveal rumors later.	Sets up Oleb, Rao, and the Letter of Marque.

14. Scene-by-Scene Outline

Scene 1: Opening Brief

PURPOSE

Explain what Session 0 will accomplish and what it will not attempt.

Scene 2: Traveller Tone

SETUP

Describe Traveller as a game of risk, competence, uncertainty, and consequences. Compare privateering to crime with paperwork, not heroic immunity.

Scene 3: Character Review

WHAT PLAYERS CAN DO

Introduce their characters, explain useful skills, name one fear, one ambition, and one reason to accept the summons.

Scene 4: Crew Roles

RELEVANT CHECKS

No checks are needed. Discuss who handles command, piloting, engineering, sensors, gunnery, medicine, brokerage, and security.

Scene 5: Table Agreement

LIKELY OUTCOMES

The group decides how ruthless, heroic, cautious, comic, or political the campaign should be.

Scene 6: Campaign Ledger

FAILURE COMPLICATIONS

If players dislike bookkeeping, simplify the ledger to ship status, credits, reputation, contacts, and trouble. Do not abandon tracking entirely.

Scene 7: Drinax Summons

TRANSITION

End with the message from Drinax and ask each character why they go. Session 1 begins with arrival and court testing.

Referee advice: Do not script the players into loyalty. Let them be curious, greedy, desperate, patriotic, indebted, ambitious, or cautious. Drinax only needs them to show up. Loyalty can be earned or broken later.

15. Core Checks and Suggested Difficulties

Situation	Skill	Difficulty	Success	Failure
Understand whether the summons is legitimate	Admin, Advocate, Investigate, or Streetwise	8+	The character recognizes that the invitation is serious and discreet.	They still know enough to attend, but they may misjudge who is behind it.
Recall rumors about Drinax	History, Diplomat, Streetwise, or Carouse	8+	The player receives one useful public rumor.	The rumor is incomplete, exaggerated, or colored by bias.
Identify a useful shipboard role	No roll needed, or use career history	Automatic	The player chooses a meaningful job.	The Referee suggests a backup role.
Negotiate crew expectations	Persuade, Leadership, or plain table discussion	Usually no roll	The crew agrees on a working structure.	A tension becomes a future roleplay hook, not a table problem.
Set campaign boundaries	No roll	Automatic	The group defines what belongs in play and what does not.	If unclear, pause and clarify before Session 1.
Create a useful contact or rival	Player choice	Automatic	The campaign gains a usable NPC hook.	If vague, the Referee asks one follow-up question.

16. Player-Facing Choices

Choice	Why It Matters	Benefit	Risk	Later Effect
Why answer Drinax?	It defines each character's stake.	Clear motivation and future hooks.	Weak motivation can make later missions feel forced.	Use the answer to personalize future offers.
What kind of crew are we?	It sets campaign tone.	The group starts aligned.	Unspoken assumptions can create conflict later.	Record the crew identity in the ledger.
Who commands in crisis?	Ship play needs fast decisions.	Reduces confusion during danger.	A bad structure may create useful drama, but too much can slow play.	Revisit after Session 2.
How ruthless are we willing to be?	Piracy and privateering create moral pressure.	Prevents surprise discomfort.	Too vague can make prisoner and ransom scenes harder later.	Sets expectations for Sessions 6 and beyond.
How public is our loyalty to Drinax?	Secrecy and reputation matter.	Creates a shared operational style.	Being too open may attract enemies.	This becomes a major question after the first prize.

17. Consequences and Branching Outcomes

Clean Success

Characters are complete or ready enough to play. Crew roles are assigned. The table agrees on tone and boundaries. The ledger is created. Every player has a reason to answer Drinax. Session 1 can begin immediately.

Mixed Success

Most characters are ready, but one or two roles need backup coverage. Tone is mostly agreed, but the crew has unresolved tension. Record this as a roleplay hook rather than a problem. Session 1 can still proceed.

Complicated Failure

The table discovers a major mismatch in expectations, such as heroic privateers versus ruthless pirates. Do not ignore it. Adjust the campaign frame before play. Drinax can still summon the crew, but the Referee should tailor early tests to reveal and resolve that tension.

CONSEQUENCE

Failure in Session 0 should not punish the players. It should reveal what needs to be clarified before the campaign asks harder questions.

18. Combat, Conflict, or Crisis Guidance

Combat is not the focus of this session. Use conflict as social, ethical, logistical, or political pressure. If violence occurs during a character backstory discussion, keep it as background, not an active encounter.

- Do not run a combat scene during Session 0 unless the table strongly requests a short practice exercise.
- If a practice exercise is used, keep it separate from campaign continuity.
- Do not teach all combat rules now. Save personal combat for Session 4.
- The main crisis of this session is alignment: what kind of campaign does the table want?

19. Ship, Trade, Law, or Faction Notes

Category	Session 0 Use
Ship Operations	Minimal use this session. Assign roles, but do not teach ship procedures yet.
Trade	Not used this session. Explain only that operating a ship costs money.
Cargo	Not used this session. Cargo choices begin later.
Passengers	Not used this session. Passenger complications begin later.
Fuel	Minimal use this session. Mention that fuel will matter once travel begins.
Starport Procedures	Not used this session. Introduce later during travel.
Law Level	Not used this session. Mention that law varies by world.

Category	Session 0 Use
Drinax Reputation	Starts at neutral or untested. Drinax is interested but not trusting.
Imperial Attention	None yet unless a character backstory creates a reason.
Aslan Attention	None yet. Save major Aslan focus for later.
Pirate Reputation	None yet. The crew has not acted.
Merchant Reaction	None yet. Trade pressure begins after the ship is active.

20. Campaign Ledger Updates

Create the campaign ledger during this session. It does not need to be perfect. It needs to be simple enough that the Referee will actually use it after every session.

Checklist	Checklist
■ Crew name chosen or left blank	■ Ship status placeholder created
■ Primary crew roles assigned	■ Drinax trust starts at 0 or Untested
■ Backup crew roles assigned	■ Imperial attention starts at 0
■ Tone agreement recorded	■ Aslan attention starts at 0
■ Lines and limits recorded	■ Pirate reputation starts at 0
■ Each character has a Drinax motivation	■ Merchant reputation starts at 0
■ Each character has one contact, rival, debt, or secret	■ Open hook: Drinax summons
■ Starting credits noted	■ Open question: loyalty or opportunity?

21. End-State of the Session

By the end of Session 0, the following should be true:

- The players understand the campaign premise.
- The players understand that Traveller is built around risk and consequences.
- Characters are complete or ready enough to begin.
- Every character has a reason to answer Drinax's summons.
- Crew roles and backup roles are assigned.
- The group has agreed on campaign tone and boundaries.
- The campaign ledger exists.
- The Referee has at least three future hooks drawn from player choices.
- Session 1 can begin with arrival at Drinax and the first court test.

22. Hooks into the Next Session

Hook Type	Hook
Direct Hook	The Travellers accept the summons and travel to Drinax, where the court tests whether they are useful, discreet, and controllable.
Optional Player-Driven Hook	A character brings a debt, rival, secret cargo, old military contact, or hidden agenda that may surface during the court introduction.
Consequence-Based Hook	If the table chose a ruthless tone, Rao watches for discipline. If the table chose a heroic tone, Oleb tests boldness. If the table chose a profit-first tone, the court tests whether greed can be directed.

23. Referee Quick Reference

Item	Reference
Session Goal	Prepare table, crew, characters, ledger, tone, and Drinax hook.
New Rules	Basic check vocabulary, crew roles, campaign ledger, tone agreement.

Item	Reference
Important NPCs	King Oleb, Princess Rao, Varris Sen, Jalen Mor, hidden court observer.
Important Locations	Character starting points, the real table space, future Drinax court.
Likely Checks	Usually none required. Optional Admin, Advocate, Investigate, Streetwise, History, Diplomat, Carouse.
Main Complication	Different expectations about piracy, violence, loyalty, or campaign tone.
End-State	Crew ready, ledger created, characters motivated, next session hook established.
Ledger Updates	Roles, tone, motivations, contacts, rivals, reputation tracks, starting resources.
REFEREE NOTE	
End with energy. The last thing players should hear is not a rule summary. It should be the summons from Drinax and the question: Why do you go?	

24. Player Handout Page

PLAYER HANDOUT: THE SUMMONS

A message reaches you through a channel only someone with resources, old connections, or dangerous patience could use. It does not beg. It does not threaten. It offers passage, privacy, and the possibility of employment under an ancient royal seal. The name attached to that seal is Drinax.

What Your Character Knows

- Drinax is old, proud, and diminished.
- A royal summons from Drinax may be absurd, dangerous, profitable, or all three.
- The offer is discreet. Someone does not want this recruitment widely known yet.
- You are not being hired for safe work.
- You should arrive ready to explain why you are useful.

Questions to Answer Before Play Begins

Checklist	Checklist
■ Why would I risk answering Drinax?	■ What line will I not cross?
■ What skill makes me useful to a dangerous patron?	■ What would tempt me to betray a patron?
■ What trouble follows me?	■ Do I want glory, money, safety, revenge, influence, or escape?
■ Who on the crew might I already know?	■ What role can I fill aboard ship?

Crew Role Sign-Up

Role	Primary Traveller	Backup Traveller
Captain or Mission Lead		
Pilot		
Astrogator		
Engineer		
Sensor Operator		
Gunner		
Broker or Face		
Medic		
Security		

25. Appendix: Notes, Tables, and Optional Adjustments

Shorter-Session Adjustment

If time is limited, skip detailed character review and use pregenerated Travellers. Focus on tone, crew roles, and the ledger. End with the Drinax summons.

Longer-Session Expansion

If the table has extra time, add one short flashback for each character showing how the summons reaches them. Keep each flashback under five minutes and ask one question: why does this message matter?

If the Players Choose Violence

Do not run combat in the main continuity. Ask what kind of violent past or reputation their characters may have, then record it as a future complication.

If the Players Avoid Violence

Record that the crew prefers negotiation, discretion, rescue, or clever leverage. Later sessions should still challenge that preference without punishing it.

If the Players Ignore the Hook

Ask what kind of offer would make their characters reconsider. Drinax may offer money, pardon, ship access, revenge, political protection, or answers to a personal mystery.

If the Crew Lacks a Key Skill

Use backup roles, NPC contractors, or shipboard automation later. Missing skills are not failure. They create hiring needs, risks, and reasons to seek allies.

If the Referee Wants More Roleplay

Play the summons as a short scene for each character. A courier, encrypted message, old contact, or debt collector can deliver it.

If the Referee Wants More Action

Add a non-continuity training example, such as a quick skill check challenge or mock negotiation. Save true action for Session 1 and beyond.

Optional Rumors

Rumor	Use
Rumor	Use
Drinax pays well because it cannot afford failure.	Creates tension around royal promises.
The king wants heroes, but the princess wants tools.	Foreshadows Oleb and Rao.
A ship waits for the right crew, or the wrong one.	Foreshadows Session 2.
The Trojan Reach remembers every insult.	Foreshadows reputation and factions.
Privateering is only piracy when the wrong court writes the history.	Foreshadows the Letter of Marque.

Optional Complication

OPTIONAL COMPLICATION

One character receives a second message warning them not to trust Drinax. The warning is unsigned. Do not resolve it yet. Record it as an open thread.

Optional NPC Reaction

If the players create strong character hooks, assign one to Varris Sen, Jalen Mor, or the hidden court observer. The first NPC to recognize a character in Session 1 can make the court feel alive immediately.