

The Rifter Guide: Solo PvP

The Rifter is the workhorse of the Minmatar fleet and probably the toughest frigate in Eve. Its the ideal ship for the rookie PvP pilot to learn their trade in and hopefully this guide will go some way to getting you out in your Rifter and looking for targets.

This guide is based upon my own experiences in the Rifter after reading other guides and getting out there and giving it a go. I lost plenty of ships in the learning process but as I learnt more I killed more and lost less.



The main strengths of the Rifter for PvP are its speed and slot layout. The four high slots allow you to fit three turrets and have a utility slot for a launcher or some other module. The three medium slots allow you to fit a propulsion mod, warp jammer, and stasis webifier giving you speed and the ability to hold your target in place. Finally, the three low slots are ideal for an armour tank allowing quite a variety of fittings. We'll discuss these next.

Fitting Your Rifter

For solo PvP the best thing you can do with your ship is to fit an armour tank. If you want some general information about tanking in Eve then check out A [Comprehensive New Player Guide to Tanking](#). Otherwise, let's get going.

Buffer vs Active Tank

There are two basic kinds of armour tank that you can fit. A buffer tank where you fit an oversized armour plate and a damage control or an active tank where you fit a regular plate, armour repairer, and a resistance or damage module. The advantage of a buffer tank is that it makes your tank completely capacitor independent. You have a very large plate that buffers your opponents damage while you attempt to overwhelm their defences

with your guns. The best thing about this is that there is no need to micromanage during combat. All you have to concentrate on is putting the maximum damage onto your opponent. This is, I'm sure you'll agree, a very Minmatar approach to combat.

The active tank differs from the passive tank in that you have to use up your capacitor to repair the incoming damage because your armour cannot take the same punishment as a buffer tank. This kind of tank does have its own advantages, too, especially against bigger targets. Because you are carrying a smaller plate your ship has less mass and therefore is faster and more agile playing to the strengths of the Rifter. This in turn should help you evade more of the enemy's fire, especially against cruiser-sized targets. The ability to repair your own armour also means that you don't need to dock up in order to be ready for a second fight or if there are multiple opponents in your engagement a buffer might not last long enough to beat both targets.

I started out flying the buffer tank setup because my capacitor and repair skills were not up to the job but as I learn more and more support skills I am starting to use active tanking instead. These days I pretty much exclusively fly active tanked Rifters with a gyrostabiliser for extra damage.

Propulsion Modules

The other decision to make is between a microwarp drive that will let you close on your opponents quickly or an afterburner that will let you orbit them at speed.

Since the Quantum Rise expansion this has become a slightly more difficult choice. Previously most people would say that a microwarp drive was compulsory but the changes to the way that warp scramblers work has left things more open to debate. Warp scramblers now disable microwarp drives the second that they are engaged so if you fight within scrambler range, and you will, then you won't be able to use a microwarp drive. With your own scrambler and stasis webifier you'll be able to dictate the terms of the fight if you have an afterburner fitted but will have the counter effect of being slower to close down your target. I personally fit my ships with an afterburner these days but if you are mainly hunting ships fit for PvE rather than PvP then a microwarp drive may well still be the better choice simply because it allows you to close range quickly.

Don't forget that during combat a microwarp drive massively increases your signature radius and because you can't orbit at the maximum speed boost it gives you it will actually make you easier to hit rather than harder. This can be solved by turning off your MWD once you are within combat range and pulsing it when needed to maintain range or dodge drones.

There is no right or wrong answer to the question of which you should fit. Its very much down to personal preference. At the moment I have been fitting afterburners and having a lot of success with them but I have missed targets that have warped away before I managed to lock onto them and scramble their warp drives.

Rocket Launchers and Nosferatus

If you're fitting a passive tank this isn't really a question. A rocket launcher is the only option available to you. For those interested in an active tank you can add a bit of longevity to your tank by fitting a nosferatu but this will be at the expensive of offensive power (gank). Personally I think like a Brutor and go with as many guns as possible so would fit a launcher in all cases. If I was feeling really cocksure I'd fit a gyrostabiliser instead of a damage control for extra punch but that might be a bit too gung ho.

If you do opt to go with a rocket launcher then I recommend that you also go with faction ammo, Caldari Navy probably being the best choice. It gives you a 10% damage advantage. The two types of missiles that I use are Phalanx for Gallente, Amarr, and Minmatar (except Bellicose and Stabber); and Gremlin for Caldari, Stabber, and Bellicose. The Phalanx missiles do great damage against armour's weaknesses while the Gremlin attacks the vulnerabilities of shield tanks. You could also consider carrying Foxfire to take on some Amarr T2 ships with but to be honest I'd avoid fighting them for now.

Warp Disruptor or Warp Scrambler?

I have always fit my frigates with warp scramblers. Because of the range of my guns I am going to be fighting inside scramble range and they have the advantage of offering two points of scramble strength to counter those pesky warp core stabilisers. Their other great strength and one that will appeal most to younger pilots is that they require less capacitor than warp disruptors. By using your microwarp drive to approach your target and hitting target at 10 km range you'll have no problem getting them scrambled. I don't think I've ever lost a target to the scrambler's range when using a microwarp drive.

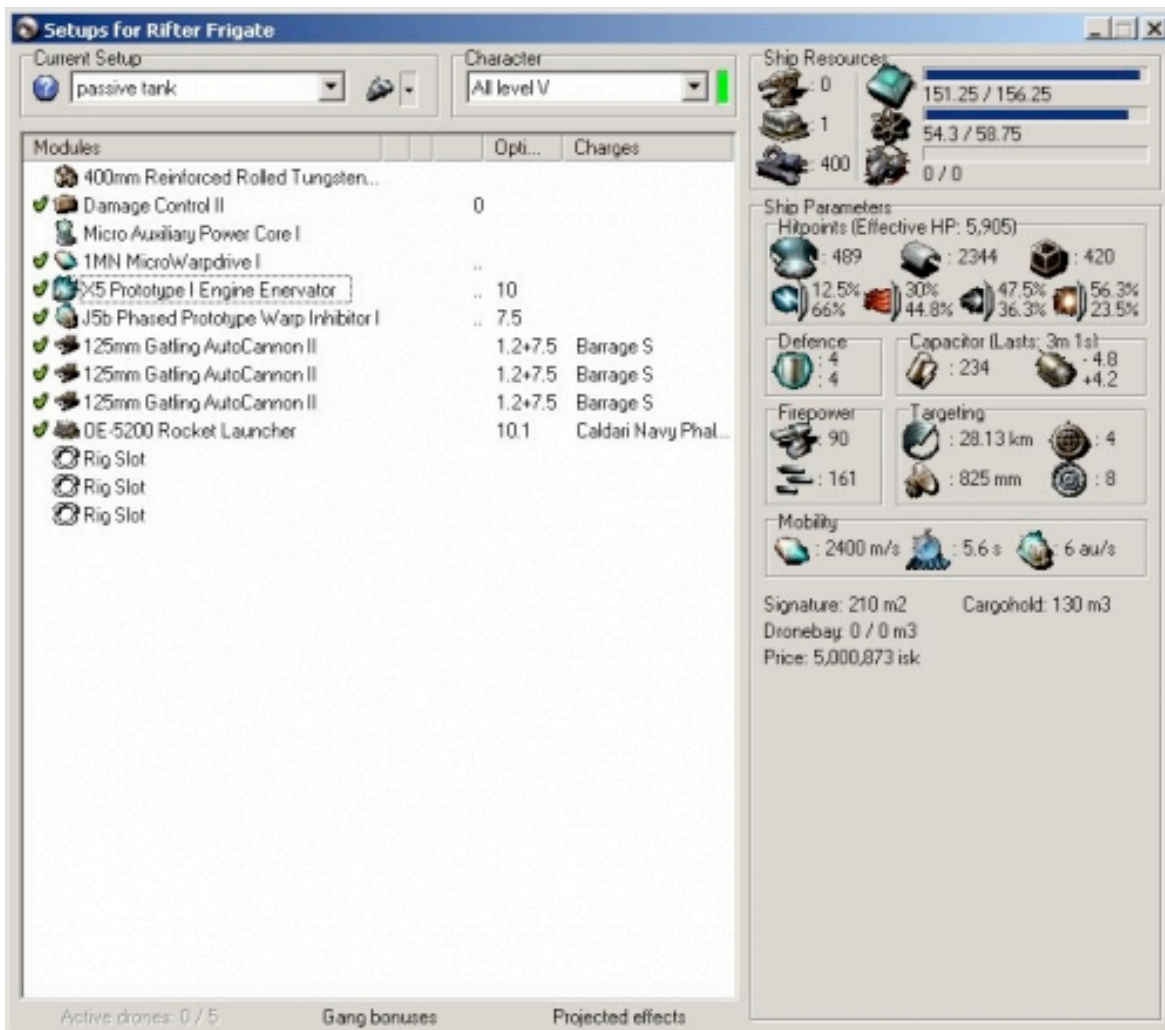
With an afterburner there is more of a risk that your prey will get away. The best way of dealing with this is to "look at" your victim as soon as you land in the belt, at the planet, or in the complex and keep an eye on which way they're heading. If you see them align to a celestial then you can be pretty sure they're going to warp there so align too or preempt them and warp and wait for them to land. Most people will warp to 0 km when they panic and warp away from a hostile ship.

There's the added bonus to fitting a warp scrambler in Quantum Rise. They shut down your targets microwarp drive denying them their speed tank if that's what they're using. Yes, I'm looking at you, Taranis.

Example Fittings

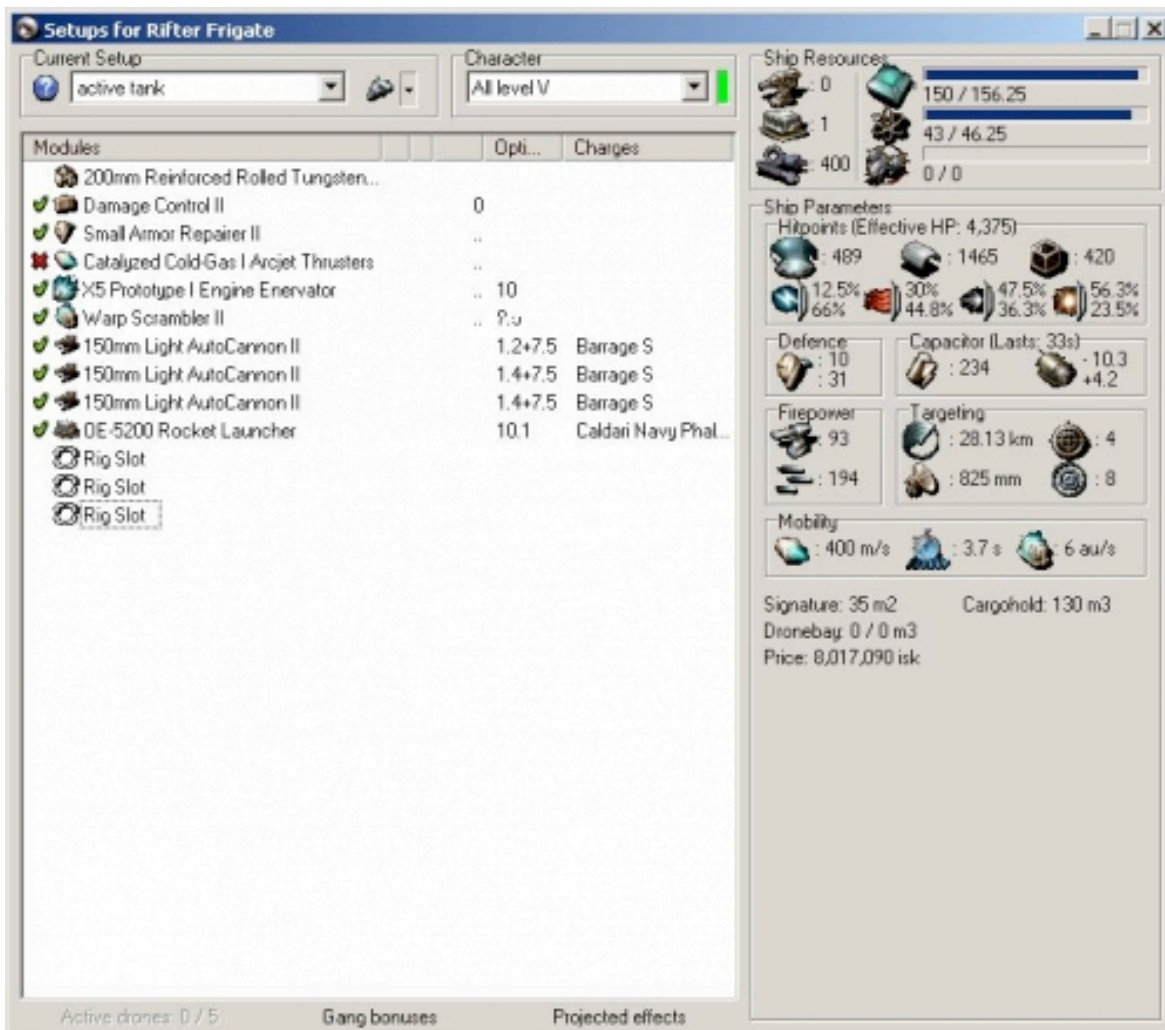
Although the two example fits I have shown have microwarp drives fitted you can replace these with afterburners and actually have more capacitor and more room for fitting guns. As your skills improve you can also upgrade other components to their T2 counterparts as your wallet allows.

Buffer Tank



You can see that in the case of the passive tank there is no need to worry about your capacitor during the fight. In fact you can run your web, scrambler, and microwarp drive continually for more than three minutes with top skills. Realistically you won't be running your microwarp drive during the fight anyway. This is a tough little cookie with almost 6,000 effective hit points (i.e. hitpoints taking into account the resistances of your defence layers).

Active Tank



The active tank allows you to pack slightly bigger guns so you do more damage. It is also a bit quicker and more nimble than the passive version. The main difference is that you have fewer effective hit points so will have to pulse your armour repairer sometimes to keep your armour alive. You can only run this for 30s at a time, though, so its not much use against heavy volleys but will make a difference in a long fight where the damage is of a gentler variety.

Mixing It Up

The fitting advice that I have given so far is for very standard, almost cookie-cutter, autocannon Rifters. This is by no means the only way that you can fit them. A lot of people have success with long range Rifters that are fitted with 250mm artillery cannons, a warp disruptor and microwarp drive. This adds up to basically flying a baby interceptor with the bonus of the Rifter's strength while having less speed than a pure interceptor. This kind of setup requires a different skill set and approach to the fittings used in this guide so I won't deal with it here.

There are plenty of other variations on the basic Rifter theme including shield-tanked Rifters, tracking disrupting Rifters, and capacitor boosted Rifters for an extra tough active tank. All of these variations involve a break from the holy trinity of propulsion module, warp disruptor, and web and should probably be considered more advanced than the scope of this guide. Once you've got the hang of flying your Rifter do experiment, though. Although these setups have become standard for a reason (i.e. they are very versatile) there's nothing wrong with adapting your fit to specialise in certain situations as long as you

remember to adjust your tactics accordingly. Try not to get too specific, though, and it's probably better to test experimental fits against corp. mates in controlled duels before letting them lose in the field with no idea of their capabilities and limits.

Target Selection

So, you've bought a Rifter and fitted it up. Once you've insured it it's time to head out and look for some targets. The great thing about the Rifter is that you have such a large range of potential victims. You can happily go head to head with any T1 frigate, a good selection of T1 cruisers, and even some T2 frigates.

Top Targets

All T1 frigates are more than beatable in a well-fitted Rifter. The main threats to you will be other Rifters and autocannon-fitted Punishers. Caldari and Gallente ships should crumble under your guns.

Destroyers, of all varieties, make great targets when they're fitted for range. You can get in close and hit them hard and fast while their guns fail to track you. It should be noted, though, that destroyers were designed as anti-frigate platforms and when fitted for PvP they make absolutely deadly opponents for Rifters. With practice, though, you should be able to easily determine which kind you're facing and decide to engage accordingly.

Caracals, Moas, Ospreys, and Scythes are all cruisers that you should have no problems with.

Finally mining barges such as Covetors, Retrievers, and Procurors should all be well within your ability.

Advanced Targets

I've not said anything about more advanced targets, particularly interceptors. In 0.0 these make great targets for a Rifter because they will almost always underestimate you. However they require more advanced tactics than the usual spiral, orbit, kill that most pilots employ. Basically, you need to goad them into web range. The best ways to do this is to either sit there looking harmless and hope they get careless, pretend to run away and hope they warp to the next gate at zero where you can point and web 'em quickly, or burn away from them with your microwarp drive and if they give chase quickly hit approach and be ready with the webs.

This will take a fair bit of practice but a well fitted interceptor could be worth more than 60,000,000 ISK compared to the 8,000,000 or so for a fully T2 fit Rifter. You might even get lucky [like I did once](#).

[Kal'Kalagan](#) a pilot for Veritas Immortalis has a lot of success using a passive tanked Rifter and variations of these tactics. Look at his kills and read the comments for advice on how he pulls them off. Be warned, even this expert has difficulty with the sheer damage potential of a Taranis so be cautious around them.

Run Away!

Thoraxes and Ruptures in particular should not be engaged. These ships are lethal. They tend to fit webbers and close range guns as well as having the ability to unleash a swarm of drones upon you. Vexors should be added to this list too. With good skills and

experience you might be able to take on these ships when piloted by inexperienced individuals but its probably best to stay away for now.

Watch out for close range destroyers. A well fitted Coercer or autocannon Thrasher will make very short work of you.

Caveat Emptor

This guide is written from the perspective of a low security pirate. Most of the targets that I engage are inexperienced at PvP and often not even expecting it. Its a world of non-consensual combat. But I'm not the only person out there looking for a fight, and nor will you be. If you find combat ready opponents they will be tough, but rewarding targets.

Although I've dismissed quite a few ship classes here as being targets you can engage with confidence you should be aware that skilled PvP pilots will be able to cause you lots of trouble. Well fit destroyers and cruisers, especially if fit for anti-frigate work, will be nightmares to engage. The only advice I can give here is that you learn to research the pilot while you're pinpointing a target. An experienced pirate should probably be avoided or engaged as a learning experience.

Learning From Your Mistakes

At the end of the day the Rifter is a cheap disposable frigate so don't be put off trying something. The things you will learn will almost always outweigh the cost of losing your ship. Try not to keep making the same mistakes again, though.

Learn the capabilities of various ships and the kinds of fits you come across. The lessons you learn from your engagements will help you in the future. If you hunt in a small area or have a regular route that you patrol then learn about your opponents. If they keep beating you look at your lossmails and research them on Battleclinic. Learn what it is about their fits that beats you and see if you can come up with a way of overcoming your weaknesses and playing to your own strengths. Sometimes you might need a specific fit to counter a certain pilot.

Tactics

The basic tactic of Rifter combat is to settle into a comfortable orbit around your opponent and smash them to bits while your armour plate absorbs the damage that they try and do you. There are basically two components to the tactics of frigate piloting. The first is to approach your target while keeping transversal high to avoid getting hit while you power towards him. The second is deciding what distance to orbit your target at for optimal effect.

Approaching

The best way to approach a target is to spiral towards him. This way you don't run the risk of being taken out in just a couple of volleys. Instead you approach your opponent while also keeping transversal high. This means they shouldn't hit you.

You do this by manually piloting. Put the target ship in the centre of your screen then double click halfway towards the edge of the screen in any direction. This will have you moving at about a 45° angle relative to them. As the target drifts re-centre and repeat. Keep doing this until you are inside about 10 km of them. At this point you can hit orbit.

When approaching it is also best to operate your microwarp drive using pulses rather than operating it continuously. This will help you save precious capacitor and also hopefully

prevent you overshooting your target and having to make a fast turn which will reduce your transversal and make you vulnerable to their guns.

The best way to practice these approaches is to find some rats in a high security belt and test it out on them. Once you can approach them without being hit you should be able to approach real targets in safety too. The more you practice the better you'll get and the more confident you'll be. This confidence will help you remain calm and give you the upper hand in the adrenaline filled fight that follows.

Orbiting

The range at which combat takes place is very important. Luckily us Minmatar have the advantage of fast, manoeuvrable ships that will let us dictate the range of a fight if we fly them sensibly. This couples with the fact that our projectile weapons have a range advantage over blasters and lasers. By using our falloff we can still do our opponents damage while they can't hit us at all. This is especially good with high tech ammo like Barrage that carries a falloff bonus.

So what does this mean for us in combat? Well, a top skilled Rifter pilot has an optimal range of 1.5 km and a falloff of 7.5 km (1.5 + 7.5) using 200 mm AutoCannon IIs and Barrage ammo. So at 8 km range you're doing about 42 DPS. This is only half the maximum but lets compare that to a Punisher and Tristan. A Punisher with maximum skills pilot using Medium Pulse Laser IIs and Multifrequency ammunition can hit to 3.8 + 2.5 km while an Incursus with Light Neutron Blaster IIs and Antimatter can hit for 1.1 + 4.7 km. So, by orbiting at range you can limit your opponents ability to do damage while still being able to hit them yourself. Of course, not everyone fits for close range combat so being at range could put you in danger if they're fit for long range fighting. Use your judgement.

Its obviously not quite this simple. Before you can use T2 guns then you don't have the advantage of Barrage's falloff. In these cases I advise that you get in as close as possible and pound them with EMP. This ammunition does nice damage against both shield and armour tanking ships. If you can afford it then splash out for the Republic Fleet variation. This gives you an extra 10% damage bonus over the regular variety but expect to pay a lot more ISK for it.

A bit of advice here is to not carry too much ammo. Frigates are flimsy ships and you will lose them. Carry no more than three reloads worth of your principle ammo and two of your secondary. You can always restock on ammo between engagements and losing a thousand rounds of faction ammo will hurt your wallet.

Where does this leave us? Well, if you think the frigate that you are fighting is fit for close range combat (i.e. is fit for PvP) then load Barrage if you can and use your falloff to your advantage. If it is a missile ship or fit for long range fighting (i.e. PvE) then get in close and pound away with a nice high damage ammo.

The best ways to learn this are to just go out and try it and to practice against corp mates. I've only ever lost one frigate fight using the orbit at 500m and shoot them in the face approach and I've starting using the range tactic to pretty good effect too. I'd probably still recommend getting up close and personal against all frigates.

Drones

If you do decide to fight against a drone ship then be aware that if they are carrying webs the drones will kill you long before you kill them. There is, however, a way of getting

around this. Orbit the target at a good range like 15-20 km. This will keep you out of his stasis webifiers and allow you to pick off his drones before closing in for the kill. This is more complicated than the normal tactic of just orbiting and firing so you will have to pay attention.

One of the other great benefits to come out of Quantum Rise is that medium and large drones will have a very hard time hitting frigates. If a Thorax has a flight of medium drones then you can consider engaging him as a much more reasonable prospect than if he had a flight of light drones. Likewise many Vexors fill their drone bays for maximum damage without considering the effects of signature radius so will unleash large and medium drones with only one or two lights for you to worry about.

If you're using a microwarp drive, target his drones and pulse your microwarp drive. The drones will initially be left behind and then will give chase lowering their transversal. This is called kiting. Shoot one of the drones as they close and pulse the microwarp drive again. Repeat until all the drones are dead.

My experiences so far in afterburner-equipped Riffers have been very pleasing. Although Warrior IIs (the frigate's worst enemy) can easily keep up with you, your reduced signature radius means that they do less damage than they do against MWDing ships. I was able to pick off a Brutix's flight of Warrior II drones before they even broke through my shields.

The complications of this tactic arise from the fact that you are vulnerable to cruiser weapons every time you slow down between pulses and during the time you are fighting his drones your opponent will try and close down to web range on you. If you see their speed shoot up then stick in a pulse of your own microwarp drive. Your frigate's speed should allow you to easily keep distance on them but your capacitor is much smaller than theirs so if they bide their time they may well get you. Of course, younger pilots will be less adept at this so should be easier pickings. When shooting the drones prioritise the smaller ones first. The medium and large drones will have a hard time hitting you as long as you are not webbed but while kiting small drones, especially Warrior IIs can be lethal.

Like all these combat tactics, dealing with drones is best practised with corp. mates before you try it in anger.

Overheating

Thermodynamics is a fantastic addition to any combat pilot's repertoire, especially when you're flying solo. Once you've trained this skill it is worth investing the time to get it up to level IV. There are three main uses for heat in the Rifter and I'll deal with each one separately.

First of all when closing in on your target to make the tackle you can overheat all of your mid slots. The 50% bonus to the speed boost of your propulsion module will allow you to quickly close on your prey. Both your scrambler and stasis webifier will benefit from a 20% range bonus too allowing you to engage them earlier and trap your victim quickly and efficiently. This is especially useful if your target uses speed as their main defence as in the case of interceptors. Once you've made the tackle stop overheating so you don't risk your modules burning out.

Next up is the ability to overload your weapons. In short, brutal fights, as most frigate fights are, you can overload for pretty much the duration of the combat to get a large damage bonus due to increased rate of fire. This is actually a really good bonus because it also increases your likelihood of getting a wrecking blow. As in all uses of heat, though, don't

forget that sustained overloading risks burning your guns out and making them completely useless. For longer engagements heat should only be used when you need to break an opponent's tank and can't do it without a little bit of extra punch. Short bursts of heat to overload a repair system can be particularly effective here.

Finally heat is fantastic for actively tanked Riffers. Armour repair units have brilliant heat tolerances so you can overload them for the duration of the engagement. Overloading in this case increases the repair speed by 20% so watch out because continuously running your repair systems will eat your capacitor very quickly.

Some of the best fights I've had in my Rifter have been a case of getting right up in the face of PvP fit destroyers, overloading everything, and crossing my fingers. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Either way its a much better adrenaline rush than ganking fools in Catalysts. I've yet to try this approach against a Taranis but I'm looking forward to doing it soon. (Have you noticed that I've got a bit of a grudge against those damned 'ranises?)

A Note On The Approach, Orbit, and Keep at Range Commands

After testing with a corp mate I have found the following: pressing the approach button will cause your ship to give chase and hence will minimise your transversal; pressing orbit will cause your ship to orbit so as to maximise transversal. The keep at range command will also minimise transversal so could result in you taking lots of damage if you use it for bugging out.

This seems like pretty trivial knowledge but it can help you out if you are having tracking issues (i.e. vs interceptors) or want to decrease their tracking (i.e. vs cruisers). Also, the closer you are, the harder it is for guns to track but don't let that worry you because that's another thing that autocannons are great for.

Relevant Skills

Basic Skills

To fit the buffer tanked version of the Rifter you will need the following skills:

- Minmatar Frigate III
- Hull Upgrades IV
- Energy Management IV
- High Speed Maneuvering I
- Propulsion Jamming I
- Small Projectile Turrent V
- Gunnery II
- Motion Prediction III
- Small Autocannon Specialization I
- Missile Launcher Operation I
- Rockets I
- Engineering IV
- Electronics V
- Weapons Upgrades III

The active tanking version also requires:

- Repair Systems III

- Mechanic III

I would recommend that if you are serious about flying the Rifter you make the T2 guns a priority. Minmatar ships live and die by their ability to fight at range and Barrage is the principle weapon in most Minmatar pilots' armoury. You might not do stellar damage but does it matter if they can't hit you?

Advanced Skills

There are two main groups of skills that will improve your effectiveness in the Rifter. These are the gunnery and navigation skills. If you want to fly the active tanked version then capacitor skills will also prove to be important. I would recommend that you make it your aim to train the following skills up to at least level three, preferably level four. I didn't start to fly cruisers until I'd got all my gunnery skills to four and most of my navigation skills at least to three.

- Gunnery - increases the rate of fire 2% per level and needed for bigger guns
- Motion Prediction - 5% more tracking per level
- Rapid Firing - 4% increase to rate of fire
- Sharpshooter - 5% increase to optimal range
- Surgical Strike - 3% bonus to damage
- Trajectory Analysis - 5% bonus to falloff (see above)
- Minmatar Frigate - 5% bonus to damage and 7.5% tracking bonus
- Acceleration Control - 5% bonus to microwarp drive speed
- Evasive Maneuvering - 5% agility bonus, lets you maintain a faster, tighter orbit
- Navigation - 5% ship velocity bonus

If you want to use an active tank then the following will all help too:

- Energy Management - 5% more capacitor
- Energy Systems Operation - 5% reduction in capacitor recharge time
- Propulsion Jamming - 5% less capacitor need for scramblers and webs
- Repair Systems - 5% reduction in repair time, so you can repair faster but also need more capacitor
- High Speed Maneuvering - 5% microwarp drive capacitor use, so you can use it for longer

If you are using a rocket launcher then you will also benefit from working on some missile skills. Rockets don't add a huge amount of damage but those few DPS can mean the difference between winning and losing. They're not worth spending as much time on as gunnery skills but getting them to level 3 definitely won't hurt and getting Rockets to 5 will allow you to train for T2 rocket launchers and rockets giving even more damage.

- Missile Bombardment - 10% bonus to missile flight time (more range)
- Missile Projection - 10% bonus to missile speed (more range)
- Rapid Launch - 3% bonus to missile rate of fire (more DPS)
- Rockets - 5% bonus to rocket damage (more DPS)

These are all great skills to know and you should definitely have them before you move into bigger ships so now's the ideal time to get a head start.

Another fantastic skill for solo PvP is Thermodynamics. This will allow you to overheat your weapons, microwarp drive, tackle systems, and armour repairers to make you much more efficient in combat at the risk of damaging your weapons.

Inspiration

Since the Quantum Rise patch was released there has been a real renaissance in frigate combat. Almost every system seems to have pirates hunting in assault frigates. Don't let this put you off. In fact, to encourage you to get stuck in here are some inspirational videos:

- Frigank [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#)

Useful Reading Material

- Ren Tales' [Noob Piracy Guide](#) on the Eve Online forums
- The [Rifter PvP Guide](#) on the Eve Online wiki (based upon this guide)
- Scrapheap Challenge's [Rifter fitting thread](#)
- [What can you take on in a Rifter?](#) on Scrapheap Challenge
- [A Comprehensive New Player's Guide to Tanking](#)
- The [Tusker Academy](#)

This guide was written by the Eve Online player Wensley. If you would like to express your gratitude then all ISK donations are gratefully accepted.

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