Skies Above Britain

The Moderator's Checklist

How to run the solitaire game ***Skies Above Britain*** as a shared, moderated experience for up to twelve players with no knowledge of the rules.

Intended for	Players	Time	Needs	Author
Moderators of group games at conventions, schools, museums and commemorative events	Up to 12, no knowledge of rules or wargames needed	About 2 hours	A copy of the game and a moderator who knows the rules well	Petr Mojžíš

A. Weeks Before the Event

- [ ] **Learn the game properly.** The rules are not simple, but the scenario book teaches them step by step: dogfights first, then attacks on single bombers, then attacks on the whole bomber formation, and finally the complete mission. Play through it all until you can run the game with just the large sequence of play diagram in your hand.
- [ ] **Decide that you will not play.** The moderator runs the Luftwaffe, ground control and random events, and, unless the section leaders take them over, the RAF aircraft without a player. Being a player at the same time does not work.
- [ ] **Choose a historical squadron and a date.** Pick the scramble you want to show. The box contains rosters for one British and one Polish squadron; any other squadron can be researched from pilot biographies, books, and with the help of AI tools.
- [ ] **Prepare the pilot roster** with ranks and names, and decide which of the pilots are rookies, veterans, and aces, either by rolling for them as instructed in the scenario or by researching the real experience of the historical pilots.
- [ ] **Advertise it as a shared experience.** Say clearly that no knowledge of rules or games is needed, that it is not about winning or losing, and that it takes about two hours. Players who expect a challenging game may be disappointed; players who come for the story will not.

B. Before the Players Sit Down

- [ ] **Prepare name stickers or badges** for every pilot with the rank and name, leaving space for the position in the formation. Mark veterans and aces on them too.
- [ ] **Set up the table** with the overview map, the squadron display, and the lost contact area. Keep a free area for the bomber formation, but do not place anything there yet.
- [ ] **Keep the decks of cards and the hit chits within reach**, so you can carry them to the players. Set up the chairs around the table in a way you can reach every player easily.
- [ ] **Have the history at hand:** a book about the squadron, printed biographies or a tablet would be a great bonus on the table. Players who drop out of the action early will love to look up who they were flying.

C. Start of the Game

- [ ] **Let the players pick their pilots**, by preference or at random. Make sure someone takes the squadron leader, who makes the most decisions. With fewer players, prioritise the section leaders, keeping in mind that the squadron leader also leads Red Section. Then decide who flies the aircraft without a player: either you as the moderator, or, with only a few players, the section leaders, each flying his whole section.
- [ ] **Let the aces choose their skills.** If any of the players flies an ace, he chooses his own skill now, and you explain briefly what it does.
- [ ] **Let the squadron leader assign the positions in the formation** (for example Red Leader, Red 2, Red 3).
- [ ] **Hand out the name stickers**, ask everybody to add their position in the formation, and to wear them.
- [ ] **Do not explain the rules.** Briefly set the scene: the date, the squadron, the airfield, and that there is a raid being reported.

E. End of the Game

- [ ] **Resolve the fate boxes together, with everyone watching.** One by one, reveal what happened to the downed pilots. This is the emotional climax, so take your time.
- [ ] **Close with history.** Ideally, tell the players what really happened on that day and to the men they flew.

D. During the Game

- [ ] **Narrate, do not lecture.** Tell the players what is happening and explain the rules only when they face a decision, together with their options.
- [ ] **Address the pilots by rank and name**, and use the stickers to find out quickly who is who.
- [ ] **Let the players draw their own cards.** Bring the deck to the player, let him draw and read the icons, and help where needed.
- [ ] **Save the bomber formation for the moment of contact.** Lay out the tiles only when the squadron spots the raid (as the rules of the game instruct you to). This is your “wow” moment.
- [ ] **Explain special abilities just in time.** When the first combat situation arrives, lend the veterans the player aid section with their abilities and explain them. Remind veterans and aces whenever they could use their ability. Greens and Regulars need no explanation.
- [ ] **Keep the game flowing.** If you make a rules mistake, or something would take long to look up, do not stop the game because of it. The game forgives small errors, and most likely nobody will notice. The experience is worth more.