

EVE

PILOTING SAVVINESS

by

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» INTRODUCTION

Although I've only been flying through lowsec wrecking mayhem (well, as much as my little Rifter will allow) for one week, I've been very surprised by the lack of pilot skill many people I've faced demonstrate. Against people with about my amount of skill points (4.5 mil), I've been doing quite well.

I started off in a PVP autocannon Punisher fit, as many guides have suggested. With it, I "won" 4 fight against Rifters, even those with more expensive T2 modules. I had two 1v1s with a Rifter, who managed to get away both times because I lost a point. I then got **this kill** 🎯, which I was quite happy about. Shortly afterwards, I fought another Rifter, who again got away. This was because, even with an afterburner, my Punisher could not keep within 8km (scrambler range) of Rifters fitted with an afterburner and web (plus a Rifter's base speed alone is faster than a Punisher). So I switched to a Rifter.

I've been using the Rifter (fitted similarly to Wensley's suggestions in his excellent **Rifter Guide** 🎯) since then. And so far I've had quite a bit of success for a carebear who was so afraid of lowsec that I never ventured out of highsec for the first two months of my life.

Which makes me wonder sometimes: why am I doing so well against ships that

theoretically should **kill** my Rifter? Part of it definitely is fitting. For example, **this Stabber**, which was shield and armor tanking. But another part is piloting. It's true that you learn the best from experience. But pirating doesn't have to purely be a school of **hard knocks**.

I think it's definitely true when people say that winning a fight is more about pilot ability than skillpoints or ships. Tactical errors can and will get you killed. Of course, pilot ability can't save you all the time, particularly from **blobs**. But it does play a huge part. So how do you get this piloting ability? How do you acquire Piloting Savviness level 5?

① KNOW YOUR SHIP

This is a given. You can practice on NPCs and corpmates.

- » Find the best orbit range that lets you get hits without being hit. Don't just orbit at 500 or whatever **EVE** says your turret's/launcher's optimal is (for missiles, find your max range – **EFT** helps with this). Find your guns' tracking speed, and turn on "Radial Velocity" in the overview. Make sure you can hit a target (e.g. turn off afterburner if necessary to lower your transversal).
- » Find the tightest orbit range at which you can maintain near-maximum ship speed (different from transversal – this is useful for fighting missile ships).
- » Find out whether you should orbit at all (this point may be a bit controversial among the **EVE** community). If your ship does more DPS or has a tougher tank but has poorer tracking (e.g. cruiser vs frigate), you may want to simply "keep at range" (e.g. in a Punisher vs Rifter fight, you may want to negate the Rifter's tracking speed bonuses by simply approaching and keeping at range.)
- » Find out how long it takes you to close distances if you spiral in (and as all the guides say, do *not* simply click 'Approach' unless you can tank all the damage you are going to get).
- » Know what to do if your opponent has "tricks" like a neut or smartbomb (e.g. get out of smartbomb range if their turrets do less damage).

- » Get familiar with the damage types and optimal ranges of your ammo (e.g. I often use Fusion S instead of EMP S because of the damage type and slightly longer optimal).
- » Practice monitoring cap and keeping a point (e.g. if your opponent starts running, do not simply keep orbiting. If you can kill him, pursue it by clicking “approach”. If he does more DPS and is trying to kite you (make sure you follow so that your transversal goes down), refuse to fight on his terms.)
- » Know how to pulse your cap-draining modules (e.g. pulse your armor rep so that cap stays near the max cap recharge point of 34% – no more (don’t overconserve it – by using cap well, you will be able to “use” more cap in the long run. so turn on that armor rep/shield booster as soon as you start taking enough damage for one cycle to rep) and no less (in 1v1s against tough opponents, every bit of cap counts. don’t let it drain)).
- » Use your ship’s strengths/bonuses (e.g. if you are in a Rifter and fighting a Punisher, you may want to pulse your afterburner to take advantage of your tracking speed bonus).
- » Know how to respond to drones. Know which ones will hurt you and which ones won’t. Have a corp mate set drones on you (you can either ignore them and shoot the ‘mother ship’ or you can try to destroy them).
- » Know how to use drones. Know what damage types they do. Know their speed. Know their resistances. Set keyboard shortcuts for telling drones to attack/come back. Know how effective pulling in and putting out drones is (if you have a large drone bay and your opponent is having a hard time taking out your drones, you may just want to leave them out and just send another one out as necessary).
- » Know your align speed (EFT helps with this). Know how fast you warp. You should be able to guesstimate how many seconds it takes to arrive at different objects.


② KNOW OTHER SHIPS (BOTH TARGETS AND THREATS)

Obviously, this is another huge factor in PVP. Know which ones to run from and which ones to fight. Don't just go, "Oh hey, there's a ship my size. Attack!"

- » Know the ships' bonuses and make them worthless (e.g. when in a Punisher and facing a Rifter, don't do your usual orbit-tightly-and-shoot technique. They have bonuses for tracking; you don't. I'm not saying not to orbit at all, I'm saying to just orbit loosely enough that their bonus means nothing for them).
- » Know the other ships' resistances (and change ammo as appropriate; also know which type of shield/armor tanking they do, and use ammo against that).
- » Know the other ships' fits. Use **EFT** and **Battleclinic**. See which fits are rated well. Look at them and get an idea of what type of fits to expect (e.g. I've made at least one EFT fit for every ship of every race from frigates up to battlecruisers). This takes time, but it's a one-time effort. And be pleasantly surprised if their fit is lacking.
- » Know the other ships' speeds and optimal orbit distances (if they have short range guns, try orbiting farther away. For example, if you are in an interceptor and are fighting a Rifter, you should almost always try to stay farther than 10km away. That way they cannot web you, cannot turn off your MWD, cannot run out of disruptor range, and cannot hit you. Of course, if you're in a Taranis or other blaster boat, you may have to come closer).
- » Know the other ships' tracking speeds. Use the DPS charts in EFT to figure out what distance and speed you should orbit at.
- » Plan accordingly, and know your responses to actions. And before going into any fights, know what the opponent may try to do. Once again, be pleasantly surprised if their pilot skills are poor.

③ KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Make use of the system map. It's not there just for probing.

- » Know its size and location of objects. Know where clusters of “juicy” belts and planets are.
- » Know where stations are, and know what agents are in the station that newbies may use.
- » Know how much gates and stations can protect you (if you're blinky red, not at all; when I don't have a GCC , I hang around stations so that I can dock to get out of danger).
- » Know your system's occupants. Know who is usually there. You may want to set “permanent” residents red so that you are wary of them.
- » Know nearby systems. Know how many people are usually in them. Know why they are popular.
- » Make bookmarks. Don't be lazy. Don't wait until you have a GCC and a cloud of angry/opportunistic capsuleers chasing you to make a safe. Make a couple deep safes. Make enough so that you can hop from one to another every few minutes to thwart probers. Make bookmarks outside gates, belts, and stations. EVE isn't simply a 2D game. If you have a battleship or other long-range ship, you can even hop from one bookmark to another and pummel your opponent while he vainly attempts to close in on you (just make sure not to get scrambled). Fight on your own terms.
- » Know how to use directional. Figure out a good scanning strategy. Set up an overview setting called “Scanning” that lists only ships.
- » Watch local. It will take up extra space, but keep it in a separate window from your other channels. *This is crucial* (when I first started, I didn't do this because I wanted to see more than just a mass of windows. That quickly changed when I got blobbed without realizing that the local count had shot up). Watch local for large gangs. Watch for GCCs that indicate recent battles.

④ KNOW YOUR OPPONENT

In smaller systems, know *every* single pilot in local. You are never alone – local is your best friend.

- » Before warping in on anyone, try to find out as much as you can about them. See their bio, what type of person they are. Big-time “I keel you” pirates are often brash and overconfident and often have support. Look at their corporation history and alliances. Check their standings – see if they missioned a lot. If they have medals, check those out too (and salivating over medals that you wish you had doesn’t really hurt either). If some player (noob!) has certificates, check those out. For players older than Apocrypha (around March 2009), check their race. Players less than a year or two old are more likely to have trained largely toward ships of their starting race.
- » Set dangerous corps/militias red. This will help you easily see blobs.

⑤ KNOW YOUR COMPUTER

EVE may be like a whole world in itself, but you do happen to live in another world.

- » Move your windows around. Those that you don’t use much, make clear and pin them down. Know exactly where on the screen things like targets, the overview, modules, chat, drone bay lists, fleet windows, etc. are. And make sure all pertinent information is clearly visible. Don’t try to save room by stacking windows; when PVPing, you often forget to check stats that are not immediately visible. The only windows I stack are overview and the fleet list (when you’re fighting, you almost never check your fleet list; all important people should be on your watch list).
- » De-clutter your overview. Learn **how the overview works** [🔗](#). Customize them to your liking (Manasi offers some practical advice **here** [🔗](#)). You should never have to search through a long list for your target. You might even end up **shooting your teammate** [🔗](#).

- » Configure graphics. Yes, textures and all are pretty to look at. Your wreck isn't. Set settings as low as necessary (and as low as you can bear – I play on a laptop with a 13" screen).
- » Configure your ship controls. Group weapons. Hide passive modules and empty slots. Move offensive modules (turrets/launchers, nosferatus, energy destabilizers, tracking disruptors, smartbombs, ecm, etc.) to the top row. Move defensive/non-offensive modules (afterburner, armor repair, shield booster, etc.) to the middle row. Move resistance modules (damage control, active hardeners) to the bottom row – you rarely ever need to turn these on or off. Memorize their location and keep them in the same place every time, regardless of ship, to avoid confusion.
- » Use custom keyboard shortcuts. Make sure they're intuitive and easy to reach. (e.g. I have `ctrl` + `1` , `2` , `3` , etc. for the top row, `ctrl` + `q` , `w` , `e` , etc. for middle row, and no shortcuts for the bottom row. Telling drones to attack is `ctrl` + `9` , and recalling drones is `ctrl` + `0` .

» FLY SMART. FLY DEADLY.

The lists above are just a starting point towards succeeding in EVE, toward acquiring Piloting Savviness level 1. You need to go further. As you train skills and gain experience, hone your techniques. Fly smart. fly deadly.

