

Star Fox 64 High Score Guide

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Star Fox 64 - High Score Guide

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- 0.1: Introduction -

I'm a big fan of Star Fox 64, and for a while now I've been trying to beat my records in the game and get as high a score as I can. This guide details my strategy of getting a high score in Star Fox 64 in hopes that anyone trying to do the same might be able to improve on their game a bit.

First off, note that this guide focuses on the normal game and not expert mode - it's so easy to lose your wings and therefore your lasers in expert mode that I don't bother trying to get high scores on it despite the fact that it has more enemies. However the guide should be useful whether or not you play expert mode.

The point of this guide isn't to tell you exactly which enemies to shoot in each level, but give a general overview of some of the trickier moments in levels that can give you a lot of extra kills if handled carefully.

- 1.1: General Tips -

1. "Use bombs wisely!"

Oftentimes the key to getting a lot of kills in a StarFox level is to bomb large groups of enemies. It can often be near-impossible to take down as many

enemies simply mashing the A button as using a well-placed bomb.

There are a couple of notable nuances to using bombs: You can press B after having shot the bomb to explode it immediately (thus being able to time it a lot easier), and you can lock bombs onto enemies by pressing B when your laser is charged and locked on rather than simply releasing A to shoot the charged laser.

Also, whenever you die or choose to retry a level, you get 3 bombs. This can be very useful if you're entering a level that you want to use bombs for but don't have any - you can simply start the level, hit Start, retry it, and presto! Bombs! Note, however, that you start off the level with regular lasers rather than double or hyper lasers, so this is not always worth it (and you lose a life, of course).

Note also that most bosses take no damage from bombs - use them for the enemies beforehand.

If you avoid overusing or underusing bombs, keep them well-stocked, and keep track of where they are best used, you can get a lot of extra kills pretty easily.

2. "Hold A to charge your laser!" "You can also lock on to enemies this way!"

This is a great way to destroy small groups of enemies at once or to hit evasive, fast-moving enemies in dogfight levels such as Katina. This is also a good way to reliably do a good amount of damage when you're stuck with level 1 lasers.

3. "Do a barrel roll!"

Not the best idea in a dogfight when the enemy is chasing you around, but in a regular level a barrel roll can let you keep firing at the enemy without having to worry about moving to avoid their gunfire.

A barrel roll does exactly this: It makes you immune to most laser-type attacks for a second or so. This means you can still run into enemies or walls and take damage. Also, barrel rolling repeatedly may shield you from a lot of laser damage, but since you're not actually constantly rolling you still will occasionally take a few hits.

Basically, if the enemy's firing at you and you want to keep shooting instead of having to move out of the way (or if you're just desperately low on health), a barrel roll is the thing to do.

4. "Try a somersault!"

Somersaults have three main uses: Dogfights, columns of bonuses, and stalling.

If you see several bonus items arranged in a vertical line (e.g. in Meteo after going through the first tunnel), you can get them all simultaneously by doing a somersault.

In a dogfight, if an enemy is shooting at you from behind, a good way to get them off your back is to somersault. Generally the enemy will simply keep flying forward and end up in front of you, where you can shoot at them.

Oftentimes, you need to stop for a bit in a level. This could be for a number of reasons - there could be an enemy behind you, you might need to collect some bonus, or you might need to wait a bit while an enemy gets within your shooting range. When the brakes just aren't enough (or when using the brakes would cause you to crash into the enemy behind you), a somersault will do the trick.

5. "Hurry up or you'll be toast!"

Bosses often (if not always) give you more kills the faster you destroy them. Star Wolf, for example, can give you 51 kills each if you kill them quickly in Venom, but if you take a long time this number can drop down to 31 or 21.

6. "Fox, get this guy off me!"

Keep your allies alive. It's true that every kill they make is one less for you; however they make very few kills as it is, and are sometimes necessary for unlocking secret exits. Also, I suspect that lacking your ally when the ally is usually asking for your help (e.g. "They're on me! I'm getting careless!") will lead to the enemies involved not showing up and you getting less kills.

Besides, that's just plain mean.

- 1.2: Which path to choose? -

To start off, you need to choose a good path for StarFox. Below is a list of the levels and the amount of kills you can fairly reliably get on them (with some skill and experience). Note that these numbers are rough estimates; you can certainly get more than the listed amount of kills in each level. This is simply used as an average sort of scoring for choosing the best path.

Stage 1: Corneria (155)

Stage 2: Sector Y (150), Meteo (310)

Stage 3: Aquas (150), Katina (150), Fortuna (70)

Stage 4: Zoness (250), Solar (95), Sector X (175)

Stage 5: Sector Z (95), Macbeth (150), Titania (175)

Stage 6: Area 6 (300), Bolse (160)

Stage 7: Star Wolf Venom (200), Temple Venom (200)

Going to Area 6 is a no-brainer; you can get there with any path so long as you avoid Bolse and Titania. Bolse is no competition when it comes to kills, and while you can reliably get around 25 more kills on Titania than on Macbeth, this is nothing compared to Area 6's 300 kills. Besides that, both versions of Venom offer approximately equal amounts of kills.

Really, the big choice to make here is whether to go for Meteo or Zoness; these two stages both give a lot of kills, but you can't go to both.

The Zoness path:

Corneria - Sector Y - Aquas - Zoness - Macbeth - Area 6 - Venom
Total number of kills: About 1355

If you go to Zoness, your options are very limited. The only way to get there is by going to Sector Y and then to Aquas. After Zoness, you can choose from Sector Z or Macbeth, and then go to Area 6. Macbeth is pretty clearly better than Z, as it offers around 50 more kills, and fairly easily at that.

The Meteo path:

Corneria - Meteo - Katina - Sector X - Macbeth - Area 6 - Venom
Total number of kills: About 1440

If you go to Meteo, you can take a lot of different routes but the best one is fairly easy to figure out. Katina offers about double the amount of kills Fortuna does, Sector X offers around 75 more kills than Solar, and the rest of the path is the same as with the Zoness path.

Given the estimates, the Meteo path offers about 75 more kills than the Zoness path - in other words, even if you're better at the levels in the Zoness path, chances are the Meteo path will give you the most kills after a bit of practice. This is the path I take, and this is the path the guide will examine.

- 2.1: Corneria -

Corneria takes some practice to get the hang of (when it comes to getting 150+ kills anyhow), but once you do you can fairly reliably get 150 kills or more. I've managed to get something like 170 kills on Corneria on a very good run.

First, as far as I've noticed the ship that follows Slippy at the beginning of the stage and the three ships that follow Falco later on are invincible the first time you see them - they can only be damaged once your teammate flies in and starts asking for help ("Whoa! Help me!", "Something's wrong with the G-Diffuser!"). So don't worry too much about the possibility of destroying these early and getting extra kills or whatnot.

One area of Corneria I overlooked for a while was the fairly sparse area you get to when Peppy says "Everybody stay alert!" towards the beginning of the level. In this part of the level there aren't any large groups of enemies, just a few ships flying around fairly randomly. It's a good idea to try to remember just where these ships are, because if you ignore them you miss out on about 5 or 10 fairly easy kills. As a lot of these enemies move quickly or are a bit out-of-the-way, it's a good idea to keep your laser charged so you can lock on and hit them with charged shots; that way it's not as hard to keep track of them.

Next, there are about four or five robots in this level that push buildings over or throw things at you. Shoot these! They give you 6 kills each, and are generally more worthwhile than other enemies on the screen while they are. Additionally, try to kill them as soon as you see them so you can focus on other enemies in the same area afterwards.

There are also groups of small car-ish ships that travel along the roads in Corneria - these can be easily downed with charge shots. Each group will give you around 3 or 4 kills.

One particularly tricky (but valuable) part of the level is shortly before the

checkpoint. There's a gate-type thing in the center of the road and two of the aforementioned robots to either side - when you're coming in you only see the leftmost one. In the middle, past the gate, there's a group of car ships. You can take down both robots and some or all of the ships if this is carefully handled: what you do is shoot the leftmost robot the moment you see it, then enter from the left of the gate and hit the ships with a charge shot, and then very quickly shoot the rightmost robot. If hitting the ships is too much, it's best to just destroy both robots, as they're worth more kills anyway.

Regarding whether or not to take the secret exit: Take it. You can still shoot down all of the waterskiing robots along the way with charge shots - shoot down the first one as soon as you see it, somersault while going through the first loop to take down the second one and get a bomb (thanks to omneidroid11 for this tip), and the other two are fairly easy as it is.

There are bird-like enemies towards the end of the level and in the secret exit. These move around quickly and can take a lot of hits (relatively). Before you go through the waterfall, kill the ones you see with charge shots or with normal shooting. However, there's a group of them after going through the waterfall and the best way to deal with this one is to use a bomb - there are simply too many to easily handle otherwise.

The boss in this level is quite easy. If you take him down quickly (and there's no reason you shouldn't be able to), he'll give you 11 kills.

- 2.2: Meteo -

Meteo is possibly the best level, apart from possibly Area 6, to get kills in all of Star Fox 64. While the medal is only 200 kills, you can get 300 reliably and I've gotten as many as 320 kills on particularly good runs.

The key to getting a lot of kills in Meteo is, of course, to go to the secret warp exit rather than the normal exit. The warp area gives you an obscene amount of kills and is probably my favorite area in the game. The way to get there is to go through all of the shining blue bullseyes in the latter half of the level. This can be tricky, but once you get the hang of it it can be done fairly easily. Make sure to use R and Z to turn sharply here or you're really screwed.

Now then, from the beginning: A great way to get a lot of kills early on that I didn't notice until some time playing is the asteroids. The brown asteroids floating around in the beginning of the stage do indeed give you kills (although one has to wonder why Gen. Pepper is paying you for this). Because there are so many of the asteroids and because they split apart once they're hit, it's very hard to get a lot of kills shooting them normally, so I use two or three bombs here right off the bat. If done well you can get around 30 kills just from the asteroids. However, be sure to keep a bomb left over for the next group of enemies.

There's a group of rocks up ahead with ships behind them ("It's quiet. Too quiet. Be careful, it's a trap!"). If you destroy all of these ships, the last one drops a bomb, so it's worthwhile to use a bomb just to ensure that they are all taken care of. I usually use a charge shot to get rid of a couple of them while they're still behind the rocks, then once some more get out I use a bomb and finish off the remaining few with normal shooting.

The next particularly noteworthy area is after the ordeal with the enormous

asteroids ("Use the boost to get thru!", etc.). There's a group of four enemies here that turn around and shoot you, then turn their backs on you again. These are very hard to kill by shooting normally, but if you shoot a bomb in the middle you destroy them all in one shot. What's more, they drop a bomb to compensate you.

When Falco says "Fox, look behind you!", do a somersault to avoid the ships and hit them when you come out of the somersault with a charged shot. You can brake instead, but you then run a pretty big risk of being hit from behind by them, and you might miss the bomb ROB gives you when you're swerving to avoid them.

As you're reaching the end of the second tunnel, there will be a group of turrets on the edge of the tunnel shooting at you ("Do a barrel roll!"). Instead of doing a barrel roll, just shoot a bomb at them when they come into your sight and destroy them all at once. Then shoot another bomb into the empty space ahead - if you time it right, you can kill the group of enemies that usually creates a grid here.

While you're going through the bullseyes to go to the warp exit, there are groups of eight ships floating around in star patterns. If you use charge shots carefully, you can take down some of these groups as you go through the bullseyes. Each group gives you eight kills, so these are extremely valuable. Note, however, that you may often lock onto one of the other ships in the area instead and fail to destroy the groups of ships - it may be a good idea to orient your ship slightly upwards or to the side to lock onto the groups rather than the other ships. However, it's much more important to get to the warp exit than it is to destroy these groups of ships, so don't spend too much energy on this. If you've played through the level well up to this point, you should have at least 150 kills once you enter the warp.

As for the warp zone: The most important things to shoot here are the groups of large rocks floating around and the sea urchin-like groups of mines tucked away in corners. All of these give you enormous amounts of kills, but are very hard to take down by shooting normally - so use a lot of bombs. The rocks often drop bombs and near the beginning of the warp zone there is a group of bombs arranged vertically that you can somersault to get, so if you get these bombs you can score quite a few kills with them.

- 2.3: Katina -

Katina isn't the best level around but it's much better than its alternative, Fortuna. I've gotten something like 165 kills on Katina on a very good run, but usually you can only count on getting 155 or so.

The most important thing in Katina is the fact that if you don't take down the hatches on the underside of the mothership, enemy ships will keep coming. What I usually do is let the hatches open a few times, then once a couple of minutes have passed start taking them out, but leave one unharmed so ships keep coming.

There isn't any real penalty in shooting down Bill's ships, so don't worry too much if he chastises you for it ("Fox! That's one of ours!"). However, a good way to both avoid shooting his ships and to get a lot of kills on the enemy ships is to use charge shots - you'll often take down several enemy ships at a time, and charge shots are a good way to fairly reliably take down the enemy (although you can still miss if the enemy ships are too far to your side when

you shoot). What I usually do is use charge shots when I'm towards the center, where all the ships are, and use more normal shots if I'm towards the edge, where I can see individual enemy ships. Avoid bombs altogether - they won't be of much more use than charge shots and they come much more in handy in Sector X.

You can shoot wildly and ignore Bill's ships if you like; however be careful not to do too much damage to your allies in the process (Bill himself is invincible).

When the enemy core eventually comes out, hit it a few times but don't outright take it down until the time's down to 15 or 20 seconds - you can use the countdown time to take down some more enemy ships or, if you're lucky, the last hatch (occasionally the hatches will be open even while the countdown is going on). If you stall too much and are worried you won't be able to take down the core in time, shooting a bomb directly onto it does a lot of damage.

- 2.4: Sector X -

The medal here is 150 kills, but it's fairly easy to get at least 180, especially if you go through the regular exit rather than the warp exit (the warp exit here is much less fruitful than the one in Meteo, and the regular exit has quite a lot of enemies that are much easier to hit than the ones in the warp). It is possible to get over 200 kills here if you make good use of bombs and take advantage of the enemies in the regular exit.

First off, it's good to have at least three bombs when you're starting off Sector X. Having good lasers isn't as important here; if you have less than three bombs, just retry the level to get three.

When the first group of enemies appears, lock on and take them down with a bomb (and some regular shooting as back-up). You can get about 20 kills here.

With the next few groups of enemies, use bombs if you have extras, but be sure to keep two bombs for later - there are more worthy enemies to use them against a bit farther ahead.

At about the time when Falco says "Enemy group behind us! Man, they're fast!", shoot a bomb into the middle of the area ahead of you to get rid of a lot of these guys.

Similarly, when you see the space mines ahead, use a bomb to destroy them - you will get a lot of kills and they are very hard to completely take down normally.

At this point if you handled the bombs well and made good use of your lasers you should have around 70 or 80 kills. Once you reach the checkpoint you can have over 100.

The rest of Sector X is fairly straightforward. Take a right when you reach a fork in your path to go to the normal exit rather than the warp - it will yield more kills. There are a lot of ships and turrets in this area - for the ships you'll generally just want to mash the A button while charged shots sometimes help with the turrets. I've noticed that you sometimes get extra kills when using charge shots on groups of turrets - for example, you might get 3 kills when there are only two turrets close together.

All throughout Sector X there are some ship-type things floating around that shoot only when you hit them (if you don't know what I'm talking about, there is a group of three of them at the fork in the level where you can take the warp exit or the normal one). They're often positioned at out-of-the-way places in the level, so keep an eye out for them and shoot them down if you have some extra time between kills.

When the boss is in the process of coming up behind you and getting ready to attack, there are a few ships/pieces of rubble that you can shoot up ahead of you for a few more kills. The easiest way to find these is to lock on to them - they're off to the sides and fairly far away.

If the boss is taken care of properly, it will give you 11 kills.

- 2.5: Macbeth -

When you begin the level, try to take out at least the first two rock-holding cars of the train - you'll get a lot of kills at once and it'll save you time shooting the rocks later (it's also a lot harder to shoot all the rocks later on). If you have spare bombs you can also bomb the back of the train immediately upon starting the level to get a few extra kills - there are a couple of cars in the back, out of your sight, and once you destroy the rock-holding cars the ones behind them are no longer available to shoot. Once you've taken care of the cars, move on to the various other enemies.

When a large group of ships appears above you early on in the level, ("Just shoot it, Fox!"), it's easiest to shoot them down by making a lot of locked-on, charged shots. You're given enough time to do this and it's more reliable than shooting normally.

When small groups of ships start to appear afterwards ("Incoming!!"), you can take them down fairly easily with charged shots as well.

Rather than hovering or swerving to avoid any boulders tossed at you, shoot them down. If you have some extra bombs handy, you can use them to take down entire groups of boulders instead of only one or two, although charged shots work well to do damage to several boulders at once as well.

When the boss says "Detach the rear vehicle!" shortly afterwards, a group of ships will appear from under the bridge. Take them down with a charge shot, hover to get the bomb they leave, and immediately use the bomb to shoot the train. If you do this correctly you can get quite a few kills fairly easily, take care of Falco's pursuer in the process, and avoid having exploding cannonballs shot at you after crossing the bridge.

This is a bit of a cheap shot, but if you want some extra kills at this point, shoot down as much of the train you can see before the checkpoint comes up - then after going through the checkpoint, kill yourself (don't hit retry level or you'll start from the beginning of the level). When you start from the checkpoint, you'll have the same amount of kills, but the train will have a couple of cars that you shot down attached again and you can shoot them down again for more kills.

Finally, shoot the eight switches and kill the boss via having him crash into the tunnel. There are a few enemies flying around as you're shooting the switches (especially during the first few switches) - they can be tricky to hit but should not be ignored.

- 2.6: Area 6 -

Area 6 is a great place to get kills - the medal is 300 kills and you can get around 320 on a good run. I don't have too much specific advice for the stage, but some general tips:

Don't focus too much on the big satellites that float around and give you 6 kills each - oftentimes, there will be a group of over 6 enemies that you can shoot down instead of the satellites and get more kills. Be sure to give these enemy groups priority over the satellites - however, obviously if you have spare time or the enemies are sparse, go for the satellites. If you're stuck with level 1 or 2 lasers, however, it's probably best to focus on ships rather than satellites, as having low-quality lasers makes the satellites much harder to destroy.

As before, use bombs for space mines to destroy a lot more of them than you'd be able to otherwise.

Allow Great Fox to shoot some of the warships - you still get kills for them. It may be necessary to shoot them yourself as well to make sure they're destroyed.

Around the time that you get a message from Andross ("Those tin cans are no match for me!", etc.) there will be a bunch of scattered, fast-moving ships that can take a lot of hits. It's pretty hard to take them down by shooting normally, so I usually shoot a bomb at them.

The larger warships have two places to get kills - their turrets, which they usually have 3 or 6 of, and the bump at the back of the ship (the bridge?). Use a charge shot for the turrets (you can't lock on to them - just shoot at the general area where they are) and mash the A button to take care of the back of the ship. If you're having trouble taking care of a lot of enemies here, use any bombs you might have left - you won't have any use for them when facing Star Wolf or Andross, and you don't need them for the boss.

One particularly good place to use a bomb is towards the end of the level when you're passing close by a larger warship and have a group of nine enemies arranged in a 3X3 square coming at you - you can take down the enemies and the warship's back area with one bomb.

Also note that the missiles the ships shoot at you also count for kills, so don't ignore them.

Finally, try to take down the boss of the level as quickly as possible - this boss is often tricky to beat because the tentacles are hard to hit, but you get a thin margin in which to get the 11 kills it's worth - if you take a little too long you'll get 6 or less kills. Also, be sure that you have hyper lasers or at the very least double lasers when you finish the level, because without them it's a lot more difficult to beat Star Wolf quickly enough in Venom to get 51 kills from each of them.

- 2.7: Venom -

Andross is a fairly reliable enemy here - you'll get +5 kills from each of his eyes and +10 from his brain even if you take a while to beat him; and if he kills you, you can just retry and not be all that much worse off. Star Wolf, however, is another story - you need to kill them quite fast, and if you take too long or die you're going to be retrying with level 1 lasers, making it extremely difficult to pull off 51 kills from each of them.

First off, you can get some free hits off of Star Wolf if you're flying to meet them as they arrive. To do this, veer off to the left somewhat as the level begins, press Start to skip their cutscene, and make a sharp turn, maybe using a boost to get to them faster (pay attention to the radar to see where they are). If you succeed, you can see their ships coming down in a group ahead of you and you can do some damage to them before they split up.

Star Wolf don't take damage from bombs or charged shots, so don't bother. However, locking onto them can be useful to get a quick notice of when one is in your firing range. Leon, Andrew and Pigma are fairly easy to take down because they follow your allies; just circle around the center of the base and if you see one of your allies, look for a member of Star Wolf nearby and shoot at them. If they do a somersault, try to keep shooting as they go through the somersault; they'll be defenseless.

If any of your allies are shot down at this point, don't worry about it; you won't get any less kills and you won't need them once you take care of Star Wolf anyway. However, note that the enemy who shot down your ally will now be chasing you along with Wolf, so they will be harder to hit.

If Wolf is shooting at you, do a somersault and angle sharply left or right out of it; you'll get him off your back for a while and if you're lucky you'll be able to get some hits off of him.

- 3.1: The End -

That's pretty much it. So far using this path and these strategies I've gotten over 1550 kills. If you have any suggestions or questions feel free to e-mail me at estukaamiaftadai@gmail.com.

- 3.2: Legal Stuff -

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