



Game Design Document (Summary)

1. Overview & Positioning

Rockhounds is a 1-4 player extraction shooter where you and your squad brave the deadliest planets to extract minerals for ruthless Megacorps. Every mission is a fight for survival, wealth, and glory. Will you conquer the chaos and escape with your team? Gear up, and prove you've got what it takes!

Core pillars:

- **Class-based** - Distinct roles, each worth playing and progressing.
- **PvE only** - We focus on a cooperative multiplayer experience, and avoid the complexity of competitive multiplayer.
- **Horde shooter** - Waves of enemies attacking a central objective.
- **Base-building** - A new layer letting players collaborate and strategize across mission phases.

All numbers in the document (costs, stats, durations) are placeholders meant to illustrate direction, instead of a final gameplay balance.

2. Narrative & Backstory

Premise: Megacorps hire mercenaries (Rockhounds) to strip-mine distant planets. Megacorps publicly brand themselves as sustainable and holistic while privately gutting ecosystems for

profit and market control. Players are hired guns who do the dirty work for money, thrill, and status, extracting "Space Coal" (CCH-8) while indigenous creatures fight back to protect their homes.

The term "Rockhound" is deliberately condescending corporate slang - a "hound" following the scent of profit - but players reclaim it as a badge of pride ("No Hound gets left behind"). New recruits are "Runts" until they earn veteran status as "Hounds."

Megacorps introduced:

- **Ignis Industries** - an energy company faking clean fusion while secretly burning Space Coal.

Megacorps on backlog:

- **Genova Biotech** - sells "miracle cures" engineered to keep patients dependent.
- **Omnivista** - a social-media conglomerate running propaganda bot networks.

3. Classes

Classes each feature a strong personality to aid identification and banter:

Class	Role	Personality
Sally - Miner	Scout & mining expert; finds resources, handles side objectives	Gruff blue-collar tough guy, dry humor
Mike - Assault	Heavy firepower, draws aggro, kills priority threats	Loud, adrenaline junkie, action-hero energy
A.C. - Engineer	Builds/repairs defenses, strategic anchor	Calm, methodical "team leader" type
Patch - Support	Ammo/health support, force multiplier	Compassionate but sarcastic, House-like wit



Class mechanics highlights:

- **Primary weapon:** Classes can bring 1 primary weapon of choice on a mission
- **Secondary weapon:** Classes can bring 1 secondary weapon of choice on a mission
- **Melee:** weapon-determined damage/attack type (swipe/stab/spin), stamina-gated, breaks other actions but not abilities.
- **Movement abilities:** Sprint (stamina-based speed), Dash (short burst that deals damage) and Dodge-roll (stamina based, invincible during roll)
- **Mining laser:** Class specific stats, used to mine resources, repair buildings or restock turrets
- **Class abilities:** each class has 4 signature abilities but only 2 equip slots, forcing loadout tradeoffs. Abilities have linear progression that unlock by progressing the class.
- **Blueprints:** Take up to 4 blueprints used to defend/build bases
- **Attachments:** Increase base stats of class, consumable
- **Items:** Take up to 4 items, consumable
- **Attributes:** Spent attribute points to improve class' base stats

4. Progression Systems

Three loop tiers:

- *Short loop*: class/loadout matching mission requirements for best contract outcome.
- *Mid loop*: completing contracts for rewards and higher-rarity gear across a difficulty curve.
- *Long loop*: Higher risk contracts, ship upgrades, meta/cosmetic goals, leaderboards, and player reputation.

Profile progression: Ranks 1-50 grant Coinbits (currency), Tokens (premium currency), Packs (Pick 1 out of 3, contains weapons, items, etc), and Blueprints (new blueprints).

Class progression: Levels 1-20 per class, includes a visible roadmap of class-specific rewards: ability upgrades and attribute points.

Class attributes: Grouped stat pools upgraded via attribute points (limited pool forces tradeoffs), with class-specific starting values, floors, and caps to preserve identity.

Contracts progression: Unlock higher risk contracts by ranking up your profile.

Weapons & items: Rarity (from Common to Legendary) determines attachment slot count (1-5) and scales stats, but never changes the weapon's core identity. A DPS-based "Power Level" gives players an at-a-glance comparison metric.

Damage/attack-speed/spread/mobility/recoil/reload/ammo stats are rolled per rarity tier, with damage numbers scaled by weapon level (1-100).

Damage types vs. enemy armor types: A rock-paper-scissors system pairs damage types AP1 (Armor Penetration), AP2, AP3, AP4, Fire, Electric, Plasma against enemy armor layers (Flesh, Light -, Medium - or Heavy Armor, Shields, Weakspot), pushing players to adapt loadouts to enemy composition.

Pack reward rarity: Tied to account rank via a weighted probability table (e.g., Rank 20+: 50% Common down to 4% Legendary), with a pity system guaranteeing occasional high-rarity pulls.

5. Vendors, Crafting & Packs

Weapon vendor: Offers a limited amount of pre-rolled weapons refreshed at a fixed interval.

Mineral vendor: Convert mined raw minerals into tokens at fluctuating prices.

Fabricator: Polish mined raw minerals into refined minerals over time.

Crafting table: Craft consumable items or attachments from raw or refined minerals. Crafting recipes can be upgraded, but might be locked behind crafting table level.

Packs: These are the random reward-reveal mechanic. Opening one presents 3+ randomly rolled items or attachments from a themed pool; the player picks one, which is added to the class's inventory. Types include item packs, attachment packs and random packs. Also come in super Packs variants (pick 2 of 5).

Roadmap ideas: Legendary weapons vendor, vault (display richness), generator (multiple ship upgrades at the same time), dropship (offensive improvements, faster deployment), waste distillation (Increase return of minerals when discarding gear).

6. Ship Progression & Expression

The ship is home base and a personal-expression space.

Functional ship upgrades:

- **Weapon vendor:** Increase amount of weapons on display, increase weapon's level, higher rarity chance.
- **Mineral vendor:** better mineral conversion rate.
- **Fabricator:** fabricator refining speed.
- **crafting table:** Allow recipes of items and attachments to be upgraded

Roadmap upgrades:

- **Ship Expression:** customizable lighting, materials, VFX, common-area furniture, a bar, a "Scrooge McDuck" money vault room, pet companions, and music ("Rockbox").
- **The Vault** is a purely cosmetic trophy room that visually fills with credit piles as lifetime earnings grow - no gameplay function, purely a flex/progression showcase.

Client/host asymmetry: clients can view but not upgrade the host's ship; upgrading only happens on your own ship.

7. Contracts & Missions

Players select **Contracts** from a rotating board (15 contract slots) offered by Megacorps across planets, sorted by difficulty. Completing one contract cycles in a new one; occasional "bad deal" contracts (low reward / high difficulty) add lore-driven friction, cancelable for a credit fee.

Contract structure: mission type, difficulty (skull rating 1-5), planet/biome, rewards (tokens / credits / packs), anomalies (turn on/off to add additional rewards), weather, and side objectives. Team voting lets squadmates pick among offered contracts; the host's selection is final.

Mission Type - Holdout

The flagship mission type: squad lands, locates a **Deep Core Mining Drill (DCMD)** in a derelict base, and must defend it through enemy wave attacks while it drills for Space Coal. A UI dashboard shows rig-arm health, total health, efficiency (RPM), active buffs, and yield progress; side objectives are flagged as bonus (yellow) or penalty (red) modifiers.

Mission phases:

1. **Recon** - land, mine resources to build defenses, find the base (health/yield-multiplier revealed), build defenses without time pressure.
2. **Holdout** - activate the extractor; it mines for a period while enemies attack, then hits a "boiling point" and cools down (down-time for repairs/building).
3. **Break (side missions)** - repair damage, complete side objectives that boost yield efficiency (e.g., rescuing NPCs improves yield, venting heat extends holdout time, killing threats reduces difficulty).
4. **Yield Extraction** - once the required amount is met, players manually trigger a "Launch Space Coal" sequence (can't fail after this point).
5. **Merc Extraction** - survive to the LZ and board the dropship before it departs (first boarder starts a 10-15s countdown for others).

On higher difficulties players can choose to keep mining beyond the required space coal goal for bonus payout at increased risk.

Mission type - Rescue Accountants

Free hostages from a bunker (requires finding a key), escort them to an extraction ship, then defend it while the rescue ship is refueling.

Mission type - Kill Targets

Find and eliminate a set number of enemy targets; a shorter, loot-focused contract type.

Mission type - Destroy Nesting Grounds

Find and destroy a set number of nests grounds; a shorter, loot-focused contract type.

Future Contract Types

- **Convoy** - escort an autonomous, vulnerable yield-silo truck between deposit points, defending it from raiders, saboteurs, and terrain hazards, with side objectives like powering depots or hacking transfer protocols.
- **Repel and Destroy** (tower-defense variant) - protect a base while pushing to destroy an enemy landing zone along a single lane, using turrets and mined resources.
- **Leaderboard Contract** - a shared daily competitive mission tracked by total resources mined over 24 hours, with placement-based bonus rewards.

8. Anomalies & Weather

Anomalies are tactical modifiers tied to planet lore (e.g., "Reinforced Flesh" = +200% enemy health, "Adaptive Resistance," "Radar Blackout" disabling the minimap), each with a defined counterplay (specific weapon types, EMP, etc.) to reward loadout adaptation. Miscellaneous ideas include exploding enemies, bio-shields, minefields, spatial rifts, and time-slowing fields.

Weather events are planet/biome-themed events that occur at certain intervals (Forest: Acid Rain, Radiant Spores; Ice: Blizzard, Permafrost Lock, Cryo Exposure; Volcanic: Pyroclastic Vortex, Lightning Storm, Heat Waves, Meteor Strike) and affect visibility, mobility, or health, mitigated through preparation (attachments/abilities) or in-mission adaptation (shelter, timing).

9. Base Building

Building is a **shared team mechanic** rather than one class's sole responsibility:

- Building is done by placing blueprints on building plates spread across the planets.
- Construction is automatic once placed with a visible progress timer.
- All players can build any structure, gated by resource cost, per-building limits.
- Players are challenged to strategize which blueprints to take based on the selected contract.
- Damage buildings can be repaired with the multi tool.
- Removing a placed building refunds resources proportional to its remaining health.

10. Resources

Resources/minerals (Amber, Ferrite, Glacierite, plus standard Ore) each have planet affinities, risk/reward spawn patterns (high-risk exposed veins vs. low-risk destructible objects), and tie into environmental status effects (Enrage, Radioactivity, Frost) when disturbed. A shared **Skipjack** mining cart handles team deposits: indestructible, auto-following within a "sweet spot" distance or callable via a hotkey, with a visible team-wide deposit UI.

11. Enemies & AI

Creature enemies are planet specific and have refined behaviors to adapt to changing player behaviours (target players, target buildings, etc). Each enemy has a different strategy to approach based on armor type, weak spots or attack pattern (e.g., Armored Bug have ground attacks and a "small" variant; Spitters become a burrowing turret-type; Hidden Dragons reveals a weak spot on attack).

Humanoid enemies support the narrative goal of meaningful conflict. They occupy compounds or derelict bases and guard perimeters by patrolling.

Companions (backlog) are proposed to fill the gap for smaller squads and add narrative depth: followable, commandable via a contextual "ping" system, capable of reviving players, and eventually able to take over tasks like mining or resource delivery.

12. Socials

Social/Discord integration includes account linking, friends list actions (invite, message, block/report), voice chat reusing existing FMOD channels, and rich presence.