

BARRACKS (SOLUTION)

by Celestine Lau

Solvers are presented with what looks like a unit progression/upgrade chart with two different types of units, represented by the square or diamond border, and two different types of relationships between units, a numerical one (the black arrows with “xp” amounts), and a non-numerical one (the blue arrows). Each column is also associated with a generic picture of a military unit, suggesting that they each represent a different type of unit.

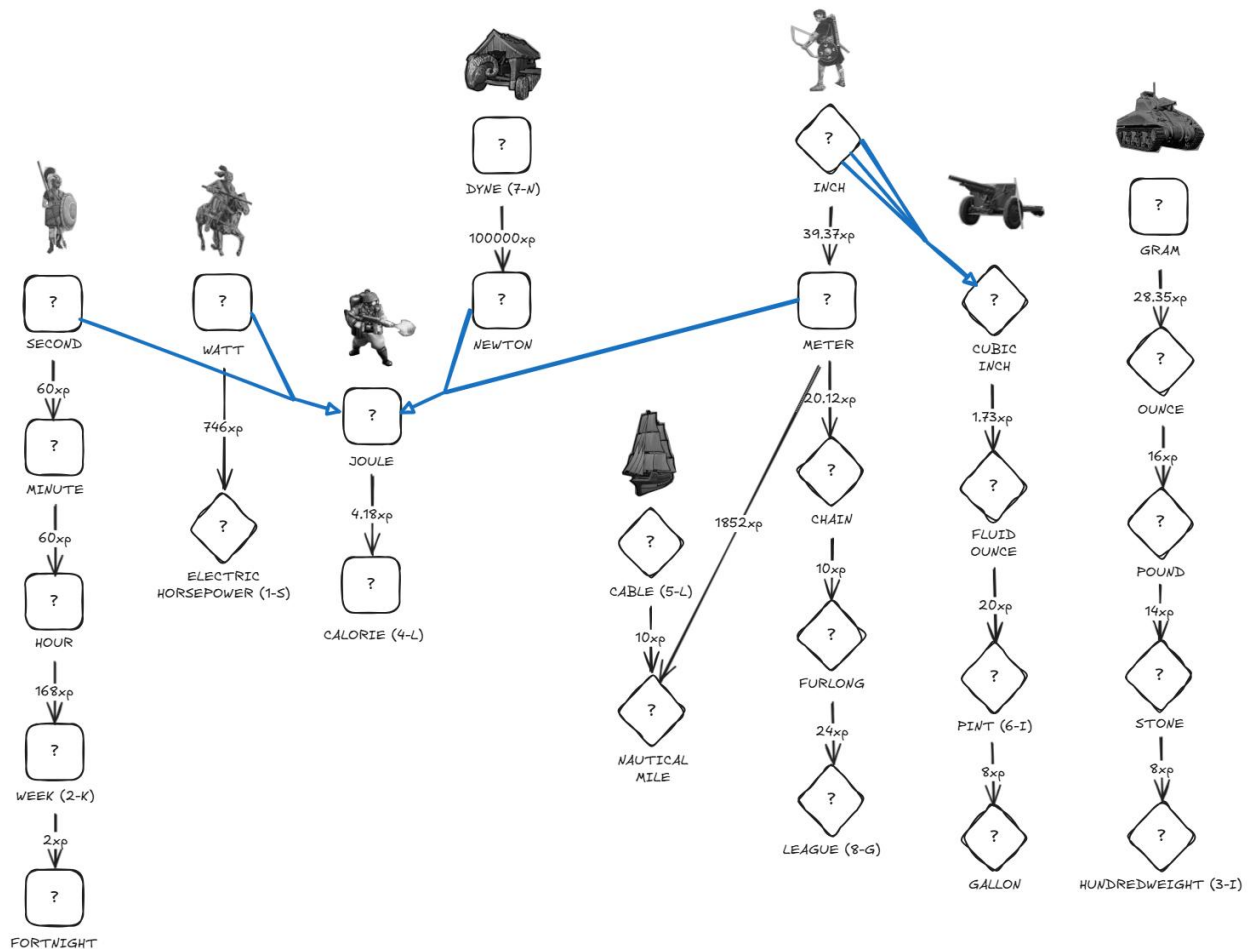
There are a number of entry points into this puzzle.

- The flavortext suggests that “units” are important.
- The flavortext also suggests the units include “those not from the Empire”, i.e. non-imperial units.
- Some of the numerical relationships, e.g. the 60, 60, 168 in the leftmost chain, and some numerical constants (e.g. 1852, linking to the column with a ship) might be familiar.

These suggest that the “units” this puzzle refers to could be units of measurement. This can be confirmed by completing the leftmost chain and checking that they correspond to familiar units of time. The other relationships in the puzzle also help to provide confirmation:

- Imperial units are indicated by a diamond border, while non-imperial units are indicated with a square border.
- The black arrows indicate that a unit is equivalent to some quantity (rounded to 2 decimal places) of the previous unit.
- The blue arrows indicate a “product” relationship where a unit can be derived by taking the product of other units.
- The unit images also might provide oblique hints as to the category of units they refer to:
 - The hoplite has a large round shield that could resemble a clock face.
 - The cavalry provides horsepower, a unit of power.
 - The flamethrower soldier represents heat, which is a reference point for several units of energy.
 - The battering ram is used to force a way into a fortified structure.
 - The ship represents the nautical units of length.
 - The archer, a ranged unit, represents the other units of length.
 - The artillery represents the units of volume, as when it fires it produces noise of a very loud volume.
 - The tank, a heavily armored unit, represents the units of mass.
 - Deciphering these is not required to solve the puzzle.

The full diagram with all the units is shown below:



Take the letters in the given positions and arrange them in the given order to obtain the final answer **SKILLING**.

Constructor's Notes:

This puzzle was inspired by a play on the word "unit" and the required answer suggesting some sort of "tech tree" like diagram. It also helped that the Empire plays such a large role in the story of Dune, allowing the incorporation of the "imperial" reference into the flavortext.

I went through several iterations on this – initially I had the numerical relationships represented as "levels", but it felt odd that any game could require a non-whole number of levels for progression. Switching to "experience points" felt somewhat better as decimal amounts of experience is possible in some games. The unit images were a final touch to provide an extra confirmation (I realize some of the image references were a bit of a stretch, like the one for artillery) and to make the overall presentation appear more thematic.