

Xeno Arena - Creature Battles

No Man's Sky Update 6.3

The second update of 2026 allowed players to indulge in a "game within a game" which, to many, felt like *Pokémon Stadium*. You use up to three creatures from your **Companion Register** against three owned by your opponent. The game takes place in a **Holo-Arena** and is turn-based. You fight one creature at a time, utilizing various attacks, health revivals, or complex tactical variations.

Each creature has its own set of moves, and you can swap your active creature at the start of any turn. The game ends when one player has no creatures left. Notably, losing does not result in the permanent loss of your creatures; in fact, even in defeat, they may grow in ability over time.

While you can earn **Nanites**, this feature has little impact on the main game. It is a fresh challenge for when you want a break from the exploring the Galaxies.

Where to Play

- **The Anomaly:** Hosts three Holo-Arena tables. Two are located at the mezzanine area (top of the main stairs from the Docking Area) for Player v. Player. To the left, in front of **Hesperus and Gemini**, is a table for practicing against **Oceanus**, the NPC tutor.
- **Space Stations:** Look for tables at the top of the stairs on Level 1. In **Outlaw Stations**, the table is tucked between the Contraband Agent and the Exosuit terminal.
- **Planetary Structures:** Colossal Archives, Settlements, and Trading Posts are some of the places that also host tables. Challenging random NPCs here improves your creatures but does not contribute to your **League Status**.

The Creature Register

To play, you must own at least one creature, though three are recommended for a competitive chance.

- **Adoption:** Discover creatures on planets and offer **Creature Pellets** to befriend them.
- **Slots:** You can manage slots via the Quick Menu. Additional slots cost **500 Nanites** each (up to a limit of 30).
- **Creature Scanning Mode:** A new Multi-tool function. Toggle your scanner (like switching to Target Sweep) to see a creature's potential before adopting it.

Class and Affinities

Each creature is graded from **C to S-Class** overall and also in three categories: **Combat Effectiveness**, **Agility**, and **Health**. The class indicates the creature's *potential* maximum level, not its current strength.

Understanding Affinities

A creature's **Affinity** is largely determined by its home biome. There are six primary types that correlate directly with the unique flora found on those worlds:

- **Desert:** Found on arid planets among **Cactus Flesh**.
- **Fire:** Hails from scorched worlds home to **Solanium**.
- **Frost:** Inhabits frozen environments where **Frostwort** grows.
- **Radioactive:** Found on irradiated planets alongside **Gamma Weed**.
- **Tropical:** Native to lush, verdant worlds where **Star Bulbs** thrive.
- **Toxic:** Dwells on corrosive planets home to **Fungal Mold**.

Beyond these elemental types, you can find specialized categories:

- **Mechanical:** These are the robotic "Synthetic" fauna found exclusively in **Uncharted Systems** (systems without a Space Station).
- **Anomalous:** These "Exotic" or "Glitch" creatures inhabit bizarre, monochromatic, or fractured planets, which typically host only one species.

Tactical Advantage

I suggest recruiting a diverse spread of Affinities early on; eventually, you will want at least one of each type in your collection.

The importance of Affinity becomes clear in the heat of battle. For example, a Desert creature attacking a Toxic opponent will have its attack strength multiplied. Conversely, if that same Desert creature is hit by a Mechanical attack, the damage it receives will be significantly higher than normal.

Please look at the table for a full list of effects. Note that these have been derived from playing the game. There are some tables on the internet that are wrong, and even the game itself makes a mistake with the Frost defence effects.

Affinity Type	Attack Against		Defend Against	
	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
 Anomalous	 Radioactive	 Fire	 Mechanical	 Tropical
 Desert	 Toxic	 Fire	 Fire	 Mechanical
 Fire	 Frost	 Desert	 Anomalous	 Radioactive
 Frost	 Mechanical	 Radioactive	 Toxic	 Fire
 Mechanical	 Desert	 Anomalous	 Desert	 Frost
 Radioactive	 Fire	 Toxic	 Frost	 Tropical
 Toxic	 Tropical	 Frost	 Radioactive	 Desert
 Tropical	 Anomalous	 Mechanical	 Desert	 Toxic

Traits

Creatures that have been bred to be larger will have their **health** boosted, which helps them withstand attacks.

Creatures that are smaller are more **agile** and therefore better at dodging attacks. At the start of each game the creature with the highest agility gets the first turn.

You may notice that creatures will sometimes add a move of their own accord. These actions don't affect your turn – they are a complete bonus, but you don't have any control of what they are and when they happen.

I haven't seen all these traits, but other players report the following:

- **Helpfulness** gives you effectiveness buffs that last for two turns. **Playfulness** is reported to give Dodge chances.
- **Aggressiveness** gives you a damage-over-time attack. Gentleness can de-buff your opponent's attacks.
- **Devotion** can trigger a self-heal. **Independence** reduces your opponent's accuracy – its more likely to miss.

Gene Mutation (Leveling Up)

You level up creatures via two methods:

1. **Retroviral Pellets:** Awarded after matches; these provide an immediate boost to a chosen creature.
2. **Mutation Points:** Earned through combat. Once a gene (Health, Agility, or Combat) reaches 100%, you can apply a **Gene Edit**. A creature can't evolve any more after 30 mutations.

The Arena League

After your tutorial with Oceanus, you can pursue the **Arena League**. You must defeat a series of Challengers to earn a **Gold Ticket**, which allows you to challenge the current **League Champion** at a specific Space Station. Beating the Champion unlocks unique **Titles** available at the Appearance Modifier.

Tracking Your Progress

To see how you stack up in the galactic rankings, open the **Catalogue and Guide**, select **Journey Milestones**, and choose **Arena League** from the Factions list on the left.

- **Champions Defeated:** Awards exclusive **Titles** for your character.
- **Other Metrics:** You can track total victories, number of fully trained creatures, wins against Oceanus, and eggs hatched.

How to Play Successfully

The **Holo-HUD** provides all the data you need to make tactical decisions:

- **Team Status:** Your info is on the left; your opponent's is on the right. Numbers in circles represent your three creatures. A **blue bar** indicates the health of those on the bench, while an **X** marks an eliminated creature.
- **Creature Stats:** Hover over a circle to see the creature's Level (total gene edits), Affinity, and stats for Combat, Agility, and Health.
- **The Turn Indicator:** Look for the **double arrow symbol** above the health bar to see whose turn it is.
- **Bufs & De-buffs:** Small symbols under the health bar represent active effects. Hover over them to see the **Cooldown** (represented by a clock icon), which tells you how many turns the effect will last.
- **The Combat Log:** At the bottom left of the screen, a running commentary explains the result of every move, accounting for Affinities, buffs, and automatic actions taken by the creatures themselves.
- **Your Moves:** Shown at the bottom right when it is your turn. If a choice is greyed out, it currently isn't available. Hovering gives you a full description followed by the Affinity if there is one – what it is strong and weak against. Next comes the Cooldown, which is the number of turns before it becomes available after you use it. A figure of zero means that you can use it on the next turn as well as the current one. Finally, if there is a risk of your attack missing, it is given as a percentage.

Tactics

One way to success is owning more powerful creatures, but clever gameplay will also help. In a book of this size I can't give you detailed instructions to a game that is somewhat similar to chess – where you should be thinking up to 4 turns ahead – but with a vastly more complex set of moves.

Nevertheless, keep these principles in mind:

- Always try to swap in a creature that has an **Affinity advantage** over the current opponent.
- Don't just keep on attacking. If your high-damage moves are on cooldown, use that turn to **heal or protect** yourself.
- If a creature on your bench has very low health, you might swap it in to "take one for the team," protecting a more valuable creature from a massive incoming hit.
- Some attacks apply damage over multiple turns. Study the messages on the left side of the screen to see if a status effect is doing the work for you.
- Even if a loss is certain, your creatures still earn **Gene Mutation rewards** based on their performance. Every turn counts toward their evolution.

Breeding New Creatures

If you want to create a better fighter, you can head to the **Egg Sequencer** on the Anomaly.

To duplicate a creature, take it to its native biome to induce an egg. From there, you can use the sequencer to manipulate its traits. Creatures can be bred to be large, slow and difficult to defeat, or fast small and powerful attackers. Also try to manipulate it's traits to match the type of creature you want.

Refining a breeding stock can take days of real-world time as you wait for eggs to hatch and mutations to take hold, but for the dedicated trainer, the results are worth the wait.

This new update might not be everyone's cup of tea, but I enjoyed it!