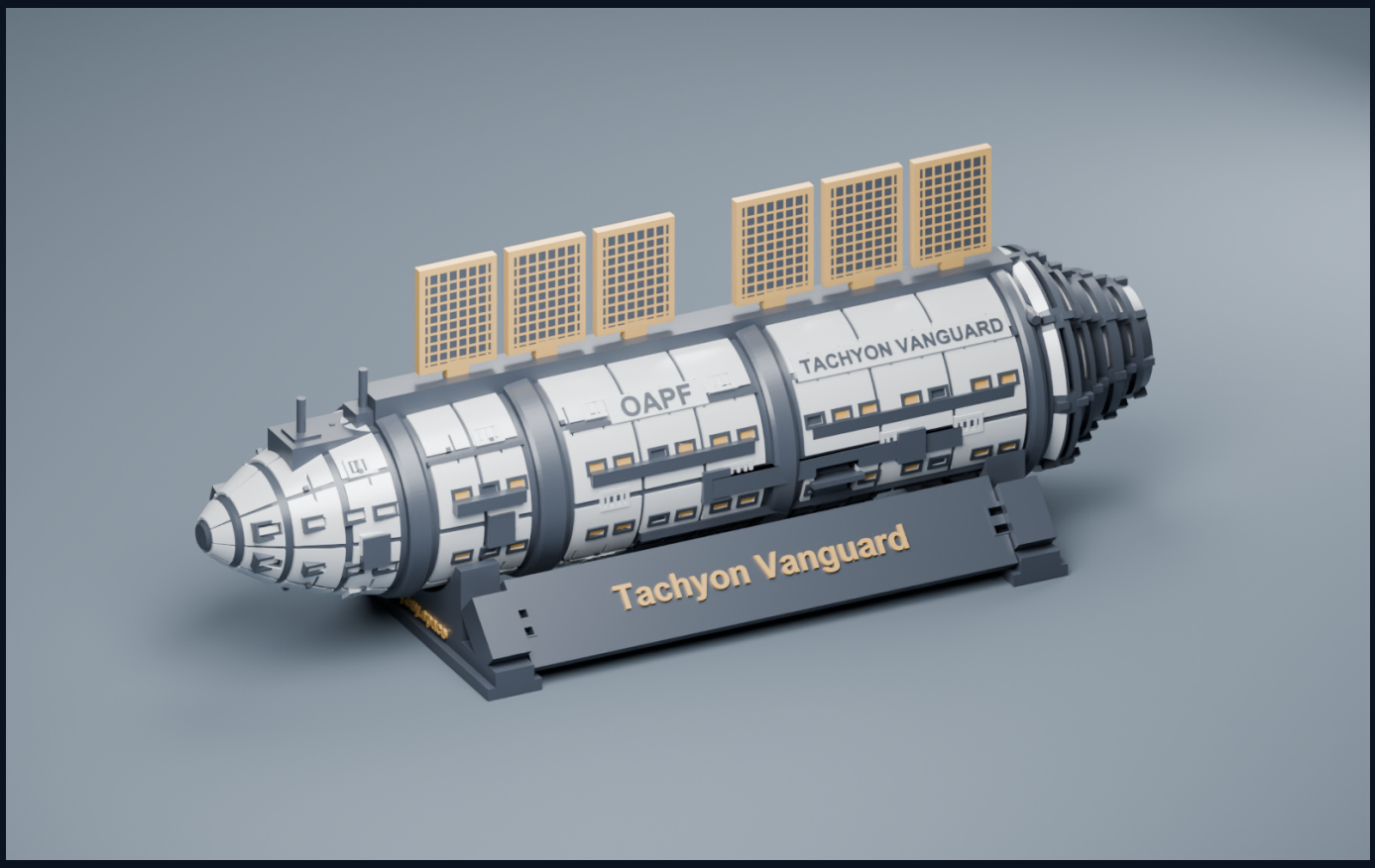
The Tachyon Wake

Reader Glossary

A free companion to Book One



Feed your inner geek.

73 terms / Alphabetical reference / Fiction and science

A guide for the journey

Explore the language of The Tachyon Wake by Jeffrey Jay, from the Vanguard's phase systems to the ancient anchor network.

Definitions follow Book One and its technical appendices. Major outcomes are not recounted, but some places and systems encountered later in the book are named. Propulsion and field systems are fictional; the gravitational-wave entry distinguishes real-world science from fictional navigation.

Use the alphabetical sections below or the PDF bookmarks to find a term. This is a standalone reader supplement.

0-9

5c / C5

Five times the speed of light. The Vanguard reaches this operating regime inside its maintained phase envelope. C5 is the technical dossier designation for that regime, not a separate ship. Speed alone does not account for the enormous distances crossed through anchor corridors.

A

Actuator

A component that changes the Foil collector's mechanical or field-control setting. Sensing a gravity gradient and actively adjusting the craft are different functions: working pickups do not compensate for a failed actuator.

Anchor array

A reader shorthand for a group or network of transit anchors. The manuscript generally uses "anchor network" or "quantum anchor," rather than this exact phrase. It should not be confused with Earth's Orbital Array. See Anchor network and Orbital Array.

Anchor beacon

A signal associated with an anchor that supplies approach or route information. A beacon helps identify a crossing, but its apparent status does not guarantee that the route or its authority is trustworthy.

Anchor corridor

A passage between anchors that compresses the route between distant regions. Corridor shortening and the engine's 5c speed are separate advantages. See Phased slipstream.

Anchor network

The ancient system of linked transit anchors and corridors. It predates the diaspora carriers that discovered and used it. Some routes are mapped, but the crew does not possess a complete or permanently reliable map.

Anchor pocket

A local region or approach area associated with an anchor, used for navigation, emergence, waiting, or rendezvous. Conditions vary; a pocket is not automatically a safe harbor.

Ash Nebula

The travelers' local name for a dust-cloud region whose magnetic field disrupts communications. The manuscript explicitly notes that it is not much of a nebula by ordinary astronomical standards.

Attitude control

Control of a spacecraft's orientation: which way it points, rolls, or turns. Small maneuvering thrusters can change orientation even when the primary drive is unavailable.

B

Baseline audit

A protected record of the custodial system's original operating requirements. A challenged command must be compared with this record and current measurements; a valid-looking credential alone is insufficient.

Breaching machines

Machines sent to penetrate or enter defended spaces. In the vault sequence they approach through the access shaft. Their precise origin and complete technical specifications are not established.

C

Capacitor

A device that stores electrical energy for rapid use. The Vanguard's weapon and essential systems can compete for this reserve, making power allocation a practical survival decision.

Collector - Ash Nebula structure

An external structure encountered in the Ash Nebula that couples to the Vanguard's phase system. Its behavior can excite the coils even when the main drive is shut down. This is distinct from the Foil's onboard collector.

Collector - Foil

The Slipstream Foil's system for sensing and coupling to the surrounding gravitational environment. It has adjustable bias and finite load limits; overload can damage it. See Gravity deflectors.

Containment

Hardware and procedures that limit exposure to dangerous energy or field activity. Shutters, isolation, and local controls matter because issuing a shutdown command does not necessarily stop an externally driven field.

Core Repository

The vault's protected storage and inspection area for physical records and historical audits. It preserves evidence that can be checked rather than granting unlimited authority to whoever enters.

Custodial handshake

A communication exchange by which equipment identifies itself to, or requests contact with, custodial systems. Helpful salvaged hardware can create a security exposure when it also communicates with an outside authority.

Custodians / custodial systems

The anchor network's maintenance, defense, and archive systems and associated machines. Their original responsibilities include supporting travelers and monitoring the Null boundary. Their credentials and their actual commands must be evaluated separately.

D

Dark-matter pocket

A region described in the novel as having a dark-matter concentration and distorted field conditions. Competing anchor reflections there make the Vanguard's phase reference unreliable. The story does not supply a complete scientific model of the phenomenon.

Deflector / Dimensional Deflector Shield

The Vanguard's field system for diverting matter around its phased hull. It works only while its frequency and field remain coherent. It does not make the ship immune to large rocks, weapons, or sustained overload.

Derelict field / ship graveyard

A region containing abandoned or wrecked spacecraft. Moving hulls, gravity eddies, uncertain routes, and hostile sightlines make it hazardous even where useful salvage remains.

Diaspora - communities

Human communities descended from migrations aboard large carriers. Their families preserve route knowledge, waymarks, names, and songs. Kaelen's upbringing belongs to this tradition.

Diaspora - the carrier

The named derelict carrier explored by the crew. Its records, inscriptions, and equipment connect migration history with the ancient anchor network. Capitalization distinguishes the ship from the wider diaspora communities.

Diaspora carrier

A large vessel associated with migrating human communities and life across generations. These ships passed down practical knowledge of changing gravity, travel routes, and shared history.

Docking cradle

A physical support and connection system for a docked craft or component. The Foil can assist the Vanguard through its cradle, but power, heat, structural loads, and coordinated controls still impose limits.

Dorsal cannon / dorsal weapon

The Vanguard's defensive weapon mounted on its upper side. Originally intended to clear test debris and discourage boarding, it has limited ammunition and shares important power resources with other systems.

Dyson Fragment

The chapter title for the damaged megastructure environment reached after the Sagittarius crossing. The surviving ring and installation are fragmentary; the title does not establish that the crew has found an intact, functioning Dyson sphere.

E

Energy-dump sump

A system that receives discharge from the phase reservoir through a sacrificial liner. It is separate from the coolant catch tank. The liner is a replaceable protective component, not a phase coil.

F

Field plate

A component of the ancient installation's field-control machinery. Its alignment and measured stability affect the local environment; continuing to hold an unsafe alignment can conflict with the original maintenance requirements.

Flight archive

The ship's preserved flight records, including route information, timing traces, and signed anchor exchanges. Together with independent measurements, these records can provide evidence; they are not a universal access key.

G

Golden record / Voyager record

A physical record in the Voyager format, associated with a pulsar map and human greetings. In the story, cataloged physical marks help verify a historical record. Possession of the disk by itself confers no command authority.

Gravimetric hold / tractor field

A field used to restrain or draw a vessel toward another object. Timing, geometry, and changes between correction pulses may offer a maneuvering opportunity, but escape is not guaranteed.

Gravity deflectors

The Foil's distributed field-shaping elements. They apply the collector's commanded bias around the craft for turning, load shifting, and brief trajectory deflection. They share the collector's power and load limits.

Gravity gradient

A change in gravitational influence across a region. Kaelen reads these changes through the Foil's instruments and pressure-responsive controls to judge a route and adjust the craft.

Gravity surfing

The piloting practice of using changing gravitational fields and the Foil's collector response to maneuver. Skill improves interpretation and timing; it does not remove fuel, heat, or equipment limits.

Gravity waves (gravitational waves)

REAL-WORLD SCIENCE / FICTIONAL NAVIGATION

Ripples in spacetime that travel at the speed of light. In the story, Kaelen rides the changing gravitational landscape with the Slipstream Foil, adjusting its collector and gravity deflectors much as a surfer steers across a wave. This gravity-surfing technology is fictional.

H

Halcyon relay

A settled relay facility with rescue, repair, medical, communications, and route-analysis services. It provides an independent community and authorities rather than merely a navigation signal.

Heat sink / thermal margin

A heat sink carries or absorbs waste heat from machinery; thermal margin is the safe operating room before temperatures exceed limits. Cooling damage can shorten a crossing even if the engine still produces useful output.

Hegemony

The power known to Earth as administering many outer transit lanes. Its transport agreements, fleet codes, and service credentials feature in the story. Recognized paperwork does not automatically authorize seizure of a Terran vessel.

I

Impulse drive

The Vanguard's conventional propulsion for local movement when phase travel is unavailable or unsuitable. It remains limited by fuel or reaction mass, power, cooling, and damaged hardware.

Inquisitor Verit

The commander of the Obsidian Dread and the Vanguard's principal immediate pursuer. His methods include military force, hostage leverage, and claims of administrative authority.

K

Kestrel-4

A Hegemony holding station named in detention-transfer records. A recorded transfer gives investigators a location to examine; it does not by itself establish a missing person's present location or safety.

M

Monolith

The obsidian vessel or machine that tracks the Vanguard in the derelict field. Its tracking and tethering systems threaten the ship. The manuscript does not establish a complete origin or technical specification.

N

Nine-Bravo / Sector Nine waypoint

A closed freight depot with docking pylons and an old anchor incorporated into its machinery. "Sector Nine" is a local route name whose boundaries are inconsistent between maps.

Null boundary

The boundary in the anchor network separating known monitored routes from the region called the Null Void. Monitoring it does not mean its far side is fully understood.

Null Void

The region beyond the monitored Null boundary. Its nature, extent, and inhabitants remain unresolved in Book 1. It is not another name for the Null-7 station.

Null-7

An inhabited repair and trading outpost beyond the Ash Nebula. It has docking facilities, brokers, service personnel, and ordinary civilian life. The name does not make it part of the Null Void.

O

Obsidian Dread

Inquisitor Verit's large warship, supported by escorts and equipped to pursue, restrain, and attack the Vanguard. See Inquisitor Verit and Tractor field.

Orbital Array / Earth Array

The orbital installation where the Vanguard's engine trial was prepared and where civilian and industrial activities took place. "The Array" usually refers to this facility. It is distinct from the ancient anchor network.

P

Phase coils

The drive components that shape and maintain the phase envelope. External fields can excite them into unwanted resonance, so turning off the main engine may not end their dangerous coupling.

Phase envelope / quantum envelope

The coherent field surrounding the Vanguard during phase travel. The engine shapes this envelope against a reference; it must be kept stable and reduced deliberately during emergence. See Phased slipstream.

Phase reference

The comparison signal or state used to keep the drive's envelope stable. An anchor can supply it; contradictory reflections or untrusted equipment can make it unreliable.

Phase-Safe

Chen's proposed replacement drive design with independent controller cutoffs. It is a development project described in the technical appendix, not an already installed or certified improvement.

Phased slipstream

The fictional travel state in which the Vanguard maintains a phase envelope and operates at 5c. Ancient anchor corridors separately shorten the route. Entry, cooling, navigation, and controlled exit all have practical limits.

Physical witness

A cataloged physical record used to check which protected historical audit is being presented. Its marks can be compared with a stored baseline. Authenticating that record does not automatically authorize the holder's commands.

Proxima

The story's shorthand for the Proxima Centauri region, including approach lanes and the planet Proxima Centauri b. It is an early destination on the Vanguard's route.

Pulsar map

A pattern using pulsars as astronomical reference points, associated with Voyager's record and the diaspora waymark tradition. In the novel it connects human origins with preserved route history.

Q

Quantum anchor

A transit reference or node in the ancient network. Anchors support navigation and access to folded corridors; damage, drift, or a bad reference can make a planned crossing unsafe.

Quantum stabilizer

The drive's reference-control component, which helps keep its phase state coherent. It is not an unlimited energy source. An independent salvaged reference can help when external anchor signals conflict.

R

Reaction mass

Material expelled by conventional propulsion to change a spacecraft's motion. Supplies are finite; having an impulse circuit available does not mean the ship can reach any distant destination.

Resonance / external coupling

A condition in which an outside field drives or amplifies activity in the ship's coils. This explains why dangerous field behavior can continue after the main drive has been shut down.

Route table

Recorded navigation information describing available references and crossings. A route that was accurate when charted may become unsafe; tables require checking against current conditions.

S

Sagittarius Threshold

The chapter title for the approach to the distant Sagittarius destination through an old folded corridor. The journey depends on corridor shortening; the Vanguard does not simply fly that entire distance at 5c.

Scuttle sequence

A programmed sequence intended to destroy or disable a ship. It is distinct from an ordinary safe shutdown or controlled exit from phase.

Slipstream Foil

Kaelen Vane's compact diaspora gravity-surfing skiff. It fits in the Vanguard's lower bay and uses its collector for close maneuvering. The book gives it no independent 5c certification.

Subspace

The story's term for a channel or environment through which some faint signals arrive. The manuscript shows its use without supplying a complete physical explanation or unlimited communication range.

T

Tachyon

The particle concept evoked by the engine's name and its faster-than-light operating premise. The book treats the engine as fictional technology; the name is not proof that such propulsion exists in real physics.

Tachyon Vanguard

The experimental Terran spacecraft commanded by Captain Sarah Vance. Built for a short engine trial, it becomes an extended survival vessel with limited habitation and maintenance capacity.

Tachyon-Phased Slipstream Engine

Chen Lee's experimental propulsion system aboard the Vanguard. It creates and maintains the phase envelope for 5c operation while depending on power, cooling, containment, and a credible reference.

Terran / Terran standard

Earth-related. "Terran" describes people, equipment, or institutions associated with Earth; "Terran standard" refers to a human language form used in the archive.

Transponder

A device that broadcasts identifying information for a craft or pod. Recognizing its signal helps identify or track the sender; it does not independently authenticate every other message.

U

Umbilicals

Temporary service connections between a docked ship and its supporting facility, carrying services such as power or data. They must be released before departure and can also provide access into ship systems.

W

Waymark

An inherited navigation and origin pattern preserved by diaspora families and found on old installations. It can identify an inspection route or support proof of origin; it is not a master key or automatic command credential.

Reference notes

Earth's Orbital Array is separate from the ancient anchor network. Lower-case diaspora refers to communities; Diaspora also names a carrier. Null-7 and the Null Void are separate places. C5 labels the technical appendix's 5c regime.

Source basis: the 35-chapter published-interior source used for the large-print edition, with its Halcyon recovery technical appendices. Original glossary prepared October 10, 2026; branded download edition October 12, 2026.

Science references

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Story and glossary: Jeffrey Jay.
Available free at JeffreyJay.space.