Scallywag's

Bughunter’s guide

Ver 1.0

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“There's a possibility that a xenomorph may be involved.
Excuse me sir, a what?
It's a bughunt.” - Aliens
This is my guide to taking on spawn as marines. Personally I believe that marines are the most powerful race and that in most circumstances have an even-or-better chance against spawn. However marines against spawn definitely requires the most difficult tactics of any of the three race matchups (soon to be 6, whoo-hoo 😊). I'm going to try and explain the tactics that marines need to use to survive against spawn.

**Section 1: Tactics**

**Spawn players**

Firstly it's important to know your enemy, the best way is to play spawn yourself a few times. Have a look at my spawn tactics guide, I've included it as an appendix. You should also know that spawn players come in two main flavours, rushers and sneakers (I'm a sneaker myself 😊). Rushers bring lots of drones, buzzers, and splatters and swarm all over you by the third turn, they often don't bring a queen. Sneakers nearly always bring a queen (sometimes two, occasionally three), they probe your position, pick off your men one by one and slowly soften you up for the final rush (think of the difference between the second and the first "Alien" film). There's also a small group who love to deploy insane loadouts like 30 goo spitters, but with those you're on your own.

**Deployment**

You can't win a marine v spawn game with your deployment, but boy-oh-boy can you lose it. Good techniques for losing before the game starts are:

1. A wide deployment with marines spread all over one side of the map.
2. A blind deployment close to your opponents deployment zones.
3. Deploying in two equal groups on opposite sides of the map.
4. Deploying your only HQ in the open or far away from the rest of your marines.

Your priorities when deploying as marines are:

1. Finding out what race you are facing as fast as possible.
2. Deploying in a flexible formation that can cope with a spawn rush OR a machina missile bombardment.

You can accomplish these by deploying 90% of your forces within about 40 metres of each other, and by deploying scouts.

The 40 metres distance is derived from the standard top speed of a marine unit (30m per turn), a formation of marines 40m across can contract to a tight bunch all within a few metres or disperse to form a formation 100 metres across in one turn. This is important because against an aggressive spawn player you only have one turn to prepare for the rush and against an aggressive machina player you'll have missiles bursting at the end of the first turn.

Consider how many directions you can be rushed from before you deploy your HQ, deploying it somewhere near the corner of a map usually reduces this from 3 or 4 to 1 or 2.

**Scouting**

Of course you need to know whether to contract (spawn) or expand (machina/marines) your formation, that's where scouting comes in. Scouts are of two types - snipers deployed away from your main location in positions of maximum sight and grunts deployed forward of your position.
The life expectancy of these scouts isn't too high but their priority isn't to survive, their priorities are

1. To get you the information that your squad needs to survive (are there spawn, where are they coming from, what is their force mix).
2. To deny their corpses to the enemy.

If your opponent is spawn and rushes you then you are lucky to have two turns before he is in contact. If you spend the first redeploying you can kill him in the second. But you can only do this if you see him coming. This is not optional in a marine-spawn game. Either you see him coming or you are dead, it really is as simple as that.

Try and deploy your scouts in positions that can see as much of his deployment zone as possible - that way you'll hopefully be issuing the orders for the first turn knowing what race you're facing. And if the scout that got the spot was a sniper you've got a good chance of being unspotted by his units, which is always a nice position to be in. I love killing enemy units before he even gets a spot of mine ☺.

Remember that time is your most precious asset in a marine-spawn game, time to react to his rush, time to do him enough damage that you can survive the close combat.

Types of defense

Marine-spawn games are by necessity defensive. It’s worth looking at different types of defensive strategies:

Static defence

You draw a line in the sand and they shalt not pass. You set up your position at the start of the game and maintain it as the spawn come in. This can work and has the advantage that you spend all your time shooting, but it isn’t the best form of defence for three reasons:

1. You completely lose the initiative. The spawn player has a great advantage here anyway but giving up control of the game entirely doesn’t help. Good spawn players will work their units into optimal positions without allowing you to do them damage, and either wear your men down slowly or unleash the mother of all rushes.

2. Goo – as part of the re-balancing in 2.13 goo spitters got a lot longer ranged. This means that they can drop goo in your position no matter what you do. Your only response to this is to be mobile and scout/maintain lots of LOS to as much of the map as possible. You can usually only be goo’d if he launches in the first 3 seconds of the turn – try never to let a situation happen where a spitter can break cover and get to within goo range in the first 3 seconds of a turn.

3. You lose the advantage of your mobility. Marines are quick, not as quick as spawn but fast enough to make a difference.

Elastic defence

This is the best form of defence, allowing you to use your mobility. Marine v spawn games often revolve about the control of the range of the encounter – he wants to reduce it to zero (usually), you want to keep it in the sweet spot of the maximum effective range of your weapons. While you can’t run away as such you can adjust the range to your advantage.
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In lulls in the action you can let your men drift forward, which allows you to improve terrain further away from your position, extend your lines of sight, and give you more room to fall back if you get rushed. This makes it more and more difficult for the spawn player to threaten your position, so that even though he can still determine the pace of the game the “tide” of it is steadily moving in your direction.

You can combine this with the sacrifice HQ strategy mentioned below. “Running in panic” and “abandoning your HQ” are great ways to win games against spawn 😊.

Distributed defense

I haven’t really investigated this strategy - of having various strong points which each stand against the attack. If they are isolated from each other then it will fail as the spawn player will destroy one, eat-and-lay and then come after the others. If they are close enough to support each other then maybe… but probably not.

Force Balance

While a force loaded down with grunts might help against spawn it really isn't necessary. A balanced force can take down a spawn force most of the time, even if it is a monstrously distorted loadout like 30 buzzers. Scout, stay cool, take them down.

The Grenadier’s Bible (GB) is a fine tactics manual for marine v marine games, using elements works well against other marine forces. It does not work well against spawn. The loadouts that are advised in the GB do work against spawn, so what you have to do is follow that loadout strategy but be able to radically shift your tactics from the distributed fluid style that Crank advocates to a concentrated “hedgehog” defensive style.

Speculative fire

This is an important concept in the turns before you know which race you are facing. Always assume that it is the worst one possible (usually spawn). If you don’t know the race assume that there is a rush coming in from his closest deployment zone toward your position. Calculate where the spawn will be and plaster the area with grenades. See if you can combine this with terrain modification and knock down walls to give your scouts better lines of sight. Make sure that by the end of the 1st turn your have LOS to any potential rush vectors, so you either see them if they are coming or you know that they are not.

The firing line

Your squad divides into two basic groups (elements? forget them – they will just get you eaten). You have your grenadiers and your shooters.

Your firing line consists of your grunts, medics, comms and snipers. The exact shape of this “line” depends on circumstances. Spread out over 20m if splatters are coming in, broken up into small sections if you are defending a bunker, shoulder to shoulder if you know there are no splatters and no incoming goo.

An L-shape line works best, this minimizes friendly fire and allows each half of the line to cover the other half if the spawn close to contact.

If you’re not sure which way the spawn are coming a diagonal line can help maximize the amount of ground you cover.
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A diagonal line maximises your line of sight if you don’t know where they are coming from.

A L-shaped line is best when you know where the rush is coming from. Note the weakest unit in the corner and toughest at the end.

The grenadier line

If there aren’t too many spikers it’s a good idea to post your grens about 10m in front of your shooter line, but not so that they block the shooter’s line of fire. This gives your grenadiers some extra range which allows you to bombard rushes for longer and keeps goo spitters further back – so they find it hard to goo your shooter line. As the rush comes in the grenadiers fall back while firing. Try to keep the rush at easy grenade range as long as possible. If you’ve timed everything perfectly the remnants of the rush reach your grenadier line as it reaches your shooter line and the now-useless and near empty grenadiers serve as chewtoys for the drones while the shooters pump fire into them.

Terrain modification

In general the more open maps favour marines over spawn, as long as you have cover for your HQ and he hasn’t brought a queen and a shite-load of spikers. It's a standard tactic to blow away any and all buildings that might provide spawn with cover. Use your commanders and snipers to shoot out walls as well as the grenadiers.

See LSNguide for excellent advice on this.

Counting FPs
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Always count every unit you see. Try and build up a more and more accurate picture of his force balance over the first two or three turns.

Your priorities are 1. to determine what kind of main line units he has (drones, buzzers, spikers), 2. to determine whether he has a Queen or not, 3. to determine how many splatters there may be (this is actually the most important but you just can’t tell until you spot the last FP).

If you know his force balance you can make a very good guess about what he is going to do (if he is a rusher) in that case you can grenade the hell out the approaches he will be taking.

If you figure out that there is no Queen you are almost certainly going to be full-on rushed with every force point he has in the next turn or two. Start laying down suppressing fire...

Once you know for sure that no more splatters are going to suddenly appear you can relax a lot. Concentrate your formation, you can line your men up shoulder to shoulder if you know that there are no more splatters. Be very careful about him laying new splatters though, once he starts to lay assume that each one is a splatter if that is the most dangerous in the situation.

In the mid game against a sneaky player watch the point count like a hawk. Make sure that you can account for every point you get and keep watch on (preferably destroy) every corpse. There’s nothing worse than him recycling a damaged unit into a splatter or spitter that you knew nothing about.

Cleaning up the town

The new vision function in 2.13 is a wonderful thing. Now imagine that you could select all of your units simultaneously and switch the vision function on. You would colour every square on the map that your units can observe. Lets call this is the “clean” area. At the start of the game you know where the spawn could be located - anywhere in his deployment zone, this is the “dirty” area. Inbetween is undecided. Anywhere that you can see there aren’t spawn is “clean” (and anywhere that you know they couldn’t be because they would have had to cross one of your lines of sight to get there). In the first couple of turns the dirty area expands at spawn movement speed until it occupies all the undecided terrain.

What you must do from then on is treat all the dirty areas as if there was either a splatter or a drone/buzzer rush hiding in them, whichever is potentially more damaging to your force. So don't have units within 20m of a dirty area or they will die when the splatter/rush springs out of cover. Keep a running log in your head of the shape of the dirty and clean areas, try to maximise the size of the clean area by blowing away walls and other cover and posting spotters at the side of your position.

Be afraid... be a little bit afraid.

There's no doubt that watching a dozen drones thunder towards your men can be a little intimidating. That's good, it keeps you from getting complacent.

Expect dozens of spawn to pop out of nowhere and charge your position, expect half your men to get goo'd down, expect buzzers to be flying back and forth through your position killing your medics. That's what happens in marine-spawn games. Suck it up, you in the marines now boy. Want that spawn rush.

Often some or all of your squad will get overrun, if this happens it's nearly always best to stand there pumping out fire while the spawn chew on you rather than run away. Grenadiers can
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usually get two grenades off (on or near their own position) before they go down, which can do a lot of damage.

Cover me damnit

When playing against spawn marines need to work as a squad, covering each other. This is principally against small numbers of buzzers which often fly into and through a marine position (your grenadiers are usually too busy elsewhere to stop them). Every marine in your position should be covered by a few of his buddies so that if the buzzers go for them they will take as much damage as they dish out. Remember to cover your HQ as well.

Firing orders

It’s important to understand the way that the game AI directs fire orders. Leaving aside forced fire we have opp fire (yellow line), direct fire (red line), and no orders.

Direct fire – okay the spawn are 10 metres from your position and you’re about to get overrun. Time to redline all of them and shoot them down? Well… maybe. As detailed in the GB there are massive tactical advantages to redlining enemy units but there is also one important disadvantage when fighting spawn: if you lose LOS to a spawn unit (including a friendly unit getting between the shooter and the spawn unit) then your unit will abandon it's fire orders (wasting any time it has spent aiming) and move to it’s next set of orders. So if you are trying to kill those buzzers that are weaving through your men then you is fresh out of luck.

Opp fire – this has the disadvantage that you have to specify the direction but the shooter will maintain it’s target lock to the end of the fire period and if at that time there is a shot then he will take it. If the target moves out of the opportunity fire arc in this period then the shooter will follow the target, pirouetting as needed. So if you are about to get hit by a bunch of buzzers it’s often best to target their squares with opp fire for at least the first shot – particularly for long fire time units like comms and snipers. Units with opp fire orders lock onto to the target closest to the line of fire, so if at the start of the turn you can see an enemy unit you can make certain that you get a target lock by targeting it’s square.

No orders – The unit will execute a direct fire command on the nearest enemy unit, and keep doing this until the end of the turn. Every time they acquire a new unit they pay the reaction time penalty. However, close combat against spawn is often very unpredictable and it’s often a good idea to have a couple of grunts or medics in the middle of your position on no orders. So if (for example) a bunch of buzzers appear from nowhere and fly right into the middle of your men they will at least be taking some fire.

In general (if things are close and nasty) it’s best to mix the three types. Redline or target-square-opp-fire units that you need to kill (eg splatters coming in behind the main rush). Opp fire in the direction that the spawn are coming from until they will reach you then go to redlines and leave a couple of guys on no orders to deal with the close-in spawn.

Controlling the spawn

Spikers and spitters (and to some extent splatters) aside spawn are a short ranged species. This means that to attack you they need to go where your men are. This may sound obvious but consider that you decide where your men are, and therefore where the spawn go. The marine player can chose not only the area of the fight but the actual locations of individual spawn units. Remember that once things get up close and personal the game AI will control the actions of the spawn to a large extent, and the game AI is completely predictable.

As an aside it is possible, due to the long bite time, to punish spawn by selective running.
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Assume that one of grunts is just about to get chomped by a drone in contact with him at the end of the turn, if you order him to run like a mofo then the drone will either bite and chase him (letting the rest of the firing line hose him with fire) or chase him for a short period then look for a closer target (costing reaction time). Remember that time is money, or rather- health.

Drones are big units, if you selectively use trees, bits of sandbag or other furniture you can set things up so that only two drones can fit between to attack three or four marines. The other drones will pile up behind and you will be able to defeat them piecemeal.

Other examples -

A grunt scout sees a buzzer scout and retreats, then stops so that the buzzer will reach him 2.5 seconds into the turn, at 2.8 seconds two sniper shots arrive and kill it before it gets a single bite in.

A marine (commanders work best) can stand just around a corner or just inside a doorway and let a rush run at him while a firing line or grenade bursts kill them from one side - see “chewtoys” below.

A sacrificial grunt can step out in front of a 6 drone rush and drag it to him, just as three grenades land at his position and kill all 7 units.

Where they drop

The queens ability to recycle corpses changes the point of killing the enemy units. Unlike other matchups where it’s (nearly) always best to kill any unit if you can in marine v spawn games you may only want to kill a unit if it is in a deniable place for a queen, other wise it might be better to wound it, a drone on 10 health is a lot less frightening than one on 23. You win by reducing the spawns useful Force Points to zero, not quite the same thing as killing enemy units.

For example -

It's often a good idea for snipers to target different drones in a rush with each successive shot, damage as many as possible so that they die as close to your position as possible, where you can grenade the corpses.

Maps which have metal walled buildings often have parts that cannot be accessed by queens. Try and kill spawn in these locations (see death rooms) or if it comes to it, have your men die in these locations.

It’s a simple calculation: if one of your FPs kills a spawn FP then dies and your opponent’s queen recycles both then you are +1 –1 –2 = -2 FPs down. It is better (usually) to lose a guy for no gain but not have him recycled than kill one spawn unit and die in a recyclable place.

Don't point those bladdy spikers at MAH!

Spikers are tough. I hate it when my spawn opponents bring spikers. This might surprise some people as the common wisdom is that spikers are useless against marines. The common wisdom is wrong.

If your opponent brings few or no spikers then you are sitting pretty. Your marines can stand about in the open, clear all the terrain they like. You own the open (okay you still have to dodge goo). If there are lots of spikers you have to play marines as if you were in a marine-marine game. Corner dance, use cover, blah blah blah. If there are no spikers all that goes out the window. You own the open.
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You also have to be paranoid about your HQs against lots of spikers, if he can get a LOS to your HQs he can stand off and destroy it/them with spikers. In that case you have to go on the offensive, which is always dicey, roll forward with your grenadiers pumping and your shooter line following.

Chewtoys

A chewtoy is a marine that is positioned so that he can be attacked by drones or buzzers. This is done so that the rest of the squad can kill the drones/buzzers attacking him. This can either be with grenades (have the chewtoy around a corner and the spawn exposed to the grenade bursts) or with shooters (the chewtoy stands in sight and gets rushed, the shooters stand off to the side unseen and shoot sideways at the rush as it comes in).

Grenades

Grenades are marine's greatest strength, particularly against spawn. Spawn work best in groups, and have lots of health points. Grenades work best against groups, and do lots of damage. Use grenades.

Scouting

I keep hammering on about this for a reason – because it’s the most important thing. You need information about where the spawn are and what they are doing. Particularly when using grenades, because grenades are slow. It takes about 6.5 seconds between starting to fire and the grenade having an effect. Spawn can cover a lot of ground in that time so the only way to make your grenades effective is to anticipate where the spawn are going to be in 6.5 seconds time. To do that you need to scout the spawn. The good thing is that marines have much greater vision than spawn so you can (sometimes) see what he is doing without him being aware that his plan is compromised. That way you can often let his spawn walk right into a grenade apocalypse with absolutely no warning.

Walking the dogs

If you have spotted a spawn rush coming in you naturally want to grenade it to pieces. Remember though that spawn are fast. You need to estimate where the spawn will be at the times that the grenades are going off and make sure that you are putting your grenade where they will be, not where they are at the start of the turn. Walk the explosions back towards your own position at the correct rate so they have to run through all the bursts.

Bouncebacks & bad bounces.

After bad deployment and bad scouting the best way to lose a marine-spawn game is to kill half your squad with a bad bounce. In these games you are by necessity exploding grenades right up to the boundary your squad. If you get a bad bounce on even one of these grenades you have a good chance of losing the game. The new (in 2.13) grenade bounce tool is a wonderful thing but it’s a warped mirror and you shouldn’t entirely believe what you see. Testing is the only way to know. It’s tedious I know, and you have to draw your own balance between tedium and enjoyment but the more you test the more games you’ll win. A good rule of thumb is at least 10 tests. As Crank advises in the GB plot your grenades first then check them as you are doing the rest of the plotting and testing.

Spawn (particularly drones) have a nasty habit of kicking grenades right back into your position, which is usually fatal. Consider where the drones will be running and put grenades slightly to the
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side of the rush rather than right at it. Bouncing grenades off territory to the side of the rush will minimize the number of bouncebacks (zig-zagging them up corridors for example).

Deathrooms

This is a useful concept: Nominate a room (usually in a military building) that a spawn rush is likely to be coming through and make absolutely-damn-sure-as-mustard that nothing that enters that room in a whole turn gets out alive. This usually takes at least 6 grenades but if you catch a rush like this it can win you the game. If you are feeling sneaky one of your scouts can lead the rush into the death room and with careful timing the scout can get out of the room half a second before the first grenades let go.

Ammo logistics

Against spawn marines go through ammo like nobodies business. First there's all the terrain clearance, then the speculative fire, and then you have to cope with the rush. Make sure you don't empty all your grenadiers at once. The exact timing of your reloading depends on the spawn player, if he is rushing you all out you might as well dump everything you’ve got right now, if he is being cautious cycle your grenadiers back to the HQ in shifts.

One solution is to post one or more grenadiers adjacent to the HQ, you can get three grenades off per turn and reload in the last 2.5 seconds. However this strategy leaves you with no room to manoeuvre and is venerable to spikers and goo.

Threat balancing

This is the thing that makes marine-spawn games interesting for me. A good spawn opponent will present several distinct threats to your squad (usually four or more), for example a drone pack, a buzzer pack, a goo spitter, two separate splatters and a spiker line present six distinct threats to your position. You need to allocate your resources to defeat each threat, do it right and do it in the right order. In the turn before you get rushed consider how many marines you need to allocate to neutralizing each threat, which threats are most important, whether any can be ignored.

Section 2 : Units

Drone

Fast, tough and deadly. Many games are decided by whether the drone rush reaches your position.

The current drone bite time is quite long – 2.5 seconds in total (though note that the actual bite happens at 1.0 seconds plus 1.5 seconds drone-recovery time). This means that you can often kill drones in the period between them reaching you and them killing you. It also means that a drone that reaches your position between 9.0 seconds and the end of the turn can’t hurt you until 1 second into the next turn. So you get 2 seconds of shooting at it from point blank range with next to no chance of missing. The super-anal can adjust the position of their firing lines to ensure that drones reach them in this window, but that’s a bit too much effort even for me. More importantly it means that a drone that reaches you after 6.5 seconds into the turn can only bite you once between then and 1 second into the next turn.
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**Buzzer**

Before 2.13 buzzers were a frontline combat unit, now in 2.13 they occupy a sort of "special forces" role. You will still see 30 buzzer loadouts, but not as often as the bad old days, and dealing with a buzzer rush is just like a drone rush, only more so. As they move faster you need to scout it better and be more accurate at placing thegrenades where the buzzers will be. However because they are pretty venerable to grenades you only need to get 2 or 3 in the right place to neutralise the rush.

**Spitter**

These guys can be trouble but are primarily a spawn players weapon against other spawn and against machina.

One thing to realise is that the presence of spitters is a good indicator to the quality of spawn players. If your FP count shows up no spitters you know that the guy doesn’t know how to play spawn very well.

Goo only has a limited radius – much less than a grenade, if it still in the air at the end of the turn you can often just move outside the goo radius, the goo then provides a handy barrier against splatters and queens 😎

**Splatter**

The bad boy of the spawn world. These are your number one enemy, they are the one spawn unit with the potential to swing the entire game in a fraction of a second (okay, maybe the spitter too in some circumstances).

You have to spot splatters at greater than 20m range and kill them at greater than 10m, this is another non-optional procedure.

A suicide grunt (or medic) can be a good way to deal with pesky splatters. If you know a splatter is coming in but can’t kill it with direct fire or grenades for some reason you can position a grunt about 10m in front of your position. This guy’s only purpose is to shoot that splatter and die. It's a tough life in the marines but trading 1FP for 1FP is a lot better than letting that splatter get into your position and wiping out the entire squad. You can also use a commander for this (who will survive a splatter even at point blank range) but it will leave him near zero health and extremely vulnerable for the rest of the game.

**Spiker**

See above.

**Queens & Eggs**

Be aware that Queens can easily be killed in 10-15 seconds, if you get enough marines on the job. This is a good use for commanders and snipers if they aren’t pressed too hard elsewhere.

If you know that a queen has eaten a corpse try and keep harassing her with grenades, this will wear her down slowly but also make the spawn player hesitant about doing any actual laying.

**Grunt**
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For a long time I didn’t think that grunts were all that much use, even against spawn… and that the equivalent weight of grenadiers and snipers were better. Recently though I’ve been converted to grunts. Grunts add a good deal of “toughness” to a marine squad. Playing with lots of grenadiers and snipers produces a very hard hitting but tactically very fragile squad – once things start to go wrong they often fall completely to pieces. Grunts are cheap, cheerful short ranged units which can hang tough and plug the gaps.

One-on-one a grunt will kill a buzzer or a drone with only a few metres warning. You can use a grunt or two to guard your sides/rear against probing buzzers (and probing drones by sneaky players).

Sniper

Snipers are often dismissed as useless in spawn games, that’s not entirely true. They are good for killing incoming splatters – pair them up and they can kill a splatter only a few metres after it breaks cover.

Snipers have nearly the same fire time as drones bite time - so if they get a little aim time before the drone starts it’s bite they will get off their shot first, excellent for chewtoy tactics.

If you are being rushed try and align the direction of your snipers shots with the direction of the rush, you’ll get a lot more hits that way.

Commander

Commanders are useful against spawn, but not much more than that. They have good medium range accuracy, pack a good punch and are pretty tough. This makes them particularly handy for killing incoming splatters - and walking away afterwards. Their toughness also makes them a good drone chewtoy.

Medic

The thing to realise when playing against spawn is that your medics are combat units. They can heal 5 points of damage a turn, but if used as a grunt replacement can realistically deal out more than 20. Except in specialised roles like com-medics in doorways they are nearly always better used as grunts.

HQ

Lose your HQ and against a “sneaky” spawn player and you'll probably lose the game.

A favourite HQ killing tactic of spawn players is to sneak (or even brazenly fly in the open) 4-5 buzzers around your deployment zone until they find your HQ and then kill it in less than 10 seconds. Remember that your HQ is one of your men (sorta), cover it in the same way you do the rest of your squad.

The other favourite way is to pick at it with spikers. Since you can't repair your HQ then if he can get a line of sight to it from somewhere out of grenade range (possible on many maps) then he can wear it down over 10 turns or so, recycling spikers as he goes. This is tougher to deal with, especially if the spawn player is keeping a bunch of drones in reserve somewhere. Put your HQ in a safe place.

Taking an extra HQ often works out better than taking another grunt, this also allows you to bait
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the spawn player with the prospect of a HQ kill. If he believes he can win the game by taking out your "only" HQ he'll accept otherwise unjustifiable losses to do it. Try and resist sending over-cocy messages to the opponent when this happens 😁

HQ's blow up when they die! It's the marine-issue splatter. If 5 of his buzzers kill your only HQ then he is laughing. If 5 of his buzzers kill one of your two HQs then you are laughing, especially if you drop a grenade on it to help things along.

Some players suggest putting a HQ forward of your position, but out of sight, and shooting it down to a few points of health yourself. Then when the enemy rounds the corner he will attack the HQ automatically and blow himself up.

You can also use a HQ to block or greatly restrict access to a corridor, on some maps this can make a big difference and reduce the number of directions you have to guard with the rest of your squad.

Suggested research

The books –

“Strategy”, Edward N. Luttwak
“The art of war”, Sun Tzu

The films –

“Alien”
“Aliens”
“Zulu”

Board games –

“Risk”
“Space hulk”


This is how to kill marines with spawn. Try and frustrate all these tactics when you are playing marines.

What you need to worry about.

In this order:
Grenades
Grenades
Grenades
Grunts
Snipers/Comms

Every spawn is sacred.

Many spawn players have a sense of invulnerability. Maybe because of the killer rep. Maybe because of the vast number of hit points that spawn units have. Lose it. Don't leave your spawn hanging out in the open. Don't charge in groups over open terrain. Be sneaky. Be evil. Stay in cover. Corner dance. Attempt to keep the score in your favour. Try to be able to retreat at any
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time and still win. Ideally you should be attacking because you want to win quickly, not because you have to. Guard the health of your units jealously - you can’t heal them remember. Hang back, scout out his grenadiers before you commit yourself.

Convergence.

As a close combat species spawn need to put as many units as possible in contact with the enemy. Fair enough. Where does it say that they need to approach the enemy in a group? Nowhere - that just makes you grenade bait. The ideal attack is one where multiple units emerge from widely separated cover and physically converge only at the target (where he can’t grenade you without killing his own units).

Orders f5cking over.

You’re fast and he’s scared. Think how he will be allocating his fire orders. Either he can op fire you, which is direction specific and wastes precious time if there are no targets, he can direct fire you, or he can leave blank orders and let his men take their best guess. An important job that you need to do is to completely screw up his fire orders. If he is direct firing then you can screw him over by ducking in and out of cover, or Inbetween his own men (best with buzzers since they move so fast). Every 1/10th second he isn’t firing at you means you are getting closer to winning. Spawn trade time for health on the way in, and their health for marine health when in close contact. Wasting his time is exactly the same as doing him damage.

Overload & Psychological warfare.

It’s often said that in marine spawn games the marine player has to do 10 minutes order plotting for the spawn players 30 seconds. Hmmm, what if you did 10 minutes plotting too? Think he’d do a hour’s worth? He’s already got way too much to think about, why not give him a little more? Pop splatters or a couple of drones out of cover at 9.5 seconds and make him think you’re going to rush him. Run buzzers behind or through his flanks. Show him a goo spitter or a queen. Anything to complicate his planning.

To recycle or not to recycle?

Assuming you have at least one queen should you start recycling redundant or badly damaged units? Against marines you are doing very well if you are scoring more than the opponent at any stage so the question rarely applies. Spawn usually have win by killing all the marines, so go for it. Be aware of the last two or three turns in a long game – if you are losing on points the remaining marines will usually run away and hide, trying to win by surviving. Close down their running space if you can.

The last turn.

If you are going to rush then you have to completely smash the marine position, don’t do things by halves. Assuming that you are attacking a well defended static position the best way to do this is (to steal a quote) fall on it like rolling round rocks from a mountain a thousand metres high. Hit it with everything you’ve got in one turn. Drones. Buzzers. Spikers. Goo. Splatters. Queens. Don’t try one each of these in successive turns or you’ll watch each of them fall under the guns.

Spitters.
Bughunter's guide

Goo rocks. The two things about marines that absolutely kill arse are their firepower and their manoeuvrability. With goo you can almost completely neutralise the second one and take advantage of the one thing about marines that sucks beans – their lightweightness. Grenadiers easily take out goo spitters, but you can survive a grenade or two, so dart in and fire. Then hide in cover for two turns and do it again.

Splatters.

Splatters are the marine killing unit. If his marines are grouped (and if they aren't you're sitting pretty anyway) you just need to get one splatter through and you've almost certainly won the game. But if you are playing a marine player who knows what he is about you won't have a chance, he'll be looking for your splatters, and will devote every effort to killing them. The answer is to overload him, make him choose between 1 splatter and five drones. Or three splatters converging from multiple directions. Don't send them in together, if he gets one he'll get both. Try using a sacrificial drone or buzzer with the splatter to distract opp fires and take hits while the splatter edges closer.

How many splatters to bring though? Remember that in a rush you are trying to hit the marine player with everything all in one turn, and splatters take up a lot of space if you want to avoid getting damaged by the blast yourself. Two or three is probably the most you can usefully take. A good tactic can be to let one hang back out of sight until latish in the game, if the marine player is sloppy about counting your FPs he will probably assume that all your splatters have gone pop and let his guard down, that's when you nail him.

Spikers.

That group of spikers that you brought along to take out any AIs you ran into. Think they are no good against marines? You're wrong, spikers kick marine ass. Spikers can be used in a number of ways. Possibly the best way is to find his HQ with your buzzers and then have 3 or 4 spikers kill it, he'll almost certainly have units close to it so it will be hard for him to avoid lots of damage from the explosion, but mostly you profit from the fact that marines without a HQ don't last long against spawn. Bear in mind that cunning marine players will have more than one HQ. This works very well on open maps like Sublevel or Desolation where there is no-where to hide a HQ that you can't somehow get a LOS to.

Apart from that spikers are great for killing slow firing marine units (commanders, grens, snipers). Use them in packs of 3-4 but don't put them right next to each other dammit, that's just magnetic to grenades. Pretend you are playing marines and use cover. Corner dance, remember every spawn is sacred.

Drones.

A drone rush is a powerful and vicious thing. I'd recommend taking a squad of drones (4-5) on any spawn deployment. They can take out an AI if you run into mechs, and do real damage against marines. The most important thing to remember is that the strength of your rush depends on the number of health points that make it to the enemy position. You start off with nearly 100 (for 4 drones), but every little bit of red on those green health bars reduces your rush strength a little. Keep those drones safe until you need them! Sneak! Don't run about in packs in the open.

Remember that the threat of a drone rush is in itself a valuable commodity. When you send that rush in you lose the threat whether or not the rush was successful. Husband that strength, don't squander it on an unworthy target. Spawn players who rush blindly get nailed. Rush, but rush with style.
Bughunter’s guide

Buzzers.

Think of buzzers as your special forces units. Use them for scouting and assassination purposes. Most importantly only ever concentrate them at the target, buzzers are fragile and (like sharks) if they stop moving they tend to die.

Buzzers are the answer to the spawns crap eyesight. They have the survivability to fly right through a marine position with only a little damage, if they don’t stop, and if they use cover. You need this information against a decent marine player, or you’ll run into no end of tricksy traps and ambushes. There’s no reason you can’t keep sending buzzers on harassment runs through his position all game, it gives you excellent intel, and complicates his plotting no end.

Assassination – this is the fun bit. Say you have three buzzers dodging in an out of cover near or within the marine position. They can converge on a medic, kill him and be one their way in 1 second. Isn’t that amazing? A sniper only takes 2 seconds, but you’ll probably lose at least one buzzer doing it. If you stop you die, but sometimes it’s worth it. If the marine player is dumb enough to leave commanders or grenadiers unsupported converge and kill them, then keep scouting or run back to mum for recycling if you’ve picked up too many hits. Unsupported HQs can be killed off but it might not be worth losing the buzzers to do it. Sadistic spawn player (like me☺) can reduce the HQ health to 1 or 2 then tease the marine player with the risk of reloading at it while you have a spiker or two covering it from a distance. Remember – you are faster so you can pick the fights.

Queens.

How many queens to take, 0, 1, or maybe 2? All can work against marines. The extra killing power you get from 0 queens is useful, but if it goes pear shaped in the initial attack (and it can, very very easily) you’ve got no comeback strategy. 1 is standard, in this case she needs to hang back. A marine squad can kill a queen in 15 seconds, no problem. Try and have your spawn die in places she can get to without getting shot up. Retreat badly injured spawn to her and let her kill and eat them.

2 queens is an interesting game. They can both be frontline combat units, since you only need to keep one alive to have a comeback strategy. One queen can always eat the corpse of the other to leave you in a 1 queen situation (it’s harder to go the other way though).