Battle System

A general introduction

When facing fearsome monsters, the outcome is rarely decided by brute force or a well-honed blade. Instead, Final Fantasy IX is structured to allow even a clearly weaker party to emerge victorious from battle— as long as you familiarise yourself with the finer points of the battle system. Study the details well and outwit your opponents, putting their weaknesses to your advantage.

Final Fantasy IX uses the Active Time Battle System, or ATB. Each character (and each monster) has an ATB Gauge that fills up during battle. Once the ATB Gauge is full, the character or monster can perform an action. This prevents participants in battle from attacking incessantly, reflecting the fact that they must recoup their strength after executing an action. The actions that can be executed depend on the character or monster in question, while the effectiveness of an attack depends on the opponent in question. It may sound complicated, but in fact it’s all very simple.

The Battle Screen

**ATB-Gauge:** This fills over time. A character can execute a command once his or her ATB Gauge is full.

**Trance-Gauge:** A character’s Trance Gauge fills when this character receives damage from opponents. Once the gauge is full, the party member enters Trance. The Trance Gauge first appears after a specific event on CD 2.

**Commands:** The Attack and Item commands can be executed by all party members. The two remaining commands are specific to a character.

**Cursor:** Shows which character’s turn it is next. The name of this party member is shown in yellow at the bottom right of the screen.

**HP and MP:** Characters whose HP drop to 0 are KO’d and take no further part in the battle. MP is required in order to use most abilities.

Read before attacking

**Change of character:** There is little you can do other than plan your next actions while the ATB Gauges of your party members fill up. Use the time to compare your characters’ ATB Gauges. You should wait if a weak character—let’s call him or her A— is next to perform an action, and the ATB Gauge of a stronger character—called B here—will be filled soon after A’s. Press the 4- button when B’s ATB Gauge is filled to change from A to B. This prevents you from wasting time on the comparatively ineffective action of a weak party member—time which the monster may use to launch an attack of its own. Having selected an action from B, you can skip back to A.

**HP and MP:** A white number is shown to the right of a character’s name to indicate HP and MP. Characters whose HP drop to 0 are KO’d and take no further part in the battle. MP is required in order to use most abilities.

**Gauge first appears after a specific event on CD 2.**

**Trance-Gauge:** A character’s Trance Gauge fills when this character receives damage from opponents. Once the gauge is full, the party member enters Trance. The Trance Gauge first appears after a specific event on CD 2.

**Your turn:** The commands

Once a character’s ATB Gauge is full, you can select one of the four available commands or you can choose to defend. In addition to the straightforward Attack option or the opportunity to use an Item, each character has two individual commands at his or her disposal. For example, Zidane can attempt to steal items from monsters, while Vivi can cast powerful spells with the Black Mage command. Garret will eventually be able to use his summon command after a certain event on Disk 2. If you find yourself spoilt for choice at the start, gain time by setting the ATB Gauge of your other party members to delayed: which of the four commands do you choose from the options offered within a command at your leisure. Of course, the main decision is not delayed: which of the four commands to select? For the sake of fairness, your other party members’ ATB Gauges do not fill up either during this time. Once a character has executed the selected Command, he or her ATB Gauge is emptied and begins to fill up again from scratch.

Flight over fight: If your opponent seems overpowering, or if you simply do not feel like spending time doing battle, you can end the encounter by fleeing. Press the 3- and 1- buttons simultaneously until you make your escape. Your party might not be able to flee immediately, and your characters may suffer some damage before making their escape. When hit, your party members take 50% more damage than usual as they are attacked from behind. Such is the price of flight! Note that there are some opponents you cannot “fly” from.

Choose a target faster: If you have problems choosing a friendly or hostile target using the directional buttons of your controller (for example, if you want to heal a party member during battle), simply press the 3- button. This opens the Target Window, allowing you to easily select your target.

The damage display

**HP-Change:** Green figures indicate healing of HP displayed in white. White figures indicate a loss of HP displayed in white.

**MP-Changes:** Green figures indicate healing of MP displayed in green. White figures indicate a loss of MP displayed in green.

In addition, four damage symbols indicate specific circumstances, and are displayed in the following situations:

- **M/S:** If an attack or other action misses its target.
- **C/RITICAL:** If the target receives critical damage.
- **K/GUARD:** If the target is disabled instantly.
- **D:** If the target is protected against status effects or elemental attacks.

Four damage symbols indicate special circumstances during battle—such as an attack that misses its target...