WAITING AND PREPARING

The ATB Gauge provides you with two different types of information. A green bar measures the charge time that has to elapse before a character is ready to receive a command. A purple bar measures the wait time before the next command is executed. The character becomes active as soon as the bar is full. Once the ATB Gauge turns purple, the command cannot be reversed. If the green bar is full for several characters, you may switch back and forth between them by pressing \.

Wait and charge times differ depending on a character’s Agility and the chosen command. Not all abilities require a wait. In addition, charge and wait time can be influenced by status effects such as Slow or Haste (the colour of the bar will also change).

Physical attacks will temporarily interrupt the process of filling the bar. This system also applies to opponents even though their bar is not displayed.

Some battles start under altered circumstances, when for example, you are ambushed by an opponent, or ice versa. The likelihood of such an event depends on the Agility levels of your team and those of the fiends you encounter. The First Strike Auto-Ability will always give you the initiative in random battles.

DECIDING ON A TARGET

When an action is selected, the Command menu will be replaced by a list of possible targets. Any status effects will be also be indicated by the appropriate symbols here. Select a target by pressing the up or down directional buttons. By pressing left, you can target all opponents and by pressing right, you can switch to targeting your own party members. When the selected action supports this option, or select your entire party if you so desire, depending, again, on the nature of the action.

ACCURACY

The accuracy of a physical attack will depend on the attacker’s status (e.g. if an attacker is afflicted with Darkness, its accuracy will be dramatically reduced) - and on the Evasion value of the target. Targeting groups does have some penalties, however, as it means that the effects of the attack are halved. There are some actions that can only be applied to the active character, for example Escape. In contrast, Heal only works on an opponent.

When you use a curative item or ability, the cursor will always be initially pointed at your own party members, whereas in the case of a grenade the cursor will point at your opponents. You can, however, switch over by pressing left or right and use the curative item or ability on an opponent, or throw a grenade at your own party. That may sound pointless but it can be surprisingly useful tactic under certain circumstances.

MORE DAMAGE!

There are several methods for making your attacks more damaging.

- You attack your opponent from behind. Effect: twice the amount of damage.
- Critical Hit: Some attacks cause a critical hit. The likelihood of this depends, among other things, on the Luck value of the attacker and the target. Effect: twice the amount of damage.
- Certain abilities will allow you to increase the Strength of your own physical attacks, whilst others will diminish the Defence of your opponent. Effect: dependent on the changes that have occurred.

- An adroit use of elemental affinities. Effect: 200% damage (by combining several weaknesses, theoretically up to 3200%).
- The upper limit for damage is 9999 points. Unsurprisingly, at the beginning of the game you will not be able to inflict anything like that much damage. With the Auto-Ability Break Ding, Limit, however, you can eventually increase the damage threshold to 99,999 points. You can also defeat an opponent with one hit by inflicting status ailments such as Petrification or special effects like Death and Eeat.

CHAIN ATTACK

If a target suffers several hits in rapid succession, this will result in a Chain Attack. You must hit your target again while it is still reeling from an attack. (For this reason, no Chain will be possible if the target is affected by Stop and is therefore completely motionless.) If you have launched a successful Chain Attack the word “Chain” will appear above the targeted opponent. Beneath it, the number of attacks in the Chain will be displayed (x1, x2... up to a maximum of 99).

Chain attacks increase in strength. They begin with a bonus of 45% for a simple Chain. The damage can increase to a maximum of 600%, it doesn't matter whether the hits came from more than one attacker. For this reason, smart timing and the co-ordination of several Chain attacks can produce devastating results.

ELEMENTAL AFFINITIES

Some abilities and monsters have elemental affinities. There are four ordinary elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Effect of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Fire, Free, Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>Blizzard, Blizzard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning</td>
<td>Thunder, Thunder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Water, Rain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two pairs of opposing elements. Fire can be used to combat Ice, Lighting can be used to combat Water, and vice versa. When the elemental affinities of a weapon and a monster come into contact, this can produce four different effects:

OVERSOUL

Occasionally, enemies will spontaneously get much stronger. This will be heralded by the legend “Oversoul” appearing above your opponent’s head. In Oversoul form, opponents become considerably more powerful, and even the most insignificant fiend can prove to be quite a handful. On a more positive note, the rewards for defeating a fiend in this state are well worth the effort. According to Shinra, this mysterious transformation may occur when you defeat several fiends of the same type.

DANGER!

If a character has lost more than 2/3 of his HP, his name and HP will be displayed in yellow, and she will visibly sag. Being in this state can trigger certain Auto-Abilities, such as SOS Haste. Another side-effect is that the party member will need slightly more time to act and recover.

STATUS EFFECTS

Status effects can be positive or negative. Negative changes that are inflicted by enemy attacks can be particularly dangerous.

STATUS AILMENTS

Status ailments can be identified either by the change in a party member’s appearance, or by targeting them with a status affecting item or ability. If you want to be sure, choose a cure for a status ailment from the Item menu. Instead of the ATB gauge a bar with symbols will then appear in the status window. For your convenience, this information is featured on the back cover inside flap of this guide.

Some effects continue after combat. You can check this in the main menu: the relevant symbols will be shown under the character’s picture, alternating with the relevant symbols. In this state can trigger certain Auto-Abilities such as SOS Haste. Another side-effect is that the party member will need slightly more time to act and recover.

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As you can see, elemental affinities are not necessarily an advantage. For example, if you use ice magic on a Flan Blanco fiend, you will heal it rather than inflict damage, which is not generally desirable during a battle! You can often tell the elemental characteristics of a fiend simply from its colour and the way it attacks. If you want to be sure, use the Gun Mage Scan ability to reveal a fiend’s elemental Achille’s Heel, or refer to the Monsters chapter on pages 119-153.