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Whether you wish to determine how to acquire a piece of equipment, study ability parameters or modifiers, understand an auto-ability's effect, or simply peruse the world's vast selection of shops, this chapter will serve as an invaluable reference tool.



This chapter is designed to demystify the fundamental mechanics that underpin the Lightning Returns experience, with a specific focus on details that the game itself does not reveal.



This chapter offers a compact, highly refined path through Lightning Returns that employs efficient multitasking and far-sighted strategic preparations.



This short but fact-filled chapter is dedicated to unlockable and secret features.

A general presentation of all main features and concepts of significance in Lightning Returns, this will enable you to approach the early stages of the adventure with far greater confidence.



A timeline itinerary that will help you to make sense of the game (particularly its freeform quest structure), this chapter is designed to allay any sense of anxiety, frustration or confusion on a first playthrough.



Our three Quest chapters offer step-by-step guidance for all quests in the game – Main Quests, Side Quests and Canvas of Prayers Quests – with an emphasis on assisting readers on a first playthrough.



This chapter reveals invaluable information on the many assailants you will encounter during your travels through Nova Chrysalia.



Quickstart

You will find a "Quickstart" section overleaf. This offers a visual presentation of the guide's contents, and explains how you can use the guide in an optimal way in accordance with your personal needs and expectations.

Index

If you would rather play with a minimum of assistance, the guide's comprehensive Index can be used to jump to topics of interest whenever you need a hint or specific piece of information.

Vertical Tab

The vertical tab on the right-hand margin of each double-page spread is a navigational tool designed to help you find your way around the guide. The top section lists the individual chapters, while the lower section highlights the part of the chapter you are currently reading.

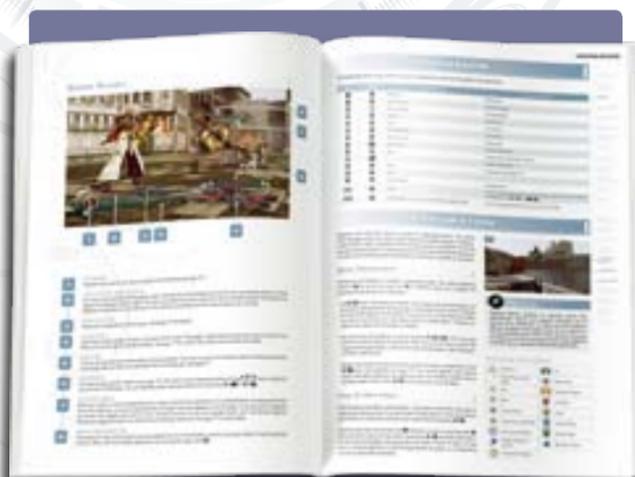
QUICKSTART



Past the opening hour of the story, Lightning Returns offers you the freedom to complete main quests and optional objectives as and when you see fit. It features play mechanics and underlying systems that are extraordinarily rich and complex, with a multilayered and flexible battle system that requires countless hours of experience and practice to master.

While such freedom is hugely enjoyable and inspiring, it also means that there are various potential traps that lie in wait for the unwary player – particularly difficulty spikes that arise from poor preparation, or attempts to conquer challenges best left to later in the story. You will therefore greatly benefit from having a clear idea of how you want to approach the adventure.

In this Quickstart section, we have defined four different play styles or general objectives that you may have. Depending on what your goals are as you begin playing Lightning Returns, this will enable you to identify what sections of the guide will be most relevant to you. If you redefine your priorities as you delve further into the game, feel free to come back here to find quick references to other sections of the guide.



FAMILIARIZATION

This is your first episode of the Final Fantasy XIII series, or you have limited role-playing game experience.

Cast & Concepts chapter (page 10)

This features brief summaries for key protagonists and events in the series to date.

Primer chapter (page 20)

The Primer will help you to get to grips with character progression, exploration, combat and the passage of time, among many other concepts, and will enable you to approach the early stages of Lightning Returns with far greater confidence.

Walkthrough chapter (page 54)

Here you will find a gradual and accessible progression plan in the Nova Chrysalia world, highlighting opportune moments to acquire new equipment or abilities, and presenting quests in an order that will help you to avoid potential difficulty spikes. If you need assistance in completing any of these objectives, you will find appropriate page references to other chapters.



GAME COMPLETION

Your primary goal is to complete the main storyline.

Main Quests chapter (page 66)

This chapter provides step-by-step guidance for the five main quest storylines, with annotated maps offering visual solutions to every challenge and dungeon.

Guide Contents Overview

Broadly speaking, the main chapters of this guide belong to one of three categories, each reflecting a way to use the guide depending on your play style and level of proficiency:

GAMEPLAY CHAPTERS

- **Primer:** An overview of all key game features – the ideal entry point to the guide for most players
- **Strategy & Analysis:** An utterly comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the game's fundamental mechanics

REFERENCE CHAPTERS

- **Bestiary:** A catalog of all enemies in the game, with a clear data sheet and authoritative combat strategies for each assailant
- **Inventory:** Lists of all items and abilities, with details on their availability conditions, parameters and effects
- **Extras:** Details on various unlockables and bonus features

WALKTHROUGH CHAPTERS

- **Walkthrough:** An optimized path through the game for a first playthrough
- **Main Quests:** Map-based, step-by-step solutions for all main quests
- **Side Quests:** Concise map-based solutions for all side quests
- **Canvas of Prayers:** Requirements and solutions for all Canvas quests
- **Ultima Walkthrough:** An optimized path through the game for experienced players



MINIMUM ASSISTANCE

You intend to play the game by yourself during a first playthrough, using the guide for occasional reference only.

Quest chapters (pages 66, 104 & 136)

If you need help for any quest in particular, the Main Quests, Side Quests and Canvas of Prayers chapters have at-a-glance solutions for the corresponding missions. A single look at our annotated maps will often be enough to get you back on track.

Bestiary chapter (page 150)

If you struggle against an enemy, the Bestiary offers you complete coverage of all monsters, highlighting their weaknesses and how they can be defeated with ease. You can find a complete directory of all creatures at the beginning of the Bestiary itself.



100% COMPLETION

You want to complete all quests and unlock all possible rewards and bonuses.

Ultima Walkthrough chapter (page 300)

After at least one initial playthrough, the Ultima Walkthrough will help you achieve a "perfect" playthrough, completing all possible quests and giving you ample time to prepare for the game's toughest challenges.

Strategy & Analysis chapter (page 260)

An in-depth look at the many systems that underpin the playing experience, which will enable you to greatly optimize your performance.

Inventory chapter (page 222)

Find out how to acquire every last piece of equipment and ability, study their parameters, and understand their usage and effects.

Bestiary chapter (page 150)

To reach 100% completion, you will need to defeat all monsters in the game, including the ultimate bosses. The Bestiary offers data sheets and extensive analysis for every enemy type, with reliable five-star strategies.

Extras chapter (page 310)

Here you will find details on any Trophies or Achievements missing in your collection, as well as New Game+ features and assorted special events.

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GAME STRUCTURE

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII is a very open adventure, with a structure so flexible that you may find yourself wondering how to approach it during its first few hours. All you know at first is that you control Lightning, and that your role as the Savior is to save the souls of the inhabitants of the Nova Chrysalia game world. This is achieved by completing quests, ranging from simple favors to extended storylines involving familiar faces from previous Final Fantasy XIII episodes.

The freedom that Lightning Returns offers in terms of how you complete its many disparate challenges is one of its principal charms, but also potentially a source of great confusion and heightened difficulty. Perhaps more so than the vast majority of RPGs, knowledge is your most powerful weapon in almost every situation. The completion of quests is your primary source of stat boosts, rather than the traditional approach of incremental growth through enemy encounters, and so advancing Lightning's abilities is a matter of accepting and completing suitable quests in an efficient order. This is complicated by the fact that quests may only appear at a certain time of day, or once other requirements have been met.

There are three categories of quests in Lightning Returns:

- **Main Quests:** These are multi-stage storylines that feature important characters from prior episodes in the Final Fantasy XIII trilogy. Main quests consist of numbered chapters, and must be completed by the end of Day 12 for you to be able to reach the final section of the story and its accompanying challenges. If you fail to fulfill any of them before the Final Day, you will hit the Game Over screen and must restart from Day 1. Main quests are (with one exception) tied to specific regions of the game world, and are automatically available in their respective locations once you complete the early tutorial-based sections of the adventure.
- **Side Quests:** These assignments are shorter than main quests, and involve a varied cast of characters encountered throughout the world. Many are solved by finding items and returning them to a quest vendor, or resolving a situation via individual steps that can be achieved immediately, though you will encounter some quests where the necessary tasks will span multiple days. The difficulty of each quest is represented with stars (☆), from one for the easiest to three for the most difficult.
- **Canvas of Prayers:** Right outside every Monorail Station, you will find a Canvas of Prayers – a notice board that you can consult by talking to the nearby Chocolina (01). Most of these tasks will simply require you to accumulate specific items, more often than not by defeating monsters or gathering collectible items. Make a habit of checking the Canvas of Prayers in each location at least once per in-game day, both to accept new missions and to turn in those that you have already completed. Some Canvas quests are interlinked: finishing one may unlock another.

Completing any quest grants you various rewards, including boosts to your attributes and items or pieces of equipment. In addition, you also obtain a hidden sum of Eradia for each main quest and side quest fulfilled. Eradia is the energy that Lightning obtains from the souls she saves (02). The Eradia you gather is transferred to the sacred tree Yggdrasil at the end of each day. By reaching certain Eradia milestones, you unlock additional days before the world ends.

Lightning begins with seven days to save the world. Completing each main quest will grant you an additional day. To reach the end of the game, you have to play until the end of Day 12 (which requires you to complete all five main quests). This gives you access to the Final Day. By completing a large amount of side quests, you can unlock a special "extra" day, which takes place after Day 12, and before the Final Day.

You are free to explore the world and complete objectives as you please. However, no matter where you are or what you are doing, every day ends at 06:00 prompt, at which point you are automatically transferred to the Ark, where time doesn't flow. The Ark is where Lightning transfers her accumulated Eradia to the Yggdrasil tree. Each new bloom that appears in the brief cutscene represents an additional day added to the potential timeline before she begins the next day.



THE TIME FACTOR

The in-game time is represented by a clock display in the top-right corner of the field screen. Time flows continuously, and rather rapidly: one in-game minute corresponds to two-and-a-half real-life seconds. In the game, the passage of time is only interrupted in the following situations:

- During cutscenes and conversations with NPCs
- During battles
- While any menu is open (including shop interfaces and decision prompts)
- While the Chronostasis EP ability is active (see page 45)
- While you are on the Ark

Outside of these specific instances, time advances inexorably. With only thirteen days to complete all main quests, and ideally a good number of secondary quests, you might get the feeling that you can't afford to waste many minutes. However, there's actually no need to feel unduly pressured by this countdown. As it happens, thirteen in-game days is more than enough to complete all main quests and the majority of (if not all) secondary quests, even if you aren't always efficient, thanks to the power of the Chronostasis feature. Once you obtain this EP ability at an early stage in the storyline, you can activate it to temporarily freeze time.

EP is a finite resource that is primarily replenished by defeating enemies in battle. By engaging in a regular sequence of battles to obtain EP while attending to other tasks, it becomes possible to freeze time for extended periods. An in-game minute can, once you get to grips with combat and efficient EP farming, be extended to entire real-life hours with Chronostasis.

The following tips will help you make the most of your time in Nova Chrysalia:

- **Dashing:** You can increase Lightning's movement speed by holding R2/RT. Dashing depletes the blue gauge at the bottom of your screen, limiting the amount of time you can spend at this sprinting pace. Release the button at any time and the gauge will quickly refill. As a rule, you should get used to dashing almost constantly, but with regular short pauses to allow the gauge to replenish whenever

it is almost empty. The refill time is extended and the sprint ability temporarily locked if you fail to take this step, which also has the side effect of preventing Lightning from using her weapon.

- **Optimizing journeys:** Another key factor to save time is to minimize the amount of travelling you do. There are simple rules you can follow to optimize your trips in any given region. Rather than running straight to a distant place to retrieve an item for a quest you just accepted, take the time to talk to all NPCs in your vicinity and agree to complete any assignment they give you during a journey. There is no limit to the number of quests you can have active at any one time, so it always makes sense to accept them immediately. You should also check the Canvas of Prayers whenever you pass it, and factor in exploration and shopping trips where possible. As a general rule, you should aim to multitask at all times, "clearing" an area of current objectives (where feasible) before you move on to another.

- **Remaining busy:** Whatever the circumstances, you should always remain active and avoid any downtime. If you are done with all optional activities in a location and have a few hours to spare before you can complete the next objective (for example, because an access gate is currently closed, or an NPC has yet to emerge), simply travel to another region and start fulfilling assignments there. Every minute of your time should be used to achieve something.

- **Influence of the time of day:** The entire game world is governed by the clock. The time of day can determine the availability of quest items, the presence of key NPCs, access to particular areas, and even the distribution of monsters. Knowing when you're supposed to visit an area (for example, by reading the quest descriptions carefully to take in such details) is hugely valuable information – enabling you to plan your travels accordingly. Naturally, our coverage of quests within this guide includes detailed information on all such considerations.

- **Feature unlocks:** Many features in the game are unlocked on a very specific day in the storyline. You will also obtain items and abilities on each visit to the Ark. This guide reveals the precise unlock progression for day-related unlocks, so you need never worry about missing anything.



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LIGHTNING: AN ARMY OF ONE

Long before the release of Lightning Returns, when the first small details on its gameplay systems and setting were published, many Final Fantasy fans were puzzled by the apparent absence of party members to accompany Lightning during battle. Though Lightning does indeed technically fight alone for large stretches of the story, this does not mean that the classic tactical dynamics of the Final Fantasy series have been discarded.

Rather than switching between party members during combat, you instead wage war with a set of three customizable sets of equipment and abilities known as Schemata (plural; singular Schema). Each Schema is to all intents and purposes a party member in its own right, with its own ATB gauge (see page 30) and – ideally – a clearly defined strategic identity of your creation. If it helps you to adjust to the new system, you can simply interpret Schema as “party member” and Schemata as “party”.

During combat, you cycle through your chosen Schemata in exactly the same way as you might with the more traditional cast of party members: you employ the powers of a Schema before moving on to another when its ATB gauge runs low, or a situation arises that necessitates the use of another Schema with a pertinent specialized ability. As each Schema features nine configurable elements (Garb, weapon, shield, two accessories, four abilities) that can all have their own unique characteristics and secondary auto-abilities, the scope for experimentation is almost endless.

We return to Schemata later in the Primer (see page 31), and cover it in great depth in the Strategy & Analysis chapter (page 295).



DIFFICULTY SETTING

Every time you begin a new playthrough, you are requested to select a difficulty setting:

- In **Easy Mode**, battles are less difficult, you can flee combat with no penalty, and you recover health automatically while on the field screen. In addition, you get extra EP from defeated enemies, and EP abilities (see page 45) cost less. On the other hand, the best potential item drops yielded by your opponents are locked.
- In **Normal Mode**, combat difficulty is standard, you suffer a time penalty whenever you escape combat, and your HP gauge does not replenish automatically between battles. The very best item drops yielded by defeated enemies are still locked.

- In **Hard Mode** (unlocked by completing the game once), battles are more difficult. The time penalty for escaping and lack of automatic HP restoration between battles from Normal Mode still apply, but you also receive less EP from enemies than you do on Normal. However, you have access to all item drops from fallen foes, including the best, top-tier rewards.

You cannot change the difficulty setting once you have confirmed your choice, so make sure that you select the one right for you. As a rule, the game is designed to be played on Normal Mode for a first playthrough, which most gamers familiar with RPGs will find presents the most rounded balance of challenge and rewards. If you are a newcomer to the series, let alone to the RPG genre, you will probably find the Easy Mode much more accessible.

ONSCREEN DISPLAY

Field Screen

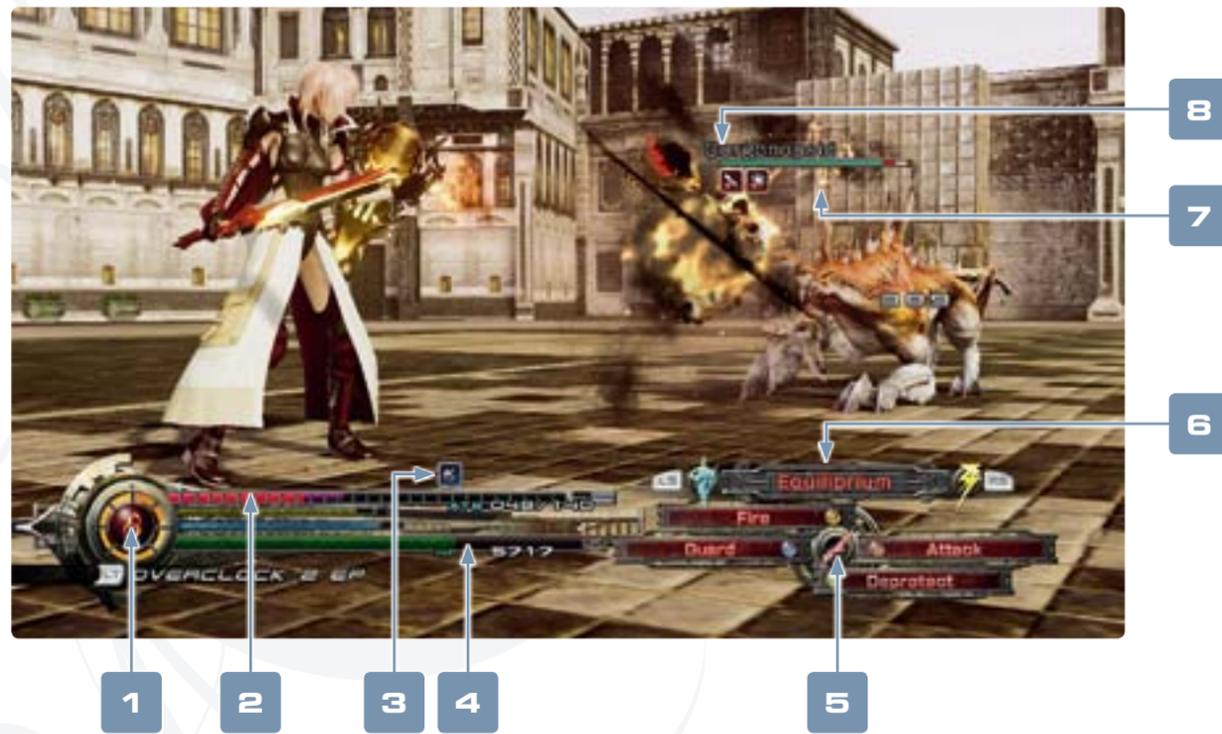


- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

- 1 EP METER**
Reveals how much EP you have available for EP abilities (see page 45).
- 2 HP GAUGE**
Lightning's current health. It flashes a strident red when her HP is dangerously low. This gauge is replenished automatically outside of combat in Easy Mode, but not on higher difficulty settings. See page 39 for a list of the various ways to restore Lightning's health.
- 3 ACTION GAUGE**
Represents how much energy you have left for dashing (**R2**/**RL**) and attacking enemies (**R1**/**RB**). Dashing depletes the blue gauge at the bottom of your screen. Release the button and the gauge will refill quickly. If you fail to do so and exhaust the entire bar, it will turn red and replenish at a slower pace, leaving you unable to run or attack for several seconds.
- 4 INTERACTIONS**
Objects or individuals that you can interact with in the game world are highlighted with a rotating circle, accompanied by a short text description – usually “Talk” for a person you can interact with, or “Examine” for a mechanism or object.
- 5 MINI-MAP**
This display offers information on the terrain in your immediate vicinity, including topographical data, waypoints, NPCs, and assorted points of interest. The mini-map always points north by default, though this can be adjusted in the Settings menu; the arrow representing Lightning corresponds to the direction she is facing. You can remove the mini-map and make it reappear by pressing **SELECT**/**○**.
- 6 CLOCK**
A clock display in the top-right corner of your screen shows you the current time of day. Use this to plan your journeys, taking into account the availability of the NPCs or quests you're trying to complete. The clock is accompanied by a reminder of how many days you have left before the world ends.

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Battle Screen



1

EP METER

Reveals how much EP you have available for EP abilities (see page 45).

2

ATB (ACTIVE TIME BATTLE)

You have three individual ATB gauges, each showing how much energy you have for each corresponding Schema. All three gauges fill gradually during combat, the two in standby three times faster than the one currently selected. ATB segments are depleted in proportion to the ATB cost of the abilities you activate with the face buttons of your controller.

3

STATUS ICONS

Shows any status effects affecting you. See page 41 for details.

4

HP GAUGE

Lightning's current health. It flashes red when her HP is low. This gauge is replenished automatically outside of combat in Easy Mode, but not on higher difficulty settings. See page 39 for a list of the various ways to restore your health.

5

ABILITIES

The four abilities set to the face buttons of your controller. Every time you press one of these buttons, the corresponding ability is activated, with its ATB cost subtracted from the ATB gauge. See page 32.

6

SCHEMATA

The name of your current Schema (see page 31). The colors of your Schemata names and the marks correspond to each Schema's ATB gauge. You can instantly switch between Schemata by pressing **L1/LB** or **R1/RB**.

7

STAGGER WAVE

When you attack an enemy (especially with a type of assault that capitalizes on its vulnerabilities), you will gradually break down their defenses, a process represented by a Stagger Wave that appears on its HP gauge. As you get closer to staggering your enemy, the Stagger Wave will turn red. Continue to assail the foe with suitable attacks, and it will become staggered. Attacking a staggered target will inflict far more damage than usual. See page 38 for more details.

8

ENEMY INFORMATION

This reveals the type of the enemy you are targeting and its current health, as well as any status effects it may be enjoying or enduring. When you face multiple opponents, you can switch target with .

COMMANDS

The following table offers a handy recap of the main commands you will use throughout the adventure.

PS3	XBOX 360	FIELD CONTROLS	BATTLE CONTROLS
		Movement	Movement
		Camera control	Camera control
		Menu navigation	Change target
		Interact/Sheath weapon	Use ability
		Jump	Use ability
		Enter Main Menu	Use ability
		View map screen	Use ability
		Attack/Ready weapon	Switch Schemata
		Dash	View enemy information (Libra)
		-	Switch Schemata
		Dash	Overclock (see page 45)
		Dash	-
		Center Camera	Change view
		Pause	Pause; use recovery items or EP abilities (switch from one screen to the other with L1/R1 or LB/RB)
		Enable/Disable mini-map; skip cutscenes on pause screen	From the pause screen, return to the Title Screen

EXPLORATION

Exploration is one of the most important activities in Lightning Returns. The game world is very large, with the four primary regions featuring countless points of interest, hundreds of NPCs to talk to, collectibles to find and many quests to complete. Scouring every last inch of Nova Chrysalia for new things to find or do is one of the great pleasures in this game, and you'll be surprised by how often your curiosity is rewarded.

Basic Movement

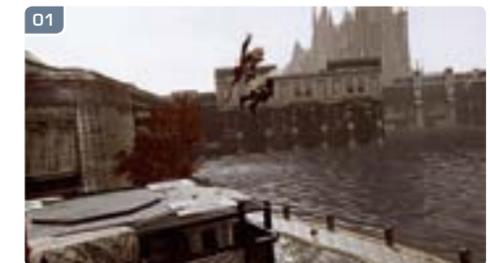
Travelling from one destination to another is extremely simple. You move Lightning around with **L1** and control the camera with **R1**. In addition, there are a handful of moves that will help you reach your destination:

- Hold **R2/RT** to dash. This enables you to sprint, which reduces the overall duration of your journeys. Dashing depletes the blue gauge at the bottom of your screen. Release the button and the gauge will refill quickly. If you fail to do so and empty the entire bar, it will turn red and will start replenishing itself at a slower pace – leaving you unable to run or attack until the process is complete.
- You can vault over small obstacles or gaps by pressing **Circle/B** (**O1**). You can jump further than normal by dashing simultaneously. Note that you will never sustain fall damage, even from great heights, so feel free to attempt tricky leaps or take a plunge if a cliff offers a useful shortcut.
- Whenever you encounter enemies during your travels, be ready to attack them with **R1/RB** once in close proximity (see page 30). You cannot interact with certain aspects of the game world (such as collecting items and climbing ladders) when Lightning's weapon is drawn. Press **Circle/A** to manually stow it on her back.

Map & Mini-Map

When the route you must follow is uncomplicated, a quick glance at the mini-map alone is usually enough to guide your steps. If you need to plan a longer journey or find a more distant point of interest, you can bring up a full map of your current locale by pressing **Circle/X**.

Once on the map screen, you can scroll with **L1** and zoom in or out as required with **R1**. You have the option to place up to ten markers by pressing **Circle/X**, and even name them. You could use this to highlight a quest giver that you'll need to return to later, or if you locate an interesting opportunity to grind through battles for spoils, or an interactive item that you cannot make sense of yet.



01 Saving

Lightning Returns employs an autosave system that automatically records your progress whenever you hit discrete story milestones, or when you travel between different locations in the game world. An icon appears in the top left-hand corner of the screen whenever the game is saving. You can also manually save and create additional save files (up to a maximum of 50) via the pause menu.

MAP & MINI-MAP LEGEND

	Lightning		Destination Marker
	Path of your recent steps		Inn
	Ally		Restaurant
	NPC		Canvas of Prayers
	Active Enemy		Outfitters
	Quest Objective		Forge
	Site of your last battle		General Store
	Main Quest Marker		Sorcery Shop
	Marker (Multiple Colors)		Monorail Station

QUICKSTART

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Collectibles

Many collectibles appear in treasure spheres (02). Press **X/A** to open them. After a short delay, a pop-up message will reveal their contents (very often useful items, such as pieces of equipment), which are automatically transferred to your inventory.

In addition, you will regularly stumble across items that appear directly in the game world as small shining objects found on the floor (03), and can be picked up by pressing **X/A** in close proximity. Most of the time, these are medals that can be sold in shops, offering a secondary source of income. However, there are also instances where such collectibles are quest items, which you must pick up and deliver to the corresponding quest vendor.

The maps in this guide reveal the locations of every last collectible in the game. However, if you intend to complete a first playthrough with a minimum of assistance, the following treasure-hunting tips will be handy:

- Use **R** to scour the environment for collectibles as you travel through new and old areas alike. Whenever you notice cul-de-sacs or alternative routes, take the time to explore these: they may well contain a reward to acknowledge your curiosity.
- Certain quest items occur naturally in the game world – particularly in the Wildlands, where you will regularly encounter an assortment of mushrooms, plants and occasional seeds. Make a point of collecting these whenever you encounter them.
- Certain treasure spheres are initially locked, and require special conditions to be met before you can open them (such as a specified investment of EP, or the commission of a quest-giver). When you notice one of these, make a mental note of its position or leave a marker on the map. You can then backtrack to open them at a later date.
- In the Wildlands region, a few treasure spheres can only be reached once you have access to the gliding skills of a Chocobo.

Points of Interactivity

In addition to collectibles, you will encounter numerous points of interactivity throughout the game world. These can vary from plot-critical devices that must be operated to advance the story, to NPCs who can be engaged in brief conversations. To interact with devices or NPCs, press **X/A**.

- When you can speak to an NPC, a speech bubble (04) will appear above that individual's head (04). In close proximity, a rotating circle and a "Talk" caption will indicate that you can strike up a conversation. Most NPCs will make contributions that have no specific relevance to your current objectives, though they might occasionally offer clues or make comments that direct you towards points of interest or refer to an ongoing quest. You will sometimes encounter NPCs with three question marks above their head, but no speech bubble per se: these are individuals that you will be able to speak to at a later date, usually during a quest.
- Interacting with certain NPCs will initiate side quests; you are given the option to decline these if you wish, though it makes sense to accept them, even if you do not intend to complete them until a later date. NPCs willing to offer you a side quest are marked with star symbols (★). The more stars (up to three), the more difficult or involved your task could be. It's also usually (but not always) an indication that a quest offers a better class of rewards.
- When you approach an object that you can interact with, a rotating circle and the "Examine" option will appear when you move within range. Not all points of interest are tied to main-quest or side-quest progression; some interactive elements can simply offer you information, such as Monorail timetables or signposts.
- In many locations, you will encounter destructible crates which you can smash apart with **R1/RB** (05). These may randomly contain generic items such as medals, which you can sell in shops. These crates sometimes also serve to block the path or partially obscure a point of interest such as a treasure sphere.
- Several areas in the game feature time-operated doors and gates. These only open at very specific times, which you need to take into account when you plan to visit the locations that lie beyond them. Once you examine such gates for the first time, the hours when they are open appear on your map permanently.
- You will encounter switches in certain mazes and dungeons, which you must usually activate to open a corresponding door.



Inventory & Gil

Every item that you collect is automatically transferred to your inventory.

- Garb, weapons, shields, accessories, and abilities are battle-oriented items, which you will need to prepare and improve your Schemata (see page 31 for details).
- Adornments are cosmetic items that you can select when creating Schemata. They have no purpose other than to customize Lightning's appearance.
- Components are ingredients required to enhance and level up abilities via the Level Boost feature, available at all Sorcery Shops (06) – see next section on Shops).
- Key Items are unique, quest-related objects, or notes with Libra information on enemy species (see page 45).
- All objects in the Other Items category are usually required to complete collection-oriented quests.

Most shopkeepers will purchase any item that you have no need for. Those marked with the **C** icon exist purely to be sold. Don't be too hasty in selling anything else. Pieces of equipment that seem obsolete

can become useful again for new strategies or to prepare Sub Schemata, while Components are precious ingredients for the Level Boost feature that enables you to level up abilities later in the story. Most objects in the Other Items category have an application in a side quest, possibly one that you haven't even unlocked yet, or could even be kept safely for a subsequent playthrough. As a rule, accumulate as many items as you can during your journeys, from fireworks in Yusnaan to wild mushrooms and flowers that grow in the Wildlands.

For the avoidance of all doubt: you won't accrue much gil (the primary currency in the Final Fantasy universe) or, for that matter, profit in the long term by clearing out your inventory. Instead, your two main sources of income will be:

- ★ The rewards from the quests that you complete. Broadly speaking, harder quests lead to better gil rewards.
- 🐉 The enemies that you defeat. Each enemy type yields a specific amount of gil, though these amounts increase from Day 7 onwards. This reflects a corresponding gradual increase to the attributes of all monsters. Refer to our Bestiary for all details on the rewards you can potentially obtain from each enemy type.

Shops

There are several types of shop in the game, each offering unique goods or services. Note that the equipment sold differs from store to store, with their inventories being expanded over time, so be sure to visit the various Outfitters and Forges scattered across the continents regularly.

SHOPS OVERVIEW

ICON	SHOP TYPE	DESCRIPTION
	General Stores	Sell recovery items, which you can use to heal or revive Lightning, apply status enhancements, and cure status ailments.
	Outfitters	Sell garb, which are essential to create Schemata (see page 31) and improve Lightning's attributes; also sell adornments that enable you to customize her look.
	Forges	Sell weapons and shields, critical pieces of equipment to improve your stats and specialize your Schemata.
	Sorcery Shops	Enable you to strengthen your abilities, via both Synthesis (to improve abilities of the same type and rank) and, later in the story, Level Boost (to level up maxed abilities with components). See page 33 for details.
	Restaurants	Sell food that immediately restores Lightning's health at the moment of purchase. The more expensive the item, the more HP it will replenish.
	Inns	Rent rooms until an hour of your choosing, restoring all of your HP. Despite the latter feature, it's better to use items or restaurants to refill the HP gauge. Inns are only of use later in the story, once you have completed most quests and need to skip to a specific time of day to continue an outstanding task.
	Adventuring Essentials	Sell monster notes, which reveal individual monster weaknesses, how best to stagger them, and other useful Libra information that you can check during battle with R2/L1 .
	Wandering Merchants	You will sometimes encounter wandering merchants in unexpected locations, most of whom will sell recovery items. However certain "rare" peddlers, who can only be found randomly in very specific locations, offer valuable pieces of equipment.

Skipping Cutscenes

While most players will want to see every last story development, there are instances (particularly after failing a difficult boss battle, or while replaying the game) where the prospect of revisiting lengthy cinematic sequences can be a less-than-enticing prospect. To skip cutscenes, press **START** / **○** and then tap **SELECT** / **△**.

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COMBAT PREPARATIONS

Lightning Returns employs a new variation on the classic Active Time Battle (ATB) system, combining the tactical possibilities of a traditional RPG with the tempo and visceral dynamic of an action game.

The number of attacks and abilities at your disposal is limited when the story begins, but you will acquire many more as you obtain additional equipment and defeat enemies. To avoid potential spoilers and an overload of information, this section is designed to act only as a generalized introduction to key features of the battle system. We offer an exhaustive investigation and interpretation of all related systems in the Inventory and Strategy & Analysis chapters.

Enemy Encounters

To initiate combat when monsters appear, approach them with **L** and tap **RT**/**RB** to attack. Whether your attack connects or not has a significant influence on the battle that follows:

- If you take your target by surprise (**V**) and your attack connects, you trigger a “great” opening: your enemies begin with 25% less HP than their maximum amount.
- If your opponent spots you (**V**) but your attack connects, you trigger a “good” opening: your enemies begin with 10% less HP than their maximum amount.
- If you fail to attack your opponent, or your attack doesn’t connect and your opponent attacks you instead, you trigger a “poor” opening: you begin with 5% less HP than your current amount on the Normal and Hard difficulty levels.

Fighting battles doesn’t lead to direct character progression, but does reward you with valuable item drops (including abilities and items required to complete quests) and gil. It also supplies you with a sum of EP usually equivalent to the stature or relative difficulty of the battle you have just fought. Though Lightning acquires numerous EP abilities over the course of the story, the EP you accumulate is most often invested in the use of Chronostasis to freeze time (see page 45).

Early in the adventure, when Lightning’s primary stats are low and your tactical options are limited by a small pool of available equipment and abilities, avoiding certain enemies is something of a necessity. There are three enemy “types” that you will regularly encounter during your travels: Chaos Beast, Feral Creature and Man-made Unit. Enemies are then further divided into three subtypes: small-scale enemy, mid-scale enemy and large-scale enemy. As a general rule of thumb, you can determine the relative difficulty of an opponent with a simple appraisal of their physical stature. The smaller an enemy is, the easier they will be to defeat.

Fighting most mid-scale and large-scale monsters is impractical (and, for the most part, suicidal) during the opening day or two of the adventure. Lightning Returns does not pull its punches: its most powerful “random” monsters can and will spawn in their natural habitats from the moment full world exploration is unlocked. As you grow in confidence and competence, however, with Lightning’s prowess improving in tandem, you’ll gradually reach a point where you can compete against larger foes.

Before then: you run away, and pick only those fights that you can hope to win.

Whenever you need to avoid an impossible or potentially difficult and protracted battle, use the following advice.

- If you can put enough distance between Lightning and an enemy, they will automatically despawn. There are also certain map areas (such as villages in the Wildlands) where enemies will not appear. If you encounter a foe on the periphery of such locations, running inside its boundaries will cause the monster to disappear.
- At her full dash speed, Lightning can easily outpace the more sluggish enemy varieties. The more fleet-footed enemies may keep up with her, but will almost never move close enough to initiate combat during a straight-line sprint.
- Faster opponents can be annoyingly dogged in their pursuit, trailing Lightning with apparent ease over long distances. There are two primary ways to shake these persistent adversaries. The first is to note that all enemies have a similar stamina limitation as Lightning: after sprinting for a time, they must briefly pause to recover. If you time a dash carefully, you can sometimes accelerate out of their range at that precise moment. Secondly, weaving between or around scenery elements will often cause monsters to pause for a moment as they navigate past the obstruction – and often, a moment is all you need to extend the distance between Lightning and the monster to cause a despawn.
- Combat will only begin if Lightning is actually struck by an enemy. This means that it is possible to brush past (or even jump over) potential adversaries in close confines.

Note that you cannot interact with NPCs while enemies are in the vicinity. You must either fight to remove them, or run away until they fall out of range and automatically despawn. You can actually use NPCs as a distraction to facilitate your escape.

ATB (Active Time Battle)

Lightning’s available energy at any given time during battle is represented by her ATB gauges. Every ability that you use consumes a portion of the ATB gauge of the Schema currently in use.

You have an individual ATB gauge for each Schema. All three gauges fill gradually during combat – the two in standby three times faster than the one currently selected. ATB segments are used in proportion to the ATB cost of the abilities you activate with the face buttons of your controller: every time you press one of these buttons, the corresponding ability is activated, with its ATB cost being withdrawn from the ATB gauge.

Switching between Schemata to make the most of each ATB gauge and carefully measuring the pace of your actions to maintain a steady assault, never ending up with all three gauges empty simultaneously, is a fundamental battle strategy.

Schemata

A Schema is a set of various pieces of equipment and up to four abilities, which you can allocate via the Customize Schemata entry at the main menu. You can have up to three Main Schemata available in combat.

During battle, you can switch between each Main Schema (**L** **RT** **RB**) at any time to make the most of their strengths, and of their respective ATB gauges.

SCHEMATA: OVERVIEW

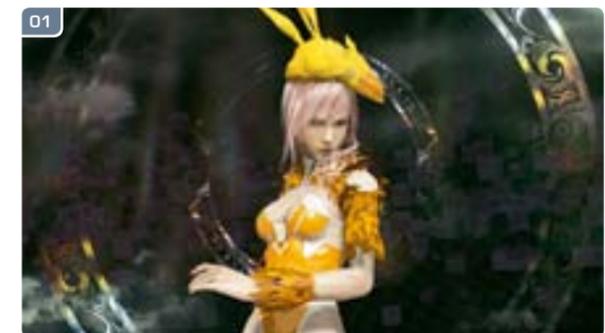
ICON	PART	KEY ATTRIBUTES	AVAILABILITY	NOTES
	Garb	Various	Garb can be purchased at Outfitters, or received as a reward.	This is the most important part of a Schema. Not only does each garb come with unique auto-abilities offering various features and attribute boosts, but they also provide native abilities that cannot be changed. In addition, your garb determines your maximum ATB, and your default ATB (how full a Schema’s ATB gauge is at the beginning of each battle). Choosing the right garb for any given situation and ensuring that your active Schemata complement each other is truly essential to your success. Turn to page 35 for more details on how to balance your Schemata configurations.
	Weapon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength (S) • Magic (M) 	Weapons can be purchased at Forges, dropped by defeated enemies, or received as rewards.	The weapon you assign to each Schema increases your character’s Strength and Magic attributes (see page 34), which in turn define the damage you can deal. Many weapons also come with auto-abilities that can have decisive applications or confer useful boons in combat (see page 32).
	Shield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HP • ATB Speed (AS) • Guard Defense (GD) 	Shields can be purchased at Forges, or received as rewards.	Shields have a bearing on the Schema’s HP (and sometimes other attributes too), but from a defensive perspective, their most important parameter is Guard Defense, which governs the Schema’s ability to resist damage while you are guarding. Turn to page 34 to find out more about attributes, and page 32 for more details on guarding.
	Head Accessory	Various	Accessories can be found in treasure spheres or received as rewards.	Head accessories are primarily used to increase your offensive or defensive stats. They only affect the Schema they are equipped to.
	Arm Accessory	Various		Most arm accessories grant you status enhancements or increase your resistance to status ailments or elemental damage, though some have more unique properties. Arm accessories affect all three Main Schemata.
	Abilities	Various	Abilities are dropped by defeated enemies, or found in certain treasure spheres.	Abilities determine which actions you can perform during battles, and constitute the backbone of the gameplay. See page 32 for details.

Note that you can customize the appearance of each Schema with adornments (**O1**), which are sold by Outfitters and can be obtained as quest rewards. You can also rename each Schema by selecting its name in the top-left corner of the screen, or adjust the color of a garb with **O**/**X**.

During battle, you can switch instantly between your Schemata, at no cost and without penalty: all you have to do is press **L1**/**LB** or **RT**/**RB**. Each Schema has its own ATB Gauge, which recovers at a rate determined by the ATB Speed attribute (**AS** – see page 34) of that Schema. The higher this value, the faster the ATB Gauge will replenish, making the corresponding Schema all the more useful.

Once you have prepared your Main Schemata, you need to choose your default Schema (**S**) with **O**/**X**. This not only determines your debut Schema at the start of every battle, but also determines Lightning’s appearance while roaming the world and during cutscenes.

In addition to the Main Schemata, you can prepare up to six Sub Schemata. These are not available during battle, but you can easily swap them with your Main Schemata from the main menu with **A**/**V**. When you start facing enemy types that potentially require very specific tactical approaches, this feature enables you to rapidly redefine your Schemata without having to spend too long tweaking individual configurations.



Setting up your Schemata is pivotal to being prepared for the many battles that await you. To optimize your ability and efficiency, you will generally need to assign clear roles to each Schema to address and exploit the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents. We dedicate a section to character specialization on page 35. Before we get there, though, let’s take a look at the different elements that give each Schema its own unique identity.

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Abilities

There are four types of abilities, each corresponding broadly to a specific role you can assign to one of your Schemata. If you have played Final Fantasy XIII and/or Final Fantasy XIII-2, you will remember these distinct “roles” from the Paradigm system. Note that you can find an exhaustive list of all abilities, with all parameters and assorted details, in the Inventory chapter.

ABILITIES: OVERVIEW

ICON	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	CORRESPONDING ROLE*
	Physical Attacks	Attacks that inflict damage based on the Strength attribute. The greater the Schema's Strength, the more damage is inflicted. Certain advanced abilities have special properties, such as interrupting enemy attacks.	Physical Schema: a role specialized in dealing physical damage (especially to staggered foes) and building up or maintaining the Stagger Wave.
	Magic Attacks	Spells that inflict damage based on the Magic attribute. The greater the Schema's Magic, the more damage is inflicted. Many spells have elemental attributes, making them ideal to exploit enemy weaknesses (see page 40).	Magic Schema: a role specialized in staggering foes and dealing magic damage.
	Defensive Abilities	Defensive abilities enable you to reduce (or evade, or counter) the damage dealt by enemy attacks: the greater the Schema's Guard Defense attribute, the less damage you take while guarding. Certain advanced abilities have specific purposes, such as healing or restoring ATB.	Defensive Schema: a role specialized in tanking enemy damage.
	Ailment Spells	These inflict status ailments to your enemies, which is a great way to hinder them and lower the danger they pose significantly. Turn to page 41 for a description of all status effects.	Ailment Schema: a role specialized in inflicting status ailments to your opponents.

* A Schema can, of course, be configured to offer a composite of more than one role if required. See page 35 for more details on character specialization.

Obtaining Abilities: There are two ways to acquire abilities. First, almost every piece of garb comes with native abilities. Simply equip the garb, and you have access to the abilities inherent to it. However, you should note that native abilities cannot be removed, as indicated by their padlock icon (🔒). You can acquire new abilities by defeating enemies (and occasionally from treasure spheres). Whenever you obtain one that you're interested in, quickly open the main menu to equip it to the relevant Schema.

Using Abilities: To have access to abilities in battle, you simply need to assign them to a Schema (see previous section). Once you have allocated the ability of your choice, you can use it in combat by pressing the corresponding face button of your controller while employing the Schema in question. Many attacking abilities are designed to be performed on multiple consecutive instances to create a combo, with the final strike in the sequence offering increased damage. To use an ability multiple times, you can either press the necessary button manually in accordance with Lightning's movements, or simply hold the button down. Holding the ability button makes a lot of sense for guard abilities, as this ensures that there are no potential interruptions in your defense. The only downside to holding the button is that it prevents you from achieving potential Perfect Timing bonuses (see page 39), though this is an advanced feature that will take a little time to master.

Button Mapping: As you become more and more familiar with the combat system, you will soon realize that it makes sense to think carefully about how you allocate abilities to the face buttons of your controller. For example, if you have attacks infused with the same element in two different Schemata (such as Aero with one, and Aerora or Galestrike with another), try to assign these abilities to the same button. This way, when you face an enemy variety that is susceptible to the Wind element, you could potentially switch between the Schemata concerned without releasing the button. You can push this even further by deciding in advance that you will always assign certain types of moves to a given button. For instance, all guard moves to /; all Fire-elemental attacks to /; and so forth. This will give you an edge in battles, helping you to know instinctively what buttons to press in accordance with your current circumstances.

Synthesis & Ability Levels: All abilities have a level, which appears in their name. Initially, you will mostly have Lv. 1 abilities, but as you progress in the game, you will receive abilities of higher levels. What's more, you will soon unlock the Synthesis feature, available in Sorcery Shops (🏪), which enables you to fuse abilities of the same level to upgrade them, and ultimately to level them up once they reach their limit via the Level Boost feature unlocked on Day 6. Read the section on Synthesis to the right for more details.

Rare Abilities: Certain abilities appear in yellow in the game, and have a small star on their icons. These rare abilities are invaluable in that they are imbued with an auto-ability that provides additional benefits.

Auto-Abilities

Auto-abilities (🌀) are perks, passive traits that permanently boost the Schema they apply to (and, in the case of arm accessories, to any active Schema). They come in all forms, from those which enhance basic attributes such as HP, ATB, stagger capability, Strength and Magic, to those that affect elemental attacks and resistances. A few only apply in very specific circumstances, such as one auto-ability that offers a bonus whenever Lightning attacks an opponent from behind.

Auto-abilities can sometimes be extremely valuable, and even entirely justify settling for the otherwise poor stats of whichever piece of equipment or ability they belong to. In a highly specialized Schemata configuration, auto-abilities often have critical significance whenever you choose abilities or equipment for a given Schema. For example, a +15% increase of your Magic attribute can prove invaluable for a magic-oriented Schema that uses elemental spells (leading to a +15% boost to the damage you cause). Any bonus to damage (or ailment) resistance is a blessing for a defensive Schema designed primarily to tank enemy assaults.

To see details about the effects of auto-abilities, move the cursor to an item or ability and press /, or simply consult our comprehensive list on page 250.

Synthesis

Once they are unlocked during the storyline, you can visit Sorcery Shops to strengthen your abilities by synthesizing them with abilities of the same type and rank – for example Attack Lv.1 with Attack Lv.1. The first ability you select is kept and upgraded during the process. The second ability you select is consumed and lost.

You will find a brief overview of the system here. You can find an in-depth presentation in the Strategy & Analysis chapter.

- Synthesizing physical abilities (🔪) and magic abilities (🔮) increases their Attack parameter by one increment (for example, from x1.00 to x1.05), making it more powerful (in this case, by 5%).
- Once an ability reaches its limit (its final increment), it is marked by an icon (🔒). At this point, synthesizing it further has no effect on its Attack value.
- The synthesis process usually keeps the best parameters of the two abilities that are fused. For instance, if you synthesize an ability with a low ATB cost, and another with a high Attack value, the resulting ability will have both of these features.
- If the two abilities that are being synthesized each have an auto-ability, the source ability has priority over the consumed ability – in other words, the auto-ability of the first ability that you select will prevail.
- In addition to a boost to the source ability's Attack parameter, the synthesis process may occasionally lead to extra bonuses, such as the appearance of an auto-ability. These are usually extremely valuable.
- Synthesizing defensive abilities (🛡️) and ailment abilities (🏠) is not necessary, as they are always maxed by default – their parameters cannot be raised any further.
- A maxed ability (marked by the 🔒 icon) can be leveled up via the Level Boost feature that is unlocked at all Sorcery Shops from Day 6. Leveling up abilities always results in boosts to their main parameters, and sometimes in additional bonuses, such as a reduction of their base ATB cost. As a consequence, abilities that you level up at Sorcery Shops (especially those that you have nurtured from Level 1) cost less in terms of ATB than those of equivalent levels that you obtain from defeated enemies.
- After leveling up an ability, you can repeat the whole process again (synthesizing it incrementally, and leveling it up) to reach even higher levels. This feature is partially restricted during a debut Easy or Normal playthrough, but fully unlocked during a subsequent Hard playthrough after you complete the main storyline for the first time.



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Attributes

Attributes are the parameters that determine each Schema's efficiency. Each attribute has a bearing on one or more gameplay elements. Once you are confident enough to start creating specialized Schemata (see page 35), you need to pay close attention to each Schema's attributes, making sure that those most pertinent to the role are maximized.

You can also increase your attributes with pieces of equipment (see page 31) and auto-abilities (see page 32).

ATTRIBUTES: OVERVIEW

ICON	ATTRIBUTE	DESCRIPTION
	Strength	Affects the damage you deal with physical attacks. An essential attribute for damage-dealers using physical strikes (🗡️): abilities such as Attack, Heavy Slash, Blitz, and so forth.
	Magic	Affects the damage you deal with magic attacks. An essential attribute for damage-dealers using magic attacks (🔮) and ailment-oriented Schemata (📄): abilities such as Ruin, elemental spells, debuffs, and so on.
	Guard Defense	Affects how well you resist damage when using a guard ability (🛡️). An essential attribute for defensive Schemata.
	HP	Your maximum HP value, when your HP gauge is full. This attribute is only of primary importance for defensive Schemata.
	ATB Speed/ATB Recovery	The speed at which a Schema's ATB gauge is replenished. This is a crucial attribute for all Schemata.
	Maximum ATB	A Schema's bonus to the Maximum ATB value. The higher this parameter, the more abilities you can use in quick succession with a full ATB Gauge.
	Default ATB	Your ATB value at the start of each battle.
	Physical Resistance	The reduction applied to any form of physical damage you sustain. This is only relevant for defensive Schemata.
	Magic Resistance	The reduction applied to any form of magic damage you sustain – again, this is only relevant for defensive Schemata.
	Stagger Power	The amount by which an attack contributes to increasing the target's Stagger Wave (see page 38). This is usually measured with letters, with A being the most efficient, and E the least efficient.
	Stagger Preservation	The amount by which an attack contributes to maintaining the target's Stagger Wave (see page 38). Also referred to as Stagger Time, this is usually measured with letters, with A being the most efficient, and E the least efficient.
	ATB Cost	The cost of an ability: in other words, how many points are removed from your current ATB Gauge.

Character Progression

Throughout the adventure, Lightning becomes stronger in many ways. However, and unlike most RPGs, her attributes do not increase via the accumulation of experience points during battles, but instead by completing quests. Each quest that you complete – be it main quest, side quest or a Canvas of Prayers task – rewards you with bonuses to your main attributes. It is usually the case that longer or more difficult quests offer better stat bonuses. As quest completion is also the principal story requirement to reach the ending, there is a very strong incentive for you to tackle as many missions as you can.

In addition to these bonuses, there are other factors that contribute to your character progression:

- **Better equipment:** As the in-game days pass, shop inventories are expanded and you have access to much more powerful (albeit more expensive) equipment, from garb to weapons and shields. Later quest rewards and items

dropped by advanced enemies can also provide you with valuable objects. Superior equipment can contribute a very significant bonus to your combat proficiency.

- **Better abilities:** From Day 7 onwards, the enemies you encounter grow stronger on a daily basis. This gradual elevation of the overall difficulty of combat has its merits, one being that monsters begin to drop abilities of higher levels. They will also surrender more rare abilities in post-battle spoils, which can drastically improve both your offensive and defensive efficiency.
- **Ability Synthesis:** As you accumulate abilities in great quantities from defeated enemies, you can eventually employ the Synthesis feature offered by Sorcery Shops (🏪) to upgrade abilities of the same level, and ultimately to level them up once they reach their limit (marked with the ⚡ icon). By manually leveling up abilities (especially the rare ones), you can further hone your combat skills.

Character Specialization

Character specialization is an all-important aspect of the game. If your Schemata are versatile and broadly similar – for example, one physical attack, one elemental spell, one area-of-effect technique, and one guard move in each Schema – you will do fine during the first few hours in the game. This is a natural approach for beginners, as you do not have access to ailment spells initially. It also makes sense to be able to block or attack with any Schema. However, if you stick to this strategy, your overall efficiency in battle will be extremely

limited in the long run – especially from the moment you start fighting stronger enemies. Indeed, the various roles you can assign to your Schemata rely upon completely different attributes, and having average attributes leads to mediocre battle performances.

We discuss the details and requirements of character specialization in the Strategy & Analysis chapter, but for now you should at least understand the general underlying mechanics.

SPECIALIZATION: OVERVIEW

KEY ABILITIES	ROLE	DESCRIPTION	KEY ATTRIBUTES
	Physical damage-dealer	A specialist in physical damage, especially the damage dealt during a stagger sequence. Can also contribute very efficiently to staggering enemies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength ATB Speed
	Magic damage-dealer	A specialist in magic and elemental damage, which can greatly contribute to staggering enemies by exploiting their weaknesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magic ATB Speed
	Tank/Damage sponge	A defense specialist, capable of tanking (or evading, or countering) even the most powerful enemy attacks without losing much health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guard Defense HP
	Ailment Schema	A specialist in status ailments, who can make a world of difference in battles by reducing key enemy attributes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain auto-abilities Magic

Given that there are four principal roles, and you only have three Main Schemata that you can use in battle, at least one of your Schemata will have to fuse two specializations.

Here is a description of a typical Schemata configuration that can prove very successful against more powerful enemies. Naturally, this is only one possibility among many, and you should feel free to adapt this to your style and needs, and to experiment with the system yourself. Consider the following configuration as a very efficient setup that will remain reliable throughout the entire adventure. You will find more suggestions and a complete presentation of the system in the Strategy & Analysis chapter.

Schema 1: Ailment Schema (📄). This essential role focuses on debuffing and debilitating your enemies. Though you may initially think that launching standard attacks would be more useful, think again: status ailments severely hamper your foes, and can have various effects, such as greatly increasing the damage you deal to them, or significantly reducing the damage they deal to you. There are many ailment abilities that work wonders (see page 41), though you will have to choose a maximum of four for this Schema. Deprotect, Deshell, Imperil and Slow tend to be effective choices in most instances. If you decide to opt for only three of them, you can use the fourth ability slot for a guard ability (making this Schema your tank – 🛡️).

Schema 2: Magic damage-dealer (🔮). This profile requires a very high Magic stat (with Strength and HP being irrelevant), and will usually need to have access to elemental spells of all four elements – which means that all four ability slots will be used up. Choose an elemental garb that suits your needs, and complement its native ability with your best spells of the other three elements.

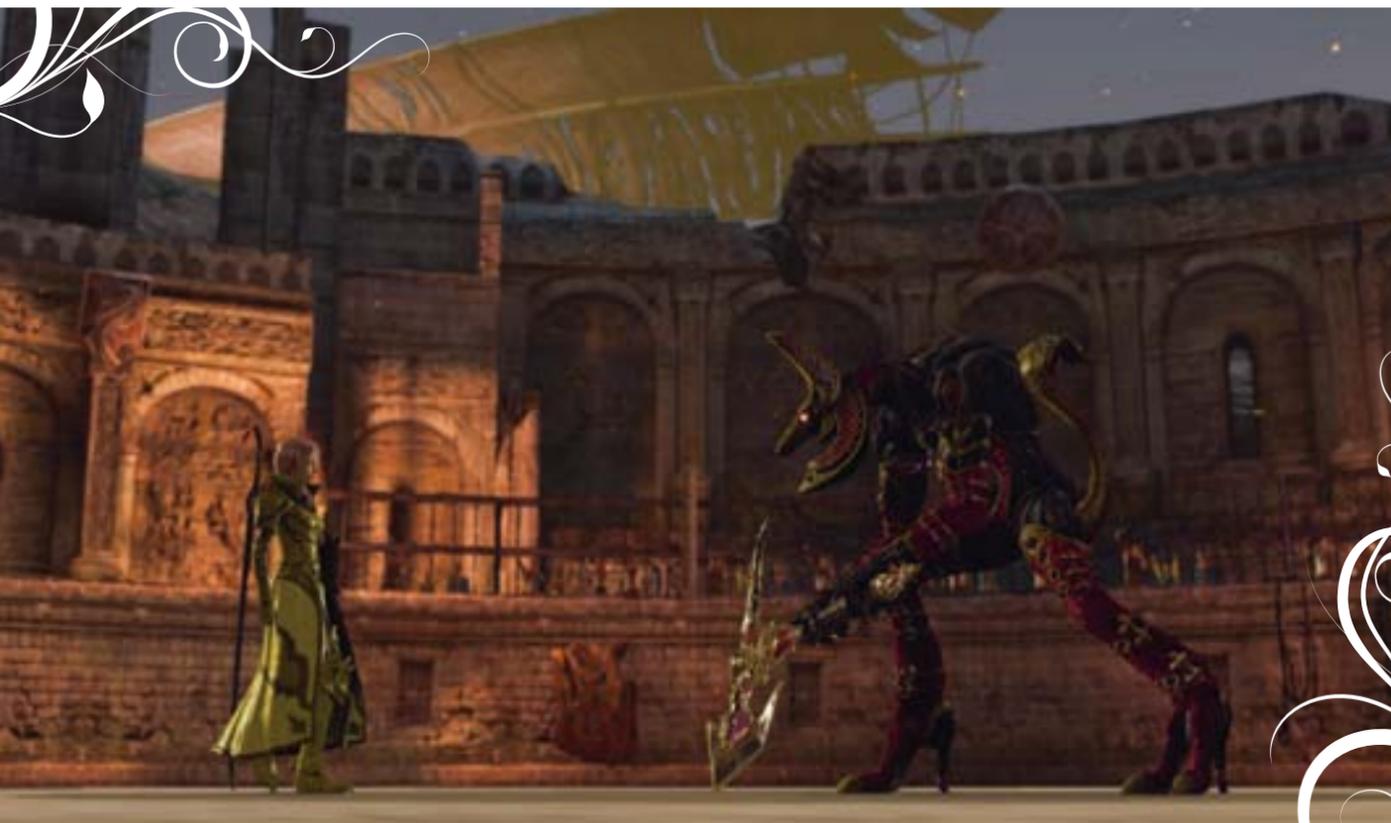
Schema 3: Physical damage-dealer (🗡️). This profile requires a very high Strength stat (with Magic being irrelevant), and at least two standard physical attacks, one that can deal massive damage to a single target, and one with an area of effect to hit multiple opponents simultaneously. An additional elemental (but physical) attack can be a boon against enemies vulnerable to the element in question. This leaves you with at least one free ability slot, which you can keep for a guard ability (giving this schema a second role: tank – 🛡️), or for an attack likely to interrupt enemy actions.

If you follow this general configuration, your defensive Schema will be either the physical damage-dealer or the ailment Schema. This choice really depends on your personal preferences, but you must ensure that your Schema with a secondary “damage sponge” role has a large amount of HP, a strong Guard Defense stat (from a shield), a powerful guard ability, and perhaps even a related auto-ability (such as an increase to damage resistance).

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COMBAT MECHANICS



Battlefield Properties



Once you've struck (or been struck by) an enemy on the field screen, you are automatically transferred to the battle screen. Wherever you are in the game, the battlefield is always the same in terms of size and shape: it's a circular arena, where you are free to move around with **○**.

Lightning walks at a rather slow pace during combat, so the instances where it makes sense to use this feature are fairly rare:

- The most common is when you identify that an enemy type has very specific attack restrictions. For example, if you notice that an opponent will only strike at melee range, you can move away from it to prevent it from attacking while your ATB gauges are being refilled. The opposite (deliberately remaining at close range) can be effective against foes who only perform ranged attacks, or favor weaker assaults when Lightning is in close proximity.
- There are also certain enemy types that are easier to stagger if you catch them from behind, or if you destroy one of their body parts by striking at certain vulnerabilities (01). Any body part that you manage to destroy will severely hamper the victim, usually causing an instant stagger and preventing an adversary from performing a specific (usually powerful) attack.



In almost all other cases, however, you are better off using abilities and making the most of your ATB gauges in a direct offensive, rather than wasting precious time by walking around the battlefield. The defensive Evade ability (02) can be used to roll in any direction, which is much faster than walking, but this is costly in terms of ATB, and there are few applications to this move.

Note that you can control the camera with **○**, and switch between near and far views with **R3**/**RT** (03 & 04). The far view can prove handy when you are facing many enemies in combat, or want to assess your exact position on the battleground.



Combat Flow

Fighting battles in Lightning Returns is almost akin to dancing or playing a rhythm game, with switches between Schemata being the beat of the melody, and the activation of abilities its notes. The important thing to keep in mind is that you do not dance alone: the behavior of your enemies partly dictates the pace of each encounter, requiring you to adapt your steps to best counter your foes. If they attack, you guard; if they resist a specific type of damage or element, you switch to the opposite one.

The point is that you usually need not worry about moving your character around, or jumping, or performing other feats of agility; your sole concern is to activate abilities with the face buttons of your controller, and switch Schemata when appropriate with **L1**/**R1** or **LB**/**RB**.

A typical sequence of events in a combat encounter might flow in the following manner:

- You open the battle with your ailment Schema, weakening your opponent with status ailments (see page 42).
- You switch to a stagger-oriented Schema to build up your target's Stagger Wave, for example with elemental attacks (exploiting the target's weaknesses – see page 43) until you cause a stagger.
- You switch to a damage-dealer Schema to hit your staggered victim with your most powerful attacks.

D. Whenever necessary, you quickly switch to your defensive Schema to tank any attacks launched against you, then immediately switch back to the previous Schema to resume your assault.

E. You keep repeating this cycle until your enemy falls, making any adjustments required during the process (for example healing, or casting a status ailment again if the enemy cured or recovered from its deleterious effects).

Once you know your three Schemata ability sets by heart, you can actually spend most of your time with your eyes focused on your opponent. Calmly but resolutely activate your abilities one after the other in sequence, only briefly switching in and out of your defensive Schema to guard every time you notice your target initiating an assault (which is foreshadowed either by a characteristic move such as an arm swinging, or by a text box with the imminent attack's name appearing directly above the foe).

With practice, battles do become like a dance, with the general tempo (your strategy) dictated by the enemy type you're facing, and more contextual actions (such as guard moves or the activation of powerful attacks) leading to smooth and precise transitions between your Schemata.

Prioritizing Targets

When you face multiple opponents, you are free to change targets during battle with **○**. This feature has various applications:

- Sometimes you may want to take out a certain enemy first: perhaps eliminating a single powerful opponent surrounded by weak minions, or taking out a fragile foe who has a propensity for healing or buffing his more attack-focused companions.
- You can also benefit from switching targets when you launch area attack spells. Choose an enemy in the center of a group to inflict damage on as many foes as possible (05).

As a rule, you should always try to thin enemy numbers quickly whenever you fight groups. Any enemy outside your current view can prepare and perform an attack that you won't even see coming, which will make it much more difficult to guard in time.



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Stagger

By striking at enemy vulnerabilities, you can break down their defenses and stagger them. Attacking a staggered enemy will deliver far more damage than usual, enabling you to end battles more quickly and efficiently. Managing to stagger your opponents is one of the most essential keys to being able to defeat them – this is especially true against large-scale creatures and bosses.

When you attack an enemy, you will see a Stagger Wave on its HP gauge. The more this wave increases, the more effective your attack was. To speed up the process, always try to exploit your target's weaknesses (see page 40). For example, hitting an opponent with a susceptibility to the Fire element with Fire-infused spells and attacks will usually lead to a quick stagger. As you get closer to staggering your enemy, the wave will turn from blue to yellow and then to red (06). Keep hitting the foe until it is staggered.

Abilities can contribute to stagger-building in two ways:

- Some abilities have excellent **Stagger Power** (⚡), which means that using them significantly increases the amplitude of the Stagger Wave.
- Other abilities are primarily equipped for **Stagger Preservation** (⚡), meaning that they maintain the wave, preventing it from being reset until the next attack with high Stagger Power is ready to be performed.

The attack that causes the stagger on an enemy enjoys a massive damage multiplier, which makes powerful abilities even more useful in that regard. The word "Staggered" appears above the victim, who usually reacts physically – for example by collapsing or kneeling down. The victim remains staggered only for a limited time, so always try to make the most of these precious seconds.

Indeed, most enemies will be severely weakened while staggered, for example taking more damage, becoming vulnerable to status ailments, or even suffering from certain stagger-exclusive ailments (represented by hexagonal icons).



This makes staggering the fastest and most effective way to take down most monsters. To maximize your damage output during a stagger, you might occasionally choose to employ the unique Overclock EP ability, which freezes time in your favor (see page 45).

Some enemies have more than one level of stagger. This means that, while they are staggered, you can repeat the process and stagger them a second time, leading to even greater results. The victim will generally react physically to each stagger. For example, a creature might kneel down during a first stagger, then completely keel over if you manage to reach the second level of stagger.

It's worth noting that some enemies will be staggered when you guard one of their attacks just before it lands, or when you strike right before or after one of their attacks. Such "Perfect Timing" moves require practice but reduce the duration and difficulty of certain encounters enormously once mastered.

Perfect Timing

The efficiency of certain abilities can be enhanced by performing them with Perfect Timing, which usually means that you execute the move during the final animation frames of a previous action.

- Offensive abilities that you can link in a combo will be ever more powerful if you unleash them right as the last physical attack strikes or when the prior spell is unleashed. Perfect attacks deal more damage, but they require you to tap the relevant face button of your controller with the right tempo. They are, naturally, impossible to achieve if you hold the button instead.
- Defensive guard abilities are also far more effective if you activate them right before the enemy's attack lands. Perfect Guard reduces (and may even negate) the damage sustained by Lightning, and can trigger an instant stagger on certain enemy types as a fringe benefit.
- Striking certain enemies just before or after they perform a signature attack can also trigger an instant stagger.

Whenever you perform an action with perfect timing, you will see a glowing aura surround Lightning (07). Perfect timing is a high-level technique that requires quick judgment and extensive practice, though its merits are substantial.



Healing

Unless you're playing on Easy Mode, where your HP gauge is replenished automatically outside battles, healing Lightning can be something of a mystery early on in the adventure, as the only curative abilities at your disposal involve consuming EP and items that you can carry in very limited quantities. As you advance in the storyline, though, you will receive additional slots for recovery items, extra EP, and equipment offering new abilities, which makes HP maintenance less of a problem.

You can see your HP gauge at all times in the bottom-left corner of the screen, whether you are on the field screen, on the battle screen, or even in menus.

Here is an overview of the various methods you can use to heal in the opening hours of play:

Recovery Items: These are consumables that you can use both during battles (START, then L1/LB or R1/RB to change screens) and outside battles (via the main menu). There are various types of potions, of varying potencies, and some with additional effects such as the endowment of buffs. Check out the Inventory chapter of this guide for a complete list. You can purchase recovery items from the multiple General Stores scattered throughout the world, and from Hope (in return for EP, rather than gil) during each visit to the Ark.

EP Abilities: You can also use these abilities both during battles (START, then L1/LB or R1/RB to change screens) and outside battles (via the main menu). They consume EP, and some of them can be used to restore health. Curaga, which is available from the start, refills your entire HP gauge. See page 45.

Restaurants: There are restaurants to be found across all four continents (though the Dead Dunes has only one). These all offer various dishes that will restore HP instantly. The more gil you spend, the larger the restoration.

Inns: Staying at an inn replenishes your entire HP gauge, though this is at the cost of both gil and, more importantly, time. Considering that you have a limited amount of hours to complete your

objectives, we would suggest that you heal at restaurants instead. Inns are designed to be of utility later in the story, when you have relatively few outstanding quests and need to accelerate time for one reason or another.

Mediguard: You are likely to obtain the Mediguard ability during your first trip to Yusnaan, as it is dropped by the Flanitor enemy type. Being able to top up Lightning's health while blocking (or in quiet moments against weak opponents) reduces the need to burn through healing items or EP. There are other abilities that can offer similar properties, but these only become available at a much later stage in the game.

Regen: This status enhancement causes your HP to slowly replenish over time during battles until the effect expires. Though you cannot cast it with an ability, there are a few ways to trigger it (mainly via certain potions and, later in the story, noteworthy equipment).

Allies: An ally acquired during the course of the main story in the Wildlands can cast healing spells on Lightning.

The most important point to understand about healing is that the ideal scenario is to avoid taking damage in the first place. The key to avoiding injuries is guarding, which you should learn to do with unfailing efficiency. To increase your chances, make sure you always assign your guard abilities to the same face button of your controller (for example, Ⓞ/ⓧ), and start holding that button immediately when you notice an incoming enemy attack, while simultaneously switching to the relevant Schema.

With practice, this will become a second-nature move that you perform instinctively in every battle. In easy encounters, guarding with Mediguard is enough to negate enemy damage, and heal as a fringe benefit. You can even use Mediguard to restore Lightning's HP after staggering more trivial enemies. Against tougher opponents, it's usually safer to resort to guard abilities with higher resistance to damage (such as Heavy Guard). Taking no or little damage without being able to heal is better than taking more damage than you can hope to heal with Mediguard.



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Death, Game Over, New Game+

In Lightning Returns, **death** isn't really a danger, and losing a battle won't send you to the Game Over screen. Whenever your HP gauge is entirely depleted, you are requested to select any of the means of revival at your disposal: either a recovery item such as Phoenix Down, or an EP ability such as Arise.

If you consume all of these and run out of options to revive Lightning, your only option is to **escape** the battle with the corresponding EP ability (which costs 0 EP). Escaping a battle rewinds time to before the battle began, resetting all of your parameters and belongings to their previous state, but this consumes an hour of the in-game time on Normal or Hard Mode – making it an inconvenient solution if activated too frequently.

Indeed, whereas occasional uses of the Escape ability can be perfectly acceptable, repeated usage will lead time to flow too fast, preventing you from completing key objectives. If you fail to complete all five main quests by Day 13, when the world is set to end, you will reach the **Game Over** screen. Your only option then is to restart the adventure from Day 1.

When this happens, you have the option to activate the **New Game+** feature, which enables you to begin the adventure anew while keeping practically all of your equipment and attributes from the previous save file. This, naturally, gives you an incredible edge in your new playthrough.



Damage Types & Elements

All attacks in the game are either physical or magic in nature, the former dealing damage based on the Strength attribute, and the latter based on the Magic attribute.

Both attack types can be either non-elemental (neutral) or elemental – in other words, imbued with an element from a subset of four elemental varieties.

DAMAGE TYPES & ELEMENTS

ICON	MEANING	ICON	MEANING
	Physical		Ice
	Magic		Lightning
	Fire		Wind

Each enemy has a set of affinities, which determine the amount of damage they sustain from attacks.

DAMAGE AFFINITIES

DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Weakness	The enemy takes extra damage.
Normal	The enemy takes standard damage.
Halved	The enemy takes reduced damage.
Resistant	The enemy takes very little damage.
Immune	The enemy takes no damage.
Absorbed	Attacks will actually heal the enemy.

Once you have identified a creature's weaknesses, it is up to you to adapt your Schemata accordingly to take advantage of them. For example, if a creature is weak to the Fire element, but resists magic damage, equipping a Fire-imbued physical ability (such as Flamestrike or Heat Blitz) to a Schema dedicated to physical damage will lead to optimal results. If you stick to abilities (even the most powerful ones) that enemies resist, your attacks will have very limited effects on them.

There are several ways to further enhance the effects of your attacks when attempting to exploit enemy weaknesses.

- Certain recovery items, including various sorts of potions, can grant you status enhancements. These increase one damage type (physical with Bravery, magic with Faith) or provide elemental properties to otherwise neutral attacks (the En- buffs, such as Enfire, Enfrost, and so on).
- You can equip certain accessories that produce similar effects.
- You can equip various pieces of equipment offering auto-abilities that enhance one specific type of damage or element.
- You can cast the Imperil status ailment on your enemies, adjusting their elemental damage affinities by one level (for example from "Normal" to "Weakness").

You also have various means at your disposal to increase your resistance to all types of attacks from your opponents:

- Many pieces of equipment, especially accessories, offer effects or auto-abilities that can increase your resistance to any and all types of damage.
- Certain abilities, such as NulAll Guard, increase your efficiency when guarding against specific types of damage.
- Various status enhancements can improve your resistance to one damage type – see next page for details.

Status Enhancements



Status enhancements (also called **buffs**) are beneficial status effects that improve the defensive or offensive prowess of the user – be that Lightning (08) or an enemy (09). They play a decisive role in determining the difficulty, duration and final outcome of the more demanding battles.

Status enhancements cannot be bestowed by abilities, but only via the use of recovery items or accessories. Each buff has a specific purpose, as revealed in the following table.

STATUS ENHANCEMENTS: OVERVIEW

ICON	ENHANCEMENT	EFFECT
	Bravery	Raises the target's Strength stat, increasing the damage inflicted by physical attacks.
	Faith	Raises the target's Magic stat, increasing the damage inflicted by magic attacks.
	Protect	Increases the target's resistance to physical attacks.
	Shell	Increases the target's resistance to magic attacks.
	Haste	Increases the rate at which the ATB gauge fills.
	Vigilance	Increases the target's resistance to interruptions.
	Regen	Slowly restores HP over time.
	Veil	Increases the target's resistance to status ailments.
	Enfire	Strengthens attacks imbued with the Fire element, imbues non-elemental attacks with this element.
	Enfrost	Strengthens attacks imbued with the Ice element, imbues non-elemental attacks with this element.
	Enthunder	Strengthens attacks imbued with the Lightning element, imbues non-elemental attacks with this element.
	Enaero	Strengthens attacks imbued with the Wind element, imbues non-elemental attacks with this element.
	Reraise	Revives you once if your HP gauge is entirely depleted.

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Status Ailments

Status ailments (which include both **debuffs** and **debilitations**) are detrimental status effects that can be inflicted on Lightning and her enemies. They become a more prominent aspect of combat encounters as you progress through the story. Some adversaries (particularly bosses and large-scale foes) can prove difficult to beat unless you weaken them with status ailments.

The most common way to inflict status ailments is via the use of debilitating abilities (☞). Ideally, you should have one of your Schemata at least part-specialized in inflicting debuffs, and pay attention to any immunities that your current target may have. What could be a long, protracted battle might become a formality the moment you hamper your opponent with the debuffs it is vulnerable to.

When you are assailed by status ailments, you will need to quickly assess how dangerous they are. The Esunada EP ability is the most obvious solution to remove them, though this costs 1 EP. Other cures include recovery items such as Remedies, and potions that grant a buff that counters the debuff you're suffering from.

STATUS AILMENTS: OVERVIEW

ICON	AILMENT	EFFECT
	Debrave	Diminishes the victim's Strength stat.
	Defaith	Diminishes the victim's Magic stat.
	Deprotect	Reduces the target's resistance to physical attacks.
	Deshell	Reduces the target's resistance to magic attacks.
	Slow	Reduces the rate at which the target's ATB gauge replenishes.
	Curse	Reduces the target's resistance to interruptions.
	Poison	Deals gradual damage until removed or the effect expires.
	Imperil	Reduces the target's resistance to elemental attacks.
	Pain	Prevents the afflicted combatant from using physical abilities.
	Fog	Prevents the afflicted combatant from using magic abilities.
	Daze	Stuns the target and increases the damage they sustain through attacks.
	Unprotected	Lowers the target's physical resistance.
	Unshelled	Lowers the target's magic resistance.
	Parched	Lowers the target's resistance to Fire damage.
	Exposed	Lowers the target's resistance to Ice damage.
	Conductive	Lowers the target's resistance to Lightning damage.
	Brittle	Lowers the target's resistance to Wind damage.
	Broken	Makes the target easier to stagger.
	Infected	Makes the target more vulnerable to status ailments.
	Hindered	Slows the target's movements.
	Confused	Makes the target unable to distinguish friend from foe.
	Cursed	Makes the target more likely to recoil and have attack interrupted.
	Dazed	Makes the target unable to take action and more vulnerable to damage.
	Pained	Makes the target unable to use physical attacks.
	Foggy	Makes the target unable to use magic attacks.



Note that each status ailment (except for Imperil) can be countered by using the opposing effect which strengthens the same parameter, and vice versa:



When you face an enemy type that is immune to certain (or all) status ailments, it is worth noting that staggering the target can often cancel its immunities and make it ripe for a quick round of ailments at the beginning of the stagger period. You can then launch your most powerful attacks for optimal results. This is an essential step against the toughest enemies and bosses in the game.

In addition, many creature types suffer from unique debuffs while staggered, making them even more vulnerable to your attacks. These ailments have the same icons as the ones introduced here, except that they have hexagonal shapes (see the Overview table, to the left).



Enemies



You will encounter dozens of different enemy types during your travels through the main regions in Lightning Returns. Many roam alone, but some are found in pairs, or even larger groups. With certain battles being unavoidable, and the rewards for taking down enemies very valuable (new abilities, pieces of equipment, quest-related drops, gil), it is essential that you get to know the strengths and weaknesses of your foes. Even more important is the need to react accordingly by adapting your Schemata and tactics.

Press **R2/Rtl** to view "Libra" information on your opponents during battles (10); use **R1/RB** and **L1/LB** to cycle through the pages that appear for each individual assailant. Most fields will be blank on a first encounter, but additional data will appear during combat, and on subsequent meetings. It usually takes a handful of separate battles to build a fairly complete picture of a particular adversary's strengths, weaknesses and special attributes. Once an entry is fully revealed it is marked with a ✓ in the in-game bestiary.

To speed up the process of revealing enemy data, you can deliberately try out all types of attacks as the battle begins: quickly cast all four varieties of elemental spells with your magic-oriented Schema, then switch to



your ailment Schema and cast all available spells, then switch to your physical-oriented Schema and unleash a physical attack. This short round of moves will uncover most of the creature's essential information.

Alternatively, you can purchase monster notes from Adventuring Essentials merchants, which offer you the benefit of a fully revealed Libra page for a relatively minor investment.

Much of the data obtained for each enemy concerns their susceptibility or capacity to withstand elemental forces and status effects. This is vitally important, as exploiting these weaknesses is the only way to stagger and defeat your opponents quickly. Indeed, if you have not discovered that a foe has a high resistance to (or, worse, absorbs) Wind-based damage, for example, any ability infused with that element will heal your target instead of damaging it.

As you establish that different kinds of attacks are more or less effective against different enemies, you will simultaneously discover each creature's stagger conditions. These list the most efficient ways to stagger your foes – an essential step for painless battles (see page 38).

There are a few final tips that you should know to fully understand the danger posed by monsters:

- **Monster Evolution:** From Day 7 onwards, all monsters grow stronger at regular intervals in the timeline (see the guide's Bestiary for details), dealing more damage to Lightning and taking less damage from her. This is a critical factor that you need to take into account when planning your journeys and the order in which you will be completing main storyline missions and secondary quests.

- **Item Drops:** As monsters grow stronger from Day 7 onwards, they also yield better rewards. You receive more gil, but more importantly you also have a better chance to obtain superior item drops, and high-level abilities. For example, an enemy type that regularly drops a standard version of Ruin Lv. 1 in early days will start to drop Ruin Lv. 2 or Lv. 3, potentially in rare versions, on Day 10. This makes the process of hunting down enemies far more rewarding, though more difficult, during the later stages of the story.

- **Last Ones:** There are a limited number of monsters inhabiting the lands of Nova Chrysalia. Once you defeat all the individuals of a species, it will have been exterminated, never to appear again. However, when ridding the world of monsters, you must take heed of the Last Ones. These are the very last specimens, appearing when their species is on the brink of extinction. Last Ones are magenta in color (11), and far more powerful than their predecessors. They're also easy to identify from the letter "Ω" (omega, the final letter of the Greek alphabet) that appears in their name. Eliminating them usually offers valuable item drops, as well as a piece of equipment to collect on the ground right after the battle ends. It's worth noting that a handful of species cannot be exterminated – these are all clearly identified in the guide's Bestiary.

SPECIAL FEATURES



The Ark



The Ark is Lightning's base of operations, where time does not flow. You are automatically returned to the Ark at 06:00 every morning, no matter where you are and what you are currently doing. Your EP meter is refilled to its maximum level in the process.

During every visit to the Ark, you will find a gift from Hope, taking the form of a cubic treasure box (01). Make sure you always open these gifts, as their contents are valuable, from new EP abilities to special garb that you can use in battle.

You can also talk to Hope to learn more about various concepts and characters, but more importantly to acquire special recovery items (see page 39) in exchange for EP. Some of these items are very rare and cannot be obtained anywhere else.

The Ark also features the Book of Conquest, a record of the highest battle scores received from all unique enemies (mostly bosses and Last Ones) that Lightning has fought and defeated. Examine the book to activate these records, and you will be able to challenge these fallen enemies again in their most powerful form. These battles offer no rewards: they are purely available for sport and practice.

Chaos Infusions



Chaos Infusions are pockets of Chaos that appear without warning in your environment (02). Inside a Chaos Infusion, several factors make your opponents significantly more difficult to beat:

- Monsters' HP, Strength and Magic are all boosted by 50%.
- Monsters restore HP indefinitely through a permanent Regen effect.
- Monsters are more resistant to interruptions, regardless of the attacks used.
- Monsters are able to quickly shake off any status ailments.
- Status ailments last longer than usual on Lightning.

However, there are some advantages to be found in battling monsters within Chaos Infusions. You will have a better chance of receiving items, and will receive a multiplier on your post-combat haul of gil and EP. Furthermore, Chaos Infusions feature Soul Seeds, collectibles that you can pick up and sell for a sizable price to traders that appear on each continent.

The moment you defeat the creatures spawned by an Infusion, the Chaos will disperse. It is up to you to weigh the risks and decide for yourself whether or not to fight or stay clear of combat. If you are unsure, you can always briefly step inside the boundaries of the pocket, and identify which enemy type spawns. Engage it if it belongs to a species that poses you no threat, and retreat otherwise: you can then eliminate the enemy from outside the Infusion, or move away and come back in the hope that another, weaker enemy type will spawn instead.

If you are competent at avoiding enemies as they pursue Lightning, you can make daring forays into Chaos Infusions to collect any Soul Seeds in the area without actually entering combat. However, as defeating enemies in Chaos Infusions is a significant source of EP, it's generally worth your while to wait for a suitable opponent and capitalize on the opportunity to gain the improved spoils.

EP & EP Abilities

Lightning's Energy Points (EP) are represented by the meter in the bottom-left corner of your screen. You can spend these points to activate EP abilities (or to buy recovery items while on the Ark).

There are multiple ways to restore your EP:

- EP is fully restored when you return to the Ark at 06:00 every day.
- Each enemy you defeat rewards you with a set amount of EP. As a rule, the tougher the foe, the more EP you get for eliminating it. Most enemies of the large-scale subtype yield large sums of EP when they fall, making the weaker varieties very efficient targets to refill your EP meter.
- Enemies that you defeat in Chaos Infusions grant you a far larger EP bonus.
- Recovery items of the Ether category (rare items that can only be obtained as rewards later in the game) refill portions of your EP meter.

The limit of your EP meter – in other words, your maximum EP – can be increased by completing main quests. Fulfilling these in priority can prove very helpful, as several EP abilities have very handy applications. You can find the full list of all EP abilities (some of which are unlocked on later days, as gifts from Hope on the Ark) in the Strategy & Analysis chapter, but the following list will give you an idea of how important even the earlier abilities can be:

- **Escape:** Enables you to flee from battle and rewind time to just prior to the battle, at the cost of one in-game hour on Normal or Hard difficulty (no penalty on Easy).
- **Curaga:** Fully restores Lightning's maximum HP.
- **Arise:** Revives Lightning from the KO status and restores HP in relation to the amount of EP consumed.
- **Overclock:** Slows the in-game time to a crawl during battles, enabling Lightning to move and attack with impunity.
- **Chronostasis:** Halts the in-game time flow for a brief period, which can be essential to complete objectives before a gate closes or you are warped back to the Ark. By efficiently farming EP from large-scale enemies, this ability enables you to freeze time for virtually as long as you need.
- **Teleport:** Instantly warps you to Monorail Stations, settlements, and other landmarks that you have previously visited.

To activate EP abilities, simply open the main menu on the field screen, or the pause menu on the battle screen (START/⏸), then (L1)/LB or (R1)/RB).

The Outerworld

You have access to various networking features in Lightning Returns to communicate with other players, as long as you have an active internet connection and requisite sign-ups/subscriptions. The online environment that is available via your connection is called the Outerworld.

You can post about your experiences in the game, share your battle scores, and view screenshots and messages from other players by talking to certain residents of Nova Chrysalia. People whose names appear in blue in the field are carrying messages posted by other players. You can change your current Outerworld parameters via the Settings option in the main menu.

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THE WORLD OF NOVA CHRYSALIA

Over the following eight pages, we offer a general (and, for that matter, gentle) introduction to the four regions that you will explore during the events of Lightning Returns.

After an initial mandatory tutorial sequence, the adventure formally begins in Luxerion. Once you have completed a few additional tasks in this city, you are completely free to visit any of the other three main regions – the lively city of Yusnaan, the mostly verdant Wildlands, and the scorched Dead Dunes – exploring them and tackling quests in practically any order you please.

The primary method of travel between the four main regions is via the Monorail network. You can find schedules for each line outside the corresponding stations.

As a rule, Monorail travel costs little in terms of gil, but precious minutes in terms of in-game time. For example, if you speak to a station attendant to book your journey at 18:53 and the next train is at 19:30, the trip will effectively waste 37 minutes of your time, in addition to the minutes required for the journey itself. This means that it's best to plan your journeys wisely and avoid unnecessary comings and goings.

A little later in the game, you will gain an EP ability that enables you to jump instantly between specific destinations (see page 45). This is a very handy feature, though it requires careful EP management.

Though you might assume that you must make significant progress in Luxerion before travelling to other regions, that really isn't the case. In fact, spending too much time in the city at the start of the adventure may actually put you at a disadvantage. Instead, it makes sense to make relatively short but purposeful visits to undertake several tasks at once.

- The North Station offers Monorail access to Yusnaan, with a General Store close to the platform. You can find an Inn and an Outfitter on the square outside.
- The South Station provides Monorail access to the Wildlands and Dead Dunes regions. The retail area to the north features two Outfitters, an Inn, a General Store and a Restaurant.
- Feel free to enter the Holy District and take in the sights at the Cathedral, but note that there are no specific points of interest or quests that originate inside the Cathedral itself. Unless prompted to enter, there is no profit to be had in making the long journey.
- The Pilgrim's Causeway is one of three main areas where monsters can spawn in Luxerion. Gremlins and Niblets are easy prey for Lightning, even from the very start of the adventure, but the Gorgonopsids that appear here can be demanding opponents until you upgrade your Schemata to a competitive level.
- Old Town features a Forge and Sorcery Shop, with an Inn to the south just before you reach the Pilgrim's Causeway.
- There are two entrances to the Warren – one from North Station to the west, another to the east of Old Town – but these are only open between the hours of 12AM to 6AM every day. There are numerous quests that require Lightning to enter the Warren for one task or another, so it makes sense to undertake many of these simultaneously to cut down on wasted travel time. Monster spawns are frequent throughout the area, with the Gertrude posing a fairly serious threat during the opening days of the story.
- Both entrances to the Forsaken Graveyard are locked until you make progress in Luxerion's main quest. This area is home to the city's most redoubtable monsters. The Gaunt has a very high spawn rate and can be a frustrating foe until you perfect the best strategy for fighting it. The large-scale class Zomok and Dreadnought should be avoided at all costs early in the adventure.
- The highway to the northwest is blocked by a barrier until Day 9. Once unlocked, this offers a direct path to the Wildlands region.
- The path leading south from the Warehouse District is guarded by a powerful monster inside a Chaos Infusion until you complete a related side quest. If you wish to travel to the south of the city before you are ready (indeed, capable of) fighting this opponent, go via the adjacent Arcade or the Pilgrim's Causeway on the east side of the map.
- There are three treasure spheres in Luxerion that Lightning cannot open until you accept a related quest. These can be identified by a padlock icon that appears when you approach them.
- The Cathedral Sentries that you encounter throughout the city will attack Lightning if she strikes them two or three times in quick succession. You can exploit this to gain EP top-ups and spoils whenever you encounter them. However, this is a trick best left until the later days, when Lightning is strong enough to end these fights quickly.

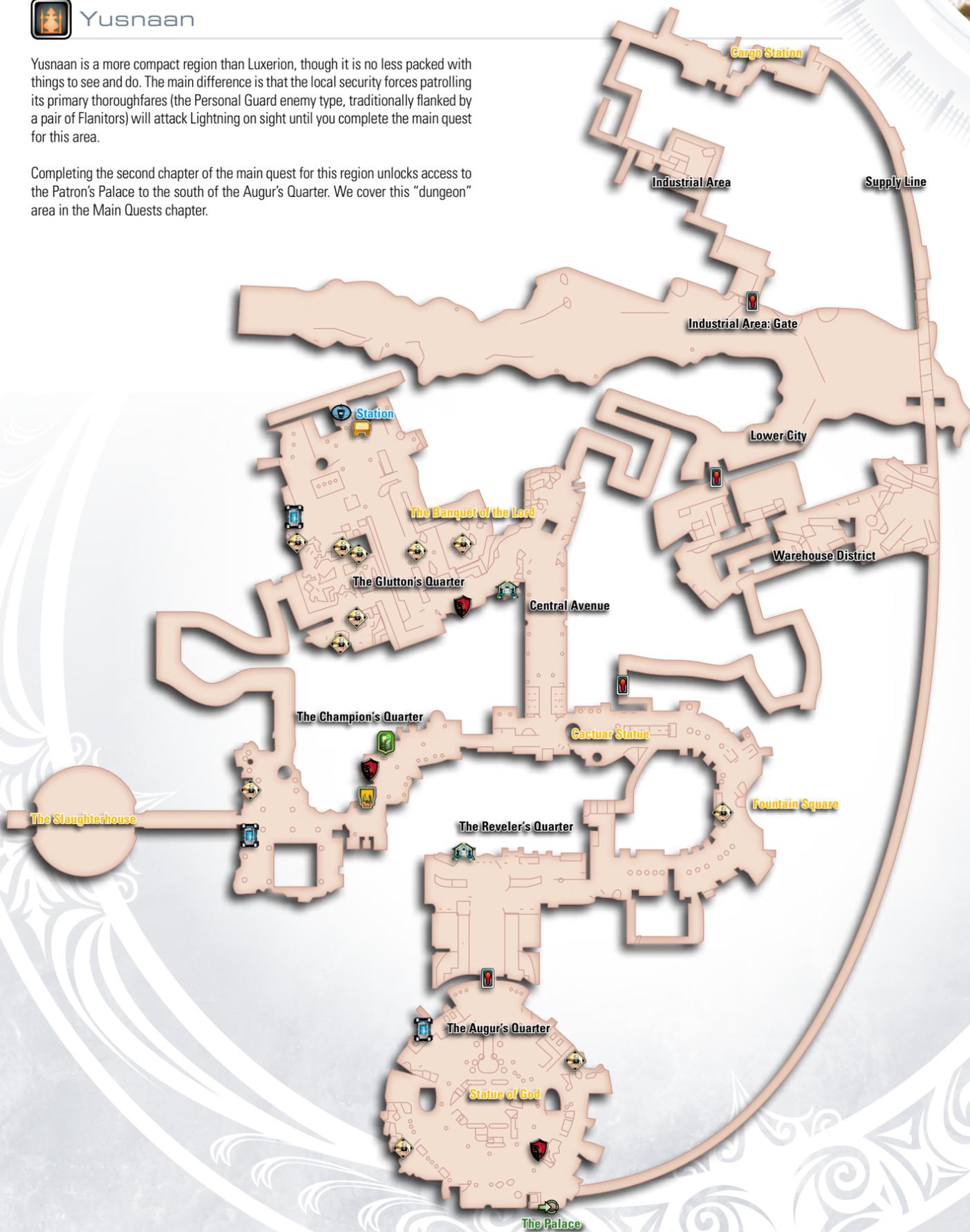
Luxerion

Luxerion plays host to numerous side quests and Canvas of Prayers tasks, but the process of completing these activities is complicated by a relative paucity of combat encounters. This limits your ability to keep Chronostasis active at all times, unless you make an effort to periodically farm EP, and makes the city something of a time sink. There are only three specific areas where enemies spawn with any degree of regularity, with one of these locked outside the hours of 00:00 to 06:00, and another sealed until you progress in the main storyline for the region.

Yusnaan

Yusnaan is a more compact region than Luxerion, though it is no less packed with things to see and do. The main difference is that the local security forces patrolling its primary thoroughfares (the Personal Guard enemy type, traditionally flanked by a pair of Flanitors) will attack Lightning on sight until you complete the main quest for this area.

Completing the second chapter of the main quest for this region unlocks access to the Patron's Palace to the south of the Augur's Quarter. We cover this "dungeon" area in the Main Quests chapter.



- Yusnaan Station provides Monorail access to Luxerion.
- South of the station, the Glutton's Quarter is home to many Restaurants, and a General Store. There is an Outfitter and an Inn just before you approach Central Avenue to the east.
- The Champion's Quarter is home to an Outfitter, a Sorcery Shop, Forge, General Store and a Restaurant. Its other main attraction is the Slaughterhouse, an arena where you can fight battles to obtain fixed rewards.
- Though their availability varies in accordance with the time of day (and, indeed, the day of your visit), the Cactuar Statue, Fountain Square and Reveler's Quarter districts are the starting point for several side quests.
- The tunnel that leads from the Reveler's Quarter to the Warehouse District is locked until you obtain the requisite key later in the story.
- The Augur's Quarter is unlocked during the main quest. It features an Outfitter, two Restaurants and a convenient General Store, and eventually offers access to the Patron's Palace – home to many dangerous monsters and, somewhere in its upper reaches, an old friend...
- The path leading north from Central Avenue leads to a run-down area with entrances to the Industrial Area and Warehouse District. This open expanse, stretching from the shore to the east, to the (initially blocked) highway to the west, features a wide variety of potential enemies. We strongly advise that you avoid combat against the Reaver and Gurangatch whenever you encounter them here. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, the Reaver will annihilate a low-level Lightning without breaking a sweat and, secondly, both enemies are vital sources of EP in their primary habitats of the Wildlands and Dead Dunes respectively. As there is only a finite supply of both monsters, any specimens that you defeat here will not be available when and where you potentially need them most. Gremlins and the Skata'ne, however, are fair game.
- The highway leading west is blocked until Day 9. It eventually provides pedestrian access to the Dead Dunes.
- The Industrial Area is locked until you visit it during the course of the main quest for this region. The Hopliters found here are easy to defeat, though the Desdemonas can be a little more challenging early in the story.
- The Cargo Station just beyond the Industrial Area, and the path leading south, are primarily of interest during the main quest. Once you have completed the related challenges and picked up the collectibles in those areas, there's little reason to return.
- The Warehouse District plays host to a lucrative (and eminently exploitable) combat-oriented side quest later in the story, where you can grind for boundless EP and battle spoils.



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The Wildlands

The Wildlands is the largest of the four regions, with several settlements offering welcome pockets of calm where you can seek refuge from the fairly intense monster spawn rate in its untamed areas. The opponents you encounter here range from trivialities to trials, with the Chocobo Eater being particularly noteworthy: it is the second most dangerous of all large-scale enemies, rivaled only by a similar species found in the Dead Dunes.

The Wildlands area is a joy to explore, and you will also find that the treasure spheres and merchants encountered here will enable you to greatly enhance Lightning's overall combat prowess during the early stages of the adventure. As long as you pick your battles carefully, avoiding large-scale opponents (including the Reaver and Aster Protoflorian) until you are equipped to deal with them without great effort, there is no reason why you shouldn't dedicate time to this region from the very moment you can travel there.



- The Wildlands is unique in that it offers two main quests: a lengthy local storyline, and a second that spans all four regions. While the main quest tied to the region is difficult to complete until Lightning is ready to tackle its demanding final dungeon and its boss, the other consists of five fairly straightforward tasks that you could potentially complete on one of the early days of the story.
- Before you attempt to fully explore the Wildlands, you should complete the first two chapters of the local main quest. This provides you with a mighty Chocobo as Lightning's constant companion in her travels through the region. Both steed and battle ally, the Chocobo greatly reduces the difficulty of combat encounters by assailing opponents, drawing their attention away from Lightning, and by assisting her with healing and status enhancement spells. There are also many places on the map that only a Chocobo can reach, and its faster movement speed reduces the time required to make journeys over its vast expanses.
- There are four types of recurring collectibles that you need to collect in large quantities to complete certain quests, so it makes sense to seek them out whenever you travel through the Wildlands. The Dayring Blossom flower and Chocoborel fungus appear during the day. Moonsoul Bloom and Luminous Mushroom replace them (even occupying the same exact positions) at night.
- The Wildlands Station, on the west side of the Grasslands area, offers passage to Luxerion and the Dead Dunes. Your first port of call on arrival should be Canopus Farms. You will return to this settlement on many occasions during the main quest and numerous secondary quests, though the very first point of interest is the Outfitter: this merchant sells some highly useful elemental garb that can be of immediate benefit. You can also find an Inn, General Store and Restaurant here.
- The Grasslands acts as a habitat for an assortment of small and easily conquered monsters, though Reavers will probably be far too powerful for Lightning during the opening few days of the story. Once you have a sufficient number of completed quests and suitable equipment, this large-scale enemy offers an invaluable supply of EP as you complete the many secondary quests available in the Wildlands.
- In the south of the map, the Aryas Climb area (accessed via a sloped path to the south-east) features the same varieties of monster as the Grasslands. Aryas Village is a profitable quest hub that you will visit many times, with its immediate surroundings free of enemy activity. A Restaurant offers the opportunity to heal, and there is also an Outfitter.
- The two highways south of Aryas Village are blocked until Day 9. The southwest road eventually leads to the Dead Dunes. The southeast road offers direct access to Luxerion.
- Travel through the Jagd Woods can be disorienting at first, so refer to the mini-map regularly (and the main map, if required) to ensure that you don't lose your bearings. The monster spawn rate is quite ferociously high throughout this area, with a varied selection of opponents to fight. These shouldn't pose too much difficulty, though, and they all become quite easy to beat once Lightning's Chocobo is restored to full fighting fitness.
- Jagd Village is another quest hub, and offers a Sorcery Shop, an Outfitter and a Forge. Once the Chocobo is at full strength, you can leap the path to the north for a convenient shortcut to the Rocky Crag area (and vice versa).
- The Moogles Village, deep in the Jagd Woods, can only be accessed between the hours of 7PM to 7AM. During your first full day of activity in the Wildlands, it makes sense to schedule a visit there to begin side quests that are exclusive to the settlement.
- Rocky Crag twists and winds all the way from the north of Jagd Woods to the west of Eremite Plains in the far north. This stark environment is the exclusive habitat for the Aster Protoflorian, a large-scale enemy that is quite dangerous until later in the story. You can defeat them at a relatively early stage, but the battles are protracted and technical until Lightning acquires certain key abilities and better equipment. We advise that you wait until you have fully healed the Chocobo before you explore this area.
- The village of Poltae is sparse on amenities (with only a General Store and an Inn), but plays a major role in the main quest local to the region. It also offers some lucrative side quests. You can only reach the Temple Entrance to the northwest with a healed Chocobo. We cover the Temple of the Goddess that lies beyond in the Main Quests chapter.
- Eremite Plains is the hunting ground of the mighty Chocobo Eater. This powerful large-scale enemy can be challenging even late in the adventure unless you prepare your Schemata to capitalize on its weaknesses, so you should definitely avoid it entirely during the opening days of the story. A low-level Lightning will struggle against the Ectopuddings that also stalk the area, though these become more approachable once you have suitably powerful ice-based attacks.
- As with the Rocky Crag, it makes sense to leave the exploration of Eremite Plains until Lightning's Chocobo is at full strength. There are many areas (and collectibles) that you cannot reach without its full jumping and gliding power.
- The Research Camp is the last settlement and major quest hub in the Wildlands. It has a Sorcery Shop and a Forge that sells a noteworthy shield that can make a real difference to a low-level Lightning.
- In the far north, the Crash Site is the starting point for the Wildlands' second main quest.

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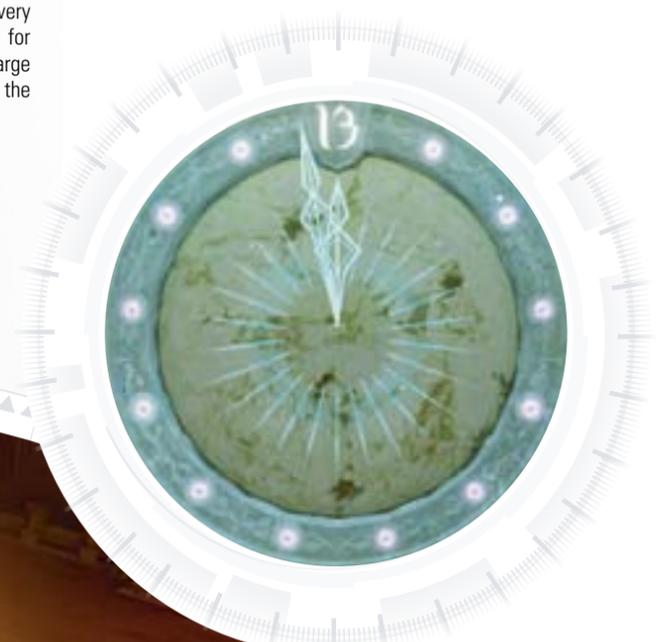
The Dead Dunes

The Dead Dunes have a surprise in store for the first-time visitor: in addition to the vast desert, there is an entire maze of underground ruins to explore. These are locked until you reach the only settlement in the region, Ruffian, and complete the first two (relatively short) chapters of the local main quest. However, as doing so also provides you with a valuable ally to fight alongside Lightning, this should be your priority when you are prepared and ready to make real progress in the Dead Dunes.

Though an early visit to collect certain items (one invaluable garb in particular) is a reasonable use of your time, we would argue that the Dead Dunes is the region that players should leave until later days on a first playthrough. Exploring the vast overground and the monster-infested Temple Ruins beneath the sands is no trivial task, and is much easier if you can defeat most indigenous monsters without difficulty – if only to farm the EP required for regular applications of Chronostasis.



- The Dead Dunes Station is located in the south of the huge expanse known as the Giant's Sandbox. This provides transit to Luxerion and the Wildlands. Though they are not marked on the in-game map, you can find two merchants outside: an Outfitter and a General Store. The former sells a garb called Passion Rouge for a modest fee that belies its incredible long-term usefulness. As you will be reminded on at least several further occasions in this guide, Passion Rouge is a key element of almost any worthwhile Schemata setup for many hours.
- The monsters that populate the Giant's Sandbox are not to be underestimated. The Desert Sahagin can be particularly troublesome at low levels, and its fast movement speed when in pursuit of Lightning makes it a regular nuisance as you explore the area. The Gurangatch, by contrast, is perhaps the easiest of all large-scale enemies to defeat. You will fight these regularly to farm EP for Chronostasis during your visits to the Dead Dunes (and, later, pine for them once you have greedily hunted the species to extinction).
- You can only access Ruffian, the region's sole settlement, via the path to the north or to the east on a first visit to the Dead Dunes: the south entrance is blocked until you complete the first two chapters of the main quest. You will find a Restaurant, an Inn and a poorly stocked General Store (later improved after you complete a side quest) on your first visit. After progressing in the storyline, a Forge, Outfitter and Sorcery Shop are added to the indoor bazaar.
- There are numerous red Cactuar statues to be found across the desert and inside the Temple Ruins. Interact with these once, and they are activated as fast travel positions. You can use Cactuar statues to move instantly to any others that you have unlocked.
- The Giant's Sandbox has three positions where you can access the underground Temple Ruins complex, but these are all blocked by barriers that prevent full access until you complete the requisite chapters of the main quest. You can find maps and detailed guidance for this subterranean labyrinth in the Main Quests chapter.
- You will often encounter small lizards scampering across the sands. They are entirely unobtrusive, and will not trouble Lightning at all. Nevertheless, you should draw her sword and smite them at every available opportunity. Lizard Tails are special items required for a handful of secondary quests, and you will need them in large quantities. It's better to begin the process of collecting them from the very moment you become active in the Dead Dunes.
- Until much later in the adventure, your sole interaction with the giant Earth Eater monsters encountered in this region should be to perhaps, at very most, offer them a fleeting glimpse of Lightning's back as she recedes rapidly into the distance. Without excellent equipment, high stats and a considered Schemata setup, these large-scale enemies are ridiculously difficult to conquer. They are easily the most powerful non-unique monster variety found during the first thirteen days. They are common in the Dry Floodlands, Atomos's Sands and Grave of the Colossi areas.
- In a similar vein, don't allow your curiosity to lead you astray if you encounter a strange and ominous black sphere punctuated by crackling energy floating through the Giant's Sandbox. This is the Aeronite: a one-of-a-kind enemy that you will not be ready to fight until very late in the storyline.
- Certain areas of the overground and subterranean maps in the Dead Dunes are blocked off until you unlock them with an item called the Pilgrim's Crux. These cross-shaped collectibles are actually fairly plentiful if you explore with diligence, and you will potentially find many more of them than you actually need. Naturally, we have a complete record of their locations later in the guide.
- The highway in the south of the Dead Dunes leads to Yusnaan, while the road in the far north leads to the Wildlands. Both are locked until Day 9.
- Most shining random collectibles found on the Dead Dunes sands (and from other sources, such as lizards) are classified as "Unappraised Items". Once you complete a (fairly elementary) side quest, you can visit the bazaar at Ruffian to have these examined and identified by an NPC. They are usually items that can be sold for gil, but may occasionally include other objects – such as the rare and valuable Ether and Turbo Ether recovery items that replenish EP.



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YUSNAAN

The majority of Yusnaan's side quests are unlocked through progress in the region's main storyline, so it makes sense to advance to at least chapter 2-2 at a relatively early stage in the adventure.



POSSIBLE ENEMY ENCOUNTERS

NAME	NOTES	BESTIARY PAGE
Personal Guard	Encountered in all central areas of the city. Will attack Lightning on sight.	211
Flanitor		203
Hoplite	Exploit its weakness to Fire- and Lightning-elemental abilities for a quick victory.	202
Niblet	Use Fire-elemental spells. Attack during Glutton for an instant stagger.	156
Gremlin	Attack while the enemy is casting to induce a stagger.	172
Desdemona	Use physical or Lightning-elemental abilities, especially immediately after Rush.	204
Cyclops	Fixed sub-boss close to the end of chapter 2-1: does not spawn.	164
Schrodinger	Spawns mostly in the Warehouse District. Can heal itself and act as a tank for weaker allies; always destroy its companions first.	182

2-1: The Great Break-In

A Travel to the Reveler's Quarter in the south of the city, speaking to civilians that you pass to obtain snippets of information.

B When you reach the gate to the Augur's Quarter, speak to the Knowledgeable Tourist to acquire a valuable tip on how Lightning might sneak into the locked area.

C Head back east and look for a garishly attired man with "one-man band" equipment; you will probably hear him before you see him. This is the Tour Guide. Once you have heard his spiel, purchase the Sneaking-In Special Ticket for 2,000 gil. At this point, you cannot continue with the main quest until 18:00. If it is still early in the day, you might as well travel to another region to attend to other activities until late in the afternoon, but don't cut it too fine: if you miss this deadline, you will need to wait until the next day to advance the storyline.



D Once you are ready to continue, travel to the entrance to the Industrial Area in the Lower City, which you can reach via the corridor at the north of Central Avenue. Speak to the Suspicious Gatekeeper, then select "Yes" when the prompt appears. If you are early, you will then be offered the opportunity to advance time to 18:00 exactly; interact with the Suspicious Gatekeeper again to continue.

E Enter the Industrial Area and follow the path until you reach steps leading upwards. Continue on this path in a counterclockwise ascent, jumping the gap in the catwalk when you arrive at it. When you reach a ladder, climb it. There is a treasure sphere that costs 2 EP to open that you might notice within jumping distance when you reach the top, but you should leave this for now: the Fencer's Earrings inside are a specialist accessory that you have no real use for at this stage.



F Follow the obvious route, dropping to a lower level when you reach the first ladder. When you reach the second ladder, investigate the nearby dead end to the north to find the Bronze Pocket Watch (an item required for a Canvas quest) before you climb up.

G Follow the path to the north to reach the Cargo Station, then head to the east. There is a merchant just before you reach the Supply Line who sells Recovery Items, so be sure to replenish your supplies if your stocks are low.

H On the Supply Line, make note of the point where the path drops, and look up to see a higher platform that Lightning can jump to (note the special "grab ledge": hold **○**/**△** as you jump to it, and Lightning will automatically haul herself up when she makes contact). Open the treasure sphere here to obtain the Soldier's Tie accessory, which offers 20% resistance to physical damage on the Schema it is equipped to.



I On that very topic, now is a good time to consult the Bestiary for advice and prepare to fight the Cyclops that you will face when you reach the next waypoint. The battle follows immediately after the cinematic. You can find a detailed presentation of this enemy type, and a strategy to defeat it, on page 164 of the Bestiary.

J After the cinematic that follows the Cyclops fight, Lightning begins in the Warehouse Area. The enemy spawn rate is ferociously high in this zone though, self-healing Schrodinger aside, there are no monsters that present any degree of difficulty. Head west to reach an opening to the north, then look for a pile of crates just through it: these lead to a walkway with a treasure sphere that contains the Sight's Circllet accessory. After you grab this, head to the next two waypoints until you reach a pile of bones; examine these to obtain the ID Card.

K From the bones, head east via the path between the storage containers, then go up the steps to reach the entrance to the Underground Route. Follow this linear corridor until you reach a closed portcullis.

L Interact with the panel to open the way forward. Look out for a small shining collectible (a Desert Flame required for a side quest) and a treasure sphere. At the end of the tunnel you will reach a ladder that leads to the Reveler's Quarter.

M To conclude the chapter, approach the interface at the gates of the Augur's Quarter and interact with it to enter. The assorted tasks that you must undertake to complete 2-2, "The Legend of the Savior", are all tailored for completion over the course of an in-game evening. We advise that you begin immediately.

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NAME	DIFFICULTY	AVAILABILITY	REWARDS					SPECIAL
			♥	🗡️	🗨️	🕒	🎁	
Whither Faith	☆☆☆	From 21:00 to 23:45 on Day 1 only	80	6	6	800	Scholar's Glasses	-
Where Are You, Holmes?	☆☆☆	From 21:00 to 06:00 on Day 1 only	30	3	-	300	Railworker's Cap, Railworker's Beret	-
The Thing She's Lost	☆☆☆	After main quest chapter 1-2; from 21:00 to 06:00 on subsequent days	30	-	3	100	Carbuncle Figurine	-
Soul Seeds	☆☆☆	After main quest chapter 1-2 on Day 1	40	2	4	400	Black Tattoo	-
Born from Chaos	☆☆☆☆	After main quest chapter 1-2 on Day 1	120	12	10	6,000	Brigand's Tricorne	Pendragon (🛡️)
Stuck in a Gem	☆☆☆	After main quest chapter 1-2 on Day 1, and from 15:00 to 03:00 on every day thereafter	80	-	12	1,600	Black Cat Ears	-
Dying Wish	☆☆☆	From Day 2, between the hours of 06:00 and 22:00	80	8	4	-	Tonberry's Lantern	-
Suspicious Spheres	☆☆☆	From Day 2, between the hours of 08:00 and 17:00	40	4	2	300	Millionaire's Mustache	-
Faster Than Lightning	☆☆☆	From Day 2, between the hours of 10:00 and 15:00	30	6	-	200	Gold Medal	-
Treasured Ball	☆☆☆	From 10:00 to 20:00 daily	30	3	-	100	Salvage Pilot's Badge	-
Buried Passion	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-4; available between 10:00 and 19:00	80	8	4	1,300	Black-rimmed Glasses	-
Like Clockwork	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-4; available between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 thereafter	80	4	8	1,200	Brass Gear	-
Get the Girl	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5; available between 00:00 and 06:00	80	4	8	1,500	Exotic Shades	-
The Saint's Stone	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5; available from 22:00 to 06:00	40	-	6	500	Fragment Crystal	Paladin (🛡️), Service Entrance Key (🗨️)
The Avid Reader	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5; available from 05:00 to 23:00	60	6	4	900	Dull Grudge Knife	-
The Girl Who Cried Wolf	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5	40	2	4	500	Leather Rucksack	-
Voices from the Grave	☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5	40	6	-	400	Halo	-
A Rose by Any Other Name	☆☆☆☆	Complete main quest chapter 1-5	120	10	12	3,200	Crystal Rose, Red Bow Tie	Purple Lightning (⚡)
The Angel's Tears	☆☆☆	Between 16:00 and 21:00	80	4	8	2,400	Crystal Tear	-
To Save the Sinless	☆☆☆☆	After reading Ranulph's Journal during "The Avid Reader"	120	12	10	4,500	-	Dark Knight (🛡️)

☆☆☆ WHITHER FAITH

Availability
From 21:00 to 23:45 on Day 1 only

Rewards
♥ 80 🗡️ 6 🗨️ 6 🕒 800 🎁 Scholar's Glasses

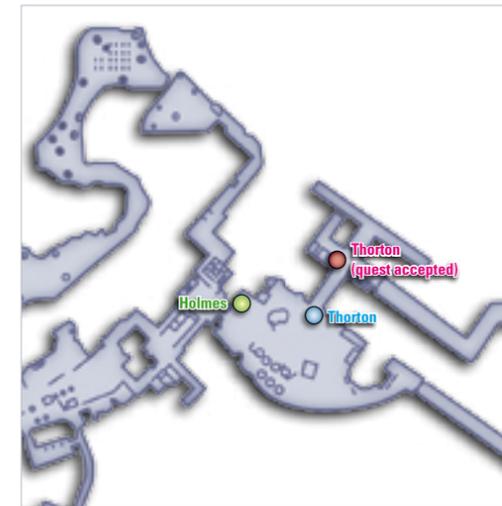
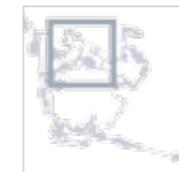
Walkthrough

- This is the opening quest on Day 1, and is covered in the Main Quests chapter (see page 71). Though unlikely, failing to accumulate and deliver a sufficient number of clues and witness statements to the Inquisitor before 23:45 will cause Lightning to fail the quest and forgo its rewards.

☆☆☆ WHERE ARE YOU, HOLMES?

Availability
From 21:00 to 06:00 on Day 1 only

Rewards
♥ 30 🗡️ - 🗨️ 3 🕒 300 🎁 Railworker's Cap, Railworker's Beret



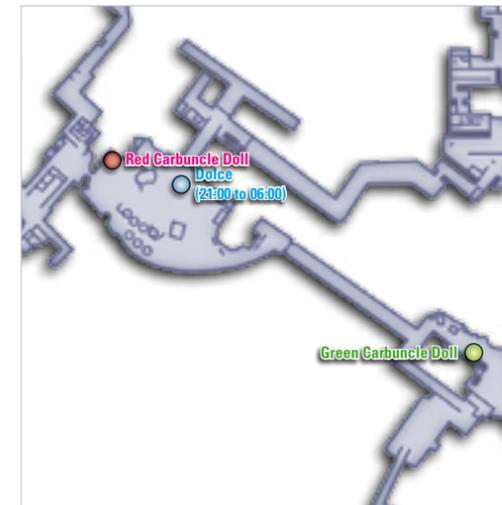
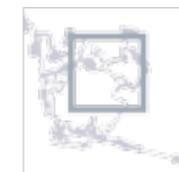
Walkthrough

- Talk to Thorton at the entrance of the North Station, then speak to Holmes on the west side of the plaza outside North Station.
- Lead Holmes to Thorton inside the station, then interact with the latter. Completing this quest while "Whither Faith" is active will automatically contribute a valuable witness statement to the ongoing investigation, so you should complete it as soon as Thorton appears.

☆☆☆ THE THING SHE'S LOST

Availability
Complete chapter 1-2 of the main quest; from 21:00 to 06:00 on subsequent days

Rewards
♥ 30 🗡️ 3 🗨️ 3 🕒 100 🎁 Carbuncle Figurine



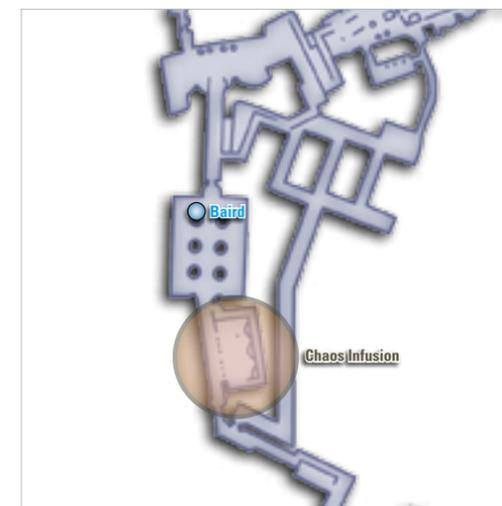
Walkthrough

- Speak to Dolce: she's the little girl to the right of the entrance to North Station. On Day 1, she will not appear until you have completed chapter 1-2 of Luxerion's main quest.
- Dolce has lost a Green Carbuncle Doll, which she believes to have been consumed by the Chaos. This can be found in Old Town, a district located to the southeast. Collect it from the boxes found in front of the Forge, then return to her to collect your reward.
- As a point of interest, you can find a Red Carbuncle Doll by the south wall of the Inn outside North Station. Collecting and delivering this plush toy to Dolce instead of the Green Carbuncle Doll will cause her to become hysterical, leading to the failure of the quest and loss of all potential rewards.

☆☆☆ SOUL SEEDS

Availability
After main quest chapter 1-2 on Day 1

Rewards
♥ 40 🗡️ 2 🗨️ 4 🕒 400 🎁 Black Tattoo



Walkthrough

- Speak to Baird in the Arcade district (you will see him standing by a pillar to your right when you arrive from the Residences), and you will be given the option to purchase a Seedhunter Membership Card for 2,000 gil. Though this may seem expensive early in the story, you will almost immediately recoup most of the balance of this payment on completion of the quest.
- The second stage of this quest is to obtain at least one Soul Seed, which requires that you enter a Chaos Infusion (see page 313). These bubbles of Chaos appear throughout Nova Chrysalia, and there will be one directly to the south of Baird if you complete this quest on Day 1. Enter its boundaries, read the tutorial, defeat the monster, collect the Soul Seeds from the floor afterwards, then return to Baird to sell them.

NORTH STATION PLAZA

NORTH STATION PLAZA & OLD TOWN

ARCADE

- QUICKSTART
- CAST & CONCEPTS
- PRIMER
- WALKTHROUGH
- MAIN QUESTS
- SIDE QUESTS
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- LUXERION
- YUSNAAN
- THE WILDLANDS
- THE DEAD DUNES

DATA SHEET STRUCTURE

All enemy data sheets in this chapter share a standardized format for quick and easy reference. The information they contain includes the basic facts offered by the in-game Libra pages, but with many additions and revelations that the game itself does not divulge. The meaning of each cell is detailed on this page.

1 Main Attributes:

- HP:** A measure of an enemy's endurance. As for several other attributes, we specify the default HP for Normal Mode, though the actual HP totals can and will vary in accordance with your chosen difficulty level and current progress (see "Important Information" overleaf).
- Strength:** The Strength attribute of the enemy – the higher this is, the more damage its physical attacks will inflict.
- Magic:** The Magic attribute of the enemy – the higher the number, the more damage it can deal when it employs magic attacks.
- Keep:** The default/idle value of maintenance of the enemy's stance. The higher this is, the more difficult it is to interrupt the enemy's actions. See page 273 for details on this system.
- For certain monsters, some of these attributes can vary in accordance with events that occur during battles – for example, when an opponent is staggered, or when they use a specific ability. In these instances, you will find the corresponding attribute values in a dedicated row.

2 Rewards:

- Item Drops:** The items you can obtain for defeating the enemy, with the exact percentages and corresponding conditions revealed in the Inventory chapter. The more advanced items (usually in the fourth and fifth slots) can often only be obtained on a subsequent New Game+ playthrough, on the Hard difficulty level.
- Gil Reward:** The amount of gil you receive for defeating the enemy on Normal.
- EP Reward:** The amount of EP you receive for defeating the enemy on Normal.

3 Data:

- Habitat:** The map areas where the creature can be encountered.
- Extinction:** The number of enemies of this variety that you must defeat to trigger the appearance of the Last One – the final specimen before the species goes extinct.
- Launch:** This reveals if a monster can be Launched or not.
- Disruption:** This tells you if a monster can be interrupted (for example knocked down, or knocked back) when the Cut value of an ability that you use is higher than the creature's Keep value.

5 Stagger Details:

The parameters in these tables are all linked to the concept of staggering. They can vary based on the condition of your target. A "default" condition is exactly what the word suggests: the enemy's basic state. Other conditions are self-explanatory.

- Stagger Point:** The threshold to reach for the creature to be staggered. The Stagger Wave acts as a visual stagger counter. All offensive abilities with Stagger Power (⚡) contribute to developing the wave (their power is added to the counter), and ultimately reaching the Stagger Point.
- Stagger Decay:** The amount of points per second that are removed from the stagger counter. When Stagger Decay occurs, the Stagger Wave pulses at a fast pace and becomes smaller.

- Maximum Wave Preservation:** Many of your abilities have Stagger Preservation values (⚡) – also referred to as Stagger Time in the game), meaning that they temporarily halt the Stagger Decay phenomenon. This is represented by the fact that the Stagger Wave pulses at a slow pace. Maximum Wave Preservation governs how much Stagger Preservation you can "stack" against each enemy type (and, therefore, how long you can keep the wave pulsing at a slow pace before it starts to shrink).
- Wave Preservation Decay:** This corresponds to the amount by which the Wave Preservation value is reduced per second. Once this decay has brought the Wave Preservation value to 0, the Stagger Decay phenomenon resumes.
- Duration:** How long a stagger condition lasts.
- Added Effect:** Staggering certain enemies can cause them to be automatically afflicted by a status ailment. Most of these status effects are based on traditional ailments, though they appear with a hexagonal icon. See page 264 for a complete list.
- Effect Duration:** How long the added effect lasts.
- Iterative Resistance:** The resistance (in percentage) applied if you attempt to cause further staggers of the same type.

For example, if you stagger a Schrodinger, which has only one type of stagger, the Stagger Power of any attack attempting to cause a second stagger after the first one ends will be reduced by 20%. If you do manage to stagger nevertheless, the Stagger Power of any attack attempting to stagger a third time will be met by a 40% resistance. The last number listed represents the limit to which this value can increase. Therefore, Schrodinger retains a 40% resistance to Stagger Power for all staggers beyond the third.

- Stagger Modifiers:** This reveals the multipliers applied to various attack types or at specific moments. These multipliers can affect either the Stagger Power of your attacks, or the Damage you deal. For example, all spells hitting a Schrodinger in its default state (when the battle begins) have a Stagger Power modifier of x1, whereas physical attacks have a modifier of x0, meaning that physical blows do not contribute to stagger. If you manage to stagger the creature, however, any further staggering becomes impossible for the duration of the stagger, but physical attacks suddenly deal three times more damage, making them far more powerful than spells.

You can find a complete presentation of the stagger system, with practical examples and applications, on page 266 of the Strategy & Analysis chapter.

4 Modifiers & Resistances*

- Damage Types and Modifiers:** There are multiple possible reactions to every type of attack, each corresponding to a calculation applied to the base damage. Broadly speaking, these are as follows:

DAMAGE TYPES	DAMAGE
	Physical
	Magic
	Fire
	Ice
	Lightning
	Wind

DAMAGE MODIFIERS	MODIFIER	MEANING
	120% to 500%	Enemy has a weakness. Pertinent attacks inflict 120% to 500% damage.
	100% to 75%	Normal damage.
	70% to 30%	Damage is reduced. With a 50% modifier, damage is halved.
	1% to 25%	Enemy is resistant, damage is significantly reduced.
	0%	Enemy is immune to damage type, and takes 0 damage.
	-100% to -500%	Enemy absorbs damage: your attacks will actually heal the target. For example, with a -200% modifier, an attack causing 1,000 damage will heal the enemy by 2,000 HP.

- Status Ailment Resistances:** These cells show the resistance of your opponent to ailments. The higher this value, the more attempts will be required for your status ailment spell to stick (see page 264 for more details on this system). The meaning of the icons used is as follows:

	Debrave		Deprotect		Imperil		Poison		Daze		Quake
	Defaith		Deshell		Slow		Curse		Dispel		Magnet

* For certain monsters, some of these parameters can vary in accordance with battle events (such as when staggered). In these instances, you will find additional information in a dedicated row.

SCHRODINGER

STANDARD: HP 15,252, STRENGTH 160, MAGIC 300, KEEP 40

HABITAT: Yusnaan (Warehouse District, Patron's Palace), Dead Dunes (Temple Ruins)

ITEM DROP: Pot Shard, Icespark, Firestorm, Icesparka, Firestorma

ACTION: 60, LAUNCH: X, DISRUPTION: X, GIL: 120, EP: 0.22

STAGGER DETAILS:

CONDITION	STAGGER POINT	STAGGER DECAY	MAX PRESERVATION	PRESERVATION DECAY	STAGGER MODIFIERS
Default	180	0	300	15	Stagger Power: spells x1, physical attacks x0.
Staggered	10s	Unprotected	12s	20%/40%	No further staggering. Damage: physical attacks x3.

Conditional Changes: Stagger Decay: 10 when staggered

7 Schemata Preparations

- Fire- or Wind-elemental spells
- Imperil ability
- Slow or Curse abilities

Overview

- Schrodinger has the ability to heal itself with Cura. You can discourage this behavior by applying Slow to reduce the frequency of its actions or Curse to interrupt them. In battles where it accompanies other monsters, defeat them first – especially at lower levels where Schrodinger might otherwise act as a tank for its companions.

SUMMARY

Use Fire- and Wind-elemental spells after applying Imperil. Slow can reduce the frequency of its healing spells.

6 Conditional Changes:

Refer to these notes to find out about a special variation of the attribute in question when very specific conditions are met.

7 Strategy:

- Schemata Preparations:** Recommendations for equipment and abilities that offer the most effective offensive and defensive options against a particular enemy in battle. In certain rare instances, we provide a specific Schemata setup against the toughest enemies in the game.
- Overview:** Presentation of a streamlined strategy for a player encountering an enemy for the first time or early during an initial Normal playthrough. Points of reference include details on enemy behavior, tactics to stagger efficiently, and topics such as spawn conditions and valuable rewards from successful battles.
- Power Play & Additional Notes:** Further discussion of aggressive strategies against large-scale enemies and bosses, geared toward players who are very familiar with the game mechanics, or those who wish to achieve a relatively painless victory after expanding Lightning's repertoire with more powerful abilities. These concepts can and should be carried over to harder enemy variants, such as Last Ones, to form the basis of an efficient, high-scoring strategy.

8 Summary:

For players in a hurry and reluctant to become bogged down in details, these short recaps distill the most pertinent information in each data sheet into bite-sized tips.

- QUICKSTART
- CAST & CONCEPTS
- PRIMER
- WALKTHROUGH
- MAIN QUESTS
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- CHAOS BEASTS
- FERAL CREATURES
- MAN-MADE UNITS
- HUMAN
- SPECIAL

FERAL CREATURES

QUICKSTART

CAST & CONCEPTS

PRIMER

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HUMAN

SPECIAL



	HP	STRENGTH	MAGIC	KEEP
STANDARD	240,000	350	350	60

HABITAT	ITEM DROP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlands (Eremitic Plains) Luxerion-Wildlands Highway Wildlands-Dead Dunes Highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Monster Moss Magnet Blizzaga Blizzaga Platinum Malistone

EXTINCTION	LAUNCH	DISRUPTION	GIL	EP
30	✓	✓	980	2.00

CHOCOBO EATER

STANDARD 100% 100% 50% 50% 100% 100% 30 30 30 30 30 30 95 30 30 0 30 0

CONDITION	STAGGER POINT	STAGGER DECAY	MAX PRESERVATION	PRESERVATION DECAY	STAGGER MODIFIERS
Default	500	20	600	100	Stagger Power: all attacks x1 (x5 during Chomp).

CONDITION	DURATION	ADDED EFFECT	EFFECT DURATION	ITERATIVE RESISTANCE	STAGGER MODIFIERS
Staggered	10s	Unshelled	20s	30%/60%	Stagger Power: physical attacks on the stomach weak point x5.
Staggered (Level 2)	10s	Broken	Permanent	0	No further staggering.

Conditional Changes: Stagger Decay: 10 when staggered, back to 20 when staggered during stagger | Strength: 650 when Angry | Physical and Magic Damage Modifiers: 150% when staggered



	HP	STRENGTH	MAGIC	KEEP
STANDARD	600,000	500	500	70

HABITAT	ITEM DROP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Chocobo Eater Ultimate Lair (Floor 28) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crippling Hood Magnet Platinum Malistone Orichalc Malistone Soul Smeltwater

EXTINCTION	LAUNCH	DISRUPTION	GIL	EP
1	✓	✓	19,600	8.00

CHOCOBO EATER Ω

STANDARD 100% 100% 50% 50% 100% 100% 30 30 30 30 30 30 95 30 30 0 30 0

CONDITION	STAGGER POINT	STAGGER DECAY	MAX PRESERVATION	PRESERVATION DECAY	STAGGER MODIFIERS
Default	600	20	600	100	Stagger Power: all attacks x1 (x5 during Chomp).

CONDITION	DURATION	ADDED EFFECT	EFFECT DURATION	ITERATIVE RESISTANCE	STAGGER MODIFIERS
Staggered	10s	Unshelled	15s	20%/40%	Stagger Power: physical attacks on the stomach weak point x5.
Staggered (Level 2)	15s	Broken	Permanent	0	No further staggering.

Conditional Changes: Stagger Decay: 10 when staggered, back to 20 when staggered during stagger | Strength: 1,500 when Angry | Physical and Magic Damage Modifiers: 200% when staggered

Schemata Preparations

- Electronica or Woodland Walker garb
- Physical resistance accessories
- Lightning- or Wind-elemental abilities
- Imperil and Slow abilities
- Brave Thief and Jump auto-abilities

Overview

Chocobo Eater hits extremely hard, especially when it powers up, but this battle is much simpler if you've completed the main quest in Yusnaan and acquired the Ghostly Hood. All of its attacks are physical, which means you can shrug off its damage as long as you guard. For the riskier and more technically savvy player, Evade is effective against almost every enemy ability, enabling you to avoid damage completely with good timing.

Begin the fight by inflicting your ailments and building up the Stagger Wave. A stagger results in an Unshelled effect, increasing the effectiveness of spells, but at lower levels of development, you should aim for a Level 2 stagger (see page 266), which applies a permanent Broken effect that makes it easier for you to trigger additional staggers as the battle wears on.

As Chocobo Eater is preparing to power up with "Should I Cook Them?", reapply any ailments. When the enemy uses "So Hungry!", it gains Haste, Bravery, Veil, and Protect. For this reason, it is recommended to prepare either Deprotect or Imperil as the most recent ailment before this occurs, as the effect will persist. Between its attacks, steal its Haste and Bravery with Heavy Slash, continue to build your stagger, then switch to your hardest physical attacks to deal damage once your target is staggered. Eventually, the enemy will become "Satisfied", reverting to its normal behavior until a new cycle begins.

If you are caught without the opportunity to equip the Ghostly Hood, be sure to Perfect Guard against the Chomp attack, which inflicts grievous damage. It is worthwhile to note that all attacks enjoy a large stagger modifier during Chomp, should you feel intrepid enough to attempt an interruption.

- When you have EP to spare or are sufficiently strong, consider equipping the Thorn of Courage and Overclocking with physicals after the initial rounds of ailments and spells.

Power Play and Last One Notes

- Against the immensely strong Chocobo Eater Ω, it is to your advantage to unleash an all-out offensive during a Level 1 stagger and defeat the enemy without ever having to deal with "So Hungry!".
- The Splendid Admiral garb is highly recommended for its Transform Bravery auto-ability. In addition, you should carry an Enthunder or Enaero Potion in your stock of Recovery Items.

- With efficient aggression, you should be able to induce a stagger in less than thirty seconds (see page 295 for possible setups). Once you stagger, cast Slow and expend all your ATB to trigger Transform Bravery with Splendid Admiral. Throw your Enthunder or Enaero Potion and then Overclock repeatedly. Three Overclocks should be sufficient to down the beast in one concentrated damage burst.
- If these tactics are not feasible for whatever reason, the Ghostly Hood and Warrior Hunter's Mask will keep you alive while you whittle away the enemy's remaining HP.

SUMMARY

Use Lightning- or Wind-elemental spells or Jump to stagger. Trigger a Level 2 stagger to make subsequent staggers easier to achieve. Use Brave Thief to steal the enemy's buffs after "So Hungry!". Consider Overclocking and using buffing Potions in combination with Imperil to power through a Level 1 stagger for a quick end to the fight. Equip the Ghostly Hood as a safety measure.



ABILITIES

CONDITION	ABILITY	TYPE	POWER	VARIATION	CUT	KEEP	EVASIVE & COUNTER	ADDED EFFECT
Default	Attack (right arm)	Physical	1.00	10%	50	65 (Ω: 75)	✓	-
	Attack (left arm)		1.10					
	Bite	Physical	1.50	10%	65	65 (Ω: 75)	✓	-
After "So Hungry!"	So Hungry!	Special	-	-	60	100	✓	Haste: 500s Bravery: 500s Protect: 500s Veil: 60s Daze (against Lightning): 110/10s
	Suck In	Physical	0	-	20	80	✓	-
	Chomp	Physical	3.00	10%	90	80	✓	-
After "So Hungry!"	Chef's Secret	Physical, Fire, Ice	0.83 x3 + 0.83 x3	10%	60	80	✓	-

SCHEMA PARAMETERS

The following sets of parameters determine Lightning's prowess as a combatant. Everything else builds on top of this foundation. Enemies possess many of these parameters, although some are not applied in exactly the same way. Enemy attribute details are listed in the Bestiary, though you will also encounter additional facts on this subject later in this chapter.

Basic Parameters

- **HP** is the numerical representation of Lightning's health and the amount of damage she can sustain before being knocked out. This is subject to a cap of 50,000 unless you activate the New Game+ Limit Break Settings, which enable you to raise it to 99,999 but essentially violate the "rules" governing the legitimacy of Battle Scores. The minimum value is 100. In battle, your HP is automatically adjusted when you change Schemata in order to maintain the same percentage of max HP for each Schema.
- **Strength** and **Magic** govern Lightning's ability to deal physical and magic damage respectively. These values are capped at 5,000, but can be boosted to 9,999 in accordance with the same conditions as HP. The minimum value for each is 5.
- **Maximum ATB** establishes a pool of stamina for every Schema that enables Lightning to perform actions. This is primarily dependent upon your choice of garb, but can be augmented further with auto-abilities. This value is capped at 200.
- **ATB Speed** is a vitally important parameter that determines the speed at which a Schema's ATB gauge regenerates while Lightning is not performing an ability. This value, capped at 200, is the percentage of the standard idle recovery rate of 2 ATB per second on an active Schema. In other words, an ATB Speed of 150 equates to 3 ATB recovered per second (2 x 150%). Recovery rates triple for your two standby Schemata.
- **Keep** is a parameter that determines Lightning's ability to maintain her stance against disruptive effects. This value is 10 while she is idle, which is easily overcome by the vast majority of enemy attacks.
- **Innate Resistances** are defensive properties that affect the amount of damage Lightning takes from enemy attacks and her susceptibility to status ailments. By default, she has no special bonuses, taking 100% damage from every damage type and element, and sporting no resistance against ailments. This parameter can only be improved by auto-abilities conferred by equipment.

Ability Parameters

These are tied to abilities and all factor in various combat subsystems. Ability parameters can be dependent upon basic parameters or completely independent.

COMMON

- **ATB Cost:** The amount of ATB points required to perform an ability. Stronger abilities within the same category of effect have higher ATB costs. These values can be reduced through the Synthesis and Level Boost services available at Sorcery Shops.
- **Keep:** Maintenance of stance against the disruptive effects of enemy attacks. Rather than acting as a modifier, the Keep associated with an ability overwrites the default Keep of 10. Keep values of abilities range from 15 to 100.
- **Priority:** A hidden parameter that allows for the interruption of an ability currently being executed by one of a higher priority. There are four possible priority assignments for all abilities: 10, 5, 2, and 1. EP abilities and recovery items have a priority of 10, all defensive abilities have a priority of 5, the finale of Punt or Whirlwind Kick has a priority of 2, and all other abilities have a priority of 1.

PHYSICAL AND MAGIC ABILITIES

- **Damage Power and Variation:** The multipliers for the applicable power stat (Strength or Magic) for abilities that deal damage to the enemy, and the random variation factor applied to these multipliers. These are highly customizable through Sorcery. Ability finales are subject to additional modifiers to the Damage Power value.
- **Cut:** Disruptive capability of an ability. Cut is measured directly against the target's Keep. Base Cut values of abilities range from 20 to 100.

- **Stagger Power:** The measure of contribution of an ability to an enemy's Stagger Wave. A stagger is triggered when accumulated Stagger Power reaches or exceeds the Stagger Point. As with Damage Power, many ability finales enjoy a bonus to Stagger Power.

- **Stagger Preservation (Stagger Time):** The measure of how an ability maintains the Stagger Wave, temporarily preventing the wave from being reduced. See the section on Stagger for a complete explanation (page 266).

DEFENSIVE ABILITIES

- **Guard Resistance:** A form of resistance that is invoked only while guarding. Effectively, it is a multiplier acquired by subtracting the effect from 100%. For example, a Level 3 Guard with 46% Guard Resistance will apply a multiplier of 0.54 to reduce the damage of incoming attacks. Note that Special-type enemy attacks ignore this parameter unless you are able to execute a Perfect Guard.

AILMENT ABILITIES

- **Accumulation:** A hidden value for an ailment spell that determines its capability to inflict negative status effects on the enemy. Measured against the enemy's ailment resistance. This value is 500 for all -ga spells (except for Dispelga), 110 for Disaster, and 250 for all other spells. See the section on status effects overleaf for more details.
- **Magic Effect Time:** The base duration of an inflicted ailment. Modifiers include the Magic stat and auto-ability bonuses. Measured against enemy resistance. See the section on status effects overleaf for more details.

MOTIVATION

The very heart of Lightning Returns is its multilayered and nuanced battle system. While the two previous installments in the Final Fantasy XIII series were defined by their high level of automation for all party members during combat, you have no such luxury here: Lightning is under your direct control at all times.

Even though it is certainly possible to "brute force" your way through the main story events, your performance in the more advanced challenges is likely to be unimpressive without a solid grasp of the game's mechanics, careful consideration of your character setup, and a willingness to retry and experiment to adjust your strategy. If you feel at all daunted by the effort that such an approach would naturally entail, worry not: your understanding and ability can and will improve if you take the time to digest the treasure trove of information available in this chapter, and put it into practice.

While it is easy to understand basic concepts such as damage potential and interruptions, how these concepts are governed by

behind-the-scenes parameters is not as obvious, leading to questions such as: "Why am I dealing less damage now than a minute ago?" or "Why can I interrupt the enemy under these circumstances but not others?", which are both likely occurrences. In this chapter, we provide clear and thorough answers to all such pertinent doubts and inquiries, enabling you to make complete sense of what is happening on-screen at all times.

We have broken down all notable systems and present them here in a natural order. At the conclusion of our analysis, we offer a selection of effective "roles" for Lightning that you can use as blueprints for your Schemata, as well as several examples suited to specific scenarios and play styles. Paired with your knowledge of in-depth mechanics, these sections should fuel your imagination if you wish to develop interesting and ruthlessly efficient strategies of your own.

And now, follow us down the rabbit hole...

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EFFICIENCY

STAGGER

To play Lightning Returns at the highest level, a thorough command of the stagger system is an absolute necessity. Against the toughest enemies, the most pertinent question in developing a battle strategy is essentially: "How can I stagger most efficiently?" After reading this section, you should be well on your way to the answer.

Terminology references in this section are strongly linked to the Stagger Details tables found in the Bestiary chapter. We explain here all of the information presented in those tables, enabling you to make complete and holistic assessments of every enemy when consulting that chapter.

Multiple Staggers & Stagger Levels

Multiple Staggers: Many enemies can be staggered in different ways, leading to different stagger effects. The specific stagger induced depends on the conditions that were fulfilled to achieve it. The large dragons Zaltys and Zomok are good examples, each vulnerable to a standard stagger, and a secondary stagger that can only be triggered by a blow to the head.

Stagger Levels: In addition to this, certain foes can be staggered consecutively by triggering a stagger while already staggered. In such cases, the first stagger is considered a Level 1 stagger. A Level 2 (and higher, if applicable) stagger is achievable only by staggering when the enemy is currently in a staggered state of the previous level. The most prominent enemy for which this is relevant is Aeronite, perhaps the toughest opponent in the game, who has four stagger levels and is essentially impossible to defeat unless you trigger all of them.

Reaching the Stagger Point

To achieve any sort of stagger for an enemy, you must accrue **Stagger Power** by performing abilities (see the Inventory chapter to check the Stagger Power of each ability) until you reach a hidden **Stagger Point** (revealed in the Bestiary chapter for each enemy type).

The "Quick Stagger 75%" auto-ability, unique to the weapon Chaos's Revenge, lowers this threshold to three-fourths of its default value. This is the only possible way to change the Stagger Point. On the other hand, the Stagger Power of your attacks can be bolstered significantly by auto-abilities, as well as the Broken stagger effect, which is very useful to achieve higher Stagger Levels. Enemies also confer bonuses or penalties to Stagger Power for attacks of a specific type, as detailed in the Bestiary's Stagger Details tables ("Stagger Modifiers" column). Based on these modifiers, enemies can be immune to the Stagger Power of certain attacks, rendering them completely ineffective for this purpose. If multiple Stagger Power modifiers apply to an attack, only the highest one takes effect.

The actual ability that causes a stagger enjoys an additional bonus of dealing triple damage to the enemy. The auto-ability of the Shadow Trooper garb boosts the base damage of that attack by an additional 50%. Generally, this makes it preferable to stagger with very powerful abilities that carry high Damage Power parameters, such as a Beat Down finale (or better yet, Jump), Heavy Slash, or a strong spell.

Stagger Preservation (Stagger Time)

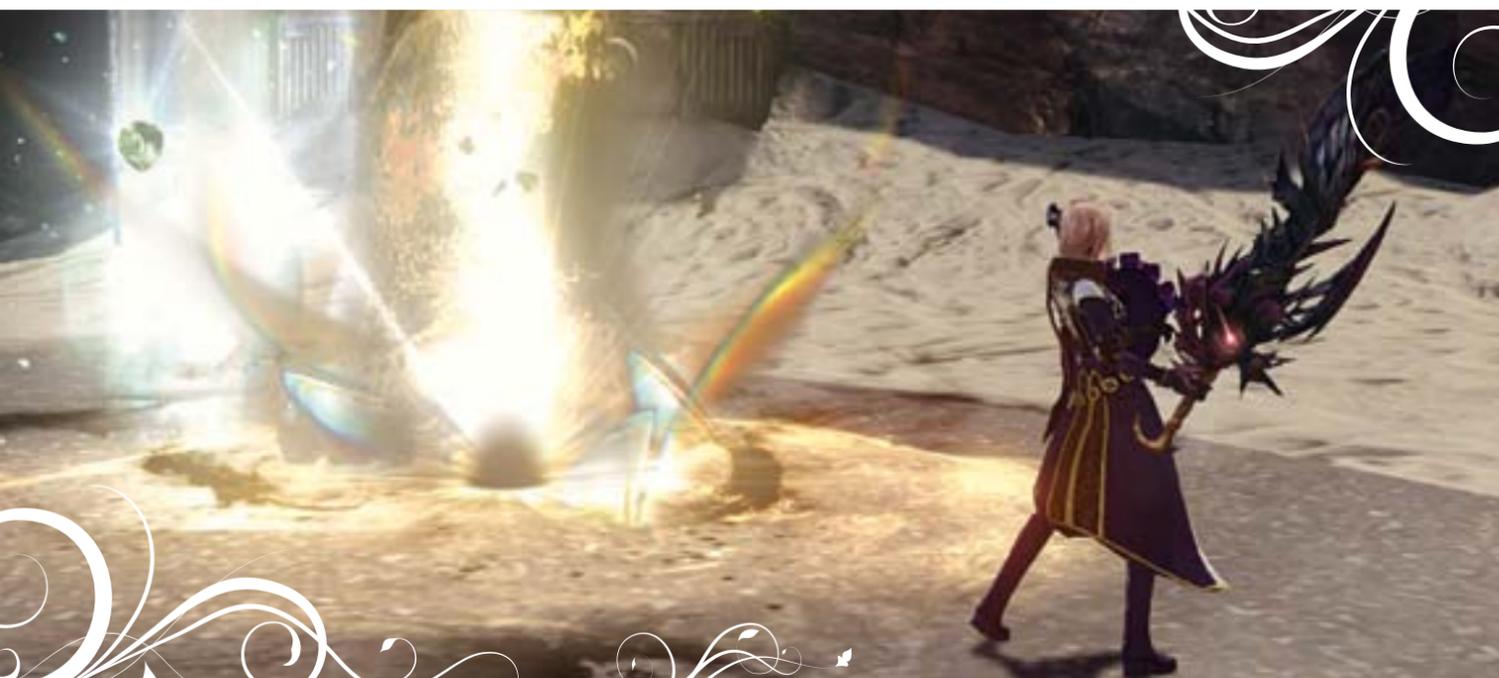
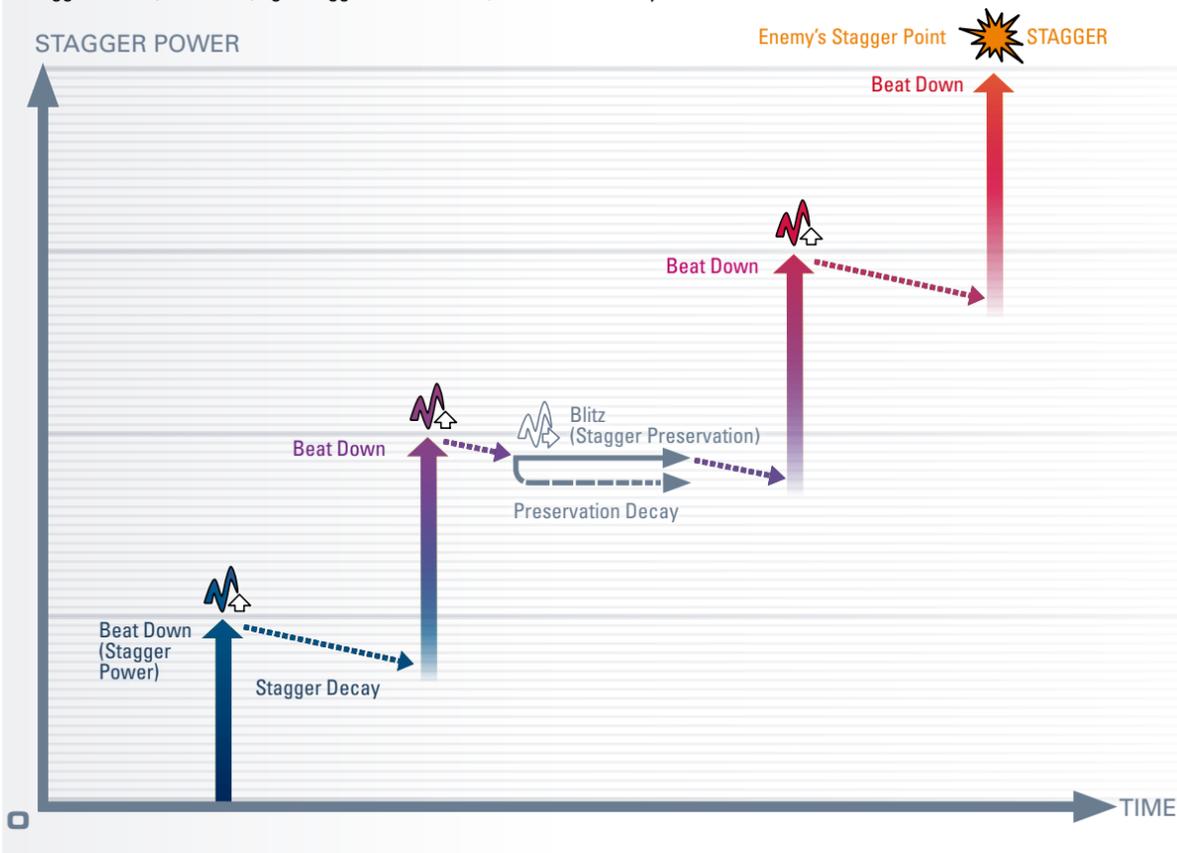
Unfortunately, you cannot simply build Stagger Power whenever you feel like it and still hope to achieve stagger reliably. The hidden stagger counter that measures the accumulated Stagger Power (in other words, the amplitude of the Stagger Wave) is persistently updated in accordance with the inherent **Stagger Decay** value of the target (see the Bestiary to find out the value of each monster type). This is the sum of Stagger Power that is lost per second.

To stymie reductions to accumulated Stagger Power, a secondary counter must be brought into play. This is the phenomenon of Stagger Preservation, sometimes denoted in-game as Stagger Time, which temporarily disables Stagger Decay and maintains your Stagger Wave for you when you face inconveniences such as ATB depletion or disruptive enemy attacks. Each enemy has a limit to the amount of **Stagger Preservation** you can build up: this is called **Max Preservation** in our Bestiary. For good measure, Stagger Preservation will *also* dissipate after a certain amount of time, as determined by the enemy's **Preservation Decay** value (the amount of Stagger Preservation points lost per second).



Summary of Stagger Parameters

In short, to reach a Stagger Point and cause a stagger, you must build Stagger Power at a rate that outpaces the enemy's Stagger Decay. Often, it is necessary to use abilities with high Stagger Preservation to steady the Stagger Power you've accumulated. You can essentially maintain Stagger Preservation indefinitely, but the frequency with which you must add to the counter depends on the enemy's Max Preservation and Preservation Decay values. Our diagram below presents a visual summary of these concepts that should help you to make sense of how everything we've discussed comes into play. We use the examples of the Beat Down (high Stagger Power) and Blitz (high Stagger Preservation) abilities for clarity.



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