

# FINAL FANTASY ZERO

## COMBAT



Corbett: "You become a champion by fighting one more round. When things are tough, you fight one more round."

## THE FIGHT

In the course of saving the world and destroying evil, you might get in fights. Indeed, combat is a central part of FINAL FANTASY ZERO, as it is a central part of the Final Fantasy videogames.

Combat in FFZ largely begins with the first violent action that any character attempts. The moment the action is attempted, the combat sequence begins. This is when the screen swirls and the battle commands appear and the music swells to an energizing battle beat.

Combat is a process of attrition. Your team and the enemy's team whittle away at each others' HP by taking turns, and the first team whose members all reach 0 HP loses.

The rules in this chapter will not only help you run a fight, but it will also tell you about why fights happen, what they mean, and how they should fit into your overall story.

## GM'S ADVICE

### WHY WE FIGHT

In the *Campaigns* document, it was stated that the core of a story is conflict.

#### **Combat is the most dramatic form of conflict resolution.**

Combat resolves conflict. One side wins, the other side loses. The winners get to do what they want, the losers don't get to do much of anything (except probably die).

While not every conflict should be resolved with combat, combat is in many ways the default, and it will usually form at the very least the climax of each session, and of the campaign. While combat itself isn't the goal of most FFZ characters, it is one of the most effective tools used to achieve their goals. Drawing swords and clashing with adversaries is a time of high tension and fast-paced action, and FFZ encourages this. In fact, most of a character's abilities – their job abilities, their feats, many of their skills – are about combat.

However, combat does not exist in a vacuum. Unlike in some Final Fantasy videogames, combat in FFZ doesn't usually randomly occur: each combat is the direct result of some conflict that must be resolved, and, more than that, each combat describes a point in the story being told.

## PLANNING COMBATS

Because each combat marks a plot point where a conflict is resolved, combats fall under the heading of *encounters*. As described in the *Campaigns* document, encounters are basically scenes in the story where a conflict gets resolved. This can happen through many methods, but combat is something that is very expected in FFZ. In general, there should be at least one combat per session, but it's not rare to have *all* the encounters in the session be combats. Having more than three or four significant combats per session (much like having more than three or four encounters per session) is generally discouraged. It eats up a lot of time that, in general, could be better spent advancing the plot and developing characters in new ways.

**Combat as Introduction:** If combat is the first encounter, it often sets the stage for something else. It may provide you with local flavor and interesting new creatures, environments, or conditions, or give the party a chance to test out newly acquired abilities. It could also introduce characters that the PC's will later ally with...or fight again. Often, it begins suddenly, out of nowhere, and ends by introducing some complication. An ambush that ends with the PC's identifying an organization that is now hunting them is a good example of an introduction combat.

**Combat as Tension:** If the combat is the second or third encounter, it usually serves as a notice that something has changed dramatically. Perhaps an enemy is growing close, or allegiances have shifted. It could slightly twist something that happened in the introduction, or even bring the PC's close to ultimate defeat as a sign of enemy strength. The combat is often expected, but serves to turn up the pressure rather than release it. A battle against a villain's cohorts, during which the PC's discover key clues to the villain's motive and whereabouts, is a good tension combat.

**Combat as Climax:** Combat works best as climax, because it allows the PC's to put everything on the line, once and for all, to overcome the biggest threat of the night, using all of their powers and abilities (and, usually, limit breaks). This resolves things one way or the other: either the PC's earn victory and slay their foe, or their enemy wins, and slays them. The party ambushing a major lackey for the campaign's villain while he is about to make a sacrifice key to the villain's major plan is a good climax combat.

It is also important to note that combat has these three elements imbedded into it.

**Introduction in Combat:** Combat is introduced rather suddenly, usually, with a violent action taken by at least one member of the

party. During the first few rounds, combatants exchange banter and learn about the main abilities (and themes) of their enemies. Usually the introduction lasts a round or two.

**Tension in Combat:** Tension rises in combat as the HP totals dwindle and quickly approach zero, as the parties usually begin their more defensive actions, having read their enemies well, or perhaps begin to formulate strategies, ways of definitively piercing their foes' defenses. Often, this is the stage when new abilities are unleashed and boasts are made.

**Climax in Combat:** It all reaches a head as one side begins to have party members drop. This is climactic because it robs one side of actions, and starts to heavily swing things in favor of the side with the most standing. Here, things begin to get desperate, people are bloodied and their friends are dropping, the crisis level is rising. This is often when limit breaks are unleashed, or when powerful recovery and healing makes every attack ineffective. The final decision is reached when one side has no new abilities or surprises left up their sleeve that their enemies haven't already counteracted. When you have countered every assault your enemy can throw at you, it's all over but for the mop-up. Initiative may even dissolve once a clear victor is achieved – because you'll start the next combat at full power, it's not necessary to roll dice for every mop-up. A combat check (see below) may also help resolve this situation quickly.

## CHOICE AND MOTIVE

Like any other kind of encounter, combats happen to PC's and because of PC's. A PC may turn any encounter into a combat, if they so choose, and they can turn a planned combat encounter into something else, if they are clever enough and roll high enough. Remember that you don't tell the PC's what to fight – the choice is theirs.

Typically, true monsters aren't very subject to reason, rationality, or compromise. They are fundamentally soulless, evil, and alien, and what they want is the destruction and consumption of all mortal life and morality for their own purposes. Even brilliant monsters of vast intellect ultimately seek the death of every PC. Villains also frequently fall into this category, as creatures so fundamentally opposed to the PC party that compromise is impossible. These are the things that the PC's most commonly fight, and there is usually no other way to resolve conflict with them.

However, sometimes the motives of the NPC's and PC's aren't entirely opposed, and may even be compatible. Combat can still

happen in this case, and it may still be deadly and savage on both sides, but either side may have a chance to stop violence, even before it starts. As noted in the *Non-Player Characters* document, every NPC should have some motive, and if they appeal to the PC's (or if the PC's appeal to them), combat may be avoided. A minion working for pay might go away if you bribe them, while a wild beast who just wants food might leave the PC's alone if easier or bigger prey is available. It's even possible to ally with these creatures – an NPC might be swayed to help the PC's out for a while if their motives mesh. Usually, communication (in the form of dialogue or description) can be used to discover a character's motive, if either side has an interest in not killing the other.

As a GM, with a clear idea of the motives of your NPC's and the PC's you should be able to anticipate when PC's might ally with NPC's, and also when such a thing might be impossible. If a PC turns an intended combat encounter on its head and tries to talk their way out of it, or if they turn what was supposed to be a noncombat encounter into a bloodfest, don't forget the GM's mantra: say yes. React, in character, and follow the conclusions wherever they might lead.

As a guideline, you should use the NPC's attitude. Hostile NPC's are going to need a lot of convincing not to attack the PC's, but neutral NPC's might just be attacking because the PC's burst into their house fully-armed and spoiling for a fight. Again, dialogue and description can help communicate with the players.

## BATTLEFIELDS

It is your job to describe the battlefield in which the combat occurs. Generally, this can be summed up as a two-word description consisting of weather and terrain. Each type of weather or terrain is associated with a given element, and you can use that to help establish an elemental theme, if you wish. The table below presents the typical weather patterns and terrain, and their associated elements.

It is not mutually exclusive, of course. For instance, an ancient robot graveyard in the middle of a desert at night might be Dark, Windy weather with Desert and Mecha terrain. As in most things, complexity implies importance: your big climactic battles may occur in very distinctive environments, while most other battles can occur with no special weather, on simple fields or forests.

Generally, you will decide the battlefield for a given region, and use that battlefield for all combats in that region. Consult the *World-*

*Building* document to see what effects these may have on a given combat.

<i>Element</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Terrain</i>
Gravity	Normal	Void, Dungeon
Shadow	Dark	Marsh, Jungle
Earth	Fog	Cave, Canyon
Water	Rain	Aquatic, Ship
Ice	Cold	Mountain, Tundra
Air	Windy	Forest, Sky
Lightning	Stormy	Urban, Mecha
Fire	Hot	Desert, Volcano
Holy	Sunny	Field, Beach
Cosmos	Aurora	Dimensional, Celestial

## UNLIMITED RESOURCES

FFZ combats are distinct from the combats of many FF games in one very big way:

They don't just consume resources.

FFZ characters effectively have nearly unlimited resources. They can start every combat with full hit points and magick points simply by waiting and resting. Thus, each combat should have the potential to actually KO the entire party. Without that threat, there is virtually no threat: "softening up" the party doesn't make sense in this context unless the plan is to not allow the party to rest. Still, that constant stress can be easily over-used.

So FFZ is designed with the idea that any combat might KO the PC's.

Of course, the chance of this happening varies with what point the encounter serves. An introductory combat might not have as much fatal potential as a climax.

## COMBAT ASSUMPTIONS

FFZ combats ride on a few basic design assumptions that a GM should be aware of.

**Team Players:** Most of the time, combat is a group affair. Each PC is on a party (composed of all the PCs) and each enemy is in their party (composed of all the other enemies). It is possible to have more than two teams involved, but this doesn't happen with regularity.

**Balanced Sides:** Every side in a given combat should have roughly equal potential for victory. The HP and MP totals of each side, as well as the attack and defense values of each side, are roughly even. While

one side may have the edge on another in a specific area, both sides have an approximately even split.

This is the fundamental rule of monster design as well, and why most monsters are made on par with the characters. Monsters will need defenses, healing, and MP restoratives just as the characters will, and it is expected that they will have these things. A monster party without a healer is just as vulnerable as a PC party without a healer, for instance.

It is this balance which gives the chance of party KO in a given encounter. Even-level encounters should have about a 50% chance of KO for either side, while one side with a higher level than the other will increase those odds against the other side.

**Five Rounds:** A combat should be decided by the fifth round, in general. More attack-oriented parties might make this quicker, while defense-oriented parties might be more tenacious, but combats are based on the assumption that each side will lose HP at a roughly equivalent rate until one side reaches 0, by about round 5.

**Speed Kills:** Because FFZ combat is a "first one to 0 loses" kind of system, and because it has balanced sides, generally, the first one to go is the victor. FFZ has a lot of ways to manipulate your speed in combat (delays, multiple attacks, etc.) in order to reflect this. The first one to go may not be the victor, for instance, if the one they are attacking manages to heal and hit them back faster than they can overcome that healing. The initial side still has an advantage, but a good defense can overcome that advantage.

**Abstraction:** FFZ's combat is an abstract system. It doesn't care about your specific wound locations, or about your specific place on the battlefield. Many assumptions are made, and many simplifications occur in these rules.

## BINARY COMBATS

Because a GM has absolute control over the NPC's that the characters encounter, a GM always has the ability to present a monster so difficult that it cannot be slain, as well as to present a beast so pathetic that the PC's will win almost no matter what.

Both of these options should be used with care, if they are used at all.

Overwhelming enemies should be announced well ahead of time, and the players should be given plenty of opportunities and encouragement to flee. While the enemy might pursue, the PC's should be able to escape – if they can't, their demise is almost assured. Even though they will probably be revived at their Safe Crystal, it is

frustrating for anyone to be KO'd, and with such overwhelming odds, it feels like the GM just basically cheated to KO them. Remember that you're not trying to "beat" the players as much as you are trying to play with them.

Overwhelming enemies can be useful, however, in that they can provide an example of the villain's strength, or a warning not to trespass in an area. They also can be foreshadowing – the PC's may eventually be able to kill this beast. There are many examples in the FF games where overwhelming enemies are used to dissuade the player from going into a certain area. Overwhelming "optional bosses" like Shinryuu or Ultima Weapon are usually better off as so-called "Trick Combats" than as regular combats.

Pathetic enemies don't make the players feel that the GM is cheating or forcing a fate on them, but they are profoundly uninteresting most of the time. The victory of the party is virtually assured and it just eats up precious time that could be dedicated to something more interesting.

Pathetic enemies have their uses, however. The PC's can demonstrate power against them, especially if they were weak against the same enemies before, and that can be very rewarding. They may also serve more as plot points – minions that can give them information, or that serve to demonstrate a distant villain's power rather than the enemies' power.

## THE COMBAT CHECK

Not every combat is of equal importance. When you want to resolve a combat without bothering to play out every sword-blow, you can make a Combat Check.

A combat check is  $1d20 +$  the average level of the party.

Each side gets a Combat Check. The winner wins the combat.

The Combat Check can also be used for off-screen combats, or NPC combats where you don't want to pre-script the outcome. It is good to use on pathetic enemy combats where victory is almost assured, but you want to give the low-level mooks a chance to overcome the PC party, however slim.

## PLAYER ADVICE

### WHY DO YOU FIGHT?

Like most of your adventuring career, combat is something that has its roots in your character's motive. Your character might fight to gain something they desire, or to stop something they fear. Your character may long for combat, be violent and hotheaded at heart, or they may fear it, try to prevent it, and would do anything to avoid it. Of course, this is a continuum, not a binary choice: true ravaging maniacs tend to be monsters, while true pacifists fit an NPC mold better than a PC one. Most PC's will fight often in their careers, and giving some thought as to why and under what conditions you may raise your weapon (and, similarly, when you may drop it in peace or even friendship) will help you determine when it is worth it.

### ATTACK AND DEFENSE

Your character is capable of both attack and defense, and it is important in FFZ to balance these. In general, you should attack early, and as overwhelmingly as you can, but chances are your enemies are doing the same. You will have to spend some rounds during combat defending yourself, recovering from wounds, restoring magick points, and refocusing your speed.

The fundamental rule in combat is:

**Gain the Advantage, Press the Advantage**

If you don't have the advantage, gain it through canny defense.

When you have it, press it as hard as you can, and hold onto it.

## THE RULES: PRE-COMBAT

Before the combat begins, the GM and the Players should already have a few things prepared.

## BATTLE MENU

It is exceptionally useful to know what you can do in combat before you enter it. The easiest way to do this to prepare a battle menu – a shorthand reference for your attacks, defenses, and abilities.

Most characters will have these basic "commands:"

**Fight:** Deal weapon damage with an equipped weapon, or use a special attack.

**Ability:** Use a Job Ability, or another Ability.

**Defend:** Take Full Defense, or use a special defense.

**Move:** Change rows or flee

**Item:** Use an item from your inventory or switch equipment.

## FORMATION

The party should always have a default formation. They can change this formation on the fly, when they're not in combat. Mostly, determining formation consists of determining two things:

**Marching Order:** Give each character a number to represent their order when marching in a line (from 1 to the number of characters in the party). Marching order largely determines the order in which characters will notice things, and be affected by things in front of them.

**Default Row:** Assign your character to the Front Row or the Back Row. This is where your character will generally start in any combat.

## PERCEPTION

A party has a Perception score equal to 11 + the highest MND in the party. This is the party's ability to notice the world around them as they move, and helps determine surprise.

## BATTLEFIELD

The GM must determine the environment the combat occurs in. To a certain degree, this will help determine what kind of maneuvers are possible, and a DM may add special maneuvers to certain special battlefields.

## THE RULES: COMBAT

### COMBAT FLOW

The flow of combat follows six basic steps:

- 1: Determine Surprise
- 2: Determine Speed and turns
- 3: Take your turns
- 4: Begin the next round
- 5: Repeat Steps 2-4
- 6: End Combat

### SURPRISE

Surprise is a fairly straightforward affair. In normal circumstances, neither side is surprised. Surprise comes from specific actions by the NPC's or the PC's.

**Surprised!:** The NPC party was prepared for the PC's, but the PC's weren't prepared. In order to ambush, have the NPC party make a collective Stealth check, opposed by the party's Perception score. If they win, the NPC party can surprise the PC party.

Being ambushed gives the NPC the entire first round to act before Speed is rolled. If the Stealth check exceeds the Perception score by 5 or more, they may also try several formation techniques:

**Back Attack:** The rows of the PC's are reversed. Any party members in the Back Row are in the Front Row, and any party members in the Front Row are in the Back Row.

**Split!:** The PC's are divided into two parties as chosen by the enemies (they are split in half, based on marching order). These parties cannot target each other, and "all allies" effects only target one party.

**Pinch!:** The enemies split into two parties, with the PC's in between them. The PC's cannot use the Flee option, and are all considered to be in the Front Row.

**Ambush!:** The PC party may also use these tactics, in the same way: the PC party must make a collective Stealth check, beating the enemies' Perception score. If they beat it by 5 or more, they can choose to attack the flank, split, or pinch the enemy party as they see fit as well.

## DETERMINE SPEED AND TURNS

After any Surprise round, have each character in combat make a Speed check. A Speed check is  $1d20 + \text{Agility}$ .

This check gives you the Speed score (abbreviated SPD) of your turn for the round. A result of 13, for instance, means your turn has a SPD score of 13 on this round.

You may have more than one turn in one round. If your check is over 20, you gain an additional turn at a SPD score of 20 less than your highest score. For instance, if you had a Speed check of 25, you would have two turns, one at a SPD 25, and one at SPD 5.

If you have a check result over 40, or 60, or 80, you may have 3 or 4 or 5 turns (or more), each one at 20 less than the previous. For instance, if you had a SPD check of 47, you would have three turns, one at SPD 47, one at SPD 27, and one at SPD 7. There is no hard limit on the number of turns you may get, but, practically speaking, SPD checks even above 40 are rare, high-level events. Most characters will have 2 turns, at most, in a round.

The turns progress from highest SPD score to the lowest, stopping at 0. Any turns that have a SPD less than zero are lost on this round.

Speed is the main tactical angle in FFZ combat. Manipulating it from round to round can give a fighter a brilliant edge.

**Gaining and Losing SPD (Delays):** You only roll for your SPD score once per combat. Your SPD may not change at all between one round and the next. However, your actions (or the actions of others) may affect that score in future rounds. The most common way is through a Delay. A Delay subtracts from the SPD score of all of your turns at the beginning of the next round.

For example, a character with two turns (SPD 21 and SPD 1) in the first round takes a Delay 5 effect. This means that at the beginning of the second round, he subtracts 5 from each SPD score, making them SPD 16 and SPD -4 (and losing his second turn).

If your highest SPD slips below 0, you may lose all of your turns in that round.

It is also possible to gain SPD from one round to the next, and this works the same way that a delay works. You may gain turns, if your highest SPD score goes over a threshold.

A delay or a speed boost never applies in the middle of a round, but rather apply on the round following their application.

**No Turns:** If your highest SPD score is negative, you can take no turns on this round. However, you gain an automatic +10 SPD bonus when you take no turns in a round. So a character with a SPD of -5 in one round will have a SPD of 5 in the next.

## TAKE YOUR TURNS

Turns proceed from the highest SPD score to the lowest, stopping at 0 (turns with a SPD score below 0 are lost). When your turn comes up, you can generally perform one action, selected from your battle menu. Below, the mechanics of these actions are discussed.

**Fight:** You attack. You can make a basic attack or a special attack. Your basic attack involves simply attacking with your weapon. Your special attack, given to you by your job, usually lets you achieve special results with a special trade-off.

A basic attack might be either melee or ranged, depending upon the weapon you have equipped.

A *melee attack* can happen only against creatures in the Front Row, by creatures in the Front Row. To make a melee attack, roll  $1d20$  and add your Level, your Brawn score, and any ATK Bonus you might have. Compare this to the target's Weapon Defense (DEF) score. If you exceed that score, you can roll Weapon Power (WPW), add your BRN to the result, and subtract that many hit points from the enemy. The enemy can prevent losing hit points up to its Resist score.

A *ranged attack* can happen only against creatures in the Back Row, by creatures in the Back Row. To make a ranged attack, roll  $1d20$ , and add your level, your Agility score, and any ATK bonus you might have. Compare this to the target's DEF score. If you exceed that score, you can roll WPW, add your BRN to it, and subtract that many hit points from the enemy. The enemy can prevent losing hit points up to its Resist score.

Your *special attack* will describe what to do in your job description. It will also list a cost, which you must pay each time you use the special attack.

When you roll a natural 20 on any attack roll, you gain a *critical hit*. This hit deals maximum damage.

**Ability:** You use a special ability. Your special abilities are given to you from four main sources: your job, your sub-job, your advanced job, and your junctioned Esper. These abilities, how to use them, and what they do, are described in their respective entries. You begin with only a single special ability from your job, but you will gain more at every level from either your job or another source.

**Defend:** You spend the turn defending yourself. You can choose to use full defense or a special defense. Full defense involves spending the round on guard, preparing for assault, gathering energy, and nursing your wounds. Your special attack, given to you by your job, lets you achieve special results with a trade-off.

Using *full defense* has the following effects: You heal HP equal to your VIT score, recover MP equal to your SPR score, gain SPD equal to your AGI score, and also gain +4 DEF and +2 Resist. These bonuses last until the next round, but can only be gained once per round. The HP healing, MP recovery, and SPD boost happen on each turn.

Your *special defense* will describe what to do in your job description. It will also list a cost, which you must pay each time you use the special defense.

**Move:** You move around the battlefield. You can choose to change rows or flee. Changing rows switches you between the Back Row and the Front Row. Fleeing allows you to end combat early.

*Changing Rows* is automatic. Simply switch your row status.

*Fleeing* is done by making an Agility check. This check must exceed the highest SPD value for the enemy team. If you succeed, you can escape combat. Others have to flee on their own power. If you fail, you take a Delay of 10.

**Item:** You take something from your inventory. You can choose to use an item, or to switch equipment. Using an item consumes it and activates its effect, while switching equipment allows you to change what you are bearing into combat.

*Using an Item* is automatic. Each item has its own effects that are unleashed when you “use” it. Using it may imply holding it, focusing on it, rubbing it, drinking it, chanting a command word, or many other kinds of “use.”

*Switching Equipment* is also automatic. You may change one piece of equipment on your turn, and then your turn is over.

**Not on the Menu:** Of course, this menu doesn’t list everything that is theoretically possible in a combat. You can always talk, move about within your row, describe your actions, and otherwise provide narration without worrying about any rules.

## BEGIN THE NEXT ROUND & REPEAT

After all the turns have been taken, you begin the next round by first applying any Delays or other SPD changes that you may have. Once all SPD changes are rendered, the round proceeds as normal. Repeat this process until there is no more threat.

## END COMBAT

Once the teams pose no more threat to each other, combat is over. If the enemy party has won, the PC’s are generally revived at their Safe

Crystal after a few minutes. If the enemies are aware of the Safe Crystal (and most creatures in the world are aware of Safe Crystals and what they do), the enemy party may make preparations for another attack, or they may move, or they may pro-actively attack the PC party at their Safe Crystal, hoping to destroy the crystal.

If the PC’s have won, they are rewarded with the enemy’s gil, loot, any special items, and a Limit Point.



## OPTIONAL RULE: STUNTS

### REALISM AND ABSTRACTION

FFZ combat is blatantly and unabashedly abstract. It deliberately models combat in the FF videogames: simple, quick, where your main choice is what move to use and how long it will take you to use that move. There are a lot of assumptions in this level of abstraction: you are assumed to always be moving, to be able to shift rows at your leisure, to have allies guarding your back, to be ducking and weaving, using the terrain to your best advantage, and pulling stunts like disarming and tripping when it makes sense to do so. A critical hit, for instance, may represent knocking an enemy prone and jamming your blade into his back, while a Full Defense might mean you take cover, hide in the underbrush, or even duck behind a monster for a minute.

However, in finding the middle ground between abstraction and realism, you may find that you want a greater level of control over your options in combat. Such a thing is possible in FFZ using a stunts system.

Stunts are mostly about player input. The player chooses to do something interesting and cinematic, and the GM, as always, is encouraged to say *yes*. The player can basically play with what is on the battlefield. The GM may describe the battlefield as a wind-swept robot graveyard in the desert at night, and the player may choose to kick sand in the eyes of his enemy, or attempt to get his enemy to strike the electrical current of the robot, shocking the foe, or might even attempt to start up the robot for a brief fusillade of attacks. They might also push their enemy down the dunes, or into a cactus, or they may try to dig into the sand themselves to hide in the fray.

By default, these things are handled by narration and abstraction. They are all possible, they just have no greater effect than, say, a normal melee attack, and they are handled with the normal melee attack rules.

However, you may want a bit more from your lovingly described narration, especially during climactic battles. That's what stunts are for.

### STEP ONE: WHAT CHECK TO USE?

All stunts are basically skill or statistics checks, at their core. It's all well and good to describe swinging from a high chandelier, feet-first

into an enemy below, but accomplishing it is going to require some rolls.

If the action targets an enemy, it is effectively an attack. Have the player use a *Melee Weapon Attack* if the attack is under their own power (such as bull rushing into an enemy to push them back with the point of your sword). Have the player use a *Ranged Weapon Attack* if they're doing it from a distance (such as yanking down a tapestry to cover the enemy's face). Generally, this will be against DEF, though there may be a bonus if the circumstances warrant it.

If the action affects only the user, make it a check. Generally, the most useful skill will be Athletics. Certain cases might warrant other skills, of course – a PC using their extensive knowledge about imps to find a weak spot might use Lore, while a PC trying to distract a foe with flirtation might use Persuasion. When in doubt, find which statistic the character might use, and make it the skill related to that statistic (even if it doesn't otherwise make sense).

As in every d20 situation, remember the GM's Best Friend: +2 bonus for an advantage, and -2 penalty for a disadvantage. If the stunt seems very likely to work, give them a +2. If it's complicated and baroque, say yes, but don't be afraid to give them a penalty.

The DC for this check should be approximately 16 + the character's level for common tasks. Difficult tasks are 20 + the character's level, while simple tasks are 12 + the character's level. Keep in mind, though, that it should be consistent across the battlefield: two fights in the same robot graveyard shouldn't have wildly different DC's.

**The Two-Verb Rule:** Because time and space are so abstracted in FFZ combat, a question of how much is possible in a given turn might come up. A handy guideline is the "two-verb rule," which basically means that they can perform an action composed of no more than two verbs. For instance, "I grab the enemy and throw them to the ground" might be an action, but "I grab the enemy, throw them to the ground, stab them seven times, and then kick them on my way up" might be a bit much. You can always choose to go back to abstraction if the action gets a little too specific.

### STEP TWO: WHAT HAPPENS?

**Attack:** If the stunt was an attack, it can inflict damage and/or status ailments on the enemy. As the GM, you must decide if the attack is a repeatable thing that can be done every round, or is a once-in-a-combat event. Tripping a creature might happen every round, but getting them to stand in front of the loaded cannon while you fire it is something that isn't likely to happen more than once.

For things that may happen regularly, use 1d8 + BRN + the character's level. Especially severe effects or clever uses of damage might use higher dice (d10 or d12), while minor inconveniences might use lower dice (d6 or d4). Increase this to 2d8 at level 6, and to 3d8 at level 11. If they also cause a status ailment, subtract 1d8, and make sure that the status ailment falls within the range of ailments that a character of that level can apply (see the *Status* document for those guidelines).

For once-a-combat events, you might let them deal double, triple, or even quadruple this damage, depending on how severe the effect might be (getting shot with a canon might be  $\times 4$ , while having a chandelier drop on you might be  $\times 3$ ). If a status happens, make the multiplier one less.

**Skill:** Skills effectively grant you an advantage in attack or defense. For standard difficulty, a +4 bonus to MAT, ATK, DEF, or MDF is standard. An easy task might award only a +2 bonus, while a difficult one might award +6.

