

Intro and Background

This document is written to help provide an overview of my thoughts about key components that go into being consistent. **This is mostly my thoughts on consistency and will have a number of anecdotes that I draw from my personal experience.** Doing everything I suggest here will most likely have different results and effects compared to my own gameplay. Finding your own holy grail of consistency should be the journey you embark on after reading this document.

There are obviously different lengths of time that one needs to be consistent, typically relating to type of raiding. The community typically separates out raiding into a number of different denominations: Casual, Softcore, Midcore, Hardcore, Week 1, WP. My understanding of these denominations for the rest of the document are as follows:

- Casual
 - Consistency is not as strict
 - Raid hours range from 2 hour sessions on 2-3 days
- Softcore
 - Consistency is slightly stricter than “Casual”
 - Raid hours range from 2-3 hour sessions on 2-4 days
- Midcore
 - Consistency is starting to be a key feature that statics are looking for
 - Raid hours range from 2-4 hour sessions on 2-4 days
- Hardcore
 - Consistency is non-negotiable
 - Raid hours range from 2-8 hour sessions on 2-7 days
- Week 1
 - Consistency is non-negotiable
 - Raid hours range from 2-16 hour sessions during prog week and dive down to 2-5 hour sessions on 2-5 days depending on splits
 - Prep vs Blind has a big difference also dependent on group consistency
- WP
 - Consistency is **absolutely** non-negotiable
 - Raid hours range from 12-16 hour sessions during prog days and dive down to 2-5 hour sessions on 2-5 days depending on splits

While these descriptions that I provide are not necessarily exact to what the community has standardized commitment/gameplay level, the major point to be seen here is that as raid sessions get longer, consistency becomes more important.

I want to quickly describe different levels of consistency one might find among the community. I will use the denominations from before to help create parallels.

- Starter/Casual
 - New players typically don't have the endurance or strong enough understanding of how the game works to recognize how to use information given to them to assist their consistency.
 - Alternatively, these players don't spend much effort making the key observations required to develop consistency.
- Softcore/Hardcore
 - Players are starting to gather experience and understand that arena features, boss cast bars, and job rotations, among numerous other information that the game provides are typically standardized. There are a number of different methods that can be employed to create a sense of consistency.
 - While these players begin to develop a sense of consistency, they lack the endurance, fatigue-reducing techniques, or techniques to allow strong gameplay while fatigued.
- W1/WP
 - Veteran players aiming for W1/WP have developed a number of techniques designed to help play consistently. They have typically identified and strongly recognized that fights are a dance that repeats every pull. While Softcore/Hardcore players understand this fact, they haven't really internalized it or begin to understand all the different ways that they could abuse it.

I am again, being very liberal with my descriptions. Please don't get offended as the spectrum of consistency is much wider than I describe here. It is not a singular skill that one develops.

Consistency is the culmination of applying a number of different techniques and skills at the same time to allow a player to perform at the same level of skill no matter how long they have been raiding for given raiding sessions.

A good player can perform at their best when they need to.

A great player can perform at their average regardless of how fatigued they are.

Note that one player's average performance may be better than another player's best performance. Performance is relative, but we tend to observe wipes as extremely detrimental, and the player who can minimize wipes is typically considered the better player in progression, parsing, and speeds. There's certainly a difference between someone who can get the best prog/parse/speed after wiping the party numerous times beforehand compared to someone who can get a marginally worse prog/parse/speed after wiping the party near zero times. This is subjective on which is better and comes down to what one considers "a waste of time." For me, the latter is slightly more exceptional than the former.

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Different Facets of Consistency

I would describe the different facets of consistency with the following terms: Visual, Auditory, Sequential, and Touch/Muscle Memory. You might recognize that these are types of memory. Some types that are not as useful for consistency might include Sensory memory, Short-term memory, and Long-term memory.

Visual Memory

We begin discussing my favorite type of memory - Visual Memory. The key part of visual memory that raiders want to tap into is using a “Visual Experience” to standardize their play during pulls. This means facing your camera a certain way at a specific point of a pull, every pull; This means looking at a specific spot at a specific point of a pull, every pull; This means seeing the rest of the party do the same thing at a specific point of a pull, every pull. This last part is not considered important by people who play the game as an individual (not a wrong playstyle) but will definitely have effects on people who tend to watch others during pulls.

Visual Snapshots

The first two points are very much related to each other. You cannot look at a specific point in the arena without having your camera facing said position. I will provide a few examples from the Abyssos Savage Raid tier.

- P5S Proto-Carbuncle Devour
 - You typically want to face your camera in an exact way during this mechanic.
 - Figuring out that exact way requires a few samples and understanding that there are only two patterns that both start off rotating Clockwise.
 - You should then be following the Teeth Icon until you can discern which pattern (typically the 2nd movement from 2-3).
 - Your eyes should then be identifying where you need to start, moving to the next safe spot and eyeing it until you can move there.
 - This is a technique used by many sports athletes where they focus their eyes towards where they want to direct an object. It helps them keep their focus on their current objective and recognizing if they have achieved it or not.
 - From there, you should be eyeing out the safe pathing to the next safe spot if needed.
- P6S Hegemone Limit Cut
 - You want to split off from the rest of the players for visual clarity
 - Identify your number and the position you need to take your cleave
 - Eyeball the cleave spot until you have to go there.

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- Staring at their cleave location helps remind the player that they haven't taken a cleave yet, and vice-versa, not staring at any cleave location for when they have taken a cleave.
- P8SP2 Hephaistos High-Concept 1
 - When you resolve the defamations with the stack players to get two of the same alchemy tables, I recommend having the defamation stand in the corner, while the stack player stands in the middle of the corner tile.
 - This helps remind the player whether they had long defamation or stack. Current strategies abuse this denotation and typically send long defamations to the north or south set of towers. Remembering which you are is pivotal to not wiping.
 - You begin to develop a "Visual Experience" where you recognize whether or not you are long defamation after the defamations have resolved simply based on your positioning.
 - The key benefit here is if you are distracted, space out, or overly-fatigued, then you can refocus and exactly understand how to resolve the rest of the mechanic even if you forgot if you were long defamation or not.

While these are all very small and one might argue obvious adjustments to one's gameplay, it has always been the small things that matter. **Properly setting up visual snapshots in mechanics using visual memory can help consistency** especially when you start spacing out or get distracted.

Visual Clutter

Setting up the aforementioned "Visual Snapshots" can be very difficult if certain players are running around like a headless chicken, or play the game inconsistently. I'll use an example here again.

- P8SP2 Hephaistos High-Concept 1
 - Players should try to follow designated raidplans/solutions as best as possible to help other players develop visual snapshots if they need them.
 - The most typical violation of this is when a player identifies an easier/lazier way of resolving a mechanic. For the typical High-Concept 1 solutions, this could be the left-over alchemy table just staying in the middle. There's no issue with this except if all of the other 7 players are putting the left-over alchemy table in a specific and exact location.
 - This is a case of inconsistency across the entire team. Inconsistencies are not necessarily focused on individual behavior but could be present across team behavior.

Auditory Memory

This is more in relation to faster prog since the majority of this section is about using either the fight BGM or sound cues to develop consistency. I understand that a majority of players prefer to play their own soundtracks while raiding but at the least keep sound effects at a high enough level to use.

BGM as a sound cue is very nice in combination with “Visual Experiences.” You can typically identify what part of the fight you are in using the BGM at a subconscious level. BGM is not used as an active indicator and is there to create a complex experience, with visuals, keypress, and other information present, that is memorable and recallable every pull to create a consistent behavior.

Sound effects are also very important. Using these in tandem with visual effects can typically reduce mislabeling. One example to use here is the Sunforged Phoenix/Serpent in P8SP1 Hephaistos. There is a very distinct sound the Phoenix and Serpent make. Upon hearing the sound, the player should be aware that they need to position very specifically. Relying on these sound cues is typically very consistent b/c they happen at the same time every pull.

Raid Callouts

Callouts technically fall under Auditory memory. It is paramount that any raid calls that are made are consistent and, at the very least, similar in wording/timing in the fight between pulls. This helps develop a sense of timing, when the raid itself lacks visual/auditory cues, that the rest of the raid group can follow, especially during more intense sections of fights.

Some might contend that calling out raidwide/mechanic names, or simply calling raid wide is meaningless. I tend to disagree. In fights that are very long and slow (P7S Agdistis), players will tend to space out during the long periods of simple movements. Adding in new sound cues is meant to help provide more information for players to digest and refresh their attention-span.

Be very careful about changing raid callout keywords, or the caller themselves as this might lend to inconsistencies between pulls.

Sequential Memory

This is the memory that most of the raiding player base tries to apply to raid consistency and fails. This type of memory isn't actually that important. I know a number of raiders who have a terrible time recalling the high-level view of timelines and still perform at a WP caliber. In my opinion, this is the least important facet of consistency that a player needs to develop. You never really need to know what is happening next. You should be developing a sense of when you need to press certain mitigations/shields while learning the fight, and adjusting when you figure out what is happening next if necessary.

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One might argue shield healing, among similar pre-emptive healing things might require sequential memory, but I might suggest baking in the shield GCD into the previous mechanic. Shields last 30s for a reason.

Touch/Muscle Memory

This type of memory is very important when it comes to job rotations, but can also be applied to learning fights. Many people develop a feel for their job rotations through muscle memory or identifying certain actions by a priority system. Being able to autonomously perform job rotations while learning a fight is important because this helps develop muscle memory for the specific fight at hand. **Once you start doing your rotation during pulls, you should never stop, especially for mechanics you've completed successfully.**

One might also try to move their player character the same way every pull. This doesn't mean *exactly* the same every pull, but using the idea of snapshots that we've been discussing. Identifying certain positions on the ground that can be used (typically raid arenas are very helpful to positional consistency) as snapshot locations during pulls. P8SP1 Hephaistos Opening Mechanic is a very strong example of this. Positioning yourself on your intercard and adjusting to the safe square and then to pairs/spread is one application of this.

In the case where arena features are not sufficient, waymarks can be used.

This adds another ingredient to the complex canvas of experiences that we've been developing with Visual and Auditory experiences. You should now be able to identify and refocus yourself by using your job rotation or muscle memory.

Consistency between Pulls

It should be clear now that setting up a number of different failsafes of consistency is important in the process of becoming a consistent player. This way, the player can use any of the set-up snapshots to realign and refocus themselves during a pull. This also helps provide a track that the player can pilot off of. In fact, diverging timeline fights such as P8SP1 Hephaistos are one method for the raid devs to throw off player consistency, or at least slow down learning fight consistency by attacking player muscle memory and sequential memory.

I might coin the term of low-level consistency and high-level consistency, referring to the scope of the consistency. Low-level consistency refers to understanding of the fight and player reactions on a GCD to GCD scope and typically uses muscle memory or sequential memory. High-level consistency refers to understanding of the fight and player reactions on a mechanic to mechanic scope and typically uses visual and auditory memory. In my experience, the more high-level consistency snapshots that a player sets up, the more consistent they may be, especially during divergent timeline fights.

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Fatigue and Endurance

Typically the result of fatigue or a lack of endurance is what seems to be something chalked up to inconsistency. However, is this inconsistency something that needs to be rectified? Should endurance be trained? Or should low-fatigue techniques be developed? I argue that the latter two should be worked on here. Inconsistency as a result of fatigue is typically a result of using consistency techniques that require high-consumption of endurance.

Low-Fatigue Techniques

What might encompass a consistency technique that requires little to no effort? If you've been paying attention, you might recognize that we've been discussing such techniques in the previous section. Setting up snapshots that let you dump information about the pull, or reduce the amount of information that you need to remember at high stress points is the major technique that I use. This is similar to writing down steps to take in a notepad on the side and breaking down mechanics. While you may not use the notepad that you wrote stuff down in during pulls, the act of writing it down will help you internalize the steps that you need to take, and sometimes develop the steps further towards an easier option.

There may be other techniques, but the key technique that I personally always use and focus on is moving my player character the exact same, along with the camera, every single pull in combination with visual snapshots.

Fatigue-Sharing Techniques

There are also techniques to share fatigue between players (before it accumulates). The most common one is raid calling. The raid caller typically develops fatigue much faster than the rest of the players. They are taking on the responsibility of calling correctly, expending more energy into vocalizations, expending thought into standardizing vocalizations, and deciding on what vocalizations have the most clarity/relevance to the group.

The only other technique that I am familiar with in sharing fatigue would be following another player, or trusting that the rest of the party understand how to resolve a specific mechanic. The most recent example is P8SP1 Hephaistos Conceptual Flares, or the flame tiles. Simply removing the processing method and trusting someone else to do the mechanic removes a significant amount of fatigue from the group in exchange for faster fatigue of the mechanic leader. This is technically a reduction in fatigue over the entire group in the short-term. On average, it shouldn't reduce any fatigue since wipes to said mechanics should have more weight on the team.

I might also suggest that players should know their own limits of endurance and how it is affected by fatigue-sharing techniques. There is typically an issue when someone decides to take on an excessive

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amount of weight during certain points of pulls. The group and the player should recognize this and try to dial it back to an appropriate level. My personal anecdote relates to high stress sections of pulls, typically the final “soft enrage” mechanics. Recent examples involve additional caller’s weight during DSR’s Dragon King Thordan phase and P8SP2 Hephaistos’ post cutscene enrage sequence. Some groups have stated upon reviewing this piece that they prefer to not share fatigue in fear of select individuals fatiguing quicker than the group’s average. This should be a case-by-case decision.

Endurance

There isn’t much to discuss here outside of how to develop endurance. The most direct method is to raid when you are tired or fatigued from irl responsibilities. Indirect methods require doing the same with other activities. Training endurance does allow players to try and figure out different avenues of developing consistency and experimenting with them.

Consistency in Everyday Life

You can train yourself to be consistent in everyday life to help be more consistent in XIV raiding. Many of the things we do in life have different avenues of developing a consistency to an end-result. Keep in mind that this refers more towards the method/how you do something, rather than when.

The most similar is going to be playing different games than XIV: aiming down sights in a consistent manner in an FPS, using different sensory information to hone that consistency; analyzing ways to be consistent in Party games (Mario Party, Pummel Party, etc); and even playing MOBA games with a sense of consistency.

Sports is the next relatable activity where consistency can be developed in a similar manner. How you handle a ball, kick a ball, or dribble a ball can all be reduced down to different consistencies. What you look at waiting for a ball to be thrown to you to what you hear can all help enhance your abilities to react to the situation at hand. This is one reason why athletes spend so much time training and honing their different skills. Identifying the fatigue-reducing techniques (Sports that demand high-endurance), or consistencies between techniques (Golf for example) are some similar things that WP players might try to identify when preparing for the next race.

However, we can even dive into craft hobbies. Baking/cooking, jewelry, and even coding, to name a few, all have different avenues to optimize over and typically relate back to consistency because they all desire to reproduce excellent products over the course of time.

Daily activities can also be used to think about consistency. A few examples that can be used are: walking/running, using stairs, sitting in a chair, brushing your teeth, and doing stretches. I don’t know what other people do in everyday life, but almost everything you do can be used as a medium to think about consistency.

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