

Introduction

After Tirankin (D) wrote his strategy introduction for understanding the Exceed speed curve (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/yb7xv475>), I wanted to go a step further. How do all of these attacks interact? How are we supposed to understand the game and it's characters?

First, I'm going to make a few assumptions and exceptions up front. I may refer to them later, but they're so universal that I'm going to get them out of the way now.

We're only covering Season 2: Seventh Cross. Season 1: Red Horizon hadn't established the meta norms yet and has too many exceptions to bother with. Meanwhile, Season 3: Street Fighter isn't out yet.

I'm using **Bold** type to highlight the names of **Normals** and **Characters**.

The normals **Cross** and **Block** can be played in almost any situation. Their purpose is often to escape damage and less for their secondary effects.

I define a clone as an attack with similar stats and usage to one of the normals. Most character's non-ranged attacks are based around being similar to one of the normals.

I'm ignoring most of the effects of boosts, transformations, EX attacks, and unique abilities.

I'm only considering the movement effects on specials in terms of hit confirm, not in terms of avoiding damage. Movement effects can substantially change the relationships of clone attacks but have too much variety to treat as a group.

Seijun essentially operates in her own meta. I'll mention her as I see fit. Similarly, **Remiliss** relies so much on EX attacks that she's hard to categorize.

I'm ignoring Ultras because they are intended to break the meta.

The Neutral Meta

To start with, range 3 is the most interesting range on the board. For the normals, **Assault**, **Dive**, **Spike**, and **Sweep** are all about as useful and viable as each other. This is more than any other range, in terms of normals. Meanwhile, almost all character's special attacks at least hit at **Range 3**, though that might not be their best range.

In terms of the counters here:

Assault beats **Dive** and **Spike**

Dive beats **Spike** and **Sweep**

Spike beats **Sweep**

Sweep beats **Assault** (If the player with Assault initiates the strike, they might consider this their win because of how good Gain Advantage is).

Sweep is often talked about as the best normal because of its fantastic reliability in terms of hit confirm and potential to trade, but this is its worst range, being vulnerable to both **Dive** and **Spike**.

Neutral is also interesting because it has the most cards that play above the speed curve. **Carl Swagnee**, **Luciya**, **Minato**, **Renea**, **Seijun**, **Sydney & Serena**, **Syrus**, **Tournelouse**, and **Zsolt** all have at least one card that hits above the speed curve at range 3. **Seijun**, **Tournelouse**, and **Zsolt** all have a printed speed of 7 on that attack, hitting 2 points above the speed curve.

On the slow side, we also have a few attacks with the protection of a **Sweep** but the speed of a **Dive** and the power or ability to stun a **Spike**. These attacks are meant to contend with Dive and Spike to help guard dependent characters protect themselves at range 3.

If an attack has similar properties but speed 3, I consider it a **Spike** clone and usually meant to counter **Spike**, **Sweep** and **Focus**.

Range 2

At range 2, **Cross** sets the speed curve at speed 6. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, **Cross** is a special card. It is still best played at range 2 in order to get a little damage in and possibly stun an opponent. It's also a little more risky there than at farther ranges as you're still vulnerable to EX attacks and specific character abilities. More importantly, if your character isn't range focused, it might be moving you out of position.

Because of that, most characters in the game have a range 2, speed 6 attack.

Only **Geoffery**, **Iaquis**, **Minato**, **Pooky**, **Remiliss**, **Sydney and Serena**, **Umina**, and **Galdred** don't have one, with **Galdred** being a special case and having it on his unique Exceed attack. Most of those characters instead have a slower attack with guard and armor.

The range 2 counters look like:

Cross counters almost everything

Character range 2, speed 6 specials counter close range **Assaults**

Spike counters **Sweep** and **Focus**

Sweep and **Focus** Trade

The interaction between **Sweep**, **Focus**, and the Character Specials depends heavily on their movement abilities.

Cross Counters

At range 2, we have an especially interesting type of attacks to talk about. Several characters have range 1-5 attacks with relatively low guard and power for their speed. We're talking about **Shovel Knight**, **Celinka**, and **Eugenia** here. **Iaquis** also has an advance ability with guard that can fill the same function. These all counter **Cross** and **Grasp**, which are the high speed normals at range 1-2. Most of these don't trade well with **Assault**, **Focus**, and **Sweep**, but have secondary effects to make up for it. Meanwhile, **Syrus**, **Geoffery**, **Iaquis**, and **Umina** have a range 2-5 attack which can counter **Cross** at range 2. What makes all of this counter-intuitive is that all of these look like ranged attacks (and the range 2-5 ones definitely are), but playing them at range 1-2 protects them from their greatest weaknesses, **Assault** and **Dive**, which are usually played at range 3 and 4.

Range 1

While range 2 is a little strange because of the weird position of **Cross** in the meta, range 1 is even stranger because of the absolute dominance of **Sweep** and **Focus**.

The range 1 counters look like:

Grasp counters mid speed attacks like **Assault** or **Cross** so that you are discouraged from playing them at range 1. It also has a powerful movement ability which is really good for setting up the next turn.

Sweep counters **Grasp** hard. It trades with **Focus**.

Focus counters **Grasp** hard. It trades with **Sweep**.

Against most characters, you can't go wrong playing Sweep or Focus at range 1. The same goes for Sweep and Focus clones, which are very important because of secondary issues in the range 1 meta. If you don't have Focus or Sweep, consider playing a wild swing. Consider holding onto them if you have them and going for the wild swing anyway. If you don't have the cards to deal with range 1, then stay well away from it.

The 3 Boosts

Our range 1 meta consists of 3 normals, including **Grasp**, **Sweep**, and **Focus**. These normals also happen to have the most important boosts for setting up an attack. **Grasp's Fierce** boost adds +2 power. Power boosts tend to be rare and very good. If you ever doubt their usefulness, try reading my Celinka guide (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/yac2vjda>) and playing her. +2 power is almost as good as winning an extra strike.

Sweep's Light boost adds +2 speed. This gives you plenty of options and reduces the opponent's options down to **Focus**, **Sweep**, **Block** and their clones, for the most part.

Focus' Reading boost sets the opponent up for a hard counter. See here for Jay Green's guide (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/y7ooxyct>)

In other words, all 3 of these cards make it clear that you are devoting significant resources to a strike and intending to make a play. They are the hardest boosts to use because they require the most commitment. They also give the strongest rewards, along with **Parry** on **Block**.

You end up with an even stranger meta a range 1 where you struggle between playing a safe, guaranteed attack against setting up a big win with the boost.

Focus Clones

Focus is the only normal with the "Opponent Can't Move You" text, which is extremely powerful against grasp and other displacement abilities. While there are many cards with similar power, guard, and armor stats, I only see 4 characters with those attacks having displacement counters.

Galdred and Carl have "Opponent Can't Move You" effects on Eviscerate with similar status to Focus. Meanwhile, Emogine and Geoffery have "Before: If you were hit during this strike, Close x". Emogine can close 2 while Geoffery can close 3. Neither of them have Focus' armor, though they have similar effects on their transformations and unique abilities.

Range 4

I'm covering range 4 last because there I don't have as much to say about it. Only the normal Dive hits this far out and you're starting to get into the ranged meta. There is a ton to talk about out here, but it's all character specific and probably requires its own guide.

The game does start at range 4, so you'll be in this position at least once a game. Learn what attacks hit out here, whether they advance, and where they fall on the speed curve. Like range 3, there are still a bunch of attacks that are +1 on the speed curve, though not as many.

Most ranged attacks will trade, though the range 1-5 attacks that I mentioned in the range 2 section are likely to get stunned out. The exceptions are advancing attacks that can move inside the opponent's range. Playing an assault can be useful for this, even if it whiffs.

Conclusion

The important takeaway is The interaction between fast attacks (**Grasp**, **Cross**, **Assault**), slow attacks (**Focus**, **Sweep**), and counters to the slow attacks (**Dive**, **Spike**). The slow attacks

become better at different ranges based on how many of the counters are effective at that range. Many characters have additional counters to slow attacks as well. Fast attacks are also worse if you aren't initiating the strike. To balance it out, I highlighted some common counters to the fast attacks like the **Cross** Counters and **Focus** Clones.

If you don't have an attack that compete with the meta at your range, you should wild swing. Even if you do, you should probably still wild swing. See the wild swing guide (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/y7n7ocqu>)