

Beginner's Raid Guide

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Final Fantasy XIV has a variety of difficult encounters that players can attempt throughout their journey in Eorzea. As the game has evolved and grown over the years, raid encounters have gotten more complex and new mechanics have been introduced. Game developers have created various types of raid content for different types of players and have made significant improvements to overall content. This guide will break down the basics of raiding and help new players gain the confidence to get their feet wet.

Story Trials > Story/Alliance Raids > Extreme/Unreal Trials > Savage Raids > Ultimate Raids

Story Dungeons > Variant Dungeons > Criterion Dungeons > Savage Criterion Dungeons

Glossary of Abbreviations

DPS = Damage Per Second

HPS = Heals Per Second

AOE = Area of Effect

ST = Server Tick (approximately every 3 seconds, naturally)

GCD = Global Cooldown (spells)

OGCD = Off-Global Cooldown (abilities/skills)

TB: Tank Buster

DOT: Damage over Time

HOT: Heal over time (regens)

LFG: Looking for Group

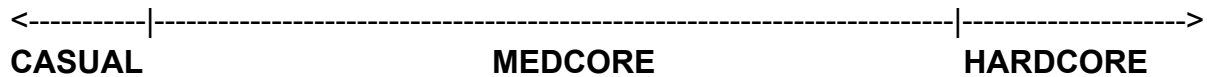
MC: Med-core

HC: Hard-core

BIS: "Best in Slot"

Introduction: “So You Want to be a Raider”

Players’ skill levels come in all types. One of the first steps to becoming a raider is to decide what **type** of raid group a player is interested in. The Final Fantasy raid community breaks it down into something of a spectrum:



Casual: Raiding interest lies in having fun and hanging out with friends. Speed of clearing the content isn’t as important as having a good time. Generally, casual groups have a relaxed schedule and relaxed attendance rules. Mastery of jobs is not required since the goal is to have fun with each other. Casual raid groups tend to get together once or twice a week for a couple of hours.

Medcore: Med-core raiders’ interests lie in progression at an above-average pace while still focusing on the fun of raiding. These groups generally have stricter schedules and tighter rules around attendance and punctuality. Advanced knowledge of job and job utility is a strong asset/required. These types of groups generally run 3 - 4 times per week for a few hours each night. ***Medcore raid groups make up the largest part of the raiding community in FFXIV.***

Hardcore: Raiding interest lies in clearing content quickly and performing at the top level. Members of hardcore raid groups must have expert knowledge and execution of the job they are playing and be able to optimise and take risks. Hardcore groups usually have a tough application process and underperformance will result in expulsion from the group. When new raid content is released, these types of groups generally run for approximately 18 hours a day for the first week or until the content is cleared.

NOTE: *Types of groups can fall anywhere on the spectrum above and be a mixture of different qualities of groups. Find a group that’s right for you! A lot of the content in this guide will also depend on the type of group you decide is the best choice for what you’re looking for.*

Med-core groups have the largest stretch in the spectrum because some groups can be a combination of two parts. For example, a med-core casual group would likely have a strong focus on clearing content and performing their jobs well but not really focusing on a schedule or clearing quickly. A player can also identify as a med-core raider, but want to join a casual group.

Lastly, a player may not have the freedom of schedule to join a static raid group and/or they may prefer using the Party Finder to clear content. Whether a player joins a static raid group or not, all content is clearable.

Static or Party Finder

Doing raid content in Final Fantasy XIV is a fun and challenging experience. The high-end raid content that is released during a raid cycle (tier) requires a party of eight players to complete. It is encouraged that a player join a “static” to achieve this; however, not all players will be able to do this due to personal schedules or limitations. *A “Static Raid Group” is a team of the same eight players that meet during set days and times of the week to clear content together.*

“Static Raid Group” Pros:

- Consistency (same players, same behaviours).
- Building relationships with other players
- Usually more relaxed and fun
- Scheduled consistency
- Controlled loot distribution.

Party Finder Pros:

- Can run content when is most convenient for the player
- More loot (if lucky)
- Build a bigger network of raiders
- Great alternative if a player cannot commit to the a set schedule

Raid Leader or Raid Member

Once a player has determined what *type* of group they are looking for, it’s important to make the decision as to whether or not they want to lead a group or simply join one. Choosing to become a raid leader comes with a little added responsibility: recruitment, attendance management, and performance management. Of course, the lattermost responsibility really depends on the type of group. *Casual groups may have a much more relaxed approach to performance.*

Raid Leading & Recruitment

Many resources are available to players looking to form their own group from the ground up: [FFXIV Recruitment Reddit](#), [Aether Recruitment Discord](#), and **Party Finder** (in game). The Black Waltz also has a [Raid Roster](#) spreadsheet where potential raiders in the Free Company leave their name to show that they are interested. Regardless of channel used, a raid leader will want to post an “advertisement” indicating what jobs they are looking for to fill out the roster. A typical recruitment advertisement should include:

- Schedule & times
- Type of raid group (casual, med-core, etc).
- Which jobs are needed
- Which jobs are currently in the roster
- Current progression (if any)
- Data-Center (if using a non-aether channel like reddit)
- Basic expectations

Example:

[7/8][LF1M][MC]

Hello, friends!

7/8 static looking for a physical ranged ( /  / ) to complete our roster. We recently had our Dancer step out due to real life conflicts and we now have a space open. Our group is very laid-back and considers ourselves to be med-core - we have a strong focus on progression but at the end of the day, we're in it for the fun of raiding. We're looking for someone with a similar mindset.

As a group, we are currently working on **Phase 2 of E12S, specifically Basic Relativity**, though some of us been to enrage on our own.

Our raid times:

Tuesdays: 8:00pm EST - 11:00pm EST
 Wednesdays: 8:00pm EST - 11:00pm EST
 Thursdays: 8:00pm EST - 11:00pm EST

Our current party composition:

WAR / GNB / AST / SCH / DRG / SAM / BLM

Setting Expectations

Whether a player has chosen to become a raid leader or not, it is very important that expectations are discussed as a group and make sure everyone is on the same page. If the raid group is leaning more towards med-core / hard-core, it would be a great opportunity to discuss the importance of attendance. Some groups enact a no-show policy (two no-shows and removed from the group), while others may set loot restrictions around lateness (2 lates within 2 weeks forfeits loot for a time). Decide what works best for the group and discuss it together!

Since the more difficult content requires practice and execution, someone missing a raid night can set the entire group back. All members should be committed to the schedule and if someone's needs change, it should be discussed. Additionally, all members should arrive to raid prepared with their gear in top condition (repaired) and with enough raid food and potions to last the evening. If the group is going for a more casual vibe, this may not be as important - just remember that everyone's time is valuable.

Performance Management (Raid Leaders)

Most players will perform their best and it is up to each individual player to understand their role completely when joining a raid group. As such, this small section on performance management will **only apply to groups that are more on the hardcore spectrum**. The more hardcore a group, the higher the expectations from each member. As a raid leader it is important to acknowledge and recognise where improvements can be made for the betterment of the group.

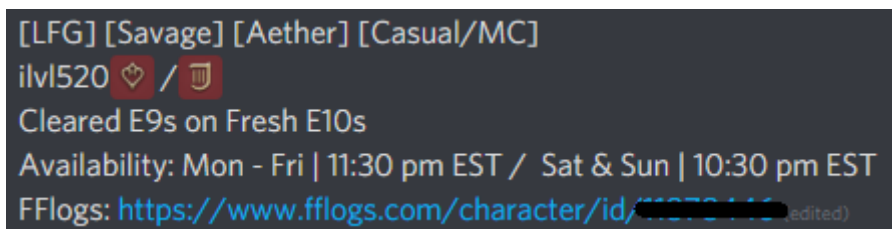
Sometimes, this requires a private conversation with a teammate that is **consistently** not performing. Be prepared to have those conversations *compassionately* -- no one likes to be told they are holding the group back. The more knowledgeable a raid leader is on the various jobs within the Final Fantasy XIV world, the more assistance they can offer. ***In a more serious setting, members are expected to know their jobs' full potential and play it well.***

Finding a Group (non Raid Leading)

A player interested in joining a raid group can do so in the same manner as a Raid Leader would when forming a group: using any of the resources available for recruitment ([FFXIV Recruitment Reddit](#), [Aether Recruitment Discord](#), Party Finder, Waltz [Raid Roster](#)). Similarly, a player looking for a group should leave an advertisement in the proper channel with important information:

- Character name, item level, and job (caster, physical ranged, etc).
- Flex jobs (if any)
- Availability & free times
- Current fight progression
- Type of group (medcore, hardcore, etc)
- Link to FFLogs "Raid Resume" if applicable (more on this ahead)

Example:



[LFG] [Savage] [Aether] [Casual/MC]
ilvl520 🍷 / 🗑️
Cleared E9s on Fresh E10s
Availability: Mon - Fri | 11:30 pm EST / Sat & Sun | 10:30 pm EST
FFlogs: <https://www.fflogs.com/character/id/11272111> (edited)

Loot and Gear Progression (Updated for 6.4)

The loot system in FFXIV has certainly been improved over the years. Whether joining a group or leading one, it is important that all members of a raid group know what specific pieces of gear they will need to complete their “Best in Slot” set.

The Balance is a group of players that spend hours researching and number-crunching to determine which combination of gear will enable a player to maximize their potential: the “Best in Slot” sets. Raid fights drop the highest item-level gear available for the current gear cycle; however, a player’s “Best in Slot” set will ***always*** be a combination of raid gear and gear purchased with the most current Tomestone currency.

When a raid cycle begins, gear is limited and locked weekly. It resets during the weekly reset every Tuesday morning at 3:00am EST. ***Once a fight is complete for the week, a player will not be able to get loot from that fight again until the following reset.***

Two chests typically drop from an encounter and are shared among all eight players that completed it. In a static raid group, loot can be controlled in a way that gives the greatest advantage to the team. Generally, the first round of gear should go to damage-dealing jobs, followed by tanks, and finally healers. This is suggested because it will give the DPS jobs a higher damage cap, making future clears easier and faster.

Tomestone currency gear starts ten item levels lower than the raid gear from the same gear cycle, but it can be upgraded to the same item level by using the upgrade components that drop in specific raid fights (listed below). Tomestone currency has a ***weekly acquisition cap of 450*** - it is wise for a raider to max this out weekly since a tomestone gear body piece costs over 800.

Raid tiers in FFXIV have been consistent in their formula: four encounters gaining in difficulty with the final one being the hardest. A player cannot access a fight beyond their current progression unless another player (while party leader) takes them.

Note: *A player who is taken into a further fight than their current progression will forfeit their weekly loot for the encounters they skipped.* Each fight drops the same type of loot each week:

Fight One:

- Accessory Coffer x 3

Fight Two (Two random gear pieces + one upgrade component):

- Head Coffer

- Gloves Coffers
- Shoes Coffers
- Tomestone Accessories Upgrade Component

Fight Three (One random gear piece + one pair of pants + one upgrade component):

- Head Coffers
- Gloves Coffers
- Shoes Coffers
- Pants Coffers
- 1 x Body Piece Coffers
- Tomestone left-side gear upgrade component

Fight Four:

- 1 x Specific Job Weapon
- 1 x Weapon Coffers
- 1 x Mount
- (Fight Depending) 1 x Minion

All coffers will yield an item for the job the player is on when they use the coffer from their inventory after winning it in a roll.

Each player should make note of which pieces of gear are their “Best in Slot” and relay that to the raid leader. Until every member of the raid group has their BIS set, members ***should not*** freely roll on gear that isn’t their “Best in Slot.” If a player is doing raid content via the Party Finder, roll on everything!

When deciding which items to purchase with Tomestone currency, always go for the pieces that will give the greatest advantage first. If a player’s best chest piece or pants are tomestone gear, it is wise to purchase these items first -- they have the greatest increase in stats over all other pieces of gear.

Once a raid fight has been completed for the week, a player cannot go back and get more loot; however, they can return to a previous fight to help a friend or another group. Doing this will affect the loot that drops for those that have not yet cleared for the week. It works this way so that tenured players cannot go back and “carry” other players through the fight without a loot penalty. If one to four players have already cleared for the week, only one chest coffer will drop for those that have yet to clear. If five or more have cleared for the week, no chests will drop at all.

Regardless of chests, players who have not yet cleared will always receive a “token” item from the fight upon completion once per week. These “token” items can be exchanged for raid gear by an NPC in the same area where Tomestone gear is sold. This also gives players another avenue to take in order to gear themselves up. The cost per gear item varies in token costs:

- **Accessories:** 3 tokens from the first fight
- **Shoes, Gloves, and Hats:** 3 tokens from the second fight
- **Pants & Chest Piece:** 6 tokens from the third fight
- **Weapon:** 8 tokens from the final fight
- **Tomestone accessory item upgrade:** 3 tokens from the second fight
- **Tomestone gear / weapon upgrade items:** 4 tokens from third fight.

In a static environment with controlled loot, most of the books are probably going to be spent on upgrade components. Most groups will clear the first one or two fights relatively easily, and by the time they start clearing the third and fourth fights, most of the static members will have all the BIS items they need from the first two.

Crafted Battle Gear and Gear Cycles

FFXIV's gear cycle is aligned with the raid cycle: when a new raid tier is released, the highest item level for gear is raised. As mentioned earlier, the raid gear will always be the highest level available and requires a lot of work to get. In addition to raid and tomestone gear, new gear recipes for crafters are also released during the start of a new gear cycle - please note that during Dawntrail launch, the crafted battle gear will not be released until Day 1 of Savage Raid release.

Crafted sets allow players to get a bump up in their item levels until they can acquire the higher-level raid and tomestone gear. Crafted sets are usually 10 item levels higher than the previous tier's best gear, and 20 item levels below the current best set. If a player has the resources available, it is highly recommended that they enlist the help of a crafter to get these sets made.

The Basics

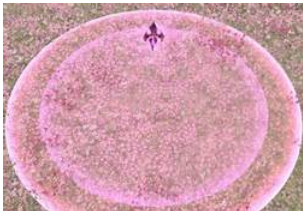
FFXIV Fight Mechanics

Final Fantasy XIV has many unique fight mechanics in duties and dungeons. Whenever new content is released, the developers will usually introduce new mechanics to keep the encounters fresh and exciting. As a result, this guide will only be going over the most common fight mechanics and terminology.

Tankbusters: These are common and appear in every raid encounter and major boss fight in the game in various ways. **TB** is the term given to an attack that does a massive amount of damage and is intended for a tank (or two tanks) to take with defensive cooldowns. Sometimes, **TBs** have no indicator at all and other times they will. In almost all cases, though, the boss will usually cast the ability and have a cast bar, giving the tank ample time to mitigate. If the **TB** gives the tank a debuff, it is likely that a tank swap is needed before the boss does a follow up move.



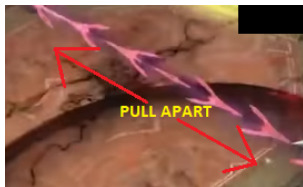
Stack Markers: Golden/yellow arrows that pulsate and point inwards on a player. This mechanic requires multiple party members standing with the affected player to share the damage from the incoming attack. If multiple players get stack markers, they should not be stacked on top of each other.



Solo AOE / Spread: Individual AOE indicators around a player mean that player will get hit with a mechanic that has splash damage. These indicators can be light purple or orange and mean a player should move away from any other player so that damage is taken alone.



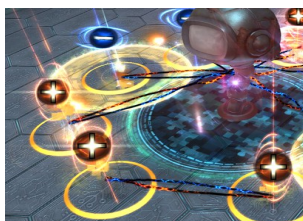
Red Eye / Gaze: This indicator is a “look away” mechanic. All players must turn their characters away from whichever target has this pulsating eye to successfully resolve the mechanic.



Tethers (Stretch): These tethers have tiny arrows along them and must be pulled apart / stretched to resolve. Many of these tethers do proximity-based damage - the further you stretch them, the better. In most cases, the arrows will change to a solid line when you're far enough away.



Tethers (Coloured): Many different types of tethers exist that have different requirements to resolve. Some are tank busters where a tank must stand in the tether to take the hit, while others might connect two players together with resolution coming from having the characters be close together or far apart.



Tethers (Polarity): Polarized tethers are indicated by large + and - signs above a character's head. When this mechanic resolves, a player will be pushed away from whatever they are tethered to, or pulled together like a magnet depending on the charges. Opposite charges attract and similar charges will repel.



Proximity-Based Impact: This mechanic is denoted by a circular

pattern pulsing outwards and will usually result in an object hitting the ground at this point. Damage is proximity-based from the point of impact - move your character as far away as possible for minimal damage.



Chains / Brambles: These are a type of tether that can look like vines, thorns, or chains. In order to resolve this mechanic, players must remain close to whatever object/other player they are tethered to until the chains form, and then run away to break them.



Proximity Flare: This mechanic looks like three large, white arrows pointing away from a player. This mechanic is a proximity-based attack targeted on this player that should be taken as far away from the group as possible.



Fire, Ice & Movement: While these mechanics appear throughout the game with many different types of visuals, the resolution remains the same. If a boss casts a fire-based spell and a player receives the **Pyretic** debuff, they will need to stop all actions and movement otherwise the debuff will cause damage over time. Ice-based spells would require a player to physically move their character

around when the cast finishes or they will be frozen in place and take damage for a set period of time.



Earthshaker / Protean: The concept of this mechanic has various names, but these are the most common. A player will receive an icon above their head indicating they are being targeted with an individual cone aoe shooting from the boss. If multiple players receive this icon, they should spread out so they do not get hit by multiple blasts. Some fights will have all eight players targeted with this mechanic and all players should spread out into “clock positions” around the boss’s hit box.



Meteors: This mechanic will show a small circle on the arena with a glowing orb or meteor falling from the sky into the center of the circle. A player needs to stand within the circle before the orb hits the ground in order to resolve this mechanic. If a circle is left unattended, a raidwide explosion will usually detonate and result in heavy damage to the party.

Voice Chat and Universal Callouts

Discord is the most commonly used service for voice communication amongst raiders and some groups require that their members use it. Content can be cleared without the use of voice communication, but it certainly makes things easier. If a member of a group is confident in the mechanics, they can call them out for the rest of the group. There are certain phrases and words that are universally accepted and *most* raiders will know what the mechanic is. Examples:

- Protean/Earthshakers = spread to clock position
- Flare = targeted player move away from the group
- Prey = targeted player needs to resolve mechanic on their own

The Black Waltz's Discord server is free to use for all members and the invite can be provided to potential raiders. Additionally, if a raid leader would like a private raid text channel and voice channel for their team, one can be created at request.

Role Mastery and Party Skills

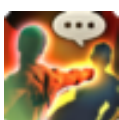
Becoming a raider in Final Fantasy XIV is an excellent way for a new player to master the job they have chosen to play. Since the fights are very puzzle-oriented, players will have to perform mechanics properly while maintaining damage ("uptime") on the boss at all times. The first two fights in a raid tier can be cleared relatively quickly due to the lower difficulty, but the third and fourth fights will take much longer.

It is highly recommended that a player understand their chosen job completely and know what additional utilities can be brought with them. Certain types of jobs bring additional skills into the mix that greatly benefit overall team progression.

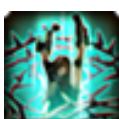
Party Utility "Role" Skills: Tanks



Reprisal: Lowers the target's damage output by 10% for 10 seconds. This can be used every 60 seconds and is a great tool for mitigating large amounts of raidwide damage.



Interject: Interrupts the target's next action. This does not affect all actions and can be used on actions where the target's cast bar is pulsing red.



Shake it Off (WAR): Creates a barrier around self and nearby party

members that absorbs up to 15% of the party member's HP worth of damage and lasts for 15 seconds. Depending on additional buffs the WAR has on themselves before using this skill, the barrier can be a maximum of 21%.



Divine Veil (PLD): When used and then a heal is received, this skill puts a shield around all nearby party members that absorbs up to 10% of the party member's maximum HP and lasts for 15 seconds.



Dark Missionary (DRK): This skill places a buff around all nearby party members that reduces the amount of **magic** damage they receive by 10% for 15 seconds.



Heart of Light (GNB): This skill places a buff around all nearby party members that reduces the amount of **magic** damage they receive by 10% for 15 seconds.

Party Utility “Role” Skills: Healers



Esuna: Removes one detrimental status effect from a single party member. Debuffs that can be removed by Esuna will have a white line at the top of the debuff icon next to the player's HP bar.



Rescue: This skill pulls another player to the healer that has used the skill. It is considered a utility skill because it can also be used to help a party member get maximum uptime before needing to be with the group for a mechanic.



Sacred Soil (SCH): This skill places a bubble on the ground in which all party members receive 10% less damage from all attacks as long as they remain in the bubble. A level 80 SCH bubble will also add a regen.



Asylum (WHM): Places a bubble on the ground in which all party members receive regen healing as long as they remain in the bubble. A level 80 WHM bubble will also increase healing received by 10%.



Collective Unconscious (AST): Erects a bubble around the caster that reduces damage taken by 10% for 18 seconds to anyone that stands within the bubble. Standing in the bubble will also give a party member a 15 second regen.



Kerochole (SGE): Casts a bubble around the caster that reduces damage taken by 10% for 18 seconds to anyone that stands within the bubble. Standing in the bubble will also give a party member a 15 second regen.

Party Utility “Role” Skills: Physical Ranged DPS



Head Graze: Interrupts the target's next action. This does not affect all actions and can be used on actions where the target's cast bar is pulsing red.



Tactician (MCH): Places a buff on all party members within range that reduces the amount of incoming damage taken by 10% for 15 seconds.



Troubadour (BRD): Places a buff on all party members within range that reduces the amount of incoming damage taken by 10% for 15 seconds.



Shield Samba (DNC): Places a buff on all party members within range that reduces the amount of incoming damage taken by 10% for 15 seconds.



Dismantle (MCH): Lowers the target's damage output by 10% for 10 seconds.

Party Utility “Role” Skills: Magical Ranged DPS



Addle: Lowers a target's MND and INT stats by 10% for 10 seconds. This reduces the damage of any magic attacks a target will perform in that 10 second period. Additionally, it lowers a target's STR and DEX by 5%, lowering physical damage out by 5% for seconds.

Party Utility “Role” Skills: Melee DPS



Feint: Lowers a target's STR and DEX stats by 10% for 10 seconds. This reduces the damage of any physical attacks a target will perform in that 10 second period. Additionally, it lowers a target's MND and INT by 5%, lowering magical damage out by 5% for seconds.

Although this guide will not deep-dive into each job's individual toolkit, it is important to reference party utility for the purpose of mitigation and progression. Raiding is not an easy task and a lot of damage coming from a fight will kill the party in one hit without proper mitigation. The tools listed above are great ways that a raid group can work together to lower the incoming damage until they get gear high enough to survive without it. **All jobs should utilise their full mitigating toolkits when applicable.**

Important Note: Mitigative debuffs and buffs within the same role category and skill type will override the same skill by another job in that same category. For example, if two casters are in the party and both use **Addle**, one will override the other. Likewise, **Troubadour** will override **Shield Samba** in the physical ranged category and one tank's **Reprisal** will override another tank's **Reprisal**. The exception to this are healer bubbles. Skills from **different** role categories or skill types can stack and further reduce incoming damage. **Note:** When stacking mitigative debuffs, there are diminishing returns on the raw number (see below).

Scenario

A party member has 95,000 HP and the boss begins casting a magic-based raidwide attack that will do 100,000 in damage. If this attack remains unmitigated it will kill the party member.

Reprisal (10%) + Addle (10%) + Shield Samba (10%) + Missionary (10%)

$$100,000 - (((10\%)10\%)10\%)10\%) = \mathbf{65,610}$$

Always communicate mitigation usage between members of your raid group. Most of the mitigating tools can be used several times over the course of a fight, and not every attack will require multiple party members using one. Proper planning and communication is key.

The Advanced Stuff

FFLogs' Raid Resume

[FFLogs](#) is a website where players can upload encounter data and compare their performance against other players who have played the same job and completed the same fight. This process is known colloquially as "parsing" and requires the use of a Third Party Tool called "[Advanced Combat Tracker](#)" (more on this ahead). Medcore players use this tool as a pseudo "resume" when applying for raid group positions.

Note: *Usage of Third Party Tools in FFXIV goes against the Terms of Service. Square-Enix has indicated that they know players use these tools and in most cases they will not act unless a player is using the tool to negatively affect another player. Despite this, it is probably best to not speak about these tools through any chat in-game and keep it limited to Discord or Voice Chat.*

FFLogs breaks down results into two categories: rDPS and aDPS.

rDPS stands for "raid-contributing damage per second" and it measures how much damage a player actually brought to the encounter. This calculation removes the damage bonuses a player received from other party members' buffs while adding the damage bonuses that player has given others.

$rDPS = \text{Total DPS} - (\text{damage gained from others' buffs}) + (\text{damage buffs given to others})$

aDPS stands for “adjusted damage per second” and it measures how much damage a player did with the removal of certain single-target buffs. *These buffs are Devilment / Standard Finish (DNC), Left Eye (DRG), and Astrologian Cards.*

$aDPS = \text{Total DPS} - (\text{damage gained from a specific set of single-target buffs})$

Why the need for two different calculations? There’s a couple of reasons for this. Shadowbringers introduced the **Dancer** job which provides heavy buffs to other party members at the expense of their own raw personal damage (DNC typically has the lowest raw damage output over all other jobs). This enables a more accurate number of a party members' personal contribution to the raid. A DPS job like BLM, which has no party buffs will have a higher *raw damage* output than a DNC, but rDPS allows the DNCs numbers to reflect their total contribution through buffs.

Additionally, removing buffs given to a player through these calculations prevents **padding** from happening. Prior to Shadowbringers, players could clear a fight with the intent on boosting a single party members’ results. That party member would be fed all buffs from the team (cards, dragoon tether, etc) on that run and it would end up showing a skewed and unfair result.



- 1: Boss / Encounter
- 2: Performance % in relation to other players.
- 3: Total damage output during the fight (raid encounters this will show rDPS).
- 4: How many kills have been logged.

- 5: Total time taken to kill the boss.
- 6: Overall performance in the category / raid.
- 7: Category dropdown
- 8: Total rank out of all players that have completed the encounter.

Generally speaking - the higher a player's percentage, the better they were at the encounter. For example, a 99% indicates that a player performed better than 99% of all the other players that did the same encounter on the same job. Average players will fall between 30% and 70% and anything above 70% can be considered above average. 95% and higher shows that a player is exceptional.

Achieving exceptionally high parses or logs is not an easy task and usually requires a group performing near perfectly.

In order to upload reports, a player will need to create an account on the FFLogs website and follow the instructions to prove that they are the owner of a character.

FFLogs is meant to be a tool for *self improvement*. It is important to never shame or put down another player for having a low parse result. Effective raid leaders can go through an FFLogs report and use another resource called [XIVAnalysis](#) to find opportunities in a member's performance and help them improve. Members can also use this tool if they want tips and tricks on how to improve on their own.

[XIV Analysis](#)

The Advanced Combat Tracker program creates reports that are saved to a players' personal computer. Once these reports are uploaded to FFLogs, they will provide a link that shows the contributions from all party members in the encounter. Players can input this link into the FFXIV Analysis website and it will break down the performance of all players in the report.

You can then select which player you want to look at and it will show tips and tricks on what that player can do to improve based on the job they played. For example, Analysis will break down a Black Mage's rotation and Thunder DOT usage and provide examples on where unnecessary clipping occurred.

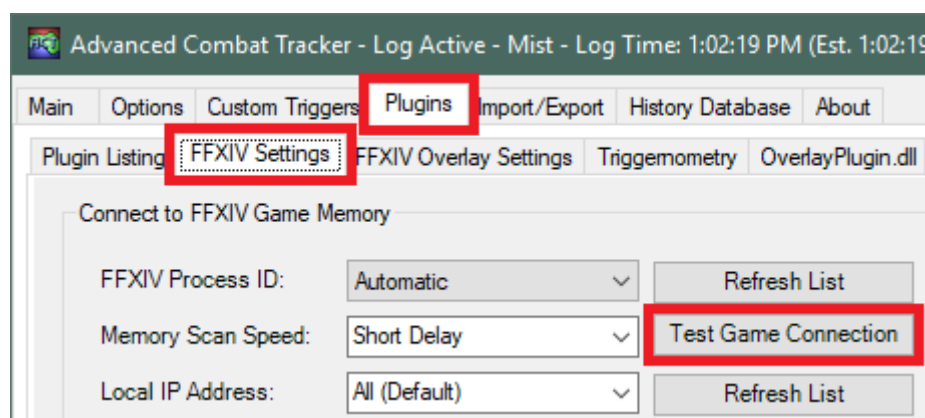
Advanced Combat Tracker

As mentioned earlier, [Advanced Combat Tracker](#) (ACT) is a third party tool for PC players that is used to measure and report player damage and healing numbers. Each report generated from ACT will include all encounters in one report for each session that the program was open, including party wipes. Once the program is installed, a player should then **run as administrator** and complete the startup

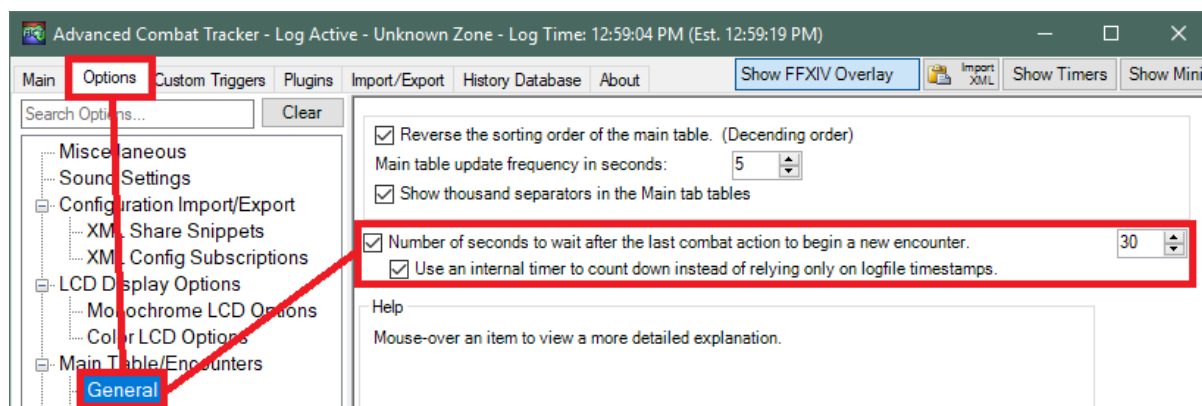
wizard. The installation will always download the latest version of the FFXIV Plugin that is required for the program to read the data from FFXIV. If it doesn't pop up, you can click "Get available plugins" and choose "FFXIV Parsing Plugin."



It is also important for the program to be run **as administrator** each time it is opened so that it is able to read the necessary information. A player may also need to create exceptions in their anti-virus firewalls so ACT can read the data being sent to and from the FFXIV servers. Once the proper plugin is installed and the firewall exceptions made, a player can click on "Test Game Connection" under the FFXIV Plugin tab to ensure that it is working properly.



Some fights in Final Fantasy XIV have a long break in the middle of them where the boss is unable to be targeted for a large, cinematic attack or phase change. Depending on the length of the break, this could end up separating the encounter into two parts in the ACT report. The standard "downtime" length set in ACT is 30 seconds, but this can be adjusted if there is a break mid fight that is longer than this.



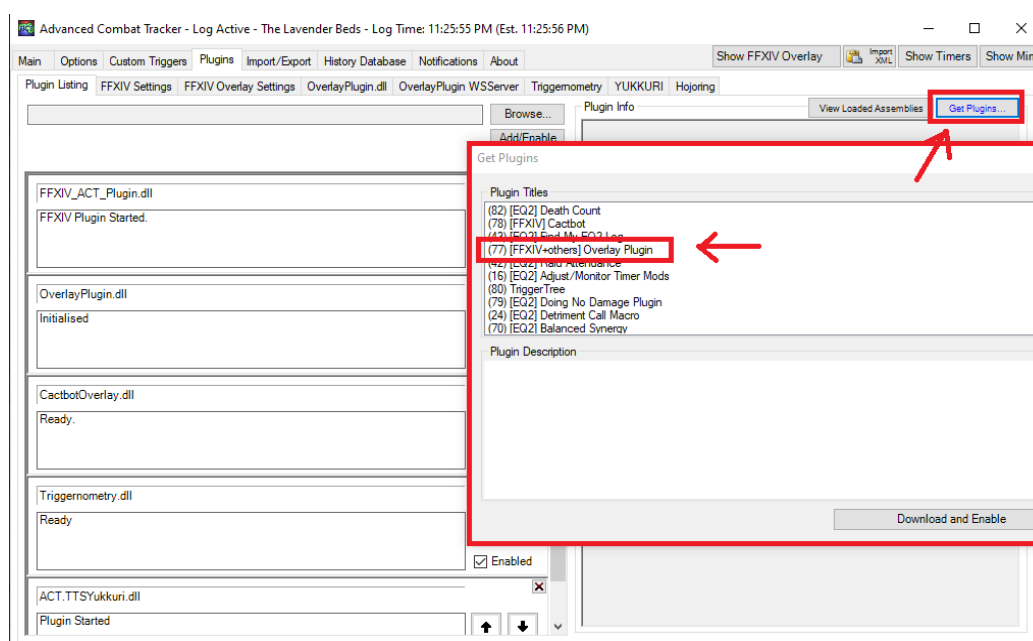
Useful ACT Plugins

The generic layout of ACT is not the most organised or easiest to read. There are many useful plugins that make this program much more appealing to the eyes.

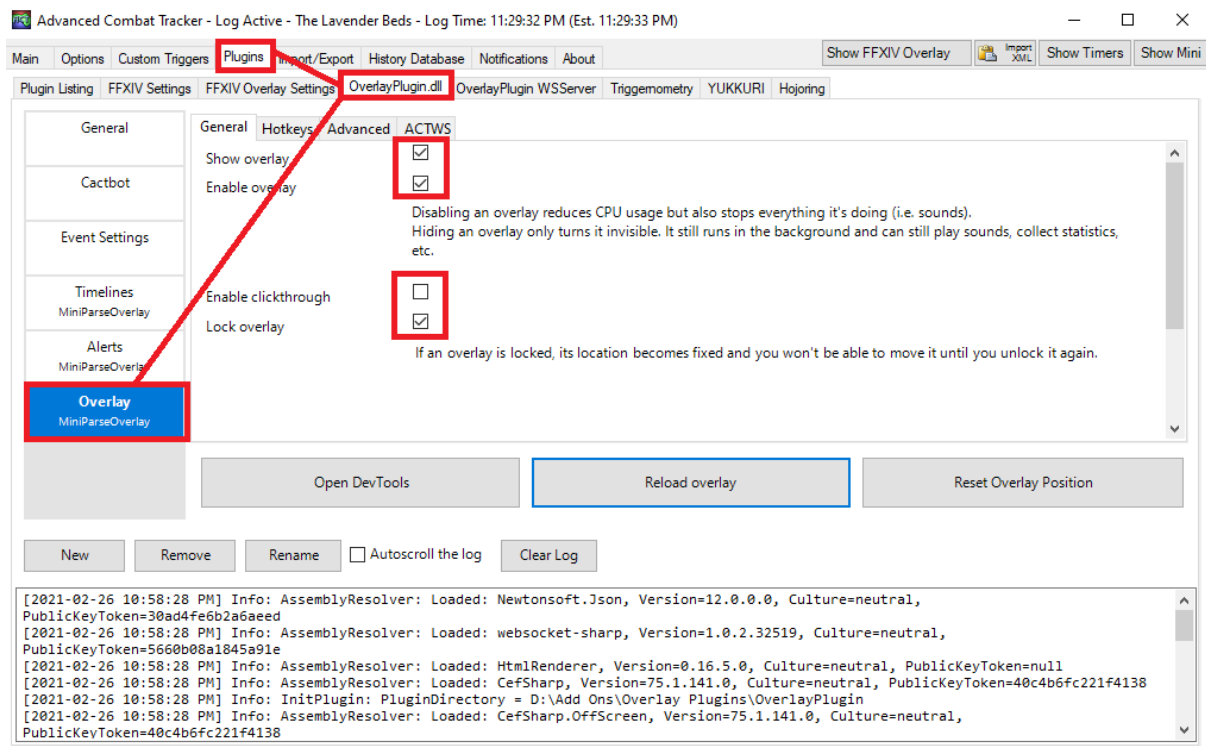
Overlay Plugin

Why this plugin? This plugin should be added after ACT is installed because it provides an overlay on top of the FFXIV user HUD that can be moved around and placed anywhere on the screen once the overlay is activated. Once the overlay is placed in an ideal position, it can be locked there and will reappear in that spot whenever ACT is opened. Various users have created their own Overlays that look appealing, but the two most popular are by Kagerou and Ember.

Note: *It is much easier to install a DPS meter / parsing overlay from the **Cactbot** Plugin; however, if a player does not want to install Cactbot and simply wants the basic ACT Overlay, please follow these instructions. Otherwise, please skip to the next Plugin, “Cactbot.”*



To turn on the overlay, simply go to the “Plugins” tab and select the Overlay plugin. From here, a player can turn it on, lock its position, and enable clickthrough.

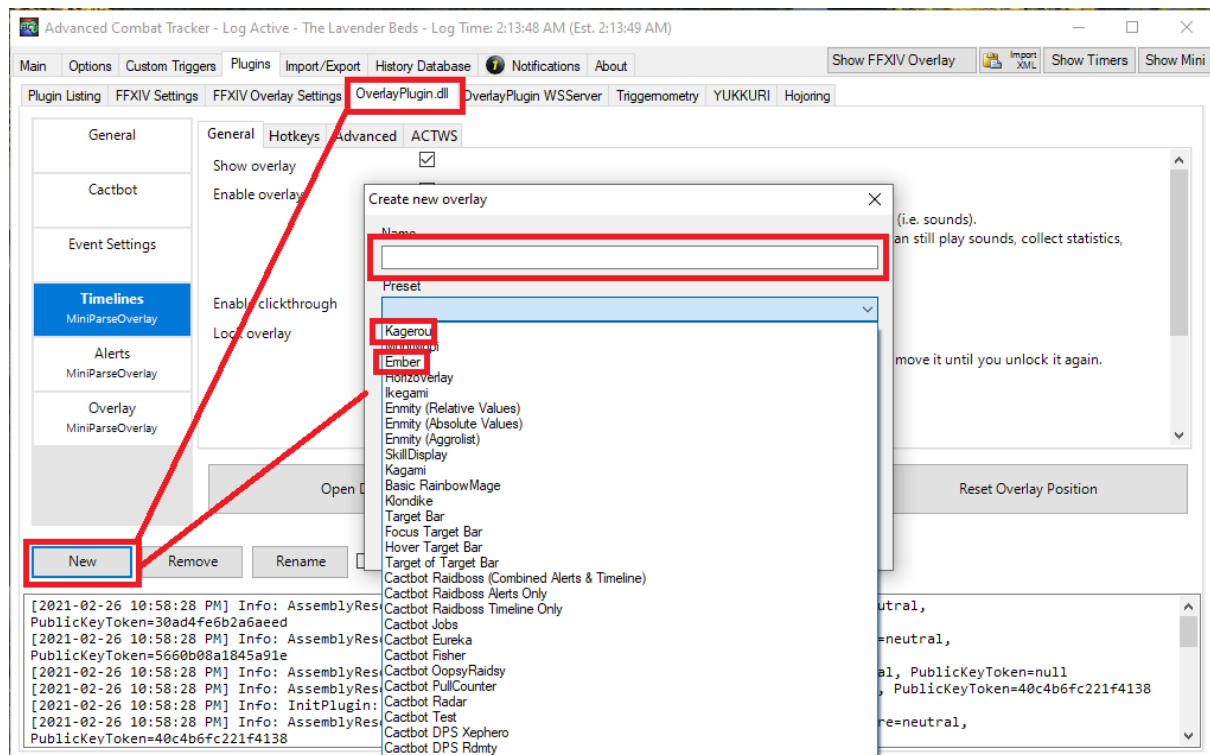


Cactbot

Why this plugin? Cactbot is probably one of the most useful plugins for ACT. It not only allows you to choose from several different overlay options (Kagerou, Ember, etc) but it also provides fight details and triggers for upcoming mechanics. One of the most useful components of Cactbot is the ability to see the fight timeline in real time. Cactbot also shows you warnings on screen if you decide to enable them.



When turning on features with the Cactbot Plugin, select “New” under the Overlay Plugin Tab and select the feature you want from the dropdown menu. This includes the desired parsing DPS meter overlay. Most players use Kagerou, but Ember was designed to look as though it is built into FFXIV. From the drop down menu, players can add the “Raidboss Alerts” and “Raidboss Timelines” to have them added to their screen.

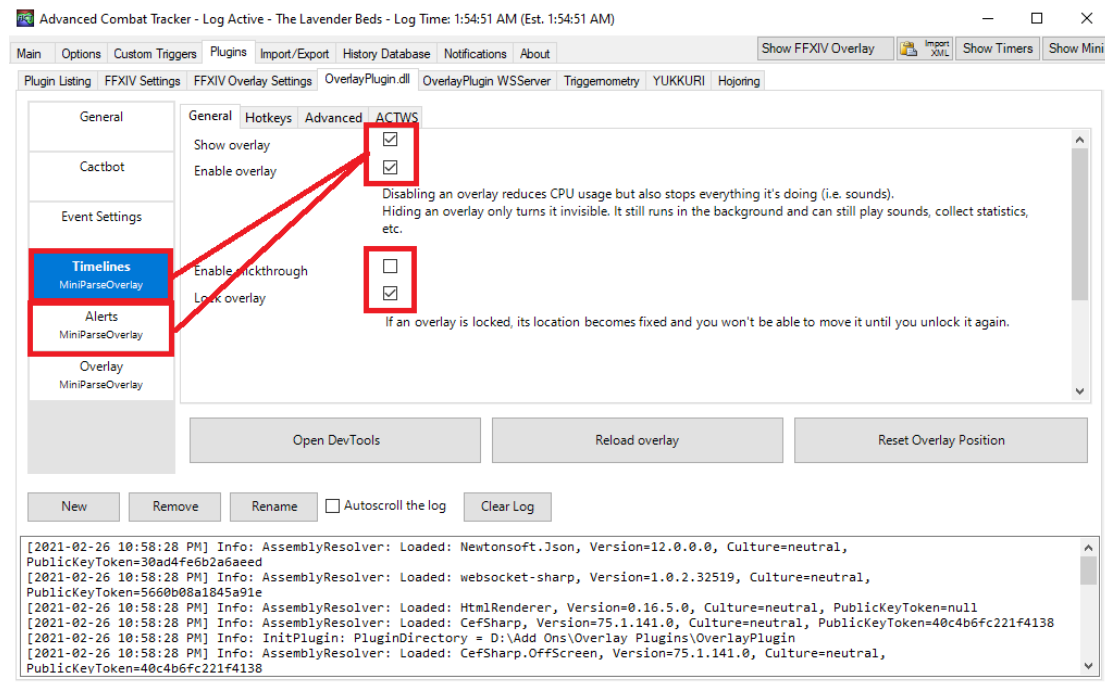


Don't forget to name the new feature that was added to ACT.

Ember DPS Meter

00:24 - THE LAVENDER BEDS					
NAME	DMG %	DPS	CH %	DH %	CDH %
 Istari X.	100%	19,328.71	5%	23%	0%
1/1		19,328.71			
DPS HEAL TANK 24 AGG					

In order to position these features on the FFXIV HUD, click on the “Overlay Plugin” and select the newly created features. From here, a player can place a checkmark in “Show Overlay,” and “Enable Overlay” and place them in a desired position on the FFXIV HUD. To finish, simply click “Lock Overlay” so that they can’t be moved.

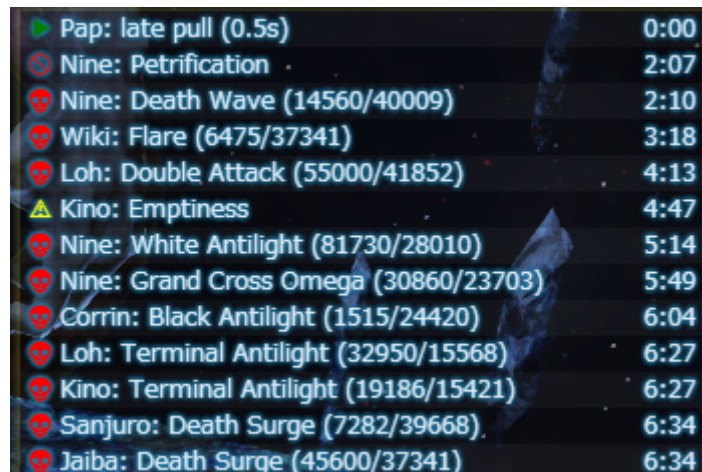


The striking dummies at Summerford Farms in La Noscea are the “unofficial Cactbot test dummies.” If a player is having trouble seeing the overlays after they have been enabled in order to reposition them, they can begin a **battle countdown** and engage one of the striking dummies near the main Aetheryte to begin the test sequence. Ensure that “Lock Overlay” is not checked so that the overlays can be moved.



In addition to the timelines and alerts, Cactbot has a whole bunch of additional features to improve player Quality of Life and raid synergy.

Mistake and Death Reporting (OopsyRaidsy Plugin): This Cactbot addition is great when learning a new fight and trying to determine what killed a party member. More importantly, it mentions how much of a hit they took and how much HP they had when they took the hit.



Pap: late pull (0.5s)	0:00
Nine: Petrification	2:07
Nine: Death Wave (14560/40009)	2:10
Wiki: Flare (6475/37341)	3:18
Loh: Double Attack (55000/41852)	4:13
Kino: Emptiness	4:47
Nine: White Antilight (81730/28010)	5:14
Nine: Grand Cross Omega (30860/23703)	5:49
Corrin: Black Antilight (1515/24420)	6:04
Loh: Terminal Antilight (32950/15568)	6:27
Kino: Terminal Antilight (19186/15421)	6:27
Sanjuro: Death Surge (7282/39668)	6:34
Jaiba: Death Surge (45600/37341)	6:34

OopsyRaidsy

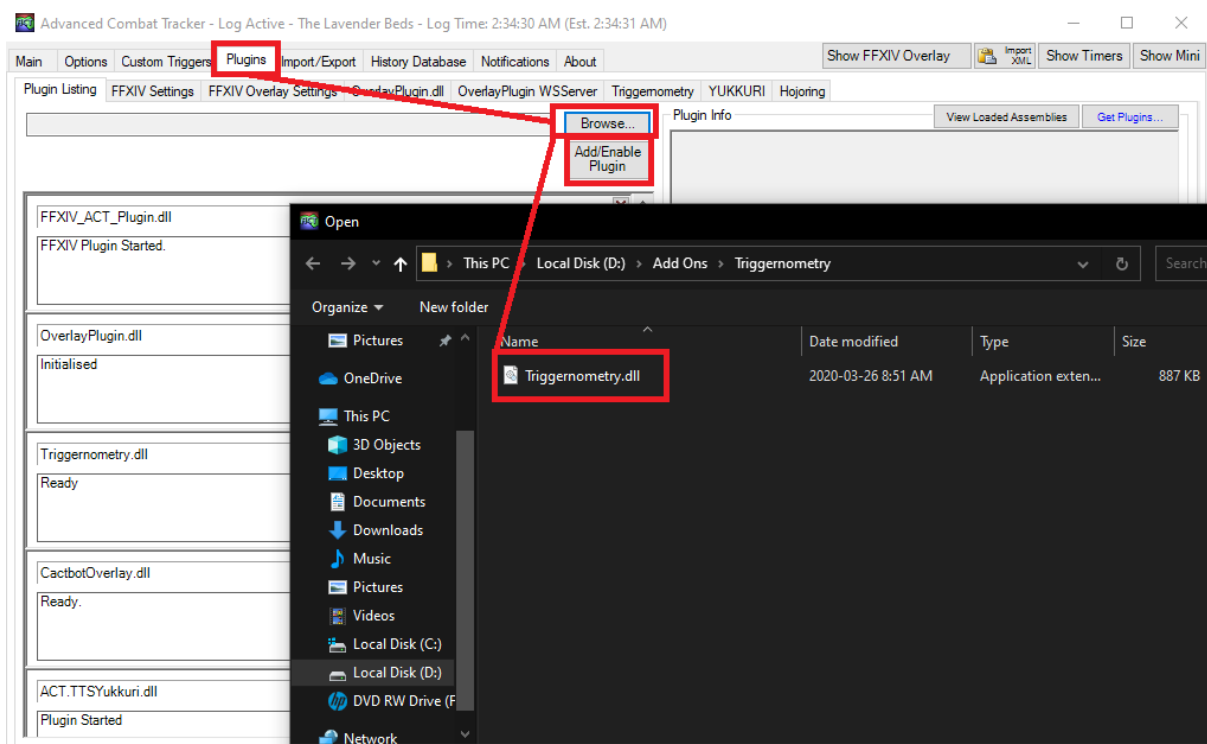
Condensed Job Gauges with Buff Tracking: This plugin provides a simpler version of a job gauge and also tracks buffs.



There are many tools within **Cactbot** that are meant to improve the Quality of Life for any player in Final Fantasy XIV, including fishing timers, Eureka notorious monster tracking, as well as other things. Not every person will want to install every feature; however, it is nice to know that they are available.

Triggernometry

Triggernometry is an ACT Plugin that enables a player to do a variety of things. One of the greatest features of Triggernometry is the ability to create custom triggers for use during fights. Another great feature is improved HUD notifications - like a reminder when a DOT is about to fall off of the enemy. Download the Zip File from the developer's Discord and unzip the files to a folder that is easily accessible. Go to the "Plugins" tab within ACT and "Browse" for the file that was just saved. Once it is selected, click "Add/Enable Plugin" to have it added to ACT.



Once the Plugin has been enabled, click on the "Triggernometry" tab to view the available features and turn on ones that may be appealing. ACT will have to be restarted for the changes to kick in.

Useful Triggernometry Features:

- Party buff visual notifications
- Reminders when a DOT is about to fall off so it can be reapplied
- Personalised triggers for mechanics
- Party skill notifications, like when a tank uses an Invulnerability Skill
- Food Reminders

Regardless of whether or not a player chooses to use any of the features in Advanced Combat Tracker, it's important to remember that it technically does go against the Terms of Service of Final Fantasy XIV and conversations should be kept private.

The Super Advanced Stuff

Snapshotting

Understanding the term “snapshotting” is incredibly important in relation to fight mechanics in Final Fantasy XIV. A “Snapshot” is when the game’s servers perform a test on a player’s current state when it tries to resolve either friendly or hostile mechanics. It’s important to note that in many other online games, the snapshots are more intuitive and generally affect players when the animation of the skill hits their character.

In FFXIV, snapshot timing varies from player to player and is greatly affected by a player’s latency (ping). This can be both detrimental to a player’s success, or it can work in their favour.

Types of Attacks

Quite a substantial amount of attacks in FFXIV come with an animation, icon, or place a target on the ground. Despite this, attacks can fall into two categories: cast-based attacks, and animation-based attacks. Cast-based attacks make up the majority of mechanics in an encounter and they “snapshot” when the cast finishes. At the snapshot the servers will check the player’s position and determine if they resolved the mechanic correctly, or have taken damage. Animation-based mechanics are very rare and will likely be discovered through trial and error.

Moving Objects and Latency

Some mechanics in FFXIV involve an object moving across an encounter or arena. It is very important to recognize that the server will always think the object is about one second ahead of where the player sees it on their screen due to latency. Players should be able to anticipate this and adjust their movements accordingly. For example, if the mechanic involves intercepting an orb travelling across an arena, the player should aim to end up a few seconds **ahead** of its path in order to hit it successfully. If a player aims for the object in its current position, the server may register the orb a second or two ahead and the player will have to chase it.

Damage and Buff Snapshotting

Damage and buff snapshots occur at the same time as positional snapshots. The server will “check” the players’ position, buffs, and debuffs together. For example, if **Addle** is placed on a boss during the cast of a raidwide blast, the damage will do 10% less to the party; however, if **Addle** is placed on the boss after the cast has finished but before the damage has registered, it will have no effect on the damage. It’s always wise to apply debuffs with ample time for the damage mitigation to register.

Player spells with a cast (SMN's Ruin, AST's Malefic, etc) register damage when the cast has completed whereas instant cast abilities (BLM's Scathe, melee skills) register the damage when the button is pressed.

It should also be added that melee positional requirements are also snapshotted when the button is pressed alongside their damage.

Snapshotting also works in a player's favour when it comes to **DOT** and **HOT** abilities. For example, a 10% damage buff that is expiring in 3 seconds will still provide the damage buff to the entirety of the **DOT's** duration, as long as the **DOT** was applied before the damage buff fell off. If a player receives a damage buff after a **DOT** was already cast on a target, the **DOT** will not receive the buff unless the player reapplies the **DOT**. **DOTs** under various snapshots are one of the many factors in player and raid optimization.

Similarly, regen heals that place a **HOT** on a party member are also snapshotted at the end of the spell's cast bar (Medica II). If, at the time the **HOT** was applied, the healer had a buff that increases healing potency, or the party member had a buff that increases healing received, the **HOT** will receive the benefit for the full duration it is on the party member even if the potency buff falls off one or two seconds later.

Aggro and Enmity Snapshotting

Unlike damage, enmity and aggro are snapshotted when the cast of an ability begins. When an enemy begins casting an ability it has already determined the target and this cannot be changed. If a DPS has aggro when a Tankbuster begins casting... ouch. Even if a tank regains aggro before the cast finishes, the DPS is still taking the hit. *If the target dies to a different mechanic before the cast finishes, the hit is more than likely going to randomly pass to someone else despite the tank regaining threat.*

Enmity snapshotting this way also means that a second tank can provoke the boss during the cast bar of an attack and take the primary threat without the initial target being changed. This is important for mechanics where a Tank Swap is needed.

Snapshotting Exceptions

While snapshotting is an important concept to grasp, there are a few exceptions. The most important exception is that a player's HP is **never** snapshotted. As long as the player's HP is high enough to survive the hit when the damage is received they will survive. **Example:** A dungeon boss performs a raidwide attack that will do 100,000 damage and the cast bar ends with one of the party member's HP being at 80,000. As long as that party member receives a heal that brings them to 100,001 before the damage is received, they will survive.

Transcendent (Rez Immunity)

When a party member is resurrected they will receive a buff that lasts for 5 seconds called, "Transcendent." This buff makes it so that the player will be invincible and cannot take damage until the buff disappears. *Performing any actions, including sprint, will remove this buff early.* If a player is raised, they should wait to be healed before performing any actions in order to survive any (potential) upcoming lethal hits. Some damage will go through immunities (including tank immunities) but this occurs rarely.

Server Ticks

In Final Fantasy XIV, all enemies and players have an internal timer that the community calls a server tick. These occur every 3 seconds and cannot be changed. Damage over time, healing over time and many other effects are added and removed during a server tick. If a **DoT** says it has a potency of 50 and lasts for 30 seconds, that means it will do a "tick" of damage worth 50 potency every 3 seconds for a total of 500 potency.

The timing of a server tick varies from player to player and enemy to enemy. This means that a **DoT** placed on Enemy A will tick damage at a different interval than a **DoT** placed on Enemy B; however, both enemies will be taking damage every 3 seconds. Likewise, if a **HoT** skill is placed on Player A, it will provide a heal every 3 seconds that will vary from the heal placed on Player B even if the **HoT** came from the same source at the same time.

Damage Types

Note: This subsection on damage is not a complete reflection of the programming of FFXIV, but it does provide generalised information that is easier and is still an accurate way for players to understand.

Damage in Final Fantasy XIV is broken down into three types with physical damage having three subtypes:

- Physical
 - Blunt Damage
 - Piercing Damage
 - Slashing Damage
- Magical
- Darkness (also known as Breath damage).

The purpose of having different damage types is that there are certain debuffs and buffs that affect the damage given or taken from a specific type. For example, a

caster's **Addle** greatly affects magical damage and a melee's **Feint** will greatly affect physical damage. It's important to know which damage type is from what source in order to use the appropriate mitigative skills.

Darkness damage is a unique enemy damage type that can only be mitigated with skills that affect **all** damage (Reprisal, Sacred Soil, etc). Fortunately this damage type makes up less than 10% of damage taken and isn't something that a player has to worry about too much.

Physical damage has a unique characteristic that it is the only damage type that can be parried. If a player sees (-% parried) on their screen when they take damage, that means the attack was physical.

In most cases, raid wide damage is magical whereas tank busters and auto-attacks are physical. Sometimes the animations of an attack can be used to determine the attack type but this isn't always accurate. For example, one would assume that Titan slamming his fist into the ground and causing a Tumult would be physical but it's actually magical damage. Outside of the game, however, it is easier to determine the damage type with the use of ACT.

With patch 6.3, Square introduced visual indicators on the flying text of various damage types:



Unique Damage

It occurs rarely, but there are instances where damage does not follow the standard calculation and has a few unique traits.

Some damage is %-based and will always do a set percent of damage and cannot be mitigated through normal means. A recent example of this comes from the "Heart Asunder" raidwide during the add phase in Eden's Verse: Refulgence (Savage): the damage will always do 50% of a player's max HP even if Tactician or Sacred Soil are present. Shield-based skills, like a SCH's Succor or a WAR's Shake it Off, however,

can reduce the amount of damage taken since the shields absorb damage until they break.

Other rare and unique damage types will do set damage in relation to a mechanic. For example, during Seat of Sacrifice the boss will cast a spell that reduces the entire party's HP to 1. This mechanical damage cannot be mitigated and cannot be shielded. Any shields provided prior to the cast will be unaffected and will serve as added protection to any follow up damage. In these situations it is always important to recognise what is coming next and who is being targeted. If the main tank's HP is reduced to 1, it's usually critical to heal them first to prevent their death from an auto-attack.

Elemental-Aspected Damage

Even though elemental properties do not really affect players' spells and actions, there are certain situations in which enemies or bosses will have elemental damage added to their skills. This includes fire, lightning, wind, earth, and so on, or simply be unaspected, and is usually a signal to players that a mechanic needs to be performed. For example, in Innocence Extreme, the boss places a Lightning Vulnerability on the main tank following the Tank Buster - this means that the other tank should provoke the boss to prevent the main tank from taking increased damage from Innocent's lightning-based auto-attacks.

Damage Optimization and Healing

Determining what type of damage is being taken as well as how strong the hits are is a great way to improve any healer's performance. Higher-end raid groups that seek to optimize and master an encounter (high parses on FFLogs) will spend a lot of time testing the limits of damage. As a healer, it is even more important to analyze damage and communicate with your co-healer if the purpose of the raid group is to optimize. **It is okay to break the healer instinct of "always having the party's HP filled to the top."**

Fight timelines are a great way to plan a healing strategy with a cohealer. The goal of a top-tier healer is to **overheal (and heal) as little as necessary**. This may be a challenge to an individual who is most comfortable with a party being at full health. Communicating with the party to control mitigation is absolutely key to optimizing -- if an attack is mitigated, it means the healer can do less healing and add more damage to the team's total output (raid damage). Higher raid damage means faster kills.

Here is a scenario using mitigation and follow-up healing planning over the first minute and a half of Eden's Verse: Refulgence (Savage). Let's assume that the average maximum HP of non-tanks in the group is 130,000.

cast:	effect:	- Mirror: Biting/Driving Frost
	00:00	pull
00:10	00:14	Absolute Zero
00:23	00:28	Mirror, Mirror(2G,1R)
00:33	00:38	Biting Frost or Driving Frost
	00:43	Reflected Biting/Driving Frost #1
	00:48	Reflected Biting/Driving Frost #2
		- Diamond Frost
00:58	01:02	Diamond Frost
01:06	01:11	Frigid Stone
01:06	01:14	Icicle Impact #1
01:11	01:16	Heavenly Strike

Planning

In this encounter, the boss begins casting “Absolute Zero,” a raidwide attack that does massive damage, 10 seconds after it has been pulled. The damage from this ability registers when the cast bar completes at 00:14. After a few pulls it is noted that this attack does anywhere from 150,000 - 160,000 points of damage. Between 00:14 and 1:02 (Diamond Frost - the next raidwide), there is no additional uncontrollable damage hitting the party aside from auto-attacks on the main tank.

Rather than heal the damage from Absolute Zero to full with regular GCD spells (Medica, Helios), the healers can choose to weave an oGCD skill (Assize, Indomitability) while they maintain their damage uptime. Additionally, if a SCH is in the party, they can choose to save their oGCD and use Whispering Dawn instead, which commands their faerie to put a regen on the entire party.

Mitigation Communication and Execution

The SCH has indicated that they will spread an Adloquium shield to the party during the pre-pull countdown and place **Sacred Soil** on the arena to mitigate Absolute Zero. One of the tanks will use **Reprisal** and the caster has mentioned they will use **Addle** as well for extra mitigation. Finally, the DRK will use **Dark Missionary**. Using the knowledge from a couple of pulls that Absolute Zero does between 150,000 and 160,000 damage, as well as the knowledge that the next raidwide damage is a little under a minute after Absolute Zero, proper mitigation and follow up can be planned:

Reprisal (10%) + Addle (10%) + Sacred Soil (10%) + Missionary (10%)

$$160,000 - (((10\%)10\%)10\%)10\%) = 104,976$$

Since the average maximum HP of non-tanks without shields is 130,000, this will leave most of the group at approximately **25,024** (130,000 - 104,976) HP. The SCH is already planning on spreading a critical shield to the party with Deployment Tactics before the pull, so this can now be factored into the damage calculation. It was noted that the average critical shield was 35,000 HP.

130,000 (average non-tank HP) + 35,000 (shield) - **104,976 = 60,024 HP**

Knowing that the next attack is almost 60 seconds away, the healers can now plan what tools to use to heal the group before the next raidwide attack without overhealing. Time spent overhealing is damage lost towards overall raid damage.

Healing Follow-up and Optimization (AST and SCH)

00:14: Party is at approximately 60,000 HP (70,000 needed to fill back to 130,000)
00:15 SCH casts Ruin II (instant spell) and weaves Fey Illumination (heal potency increase)
00:15 AST casts Malefic and weaves a card play.
00:18 SCH casts Ruin II (instant spell) and weaves Whispering Dawn (party regen)
00:18: AST casts Malefic and weaves Celestial Opposition (base heal + regen)
00:20: Party HP is at approximately 85,000 (out of 130,000)
00:21 SCH casts Broil, AST casts Malefic
00:24 SCH casts Broil, AST casts Malefic and weaves Essential Dignity on MT (autos)
00:27 SCH casts Broil, AST casts Malefic
00:30 Party HP at approximately 100,000 (out of 130,000)
00:30 SCH reapplies Biolysis **DOT**
00:30 AST reapplies Combust **DOT** and weaves Collective Unconscious
00:31 Diurnal Wheel of Fortune regen applied
00:33 SCH casts Broil
00:33 AST casts Malefic (this ends Collective Unconscious)
00:33 Celestial Opposition regen ends
00:35 Fey Illumination ends
00:36 SCH casts Broil
00:36 AST casts Malefic and weaves a card play
00:38 Whispering Dawn regen ends
00:39 SCH casts Broil, AST casts Malefic and weaves Essential Dignity on MT (autos)
00:40 Party HP at approximately 115,000
00:42 SCH and AST continue casting Broil and Malefic until 00:50
00:46 Wheel of Fortune regen ends
00:50 Party's HP at approximately 123,000 (out of 130,000)

Recap

In the above healer timeline, both healers utilised their off-global cooldown instant skills to maintain damage uptime. Both the AST and SCH utilised regens as the primary form of healing and let the **HOTs** do most of the work. At 00:50, the next series of mitigation can be planned. **Note:** *The above healing timeline is the result of a perfect series of events in which no party member fails a mechanic and takes unnecessary damage. A planned-out timeline like this one is best saved for when the fight has been cleared and the team has moved into optimising.*

Analytical Skills and Raid Alignment

As mentioned earlier, ACT provides an incredible tool for self-improvement. Even though this program is not available to PlayStation players, the data is still viewable to all players once it has been uploaded to FFLogs. If a raid member is a PlayStation player, they can still utilize the ACT reports for self-improvement or inquire about their DPS between pulls.

There is very little difference in raid performance between PC and Playstation players. If a player wants to improve at their job they must do so through any of the tools mentioned in this guide. Some players will study their rotations and practise them over and over again until they've been mastered. Other players might look at the FFLogs of a top-tier raider and compare them to their own and see where improvements can be made.

As mentioned earlier, **The Balance** community works hard with the analytics to not only determine the best gear for maximum damage potential, but also the opening rotations that should be used by each job at the beginning of the fight. Mastering an "opener" is crucial because they are meant to line up with all party buffs perfectly, including potions.

Communication and Buff Alignment

Every encounter in FFXIV is unique and in some cases the use of raid buffs or raid utilities must be planned out by all members of the group. Each fight has a "timeline" of abilities that the boss will do and most will include "down time" where a player cannot perform any actions. Effective skill use will come from learning the fights and communicating with your team on when is the best time to use certain buffs. For example, an Astrologian using Divination (which buffs the party's damage for 15 seconds) right before the boss becomes untargetable for a mechanic would be a waste of the buff. In almost all cases - when you can't take advantage of the entire duration of a buff it is better to *hold* the buff until you can. Here's an example of planning two different raid buffs...

Trick Attack, which is a Ninja's party buff (increases the party's damage by 5% for 15 seconds) can be used every 60 seconds.

Searing Light, which is a Summoner's party buff (increases the party's damage by 5% for 15 seconds) can be used every 120 seconds.

This essentially means that **Searing Light** can line up with every two **Trick Attacks** in a lengthy fight. It is incredibly wise to plan it out so that both of these abilities can be used at the same time to buff the party to maximise damage potential.

Conclusion

There is a “meta” build that is desired among the raid community in which the maximum amount of buffs are brought to the team for optimization, but this ***only matters*** in a very small portion of the raid community (less than 1%). All content can be cleared by any job. At the end of the day, play the job that brings the most happiness and work on improving it to the fullest potential. Regardless of what type of raid group a player is interested in, raiding is a fun and challenging experience.

I hope you enjoy reading this guide as much as I enjoyed writing it.

- Istari Xiomar



www.theblackwaltz.com

Raid Resources

[The Balance Discord](#)

[Aether Recruitment Discord](#)

[Reddit Recruitment](#)

[Advanced Combat Tracker](#)

[FFXIV Analysis](#)