

## **Making the most out of Arsene**

Written by Omega Raider with assistance from Plague von Karma



**Art Source**

Hello there. Welcome to our 4th issue in the Ohya's Memos article series! In today's analysis into our source's powers, we are taking a deeper look into his most iconic Persona: Arsene. How do we get to him quickly? How can opponents counter him? How do we use him effectively?

For starters: who is Arsene, and why is he relevant? Arsene is the starting persona that Joker gets in Persona 5, that is later executed for an Agathion in the fusing tutorial. In Smash, however, he will appear when the Rebellion Gauge above Joker's head is full. This can take 3 minutes, but Ren here is more likely to obtain Arsene after taking roughly ~77%. Should he get KOed during this, he will come back with 20% of the gauge filled. This makes it easier to get Arsene twice in a single stock, which is even better when you consider he gets him faster at a stock deficit.

Joker can also reduce the amount of damage taken while increasing the Rebellion Gauge through his Down B, Rebel's Guard (Will be known as RG henceforth). This is our first step to understanding how Arsene can escape that tutorial.

RG halves the amount of damage that Joker takes when he takes a hit during the time that it's active. The damage then, gets converted into fuel for the Rebellion Gauge. This goes towards progress to getting Arsene earlier. The required amount of damage taken via RG for a 11:59 pm one day delivery to Arsene Heaven is 28.6%. For more info on how RG works with each move, look [here in the Rebellion Gauge Compendium](#).

To utilize RG optimally, it's ideal to mix it up. However, it can be applied to some key interactions/options in the neutral. Take dealing with Cloud's Back Air for example. It is not ideal to shield it at all because it's -3 on shield. This is virtually impossible to punish if done properly, and our little Ren's shield game isn't too hot. If it lands on anyone's shield, it allows Cloud to do anything such as attempting to catch an escape option, continue pressure - or with limit - break shield. It's more preferable to move out of the way in the matchup. However, if the Joker player can see it coming, he can turn that interaction into Arsene fuel.

By understanding the good options that the other character has, you can induce several interactions where this particular option is more likely to come or why this option could come. Levering this type of knowledge can improve your ability to get Arsene and to find natural counterplay as other characters. Hell, this knowledge can be easily applied to Karn (Arsene Down B) as well. The Rebellion Gauge Compendium is very useful here, as you can get clear visuals of how you can get to Arsene quickly and slam an opponent. Of course, not all the information is relevant (such as Shulk's Jab), but you can find what moves can be harnessed the best: learn what is relevant to yourself.

Before we can begin to use Arsene optimally, we must look into how to counterplay Arsene and some of the pros and cons of them. We will also visit certain concepts as they come up such as stage control and threat ranges.

There are some key facts and interactions to know about Arsene when he is out. The biggest, is that he lasts for 30 seconds. However, that time can be cut if he takes damage in any form. This means multihits are bad for Arsene, as he has to suffer the hitlag of the move taking more time on top of the damage. This adds up, and if the multihit combos into another multihit, it gets dangerous to be hit by it. This also means getting grabbed in certain matchups can be bad as high damaging throws or fast pummels can delete time. This is partly why Pikachu is such a dangerous matchup, as Arsene can be depleted by at least 15 seconds in a Forward Air chain. Moves with high hitlag and high damage, such as Ganondorf's Neutral Air and King K. Rool's Forward Air, can also be problematic as a result as well. However, these don't quite compare to the dangers of multihits.

One of the common counterplays the Joker player could see is when he does get Arsene that opponent will start not interacting with him. They will also run away in tandem with this, never really trying to come in. They may not throw out as many moves as a result of Arsene's presence, as they're afraid of his devastating punish game. They may also give up stage control as the result of wanting to get the eff away from Joker. This is annoying to the Joker but there is a noticeable flaw in this form of strategy. This flaw if you can't already tell, is a lack of stage control.

To briefly go over stage control - as it could be a buzzword depending on how you look at it - is how much space the two players have behind them. A simple way of viewing this is imagining there are two tall walls in place of the two characters and behind them is how much space they have. The more space one has, the more stage they have control. This allows the option of **retreating spacing** in neutral. The space can be used in other ways but retreating spacing is more relevant as most people will be using some form of it, whether recklessly or smartly. You can read more about it [here](#). Yes, it's for the Belmonts, but the principle applies to all characters. That, and Belmont players typically specialize in stage control.

The flaw in retreat spacing is, if it doesn't work, you lose stage control for nothing. It's not even efficient to be purely running away. To compare, Cloud's has 15 seconds of limit. Many characters can camp this out, forcing Cloud to either waste it, or send out a Limit Blade Beam or something. Arsene's 30 seconds however, is too long to be running away from unless you are Sonic or ZSS. The counterplay to this type of retreat spacing is to NOT take the bait. Dash Attacking the space they are retreat spacing from is a typical mistake, and usually the player will eat a punish for it.

Instead, walk and/or take the stage control to inflict more psychological pressure. By not committing and letting them corner themselves, they will quickly realize that it's not working. Walking also gives you shield as an immediate option, allowing aggressive responses to not function.

A more aggressive alternative is using Eigaon (Side B) to pressure them as that covers quite a bit of the stage. It can also cover the space behind an opponent with proper usage. However, it can be used as an opening for your opponent to punish you due to the high FAF, and the fact it's 2 frames slower than Eiha. It can control the platforms as well though, thus preventing the ease of circle camping. Gun Special can be used as well as it's notably safe in the air while providing handy movement. The plethora of movement options can open up mixups, cracking open your opponent's heart and allowing you to steal their treasure! We will go into more detail later, but for now, just know Eigaon and Gun Special are good options for dealing with retreat spacing/camping.

A counterintuitive counterplay that is more common with people knowing the matchup is the opponent will be more aggressive in general to drain Arsene. This is a stronger counterplay if the character has the mobility, frame data, and/or the hitboxes to contend with Arsene, such as Fox. While the flaw is obvious, the opponent throwing himself at Arsene could mean death if done incorrectly. However, it can be hard for lil' Jokey to deal with this should it be done correctly. The reason why is because of his gaping blindspots on his aerials, and his better CQC options are either unsafe at close range or simply too slow. It can be tricky to deal with, especially when it is Sheik or ZSS that are doing it. But, there is a careful balance in the aggression. They make a mistake, they get utterly blown up by Arsene, and if they don't make as many mistakes, they drain a lot of time off of Arsene. Shield more, keep Tetrakarn in mind, and you should be able to tell them to stop being aggressive. Make them remember when it's their turn.

Being in a disadvantageous situation is sketchy for Arsene; due to his less than ideal recovery on top of his landing options being questionable. Even Rainstorm has simple counterplay in either running in the direction Joker is going, or staying under a platform. Many opponents can abuse the lack of reliable disadvantage mixups that Arsene has, and as time goes on this will get worse. But, it's not all gloom and doom, as he isn't Bowser or DK where they can't land without committing too hard. He has universal options, Tetrakarn, and Rainstorm to escape juggling situations. Fast Falling with Neutral Air is also very, very slept on. Offstage, he has various amounts of timing mixups such as stalling with gun, earlier/later WoR on top of aggressive Eigaons. Be warned about overusing the options, as they are all still punishable though. It's about making the opponent less likely to do it.



Grabbing is viable for the opponent as Joker will get locked and will lose roughly 3 seconds of Arsene. More or less depending on the pummel/throw combination. Take King K. Rool for an example. He doesn't have a fast pummel (although it deals heaps of damage) but his Up Throw does a whopping 20.1% fresh on top of the situation it creates enabling potential regrabbs or Up Tilts if you don't jump. He may be a bad character, but he is one of the few that are capable of draining Arsene so efficiently. Learning matchups is paramount in ensuring you don't fall into these situations, and maintain Arsene properly.

Overall, in my opinion, the most optimal counter playstyle to Joker when he has Arsene, is to play a smart aggressive approach unless you have the options to constantly move around. The opponent stays away from Arsene, but is also chipping away at the timer. How Joker counterplays it is what we also go over later, but this is to lay out the foundation for it.

Finally, Joker gets them in disadvantage. But wait, why can't he kill him as easily, even with Arsene? So, every opponent has strong moves to deal with Arsene's advantage state, which can negate parts of the effectiveness of it. This can refer to strong combo breakers such as Marcina's Up B, Belmonts Up B, and Luigi Neutral Air. This can also refer to Plant's Down B, Krool's Gut Check (try Rainstorming it off-stage and he activates it, and you'll see why), any strong anti air. This can impede Joker's ability to abuse his absurdly strong advantage state in Arsene. However, it is not unbeatable. Note, they are typically laggy or have some directions they don't cover.

The plan versus strong reversal options, is to try and bait them out. Such as going in and out of their threat range or fake them out. That's the more simple counterplay. The more complex counterplay is conditioning them to do that particular option, and make baiting it out easier. If a Lucina player keeps using their Up B out of disadvantage, you can shield it and then counter with what is likely a Forward Smash. The pressure that Arsene brings, can bring out certain situations where they would have to do it or die. Find that situation, create that situation a few times, then suddenly don't respond. They **will** do it, leaving themselves wide open.

With that, that's most of the common strategies or certain traits worth noting that are effective when playing vs Arsene. We shall go over on how to counterplay them. First, before we get into the counterplay, we must speak about the options that Joker gets in Arsene. I will go over them briefly (Famous last words).

Jab becomes a better kill option than Forward Tilt with Arsene (kills at ~135% fresh), and is Frame 4. So if you notice a chance to use it at the ledge, do it. It's a good jab lock option to Arsene's Forward Smash as well, which some of his options are really

good at creating (Forward Throw at Low%, Down Angled Forward Tilt, Down Air, etc). Arsene Forward Tilt is a safe option when spaced well, and is very hard to punish properly. Pivot canceling Forward Tilt becomes a great option because of this, especially in tech chasing scenarios. Angling it can make anti airing or edgeguarding easier to boot. Arsene Down Tilt not only becomes more potent in two framing and crossing up, but it also becomes slightly safer, albeit in exchange for more shield lag. Arsene Up Tilt is a good anti-air as well a potential platform shield poking option. Arsene Down Smash hits below the ledge and is overall a great option to use as a kill move, or to end a Dragdown Up Air conversions due to the situation that the angle it creates.

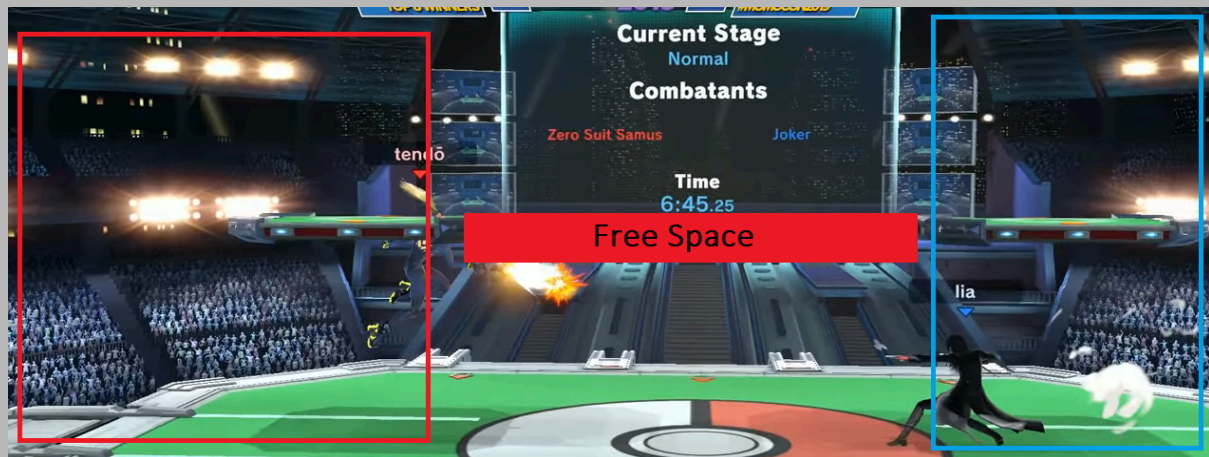
Moving onto his aerials, Arsene Back Air is one of the most DLC moves that Joker has. Sends at tumble at 0%, fantastic frame data, great knockback, safe on shield, does quite a bit of shield damage (Forward Smash can break after a Back Air on shield), and unholy edgeguarding capabilities. Arsene Forward Smash, while it should be strictly a punish option, it is still a nuke in Arsene, killing some characters at 60 at ledge. Arsene Up Smash is a better OoS option than in base form and is a good anti-air if the read is there. Arsene Down Air opens up an entirely new avenue in Joker's combo game on top of being a kill confirm to Arsene Up Air. Arsene Up Air is by far the most dangerous juggling option that Joker has. It frame traps, dragdown confirms, kills roughly around 100 in most common juggling situations, did I mention frame traps?

Lastly, his specials are overall great in Arsene. Gun Special is what if you extended the gun hitstun range and made it send at tumble on top of the safety and movement options. Yeah. Eigaon becomes a powerful option out of a tech chase as well to send pressure to the opponent for chip damage. Karn is basically frame 3 due to the I-frames starting at frame 3, although there will be situations someone hits that and not the searchbox. With Tetrakarn being one of the best counters in the game with the massive hitbox, oof is all I have to say. [Did I mention they buffed the Makarakarn searchbox in 4.0.0?](#) However, I should point out that Makakarn doesn't get I-frames or the same amount of defense that Tetra gets. Use it to counter laggier projectiles, and not on the lower-risk ones such as Link's boomerang. Wings of Rebellion...we don't speak of it outside of the increased recovery range in exchange of getting no real recovery mixups. You can't go high because the full second of landing lag but it's also uncommon, so you may get away with it one time?

Sorry for the long-winded breakdown on how Arsene buffs Joker's moveset, but we finally can look into his counterplay starting with retreat spacing.

The retreat spacing or to some, not interacting with you constantly can be played around by understanding that the less stage the opponent have, the more they have

to interact with you. Use your threat range to your full advantage. Threat range is how far you can immediately punish the opponent from a hitbox viewpoint. Take this image for an example.



(Credit to Plague for making this)

In the free space that is between the Joker and ZSS, the ZSS is doing Z-Air, which temporarily blocks off the free space that is open as far the Z-Air is. This, of course, is arguably one of the harder parts of understanding stage control/neutral, as not all characters are equal.

You can use Joker's drastically more dangerous threat range in Arsene to take the stage control and bait out more hasty options/decisions out of survival. This also to an extent shuts down burst options as you can retreat space yourself or shield or even Tetrakarn if you read it.

For projectiles, you can look [here](#). (It's the only question that isn't displayed in the outline but you can get around). To break it down how to deal with zoners, some of it depends on the stage. Not all of it is stage dependent, as Joker has options to deal with zoners, but which stage you are on is significant in how much he can do for approaching. If he is playing against say, a Belmont on BF or SV, he will have a significantly harder time getting in if the Belmont has center stage. because his angles of approach are severely limited by the platform that will be in his way. They don't have to commit as hard to cover it compared to FD where he doesn't have the platform to cover the angle. Due to this, the Belmont would have to commit a lot harder to cover a Joker jump in. Having the option between a SH approach, FH approach or even DJ mix ups makes a world of difference when dealing with zoners, as they typically have to commit to cover them all. This is important when having Arsene, as Joker wants to get in early to make the most of Arsene.

As for the event of the opponent being more aggressive, Joker would need to be using more of the space he already has efficiently, since the opponent simply isn't going to go towards the corner. Prioritize punishing the more committal parts of aggression such as jumping, or using a certain move over and over.

In the event of grabbing, if read, spotdodging can allow for some unholy options on some characters. Up Tilt works against virtually the entire cast, and we have a document especially for showing the frame minuses grabs can give. [Go here!](#)

It's also important to jump against a grab-happy opponent. 3 Frame Jumpsquats make them perfect for this, and since shields can cancel into jump...you can see a nice defensive playstyle taking root here. By using this strategy you can soon tell the opponent that they can't grab you, especially if you short hop into something like Forward Air's first hit (thus enabling our kill confirms and combos). Delayed Short Hop Back Air can preemptively stop the greedy run-in and grab strategies you see on Quickplay, usually killing someone for even thinking about it. However, Full Hop Double Back Air also works and covers jump reactions.

Should Joker get the opponent in the air, it's easy for them to panic a lot and thus throw out a lot of panic options. In situations like these, it's important to understand how to cover these panic options. Arsene Up Air and Arsene Back Air frametraps well for any airdodge as well. They can catch any hasty DJ as well but Forward Air can be used there as well for its terrifying knockback. It's important to take away their DJ as it increases their chances of dying in the following situation as they won't be able to deal with most of Joker's options afterward. It gets even worse if they are put offstage as Rainstorm becomes unbelievably good and surprise, surprise, Arsene Forward Air, and Arsene Back Air gets a whole lot better due to their angles and knockback. If you remember earlier when talking about reversal options and how to deal with them, in this situation, they are likely to come out so be aware of them.

If Joker gets any touch, it is encouraged to take it as far as possible while maintaining some form of safety (so not putting yourself at a disadvantage, keeping yourself safe-ish, etc.) as when Arsene is out, Joker obliterates entire stocks at times. This is, obviously, due to his kill power on top of his fantastic edgeguarding, fueled by the recovery range.

That is all for today. Hopefully this helps anyone reading this understand how to play as and around Arsene, and how he works overall. This was more of a beginner-targeted guide, but we can't always go overly technical now can we?