Merkava worm guide (WIP)

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Introduction

For starters, Merkava's 22x input are his worms, which are not only an important part of Merkava's okizeme, but it's also very important for his pressure game. Merkava's pressure can be very lackluster by himself, due to:

- Severe lack of consistent true blockstrings
- Severe lack of strong rebeat options in close range
- Only has one move to enforce plus frames while grounded (623a, +1. -2 on greenshield).

However, with the help of his worms, he can set up very strong frame traps, long and/or consistent gapless block strings, and can cause very tricky mix ups if applied correctly. This guide will explain how to set up worms and the best way to use them against your opponent to really make his pressure more scary.

Basic worm mechanics

As said in the beginning, inputting 22x will have Merkava place down a worm. This worm's behavior differs depending on the button pushed.

- 22a/A worm: Fastest to start up, only attacks once, can't jump high.

- 22b/B worm: Slower to start, attacks twice.

- 22[b]/IC B worm: Charged version of B worm, very slow to start, attacks three times, only worm that crawls fast.

- 22c/C worm (metered ver.): EX version, costs 100% meter, fastest to start, attacks three times, multiplies into three worms for each attack.

They take a couple of frames before they become active; certain ones take longer or shorter as seen above. Once active, they'll begin to move towards the opponent and strike once in range. Worms will go away if they are attacked while active. If Merkava blocks an attack without vorpal, or gets hit/thrown, worms will also go away. However, worms cannot die before they're active and will not go away if Merkava blocks while in vorpal unless, again, the worm itself is actually hit while active.

You can place a worm anywhere on the screen as long as you're grounded, but because of their decently long start up, they're more commonly used as an ender in most of Merkava's combo routes. The best way to guarantee a worm setup is to end a combo with 22x. Which worm you want dictates on which ender you have to use in order to actually meaty the opponent after the worm is placed. You need to meaty because worms will take some time before they become active, so it is best for Merkava himself to meaty and stall for long enough for the worm to begin attacking, and then that's where the fun begins.

As mentioned before, the enders needed for each worm to be placed safely differ for each worm actually wanted. The enders needed for a safe worm placement are honestly really flexible, however for corner pressure, the opponent <u>needs</u> to be knocked down before a worm can be placed safely.

22c/C worms are special, because it is the only 22x input that has a hitbox, and it causes a hard knockdown on hit. As a result, it is commonly used as the 3rd OTG in a combo, or the 22c can be used early, allowing Merkava to combo off the 22c ground bounce for some differing routes and oki (Mostly for flight safe jumps). For now though, Optimal enders that allow for each worm to be placed safely are listed before

- 22a/A worm: 2cc/2c >5c > 4b > 22a, 66c > 22a (No special cancel)

- 22b/B worm: 66c > 22b (Need to special cancel 66c)

- 22[b]/IC B worm: Can't get used as a resourceless ender up close. Both A and B worm enders can be used with IC worm, <u>but requires CS</u> (2cc > 4b > 22[b] > CS > meaty, or 66c > 22[b] > CS > meaty. Not used often, and **would not recommend**, as it's generally a waste of CS with resourceless options right there.)

- 22c/C worms: 236x > 22c (Depending on what ground bounce 22c uses, it can be an ender, or a combo extender to allow for flight safe jumps if a JC (Jump Cancel) was never used. Example:

For A worm you can end with 2c 5c 4b 22a or 66c 22a, but for B worm you must end with 66c 22b otherwise the opponent can simply mash out of 2c 5c 4b 22b. EX worms are unique because unlike 22a or 22b, 22c is a strike that can hit the opponent as Merkava sets down the worms. This move will use an OTG so the best ender is 2c (5c) 236b 22c if 22c is your last OTG. If you have spare OTG and haven't jump cancelled, you can try 2c (5c) 236b 22c 2c 5c 4b jump cancel fly for

a safe jump. Lastly there is 22[b] the new worm added to CLR. At the current moment, the best way to setup 22[b] is after FF while you have vorpal. Having vorpal allows Merkava to special cancel FF if it hits, but unfortunately FF ender also allows the opponent to recover in the air and tech away from the corner. Therefore it is best to use 22[b] after 5b 5c 6c 214b j214c mid screen or omit the 214b and cancel 6c into 22[b].

Corner setups and okizeme

In the last version of under night, worms used to be able to "absorb" throws if Merkava and a worm were right next to the opponent. This no longer happens as of the current patch of uni2 so being next to the opponent with a worm will now kill the worm and still throw merkava himself (Note: Merkava can still tech the throw). Worms can still extend the active frames of an opponent's attack when attacked. This can make baiting throw techs and option selects dangerous for the opponent depending on the type of OS. Knowing this, you can use worms to set up potential RPS situations that are in your favor.

Below are some setups that have the worm create a frame advantage if the frame trap/true blockstring is blocked, and hit confirms otherwise. Note: When it states "universal", this means that the setup works with both A and B worms, as they both start to become active at the same frame, and they both act extremely similar at the start. As a result, if any concept works with 22A, it automatically works with 22B as well.

Universal Worm Setups

- 2b > 236b > worm hit (Frametrap) **Video example!** (A worm: +11-+12, B worm: +3-+5)

- 5a > 2a > 3c worm hit (Overhead mix) **Video example!** (A worm: +11-+12, B worm: +5-+6)

- 2a > 5a > 4c worm hit (Overhead mix) **Video example!** (A worm: +8-+13, B worm: +3-+9)

- 2a > 5bb > 4b worm hit (True blockstring) **Video example!** (A worm: +15-+18, B worm: +7-+12)

- 2a > 5bb > 5c > 5aw worm hit (<u>True blockstring</u>) **<u>Video example!</u>** (A worm: +10-+15, B worm: +4-+7)

- 2a > 5a > 5b > 214a worm hit (<u>Frametrap, *can't convert without meter/CS*</u>) **<u>Video example!</u>** (A worm: +9-+10, B worm: +2-+4) (Note: there is a 2f gap in between 5b and 214a as well as an 3f gap between 214a and A worm hit. B worm is gapless.)

<u>B worm only</u>

While A worm concepts work with both A and B worms, B worm hit's twice, and jumps higher on hit. As a result, the second hit allows for:

<u>- more extensive pressure</u>
<u>- more opportunities for mix</u>
<u>- having better hit confirms due to the worm jump height.</u>

A good string to explain how B worms function in pressure is **2a > 2a > FF.** 2a > FF is a true blockstring, but 2a > dl.FF is a frametrap. Using meaty 2a > FF will make your opponent take longer and scarier pressure, and if timed correctly, a really long true blockstring can get made with B worm. However, you can weave in frametraps after the second hit of B worm, stuff like: 2a > 2a > FF > worm hit > 623a worm hit, or just delay the FF from earlier to frametrap as well. **<u>Video example!</u>**

<u>(Note: 2a > 2a > FF isn't the only way pressure setups like this can be performed, this is just an example of what B worm can be used for when used in pressure)</u>

The pressure strings below work only with B worm due to it's differences stated above.

- 2a > 236b > worm hit **Video example!** (+3-+5)

- 2a > 5bb > 4b > worm hit > 3c > worm hit (Overhead mix) (Note: This will be safe no matter what the opponent presses after 3c is blocked, however you'll lose your turn if they press a 5f button. 3c>623a will beat 5f 2a attempts.) **Video example! (+11-+19)**

- 2a > 2b(1) > 4c > worm hit > 66b/2a > worm hit (Overhead mix) **Video example!**

- 2a > 5bb > 4b > worm hit > 2cc > worm hit (**True** blockstring, **plus afterward**) **Video example!**

Conditioning and Flight

Once you have your opponent conditioned with frame traps and plus frames, you can use their respect to do things like reset pressure or even commit to low flight. The threat of worms or the situations that worms can create will likely make the opponent scared and either do nothing, or commit to something risky themselves to take their turn back. The setups previously listed above allow you to stop your block string at any point and play RPS. Here are some other setups that you can use to RPS the opponent:

Universal Throw/Assault setups:

- 2a > 2c > 5a throw **Video example!**

- 5a > 2c > 2a throw **Video example!**

^^ Note throw setups with worms work when the worm isn't hitting the person's block. However, when merk is running up with a worm about to become active, the opponent is ready to block. Throw setups have to be airtight with the gap the worm attacks and the time merk takes to microdash. If he chooses to also, he has options to mess up opponent OS timings, hence "RPS", they have to guess at points.

- 2a(1) > 2a > 2b > worm hit > assault **Video example!**

^^ Note assault gives a lot of mix potential. The video shows cross up overhead J.C, but you can assault crossup J.Cw > 2a, assault j.44 > J.C, or assault j.44 > J.Cw > 2a, or slide a throw in there!

Universal/A worm Flight setups:

If you want to commit to flight, I suggest you either push yourself out then 3[c]~7 or redash low flight (773). The first method reduces the risk of your opponent landing an AA to stop 3c. The second method is riskier but gives the opponent something else to look out for alongside other things like dash assault, dash throw, 66b/66c, and dash 2a. These strings take advantage of using 3[c] to get into flight while the worm keeps the opponent locked down:

- 2b > 2c > 3[c] fly worm hit **Video example! (Flight > J.Cw > 2a)**

- 5aa > 3c fly worm hit **Video example! (Flight > J.B > pressure)**

- 2a > 2b > 3[c] fly worm hit **Video example! (Flight > J.C)**

^^^ Note: After flight, any of these pressure concepts shown are options can be used to mix up and make the opponent guess in meterless worm pressure, they're not fixated to one blocksting, just that the examples are shown to give you a visual of the mix possibilities from various short blockstrings. Yes, this character is cheap.

C/EX WORMS!!!!

Now let's finally talk about EX worms and flight, as these are the worms that are easily the most scary, mainly due to him being able to SET the worms mid route and get worm oki still when the route ends. When you end a combo with 22c, sometimes you can fly afterwards. This is NOT a safe jump so the opponent can possibly use a reversal or use an anti air to hit you, as seen **HERE** . To make use of flight as a mix tool after 22c ender, you want to lock them down with a meaty into an airtight blockstring until the worms actually become active, and then enter low flight once the worms keep them blocking and not merkava himself. One of the easiest and more consistent ways of doing this is to do 22c ender > meaty 2a > 2a , which keeps them locked down long enough to enter low flight, as shown **here!!**

If you want to perform a safe jump with EX worms you'll need to not use a jump cancel (JC) and use it after the ender, which knockdowns. The theory is not using a JC, but also using 22c as the second ground bounce, and jump canceling the ender with low flight. (Input for low flight is commonly known as 773, but things like 771, 783 and 791 work just as well; it depends on person and controller honestly for comfort.)

In addition you may choose to use CS after 22c if it was the last hit of the combo. This will allow you to perform a safe jump similar to the setup discussed above with the caveat of losing CS in case of emergency. While this is an option that can be presented, you should pay attention to where the TS gauge is at in order to form plays around securing the cycle. Generally speaking it's a good idea to use CS earlier into the cycle so you aren't locked into transfer state long enough to potentially lose the next cycle.

For example, Here's both midscreen and corner combos that work from 2a starter:

C/EX worm safejump routes:

Simple A/B starter:

2a > 5c > 2c > 236b > 22c > 2c > 5c > 4b > 773 (low flight)
Video example!

Optimized A starter midscreen:

 2a > 2c > 3c(1) > j.214[a]~6 > 66c > 236b > 22c > 2c > 5c > 4b > 773 (low flight)
 Video example!

Optimized A starter corner:

2a > 2c > 3c(1) > j.214[b]~6 > 66c > j.214[a] > 236b > 22c > 2c > 5c > 4b > 773
(low flight) **Video example!**

Optimized B starter midscreen:

Optimized B starter corner:

There are two things about this setup that make it strong:

1. The worms hit meaty as you get in position to meaty high. So if you decide to fake the high meaty and go low, the opponent can't mash out without getting counter hit by worms. It's airtight.

2. This setup can safejump any reversal in the game that is 5f or slower (Things that are faster, as Wagner/Eltnum 623c and Waldstein 360c you have to whiff your j.x meaty and block early; you have to give up a safejump bait it. For Wald, react to the flash and respond with assault J.C/J.2c.)

Traditionally you wouldn't be able to safe jump reversals faster than 5f, however, using worm hits in the route and using enders such as j.2c have the second wave of C worms hit meaty, and eat the first couple of hits of 3-4f reversals like Vatista's flash kick, or Wagner/Eltnum C DPs as mentioned before. This allows Merkava to safejump 3-4f reversals using j.a/b meaty and still land safely. However, they're only corner exclusive (midscreen the worms have to travel more, making the routing and/or safejump impossible.) These routes are another way to setup an EX worm safe jump if you're in the corner that cover 3-4f reversals:

Corner Safejump Routes for 3-4f reversals:

Simple A/B starter:

2a > 5c > 2c > 623a > 22c > 2c > dl.623b > worm hit > 7 > J.2c > 773 j.b safejump
Video example!

Optimized A starter:

2a > 2c > 3c(1) > j.214[a] > 623b > 22c > 2c > 5c > 236b > worm hit > 7 > j.2c > 773 j.b safejump
Video example!

Optimized B starter:

2b > 5c > 2c > 5bb > 6c > 623b > 22c > 2c > 5c > 236b > worm hit > 9 > j.2c >
773 j.b safejump
Video example!

Optimized 623a starter (realistic frametrap):

623a > 66c(1) > j.214[a] > 3c(1) > j.214[b]~6 > j.2c > 236a > 22c > 2c > 5c > 236b
> worm hit > 7 > j.2c > 773 j.b safejump
Video example!

^^ Note: The idea works the same as the previous combos with 4b flight ender ut
again, covers 3-4f reversals due to worms eating the starting frames of the said
reversal, giving Merkava time to block and make the safejump real, AND it does
more damage, but is less commonly used unless needed (This combo came from JP
Merkava player CROW). As a result players might not be aware that this is a jump
safe and they might use a reversal.

Delay getup and counterplay

All of the worm setups listed above require strict timing so the worm can activate and
attack with perfect timing. Delay teching can throw off the timing for not only worms, but your
meaty can possibly miss as well. You can still do some worm setups, but they'll be much shorter
due to timing. Here are some setups you can use if you catch your opponent delay teching.

Universal worm Delay Tech examples:

- (Overhead mix): 2a(1)/2b(1) > 3c > worm hit
  Video example!

- (Throw mix): 2a(1) > 5a > dash throw
  Video example!

- (Plus rebeat): 2a(1) > 2b(1) > 5c > 5aw > worm hit
  Video example!

B worm exclusive delay tech examples:

- (Plus pressure reset): 2a > 5bb > 236b > frametrap
  Video example!

C/EX worm safejump on delay tech:

Now things get a little different with C/EX worms. When C/EX worms are used as an ender, the setups under "Universal" tab work for pressuring an opponent post delay tech. However, if you want to use EX worms into a standard safejump using 4b low flight (look above for route), delay teching is a very solid answer to it, as it gives his opponent enough time to react to what he's doing, and his mix factor suddenly goes away because Merkava lands from j.x first before his opponent even gets up. Because of this, Merkava can still be meaty, but has no real airtight mix or safejump after he himself lands from j.x, as seen HERE! However, if you replace 4b flight with 66b 623a, this ender gives you not only time to safejump on airtech (seen HERE), but the worms ALSO hit ivalid if the opponent chose to delay tech in that current moment in time (seen HERE), letting Merkava keep his flight pressure regardless on if his opponent used delay get up or airteched, or a combination of the two.

^^ Note, this setup does not require you to save a jump cancel, because this setups doesn't use flight in any way

Final thoughts

Remember at the end of the day you are trying to get your opponent to open up. So it's important to use the threat of worms to throw, assault, or redash back in. If they don't bite, you'll likely have to commit to something risky by going into low flight to get them to press buttons. However, worms can provide great cover for you to take said risks. Lastly, no two opponents play the same way. One player

might panic and try to mash out of pressure, another player might be more willing to sit there and wait for the vorpal cycle. So pay close attention to their habits and adjust accordingly.

Thank you so much for reading up until the end! This is still a WIP as stated in the beginning, as there are so much more setups to find! Our twitters are listed here:

Creator of the doc: https://twitter.com/onyxdood
Helped with edits and video examples: https://twitter.com/Aust_FGC

On the other hand, here are some Merkava players who we believe make the best use of worms, as well as Merkava's tools as a whole, with their twitter accounts linked below if they have one.

NA
- God Hunta: https://twitter.com/GodHunta

- Brkrdave: https://twitter.com/brkrdv

- Burgertime: https://twitter.com/burgertime_fgc

EU
- DHD: https://twitter.com/EU_DHD

JP
- CROW: https://twitter.com/RSKurou

- TatsuE: N/A

- R. N Ryuusei: https://twitter.com/RNryusei