

know that improvement takes time

if you're new to fighting games, even if you're doing everything correctly, expect to spend over 1000 hours before you can keep up with high level players. fighting games are much more about the journey than the destination. stay patient and keep up a consistent effort.

always play with a goal in mind

there is no reason to be playing games without having something that you're working on. you can be playing to learn, or to implement, or anything you find useful. you can focus on landing one combo that you're having trouble with, you focus on being more cognizant in last hit situations, what you want to work on is completely up to you. i personally recommend only having one or two goals in mind in any specific match.

know why you do everything that you do

understand that everything from standing still to specific combo routing is an option that you are choosing. you should understand why you do every single small thing that you do, and aim to have every decision you make in game have reason behind it. the reasons don't have to always be very strong convictions, but you should be aware of the logic behind your actions and inactions.

pick good characters

the usefulness of tier lists and matchup charts stops and ends at character choice. if you want to be the best, pick the best character that plays to your strengths that you won't get bored of playing. also note that like everything else, character balance as it's normally discussed is within the context of top level competition. in most cases the full context of what makes characters and matchups good or bad won't be applicable to your own matches until a very high level. pick a good character based on the opinions of those at the highest level, but don't waste your time coping about things that don't actually apply to you yet.

be annoying

everyone around you is a resource for improvement, don't be afraid to take advantage of that. you can dm top players with a question or ask them to run games with you, and generally the worst that can happen is that you'll get

ignored. for north american strive specifically, you can usually find the discord accounts of any top player through the TNS discord.

<https://discord.gg/THxE6ktn8h> as long as you aren't being ignored or given signals not to do so, don't be afraid to annoy people with lots of questions, a lot of them are happy to help.

ask specific questions

a lot of the time, people will ask questions that are too broad to be answered in a way that's helpful even if the person they're asking has the knowledge that they're looking for. an example of a bad question would be something like "what do i do against millia?" a better version of that question could sound something like "i feel like i'm missing something against millia's h-disc knockdowns, can you run me through the common situations and what my options are?" better questions will get better answers.

put in effort outside of matches

spending some of your time on things like watching your own vods, watching top level play, talking to other people about the game, and practicing situations in training mode will give you a better return on your time and effort than endlessly playing matches.

use training mode to its fullest

training mode isn't only for combos. you can learn how different buttons interact with each other, you can find counterplay to specific strings and setups, you can practice whiff punishs and hit confirms, and much more. there's a lot more than you can do than just learning how to execute things that other people have found. also, try to build a habit of going to training mode any time that you have a question about something that comes up in game.

before reaching out to others try to see what you can figure out yourself

reaching out to other people should be because you can't figure something out on your own, not because you want them to do the work for you. try to be cognizant of if you're asking someone for help because you value their advice, or if it's more so because you're being too lazy to put in the effort yourself. you'll have a much better understanding of the game if you learn as much as you can firsthand.

make the most of your sets

whenever you ask someone for a set you should be talking about the set afterwards. its the perfect time to ask questions and ask for advice. it might even be worthwhile to take a break midway through a set to lab interactions and talk about what you could be doing better. keep in mind that you can learn and ask questions even while winning.

winning more isnt always a good sign

in every game there are ways to play that will give you a short term boost in success but leave you seriously plateaued. theres also always going to be high risk high reward playstyles that give you very inconsistent success vs people who youd normally be incapable of beating, but it will never lead to you winning consistently. assuming that your goal is consistent results, both of these will hurt your improvement long term. if people keep calling you random this part might be about you.

try to not attach your ego to your skill

dont worry about how good or bad you are compared to your opponent. nothing good will come out of thinking about who you “should” win and lose to. all that matters is what theyre doing, how youre responding, and what you can learn from the set.

tournaments dont always have to be for winning

there are a lot of smaller stakes tournaments that are perfect for practice. unless theres something thats significant to you on the line, improving should be your goal over results. playing well in tournament is a unique skill that needs to be practiced. again, please do not attach your ego to tournament results. you need to be okay with losing and learning even when the result is publicly visible.

dont go out of your way to be unique

dont fall into the trap of caring more about notoriety than improving. dont do suboptimal setups and combos because they make you seem cooler or have a unique playstyle only for the sake of being unique. this doesnt mean that you

have to copy everything that you do from other people, just dont sacrifice winning for swag.

you have to do the things that arent fun

you have to learn frame data, you have to watch your tournament losses, you have to play the matchups that make you hate the game, you have to use training mode, and you have to do everything else that you know would be valuable but painful. some things will feel like chores, but if you want to be the best, this is what it takes.

do the thing that wins the game

while you dont want to overly rely on your opponents lack of knowledge, we will never live in a world where your high level opponents always know every trick you can throw at them. you dont want to be the respectable player who only does things that are 100% real, you want to be the person that wins evo. its up to you to gauge how much your opponent might know and the risks, costs, and rewards attached to your options. dont leave value on the table.

you have to learn the rules before you break the rules

you will reach a point in your journey when making less mistakes wont be good enough. if youre fighting another player who is good enough to not make significant mistakes, youll need to start making confident reads that carry risk. dont just take risks for the sake of taking risks though, they should be thought out and based on the habits of your opponent.

i hope that i could add something of substance to the conversation of how to get better at fighting games. if you have any questions or feedback my discord is @digblig