

# Yet Another Weapon Guide - Switch Axe

## [Intro](#)

[Purpose](#)

[Guide Contents](#)

## [At A Glance](#)

[How Do I Play Switch Axe?](#)

[Hot Tips](#)

[Meta Stuff](#)

[Cool Stuff](#)

## [Controls & Style Rundown](#)

[Guild Style](#)

[Striker Style](#)

[Aerial Style](#)

[Adept Style](#)

[Valor Style](#)

[Alchemy Style](#)

## [Hunter Arts](#)

[Trance Slash](#)

[Demon Riot](#)

[Energy Charge](#)

[Tempest Axe](#)

## [Switch Axe Phial Types](#)

## [What SA To Use?](#)

[Progression Recommendations](#)

[Endgame SA Recommendations](#)

## [What Skills Should I Use?](#)

[Progression Armor Sets](#)

[Skill Recommendations](#)

## [Final Thoughts](#)

# Intro

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Switch the way you play with Switch Axe! Having two distinct movesets and the ability to fluidly switch between the two of them, Switch Axe can be extremely fun to play and to master. Hack monsters down with the force behind Axe Mode, while cutting them down with the utility and speed

of Sword Mode! Abuse the power of Demon Riot and Energy Charge in GU to amplify your damage output! Use the long recovery frames to precisely iframe attacks!

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**By no means will contact result in changes to the guide.**

## Purpose

This guide is meant for new players of Monster HunterGenerations Ultimate (MHGU) or for players who haven't played Blademaster in the old-schoolgames, and wish to play as Switch Axe. Note that this guide will not assume any prior knowledge, regardless of games played before in the Monster Hunter series.

## Guide Contents

This guide will contain a comprehensive guide on Switch Axe controls, details on phial types, commentary on SA styles and combinations, recommendations on progression SA, and a final note on matchups against all monsters in the game.

## At A Glance

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### How Do I Play Switch Axe?

- SA has two modes, the Axe and the Sword. Axe Mode's attacks are slower and don't apply the Phial of your SA, but they're more powerful, and provide a measure of utility while you're low on Switch Gauge. Sword Mode's attacks are faster and use the Phial of your SA. In exchange, they're often weaker than the Axe Attacks.
- The Switch Gauge charges over time while you're outside of Sword Mode and is drained with every Sword Mode attack you do. While you're under 40% Gauge, you can Reload with R to instantly regain 40% Switch Gauge, and be able to switch back to Sword Mode.
- You can switch between Modes while you're idle with R, and some attacks can even combo into a morph attack with R. Try it out, and see what attacks can perform a morph-to attack. You can morph to Sword Mode only when you have greater than 40% Switch Gauge, otherwise, you'll reload.
- You may not be able to switch to Sword Mode when you're below 40%, but you can still attack in Sword Mode until you deplete your Switch Gauge. When you do, you'll be forced back into Axe Mode, so be sure to not deplete it in a bad place.

- After the Axe Upswing attack, you can perform Hack 'n Slash by mashing A. Each swing will consume Stamina. If you're in Guild Style, you can press R to perform a finisher attack, after which you can press R again to perform a Morph to Sword Attack. When you're low on Switch Gauge, this attack is the best to hit grounded monsters with.
- Pressing X+A while you're in Sword Mode will initiate the Elemental Discharge attack. Mashing X during this time will let you deal continuous damage, and if you press it enough, an explosion will occur, dealing a large amount of damage whilst draining a large amount of Switch Gauge. Afterwards, you'll switch back to Axe Mode automatically.

## Hot Tips

1. If, while you're in Axe Mode and you need to Reload, you perform a Morph-To-Sword attack, **you'll reload instead of performing the attack.**
2. **The Switch Axe in particular has a lengthy time after your attacks during which you can sidestep or roll.** More experienced SA players can abuse this fact to precisely time their dodges to naturally iframe through attacks.
3. **While you're in Sword Mode, all attacks have Mind's Eye,** regardless of the Phial Type. Use this fact to prevent the bounce animation on certain parts of monsters.
4. **All SA attacks provide Super Armor while you're doing them.** If you've got several people around you, like pesky LS users, you can take SA and not worry about tripping all the darn time.
5. **If you're pressing in a direction while you're starting up a combo, you'll move in that direction slightly.** Use this fact to close in on monsters.

## Meta Stuff

- **The best phials are Power Phials, always and forever.** The other phials simply don't do enough, compared to a 20% boost in damage when you're in Sword Mode.
- **If you're not in Sword Mode, you're in Reload Mode.** Sword Mode is just way better than Axe Mode for the majority of the time, especially with the power of Energy Charge + Demon Riot.
- **SA prefers Raw over Element.** It hits hard, not fast.
- **Most people use Striker SA.** The power of 3 HAs means that you can stack the 3 most powerful HAs that SA has access to, Readiness, Energy Charge, and Demon Riot, and only lose a few extraneous options.

- Guild SA gives up an HA slot for access to the Hack 'n Finisher in Axe Mode and the Double Slash in Sword Mode.
- Aerial SA can spam jump attacks automatically when you jump on the monster, and you're in Sword Mode.
- Adept SA is the most Axe-focused style, letting you perform a Hack 'n Finisher everytime you Adept Dodge, as compared to two slashes when you're in Sword Mode.
- Valor SA can be played in three distinct ways, but loses the Energy Charge/Demon Riot combination.
- Alchemy SA is like Striker Style, but has the DoubleSlash, if you really like that. Is very solid.
- **Energy Charge/Demon Riot is the best HA combo in the game.** Demon Riot boosts your Sword Mode capabilities and makes it so your Switch Gauge drains over time, rather than per attack. It also prevents reloading your Switch Gauge.
- Energy Charge ignores this restriction and recharges your Switch Gauge, while providing additional Affinity.
- Tempest Axe boosts your Axe Mode capabilities, in particular improving the Hack 'n Slash whilst giving you an additional finisher that is faster, and does about the same damage.
- Trance Slash is a lengthy damage art, which gets better if you have Demon Riot and/or Tempest Axe active, and is the most damaging HA in the game.
- Deviant Boost of some weapons makes chaining together Energy Charges while Demon Riot is active easier. Otherwise you can drop it while you're fighting non-Hyper monsters.
- The most effective DPS combo on downed monsters is Elemental Discharge canceling. You can stop mashing X after you've thrust forward, cancel with an attack, then thrust again. Even without the explosion, it's really effective.

## Cool Stuff

- If you run out of Switch Gauge mid-combo or mid-Trance Slash, you'll have to switch back to Axe Mode, and you can't cancel out of the animation. Do your best to keep an eye on the Switch Gauge while you're spamming your Sword attacks.
- Evade Extender is really helpful for mobility regarding SA. You'll be chasing after the monster with rolls most of the time, or sidestepping out of attacks. In the same vein, Evasion +1 can be used for certain attacks too.

- For more fluid transitions between Sword and Axe Mode, try using the aforementioned Morph Attacks. You'll cleanly switch between the two attack styles.
- With the reach of Axe Mode, you can even hit flying monsters with the upswing. Got a Rathalos above you? Knock 'em down.
- While Demon Riot is active, the Switch Gauge only depletes over time. This means that you can spam Elemental Discharges without the extreme cost to your Switch Gauge. Especially effective in Valor Style.
- You can reload mid-jump if you want, just watch out for the long recovery frames.

## Controls & Style Rundown

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### Guild Style

Two Hunter Art slots (1 SP Art), unlimited access to the two finishers and Morph Attacks.

*Axe Mode:*

- X - **Down Slash** - 50% damage
- A - **Side Slice** - 23% damage
- X + A - **Upswing** - 32% damage
- After Upswing, A (repeat) - **Hack 'n Slash** - 22% damage per slash
- Anytime during Hack 'n Slash, R **Hack 'n Finisher** - 25% + 30% + 40% = 95% damage / 3 hits
- After Hack 'n Finisher or Down Slash, R **Morph to Sword** - 32% damage
- Forward + X - **Forward Thrust** - 19% damage
- R while Switch Gauge is below 40% - **Reload**
- Midair X - **Jumping Swing** - 40% damage
- Midair R - **Jumping Morph to Sword** (will reload instead if Switch Gauge < 40%) - 32% damage

*Sword Mode:*

- X - **Down Slash** - 30% damage
- After Down Slash, X - **Up Slash** - 25% damage
- A - **Side Slash** - 28% damage
- After Side Slash, A - **Double Slash** - 28% + 36% = 64% damage / 2 hits
- After Side Slash, R - **Morph to Axe** (Same as Side Slice.) - 23% damage
- X + A - **Elemental Discharge Thrust** - 28% damage
- Midair X + A - **Jumping Elemental Thrust** - 40% damage
- After Elemental Discharge Thrust, X (repeat) **Elemental Discharge** - 13% damage per hit
- After Elemental Discharge x7 **Elemental Explosion** - 80% damage
- After Elemental Discharge, Back + X **Elemental Explosion (Cancel)** (is weaker than the non-cancelled version) - 50% damage

- Midair X - **Jumping Down Slash**- 30% damage

**Guild Style** is the typical SA style featuring unlimited and full access to both moves. Guild SA itself is underwhelming due to all of the fancy additions to the other styles, namely HA slots for Striker and Alchemy and the lack of loss of moves on Adept and Aerial. You can use this style if you want to try out the pure SA experience, but other than that? Not really.

#### **Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Energy Charge II/III
- Demon Riot III

#### **Cl-axe-ic Three-Stage Combo**

*Axe Mode* X, X, X, (repeat)

*A standard Axe Mode combo. The opening Down Slash may be very slow, but once you start up the combo, it can be very fast.*

#### **Axe 'n Slash**

*Axe Mode*: X, X, X, A (repeat), R

*An Axe Mode combo that leads into the Hack 'n Slash. Vary up the amount of A attacks you do depending on your stamina and on the opening length.*

#### **Axe You A Question**

*Axe Mode*: Forward X, X, R

*A simple gap closing attack in Axe Mode that transitions to Sword Mode.*

#### **Sword**

*Sword Mode*: X (repeat)

*The simplest 'combo' you can do in Sword Mode. Pretty much the bread-and-butter of Guild Sword Mode attacks.*

#### **Elemental Discharge Canceling**

*Sword Mode*: A, X+A, A, X+A, (repeat)

*The most optimal DPS combo for Sword Mode. Elemental Discharge Cancelling takes up a lot of Switch Gauge, so be careful with it. Unless you have Demon Riot up.*

#### **Elemental Discharging**

*Sword Mode*: A, A, X+A, X (repeat)

*A full Elemental Discharge combo. Useful for shorter monster downed opportunities.*

#### **Striker Style**

3 Hunter Art slots (1 SP Art), loses extra attacks from Guild to gain a third HA slot.

*Axe Mode*:

- **Cannot Hack 'n Finisher.**

*Sword Mode:*

- **Cannot Double Slash.**
- After Side Slash, A - **Striker Side Slash** - 29% damage

**Striker Style** is the new-old style favored by many in GU, just that you can't perform A spam as well as you can in Guild Style and you can't use the Hack'n Finisher like you can there too. The key thing here is the HA slots, which let you use the trifecta of SA HAs: Energy Charge, Demon Riot, and Absolute Readiness.

**Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Absolute Readiness
- Energy Charge II/III
- Demon Riot III

### **X Gonna Give It To Ya**

*Sword Mode:* Forward X, X, Forward X, X, (repeat)

*A good way to move yourself and attack at the same time in Sword Mode.*

## **Aerial Style**

1 Hunter Art slot (1 SP Art). Use the Aerial Hop to jump off of monsters and absolutely wallop them in Sword Mode.

*Axe Mode:*

- **Cannot Morph to Sword from Down Swing.**
- **Cannot Forward Thrust.**
- After Upswing, R - **Morph to Sword**

*Sword Mode:*

- **Cannot Elemental Discharge Thrust** (Can still perform Jumping Elemental Thrust from midair.)
- Post-Aerial Hop - **Aerial Upslash** - 35% damage

**Aerial Style** automatically attacks when you jump on the monster, as long as you're in Sword Mode. It also lets you attack once more when you're landing, and this includes performing an Elemental Thrust. Aerial Style Axe Mode doesn't really let you do much aside from the normal stuff you can do when jumping from a ledge, so this style really turns up the "Make Sword Mode Better" dial. Though I suppose that every style does that more or less.

**Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Energy Charge II

### **Aerial Sword**

*Sword Mode:* B, X, B, X, (repeat)

*Up and down, then the monster goes all around. A simple Aerial Sword Mode combo.*

### **Aerial Ax-No Wait, Sword**

*Axe Mode:* B, R

*An easy way to immediately transition into Sword Mode from Axe Mode midair.*

## Adept Style

1 Hunter Art slot (1 SP Art). Use the Adept Dodge to roll through monster attacks and perform extremely powerful, wide-ranging attacks.

*Axe Mode:*

- **Cannot Hack 'n Finisher.**
- Post-Adept Dodge, X - **Adept Axe Swings** -  $25\% + 30\% + 40\% = 95\%$  damage / 3 hits
- After Adept Axe Swings, R - **Morph to Sword**

*Sword Mode:*

- **Cannot Up Slash.**
- Post-Adept Dodge, X - **Adept Slashes** -  $25\% + 25\% = 50\%$  damage / 2 hits
- After Adept Slashes, R - **Morph to Axe** (Same as Down Swing.)

**Adept Style** locks the Axe Finisher behind Adept Dodging rather than Hack 'n Slash, while it doesn't do much to Sword Mode. That said, the Axe Finisher is an instant-ish 3 hits of 95 MV, but Sword's Adept counterattack is two swings, totalling 50 MV, which uses up Phial Gauge. This style is probably the most Axe-beneficial style there is, so if you really like Axe Mode, then you should consider using this style.

**Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Tempest Axe III

## Adept Axe 'n Sword

*Axe Mode:* After Adept Dodge, X, R.

*A good way to immediately counterattack Post-Adept Dodge and transition to Sword Mode afterwards.*

## Valor Style

1 Hunter Art slot (1 SP Art). Charge up the Valor Gauge to unlock chaining Morph Attacks, and a Double Discharge attack in Sword Mode.

**In any State -**

- Y - **Valor Stance**

**Outside of Valor State -**

*Axe Mode:*

- **Cannot Morph to Sword from Down Slash.**
- **Cannot Hack 'n Finisher.**
- After Valor Stance, X - **Valor Axe Finisher**
- After Valor Stance, R - **Valor Sword Morph**

*Sword Mode:*

- **Cannot Double Slash.**
- After Valor Stance, X - **Valor Up Slash**
- After Valor Stance, A - **Valor Double Slash**



- After Double Slash, R - **Valor Morph Hacks**

#### **In Valor State -**

- B - **Valor Step**

#### *Axe Mode:*

- After Valor Stance, X - **Hack 'n Finisher**
- After Valor Stance, R - **Double Slash**
- After Hack 'n Finisher, R **Valor Morph Slashes**

#### *Sword Mode:*

- After Valor Stance, X - **Valor Up Slash**
- After Valor Stance, A - **Double Slash**
- After Double Slash, R **Hack 'n Slash**
- After Elemental Discharge **Elemental Double Discharge** 40% + 60% = 100% damage / 2 hits

**Valor Style** grants you 3 ways to play, at least, while you're in Valor Mode. The more obvious style is to keep on chaining Morph Attacks with R, letting you save on phials while pumping out damage. The next most obvious style is Elemental Discharge spamming the Double Discharge to inflict large amounts of damage in short bursts. The Double Discharge also uses the phial energy of one Discharge, so you'll save phials that way. The third and probably most boring way to play is Axe Mode, which is basically just like Axe Mode in other styles except you have faster Valor Steps than Sword??

#### **Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Energy Charge III

#### **Valor Switchin'**

Y, R

*A good way to transition between Axe and Sword while charging up the Valor Gauge.*

#### **Faster Valor Charging**

*Sword Mode: Y, A*

*This combo uses the Switch Gauge in order to charge up the Valor Gauge. That's the life cycle.*

#### **Putting the 'Switch' in 'Switch Sword Axe'**

*In Valor State: R, R, R, (repeat)*

*This sort of fluid SA combo is conservative on the Switch Gauge while pumping out decent amounts of damage while in Valor State.*

#### **Alchemy Style**

3 Hunter Art slots (3 SP Arts). Automatically Morph between Axe and Sword by using X for Axe, and A for Sword. Charge the Alchemy Barrel to use special Alchemy items and upgrade SP.

- Forward B + R + Y **Alchemy Barrel** (Can also use from the Item Bar like normal.)

*Axe Mode:*

- Performs Down Slash when Morphing to Sword via the normal methods (Hack 'n Finisher, Down Slash).
- After Side Slice, A - **Forward Thrust**
- After Forward Thrust, A - **Morph to Sword**
- When Switch Gauge is under 40% and after any attack where you can morph to Sword, R - **Alchemy Reload**(Similar to Energy Charge's animation.)- 25% damage
- Charge the Alchemy Gauge quickly by using **Down Slash**.

*Sword Mode:*

- **Cannot Down Slash.**
- **Cannot Elemental Explosion (Cancel).**
- After Up Slash, X - **Side Slash**
- After Side Slash, X - **Morph to Axe**
- Charge the Alchemy Gauge quickly by using **Double Slash**.

**Alchemy Style** puts the Morph Attacks on X or A, depending on which mode you're in currently. Switch and use Axe Mode with X, and Sword Mode with A. You can perform one attack with the opposite mode's button, but when you do it twice you'll switch. Because of this, you cannot perform the infinite X attack, but you do have infinite A. Usage of this style or Striker Style will mainly depend on which infinite you need. Infinite X can weave in the gap closer attack by using the Forward + X, while infinite A has the Double Slash. It's up to you which style would fit best in which fight.

**Recommended Hunter Arts:**

- Absolute Readiness (SP)
- Energy Charge III
- Demon Riot III

### Gapclosing Sword Morph

*Axe Mode:* Forward X, A, A

*An easy way to immediately transition from Axe Mode to Sword Mode while playing Alchemy SA.*

### Alchemy Switchy Combo

*Sword Mode:* A, X, A, A, (repeat)

*A combo which conserves the Switch Gauge while performing an infinite.*

The Style Hierarchy goes Striker/Alchemy > Aerial/Valor/Guild/Adept. Striker has the Energy Charge/Demon Riot combo going for it, so it's naturally powerful, while Alchemy also has that but has the Double Slash. Usage on each monster will vary depending on if the monster stays still or if you'll need to gapclose a lot with X. The other styles generally lose out because they either don't have the HA slots in the case of Adept and Valor or they're generally underwhelming in the case of Aerial and Guild.

## Hunter Arts

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## Trance Slash

Perform an extremely lengthy combo of Axe and Sword attacks, finishing off with an Elemental Discharge Explosion. If you have Demon Riot and/or Tempest Axe active at the time you activate this art, it adds additional hits.

HA Rank	To Charge	Total Damage
I	670 (1004 SP)	(Axe) 13 + 15 + 20 + (Sword) 20 + 25 + 30 + (15 * 4) + 80 = 263%
II	750 (1100 SP)	(Axe) 15 + 17 + 22 + (Sword) 24 + 29 + 35 + (25 * 4) + 90 = 332%
III	830 (1196 SP)	(Axe) 18 + 20 + 25 + (Sword) 28 + 33 + 40 + (30 * 4) + 100 = 384%

*Full Extensions:*

HA Rank	Total Damage
I	(Axe) 13 + 15 + 20 + (Tempest Axe) 16 + (10 * 3) + 34 + (Sword) 20 + 25 + 30 + (15 * 4) + (Demon Riot) 70 + 20 = 353%
II	(Axe) 15 + 17 + 22 + (Tempest Axe) 16 + (10 * 3) + 34 + (Sword) 24 + 29 + 35 + (25 * 4) + (Demon Riot) 80 + 30 = 442%
III	(Axe) 18 + 20 + 25 + (Tempest Axe) 16 + (10 * 3) + 34 + (Sword) 28 + 33 + 40 + (30 * 4) + (Demon Riot) 90 + 40 = 494%

*Applies Phial only during the Sword Mode segment.*

The most powerful HA in the entire game, only crippled by its use time and the fact that the other HAs can do more for less. You can try to use this, but after you get slapped around by a Narga a few times, you'll probably conclude that this HAs use cases are incredibly few and far between. For full meme, use both Tempest Axe and Demon Riot and watch as your hunter pulls off an incredibly long combo that you'll probably go to sleep in the middle of, or miss.

It's also important to note that you can readjust yourself at various points in the HA, so if the monster happens to move, which will happen a lot, you can point yourself in its direction, so you don't look like an idiot when you use the finisher on the air. Also, *you stop performing the HA if you run out of Switch Gauge*, so you should probably keep an eye on it.

## Demon Riot

After performing a short animation, your Switch Gauge begins to drain over time, rather than per attack. Furthermore, you can no longer reload your Switch Gauge for the duration of the art, and phial effects are boosted. Once the Switch Gauge depletes, Demon Riot will end.

HA Rank	To Charge	Effects	Duration (at full Switch Gauge)
I	1080 (1496 SP)	+5% Phial Effects	105 seconds
II	1170 (1604 SP)	+10% Phial Effects	120
III	1250 (1700 SP)	+20% Phial Effects	105

*The listed duration for the art is based off of 100% Switch Gauge, so you may experience reduced duration otherwise.*

Demon Riot is one of the two HAs that made SA a force to reckon with in Gen. While nerfed in GU to have a shorter duration, Demon Riot is still great to use along with Energy Charge so long as you either use EC II or a Deviant weapon to boost your HA charge rate. Once you start to use it though, you'd best attack as much as you can to take the most advantage of Demon Riot.

Also, since you don't use Switch Gauge on attacks, you can use Elemental Discharges constantly without it being a pain on your Switch Gauge.

## Energy Charge

Quickly reloads the Switch Gauge, after which your hunter performs a quick sweeping attack. This attack can chain into the normal Sword Mode attacks. Later levels also give you Affinity.

HA Rank	To Charge	Effects
I	500 (1004 SP)	Reloads 70% Switch Gauge.
II	650 (1100 SP)	Reloads 100% Switch Gauge, +10% Affinity for 2 minutes.
III	850 (1196 SP)	Reloads 100% Switch Gauge, +30% Affinity for 2 minutes.

*The sweeping motion performed deals 25% damage.*

The other half of the famed Demon Riot/Energy Charge combo of Gen, Energy Charge chaining allows you to skip the Demon Riot's restriction on reloading, letting you maintain Demon Riot, and thus the enhanced phial effects. The Affinity you gain is a bonus. Though having an increased charge time in GU, you can still chain together Energy Charges, though it will be slightly harder than before. Keep up the assault of Demon Riot-empowered Sword Mode Attacks and you should be able to get Energy Charge II recharged quickly enough. III might need the help of Deviant weapons.

## Tempest Axe

Performs a few opening swings in Axe Mode, then empowers your hunter to perform the Hack 'n Slash faster, consuming less stamina. Furthermore, you move at twice the speed while you're in Axe Mode and you can also perform an enhanced finisher when you press X during Hack 'n Slash.

HA Rank	To Charge	Duration
I	420 (704 SP)	120 seconds
II	500 (800 SP)	150
III	580 (896 SP)	180

*Opening swings deal 22% + 22% = 44% damage. During Hack 'n Slash (any style), can perform the special finisher by press X. The finisher deals 25% + 55% = 80% damage.*

The new HA introduced in GU, Tempest Axe functions as a parallel to Demon Riot, except it makes your Hack 'n Slash swings more efficient in terms of Stamina and they also speed up the more you Hack 'n Slash. The finisher, which can be accessed in all styles, is also pretty good in terms of damage. It also charges quickly, which means it can be maintained fairly easily, as opposed to Demon Riot. Though Tempest Axe is still outshined in terms of meta usage as compared to Energy Charge/Demon Riot.

## Switch Axe Phial Types

When it comes to SA Phial Types, there's usually only one answer when people ask about it. "Power Phial or bust!" And that answer would be right. But we'll cover all the other SA Phial types here anyway.

SA Phials are activated and applied to your Sword Mode attacks, so while they may be weaker, their speed and phial application makes a real difference between Axe and Sword. Universally, you'll choose an SA based on its phial type, unless you want to exclusively use Axe Mode and Tempest Axe. Axe Mode doesn't take into account Phial Type at all so you can mostly ignore the phial type if you want to play that way.

### Power Phial

+20% raw to Sword Mode attacks.

20% more raw on all Sword Mode attacks makes the difference on their attacks, easily closing the gap between Sword and Axe attack MVs, and making it so that it may surpass Axe Mode MVs. I cannot overstate how great Power Phial is, especially with Demon Riot doubling the raw boost from Power Phial. It's just more damage, it's how simple that is.

### Element Phial

+25% Element/Status damage on Sword Mode attacks.

Despite the large numbers, you must remember that SA is about the middle of the road in terms of hit speed, making element not the best thing around. And when Power Phial is around, Element Phial just doesn't seem as good as pure raw.

## Dragon Phial

Adds a specific amount of Dragon-elemental damage, listed on the SA Status tip, to all Sword Mode attacks.

Now this phial type, if you can believe it, is somehow *more* niche than even the upcoming status phials. Only a few monsters in the game are really weak to Dragon, and being forced to use Sword Mode to apply Dragon? I'd rather you just have Dragon-elemental damage naturally.

## Poison/Para/Exhaust Phial

Enables you to deal the respective status damage at the same rate as normal Blademaster weapons (33% of hits) at the damage listed on the SA Status tip to Sword Mode attacks.

Pretty weak, especially when you consider that you don't even apply the status at a 100% rate. This includes *Exhaust Phial* for some reason, while Hammer and HH apply it 100% of the time. Oh, and you can KO monsters with Exhaust Phial if you hit them on the head, but good luck actually trying to KO things with that. Avoid at all costs if you even think about using Sword Mode.

# What SA To Use?

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First and foremost, always choose Power Phial SAs. Unless you plan to exclusively only use Axe Mode, Power Phial makes way too much of a splash compared to the other phial types. Then, choose raw power over elemental damage, since SA in general has high MVs, and the effects of Power Phial can further be amplified. You don't necessarily need a long Sharpness grade on an SA, but if you lack the ability to carry around Razor Sharp, then it might be a good idea to do so.

## Progression Recommendations

### Low Rank (Village 1-6\*, Hub 1-3\*)

- **Petrified Axe**  
This is a classic SA because this is really the only SA that you can use. No other SA has quite as much raw or sharpness in this point in the game for a long while, so you'd better get used to this.
- **Usurper's Downpour**  
Zinogre's SA. Petrified SA will lose a bit of effectiveness by this point, so this is basically looking for SAs to fill in late Low Rank. Zinogre's SA qualifies, with decent raw, Power Phial, and good Sharpness. It's even got Thunder, and upgrades into the best Thunder SA in the game.
- **Fond Farewell**

Mizutsune's SA. This basically fulfills the above requirements, but for Water. You'll be using this for parts in both HR and GR too, so keep it maintained.

- **Rath Flame Splitter**

The Rathalos SA also qualifies, but this time for Fire. This can also be used on LR Nakarkos, since he's weak to Fire. This also coincidentally upgrades into the best Fire SA in the game.

- **Aksa Switch**

Seregios's SA is easily the best SA you can get at this point because of the auto-sharpening mechanic. And you're an SA user, if you're not rolling, then you're probably sheathed and running towards the monster. Furthermore, the blue sharpness this SA has is effectively infinite. This SA is invaluable for progression, so use it and love it.

### High Rank (Village 7-10\*, Hub 4-7\*)

- **Aksa Switch**

Seregios's SA can be upgraded relatively early on in HR, when it just needs Keen bones and some Seregios materials. It'll stay that way until you get Petrified Axe to Level 7. Until then, this will get you pretty far.

- **Petrified Axe**

Yeah, you still aren't gonna upgrade this into Obsidian Axe because that has Dragon Phial, and that's pretty trash. At least when you upgrade this to Level 7 it gains a bit of Blue Sharpness and higher raw than the Aksa Switch, so you can use this for a bit, until you gain access to HR Seregios.

- **Fond Farewell**

Fond Farewell at this point has the same raw and Sharpness as the Petrified, but also has additional Water on top of it, and some Affinity. This may be only a minor improvement, but if you've kept up your Mizu SA improvements you should use this.

- **Aksa Switch/Baran Defiance**

The two branches off of Seregios SA are really competitive with each other, so I've recommended both here. They both retain the sharpness-restoration effect of the original Seregios SA but the Aksa Switch has less Sharpness, Affinity, and slots, but has higher raw damage, as well as an easier upgrading line. Baran Defiance has more Sharpness, Affinity, and two slots, but slightly less raw and a harder upgrading line. Your call, since it's really close.

### G-Rank (Hub G1-G4\*)

- **Elder Axe**

Elder Axe, at last, has the highest raw you've seen yet on a natural-White weapon. And it even has Power Phial! Too good to be true? Hell no. Make this and love it to get through the beginning stages of G-Rank.

- **Dragon Ripper**

I hope you get all the drops you need from Lao on your first time hunting him, since his SA, new to this game, is quite a powerhouse in its own right. The competition between this and Elder Axe is somewhat close though, so even if you don't get this SA, it's alright.

- **Despot's Cloudburst**

If you can somehow scrape together the Rajang Hardhorns required to upgrade this SA, this will be the best weapon to fight Ahtal-Ka with, since it has 290 raw and a decent amount of Thunder, combined with SA. It's even got a slot.

- **Parting Slice**

Mizu's SA is in the same boat as Zinogre's SA, with a high amount of raw, natural White Sharpness, and a decent amount of Water. This is a solid option through G3 and G4.

## Endgame SA Recommendations

- **Elderfrost Unleasher**

High raw outbalances low Sharpness when you use Sharpness +2 here. Deviant bonus is crucial to maintaining Demon Riot when you combine it with Energy Charge, so Elderfrost is generally a great choice. Run Absolute Readiness for maximum sharpness upkeep.

- **Anat Karnaim**

Ahtal-Ka's SA is solid with 3 slots, average raw, and a bit of Purple Sharpness that you can maintain with Readiness and Razor Sharp. S+2 is optional here because of that. You will also miss the Deviant boost with this SA so run Energy Charge II instead of III.

- **Fatalis End**

This is Black Fatalis's SA, upgraded from the one you get from mining materials at Pokke's giant stone. Slightly above-average raw with a healthy amount of Dragon, though you need to run Sharpness +2 with this one to get a usable amount of high Sharpness.

- **Magnastar Batis**

Valstrax's SA packs Element Phial rather than Power Phial, but is (slightly) compensated by the fact that you don't need to run either S+2 or Razor Sharp on this SA. Two slots with a high amount of Dragon is also nice. Useful for Axe Mode focus, like headlocking a Rathian.

- **Glaverno Axe**

Hellblade's SA is still relevant in GU because you don't have to run S+2 nor RS on this SA. Has a decent amount of Blast to compensate for its below-average raw. This is more suited for longer hunt-a-thons.

## Elemental SA Recommendations



- **Rath Inferno Splitter**  
Rathalos's SA is the best Fire SA due to it having the highest raw and access to Power Phial. You'll need S+2 to get Purple Sharpness though.
- **Lanternlight Grave**  
Soulseer Mizutsune's SA is the best Water SA mostly because of Deviant boost, but also because of its decent stats too. All you need is S+1 here, not S+2.
- **Opressor's Deluge**  
Great stats across the board without sacrificing too much on either raw or element. Only needs S+1 for a decent amount of Purple.

### Status SA Recommendations

*Disclaimer: Status SA is particularly ineffective because it doesn't hit often enough to apply the status. If you do use these SAs, bring out and use that Sword Mode.*

- **Dreadqueen Cleaver**  
Deviant boost, good amount of Poison, good Sharpness. The only thing not going for this SA is the low-ish amount of raw it has, but if you're going Poison SA, you're probably fighting Crystalbeard or Kushala anyway, so.
- **Exoskeleton Hacker**  
You'll deal little damage with this SA, but you'll actually have a chance of paralyzing the monster with this one. Triple slots and natural Purple is okay for Status SA.
- **Cascade Rhipidon**  
This is the only Sleep SA with Power Phial. That's it. This kinda wins by default.

## What Skills Should I Use?

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We'll go over skills and armor sets for progression in this section. SA can go for the general Blademaster stuff but with a few caveats -- You can opt to take Evade Extender and/or Evasion +1, since you'll be rolling around the area anyway. EE also helps with your sidehops, letting you get more distance on those. As for skills, stacking affinity, like the other weapon types, is generally recommended. Sharpness + and Razor Sharp are also used for many SAs, as well.

### Progression Armor Sets

**Low Rank (Village 1-6\*, Hub 1-3\*)**

- **BuJaBu**  
Standard early-LR set for Blademasters. Grants Attack Up (L) early in the game by using alternating Bulldrome and Jaggi parts. You'll need to gem in the rest of Attack, and you need to use the Bulldrome Cap instead of the Helm.

- **Ceanataur**

Alternative LR set that you can use on basically any Blademaster weapon type. Has Razor Sharp and Critical Eye, so this set will be a little less effective in terms of damage output this early in the game, but if you want a sorta-good looking set and don't want to use BuJaBu anymore, then you can use this.

- **Nargacuga**

An interesting alternative really only useful for non-Adept SA sets because it has Evade Extender and Critical Eye, which are both important for SA sets... but this is kinda too early in the game for Critical Eye to be useful, as mentioned.

- **Rathalos**

Provides a variant of Attack Up and Weakness Exploit, which will boost your damage quite effectively. This will most likely take you to early High Rank, so keep and maintain this armor for a little bit.

- **Rathalos Mix**

Exchanges some points of Attack for points to Sharpness, which provides a measure of utility for Blademasters. Specifically, this set needs Rathalos Cap, Rathalos Mail, Ceanataur Braces, Rathalos Faulds, and Bnahabra Boots and a few decorations to get the right skill setup, but this can be even more effective than the standard Rathalos set, especially if you plan to use the Aksa Switch.

### High Rank (Village 7-10\*, Hub 4-8\*)

- **BuJaBu S**

An improved version of BuJaBu but with more Defense than the Low Rank version. Doesn't really have other advantages, so only get it if you didn't get Rathalos armor and do not want to farm Rathalos.

- **Ceanataur S**

Has more points in Critical Eye compared to the LR version and has more Defense too. Still packs Razor Sharp, so this is a solid set for Blademasters.

- **Nargacuga S**

Has Evade Distance, Evasion +1 (with a few decorations) and Critical Eye, which is pretty nice for SA. Don't use Adept SA though since Evasion doesn't stack with Adept's triggering frames.

- **Rathalos S**

More Attack and more Defense than the LR version; this set is pretty great on its own, and easily capable of taking you through the early vestiges of G-Rank.

- **Rathalos Mix S**

This set is the same as the standard Rathalos mixset from Low Rank but with all of the parts upgraded to their respective High Rank versions. Still great for the same reasons, and even better at taking you through early G-Rank.

- **Silver Sol**

If you somehow managed to get through High Rank without getting Rathalos S, this is a good alternative. Packs Weakness Exploit and Critical Boost which grants an instant 20% on-average damage boost when you hit weakspots, but you have to suffer through Silver Rathalos to get it, so.

- **Hayasol**

The legendary mixset from Gen is great as a progression set, so long as you have the required charm and the ability to get both the Hayabusa Feather and to defeat the extremely-hard event Hyper Silver Rathalos. More often than not though only people who transferred their end-game character from Gen will use this as progression. If you do so though, this can take you all the way through Ahtal Ka.

#### **G-Rank (Hub G1-G4\*)**

- **Ceanataur X/GX/XR**

Depending on the variant, you'll get one of these 3 sets in G2 and G3, and it's a great set to take you through the remainder of G2 and partway through G3. It's got lots of Critical Eye and still has Razor Sharp, so it's perfect for taking up to G-Rank Defense properly.

- **Nargacuga X**

A simple upgrade from Narga S with more points in Expert and Evasion for your evasion needs. Remember to only use this with non-Adept SAs, as Adept won't benefit from the Evasion boosts.

- **Rathalos X**

Rathalos X packs more points in Attack and Tenderizer as well as points in Earplugs, which can be useful at times. This set will be the last one you make before Ahtal-Ka in all likelihood.

- **Rathalos X Mixset**

Sacrifices the ability to get Earplugs but grants you more Blademaster-relevant skills like Attack Up (L), Weakness Exploit, and Razor Sharp. Composed of Rathalos X/Rathalos X/Rathalos X/Vaik X/Bnahabra X.

- **Jho Cena**

The legendary Jho Cena provides Sharpness +2 and Razor Sharp at base, without charms or decorations. S+2 and RS isn't quite required for most SAs, but if you plan on using Elderfrost's SA then this is a set to shoot for.

## Skill Recommendations

- **Weakness Exploit**

This is a classic damage-boosting skill, where if you hit weakspots your Affinity rises by 50%, which is a 12.5% boost to your damage! SA is kind of a pro at hitting weakspots with Sword Mode, since your strikes are so precise and very vertical, so there's little chance you'll miss the hitzone you're targeting.

- **Razor Sharp**

Being a Blademaster weapon, Razor Sharp is always nice to prolong your sharpness bar and prevent dropping into lower levels of sharpness. SA may only be faster than GS, but swinging that sword around will eat your sharpness somewhat quickly. That, and Readiness really helps with managing Sharpness.

- **Critical Boost**

Stack Critical Boost with Weakness Exploit to get a further 7.5% damage boost at base! This is a pretty obvious choice if you even think about taking Weakness Exploit, which you should most of the time.

- **Sharpness +2**

Required for some SAs, not so much for others. If you're looking at a particular SA and wondering whether or not S+2 is useful, look at the Sharpness Gauges. If it gains White or Purple, like Elderfrost does, then this is great. If with Sharpness +1 you get a solid chunk of Purple to work with, then you just need Sharpness +1. And obviously if you have a full sharpness bar or if you don't get a higher sharpness grade than White with S+2, don't take this.

- **Critical Eye +1/2/3**

More Affinity is more damage, and you really can't say no to more damage, right? Furthermore, crits in Sword Mode will benefit off of Power Phial, making them extra-sweet.

- **Challenger +2**

If you can't fit anything of relevance on your armor set, then this is the skill to go for. Especially useful if your SA doesn't need S+2, since you can devote those 15 points to something else. Plus the monster is nearly always gonna be enraged in G-Rank, so this is a solid pick nevertheless.

- **Evade Extender**

Very useful for SA, as the sheath time is very lengthy, and should be avoided. This is mainly used to cover additional distance with your forward rolls to close the gap between you and the monster, but the sidehops also get extra-hoppy, letting you hop from the monster's head to their sides easily.

- **Evasion +1**

Sometimes useful to open up additional windows of opportunity on monsters, especially since you're rolling all the time. A word of warning though, it's discouraged to run both this and Evade Extender at the same time, and both skills can easily make you dependent on them, so use sparingly.

## Final Thoughts

SA, despite the Demon Riot/Energy Charge combo being nerfed from Gen, still is a house, so long as you can keep up the aggression to quickly charge up Energy Charge. With Evade Extender in tow and well-timed sidesteps, you can just hop through attacks and keep up aggression, making high levels of play interesting and effective too. Most matchups for SA are favorable too, since Sword Mode is not only powerful but also has Mind's Eye and Axe Mode has the utility of the high reach. SA is very strong in this game without being mindlessly broken, like some other meta weapon/style combos.

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