Yet Another Weapon Guide - Switch Axe

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# Intro

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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## Purpose

This guide is meant for new players of Monster Hunter Generations Ultimate (MHGU) or for players who haven’t played Blademaster in the old-school games, 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

## 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 Double Slash, 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 monster is Elemental Discharge canceling. You can stop mashing X after you’ve thrusted 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

## Guild Style

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

*Axe Mode:*

* X - **Down Slash**
* A - **Side Slice**
* X + A - **Upswing**
* After Upswing, A (repeat) - **Hack ‘n Slash**
* Anytime during Hack ‘n Slash, R - **Hack ‘n Finisher**
* After Hack ‘n Finisher or Down Slash, R - **Morph to Sword**
* Forward + X - **Forward Thrust**
* R while Switch Gauge is below 40% - **Reload**
* Midair X - **Jumping Swing**
* Midair R - **Jumping Morph to Axe** *(will reload instead if Switch Gauge < 40%)*

*Sword Mode:*

* X - **Down Slash**
* After Down Slash, X - **Up Slash**
* A - **Side Slash**
* After Side Slash, A - **Double Slash**
* After Side Slash, R - **Morph to Axe***(Same as Side Slice.)*
* X + A - **Elemental Discharge Thrust**
* Midair X + A - **Jumping Elemental Thrust**
* After Elemental Discharge Thrust, X (repeat) - **Elemental Discharge**
* After Elemental Discharge x7 - **Elemental Explosion**
* After Elemental Discharge, Back + X - **Elemental Explosion (Cancel)** *(is weaker than the non-cancelled version)*

**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 gapclosing 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 perform Hack ‘n Finisher.**

*Sword Mode:*

* **Cannot perform Double Slash.**
* After Side Slash, A - **Striker Side Slash**

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

*Sword Mode:*

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

**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 perform Hack ‘n Finisher.**
* Post-Adept Dodge, X - **Adept Axe Swings**
* After Adept Axe Swings, R - **Morph to Sword**

*Sword Mode:*

* **Cannot perform Up Slash.**
* Post-Adept Dodge, X - **Adept Slashes**
* 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 perform Morph to Sword from Down Slash.**
* **Cannot perform Hack ‘n Finisher.**
* After Valor Stance, X - **Valor Axe Finisher**
* After Valor Stance, R - **Valor Sword Morph**

*Sword Mode:*

* **Cannot perform 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**

**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 spam, using 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.)*
* Charge the Alchemy Gauge quickly by using **Down Slash.**

*Sword Mode:*

* **Cannot perform Down Slash.**
* **Cannot perform 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 gapcloser 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

## 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** | **MV** |
| I | 670 (1004 SP) | (Axe) 13 + 15 + 20 + (Sword) 20 + 25 + 30 + (15 \* 4) + 80 = 263 MV |
| II | 750 (1100 SP) | (Axe) 15 + 17 + 22 + (Sword) 24 + 29 + 35 + (25 \* 4) + 90 = 332 MV |
| III | 830 (1196 SP) | (Axe) 18 + 20 +25 + (Sword) 28 + 33 + 40 + (30 \* 4) + 100 = 384 MV |

*Full Extensions:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **HA Rank** | **MV** |
| 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 has a MV of 25.*

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 MV*.

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?

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 Keenbones 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 too 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.

* **Oppressor’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?

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 Builds because it has Evade Extender and Critical Eye, which are both important for SA Builds… 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 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 skill don’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 to 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 SA builds, 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. Comprised 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.

# Monster Matchups

**Please note that this section is mostly based on personal opinion and should not be taken at face value. Matchups can vary wildly between skill levels and even between individuals.**

In this section I’ll be going over monster matchups in the order that the monsters are arranged in the Hunter’s Notes, except for one monster, which I’ll talk about at the end in order to avoid spoilers.

I’ll be using a /10 rating system for this, the higher the number the better the matchup is for you, with 10 being a great matchup for you and 0 being a pretty bad matchup. Keep in mind that this is based off of Guild/No Arts as a baseline, because you can tapdance over most things with Adept or Valor. This section won’t cover in detail the monster either.

## Neoptorons and Temnocerans

**Seltas: 10/10**

Trivial boy. Whale on him from behind or from his frontal side, iframing the incoming attacks. He’ll go down super easy once you knock him down once too.

**Seltas Queen: 9/10**

Sword Mode attacks ignore the Seltas Queen’s foreclaws guarding her head, preventing you from bouncing. Because of this you can attack her head practically non-stop. Just watch out for her charges, since those have a wide hitbox. Not even sidesteps are enough to dodge one of those if you’re attacking her head, so stay sharp.

**Nerscylla: 9/10**

As an SA user, your unusually precise vertical attacks can hit Nerscylla’s head really well, leading to several trips, which itself leads to a faster hunt. It’s all about learning how, where, and when to position for those attacks as SA. Furthermore, the expanding fangs Nerscylla has also count as part of the head, so you can attack those to trip it as well, when it does that attack.

## Piscine Wyverns

**Cephadrome: 10/10**

Easy boy, just be patient enough for it to get out of the sand, then lay into it from the side or behind it. If it does go beneath the sand, Sonic Bomb it out and continue your onslaught.

**Plesioth: 7/10**

Uhhhh I dunno how you plan on attacking Plesioth normally. If you take Aerial SA, then maybe, but otherwise, this fight is extremely shaky for Blademasters. If it’s not the jank tailwhip hitbox then it’s the infamous hipcheck. And if it’s not the hipcheck, it’s the water beams. Aerial Style is still probably the best to fight Plesioth with regardless.

**Lavasioth: 4/10**

Ew Lavasioth. Still an annoying matchup due to the super body slam and its crazy mobility on land. Have you *tried* catching up to it when it slides on the ground? It’s hard. Also its face it’s higher up in the air, so even though you probably can hit it in the head with Sword Mode attacks, you’d have to be right there in front of it, which is a whole new can of worms. At least you can knock it out of the lava to make it vulnerable.

## Bird Wyverns

**The Dromes: 10/10**

More or less the same in every way, the Dromes have the same fight. Dodge every few seconds and attack while they’re turning around. Donezo.

**Great Maccao: 10/10**

Great Mac can’t dance circles around you if you have the power of Evade Extender. Or anything really. Clear out the smaller Maccao if you want then whale away at Great Maccao’s head safely by abusing the moments where it turns around.

**Yian Kut-Ku: 10/10**

Kut-Ku can be frisky in G-Rank, but just learn to be more patient. Wait for it to expose itself, most likely through the fireball spam attack or the Konchu bowling attack, then cut away basically anywhere.

**Gypceros: 10/10**

Meh, there’s isn’t much noteworthy about Gypceros. Remain to the sides to avoid being hit by a tailwhip as well as its charges. Use Sword Mode to attack the head while it’s trying to charge up a flash bomb. Stay away from the poison pools.

**Yian Garuga: 6/10**

Garuga is one tough cookie, and you’ll probably spend more times than you’ll care to admit eating one of its insta-charges. Your best bet is probably to wait for it to turn around and land a quick Sword Mode attack, but even then it’s risky. The best opportunity is to wait until it tries to fireball you, where it leaves the greatest amount of opportunity.

**Deadeye Yian Garuga: 9/10**

Deadeye is a Garuga designed for the modern age, meaning that this fight is much less annoying than Garuga proper. Still, the fight is about the same. Attack the head and sometimes the tail tip when it’s down for high damage. Take advantage of when it turns around to land a Sword Mode attack right across it’s darn face. When it tries to do the Earthmover attack, roll behind it and attack the tail instead of the head.

**Malfestio: 10/10**

You can roll past most of Malfestio’s attacks and it can’t do much about that. Well, aside from the wing attacks, which you should see coming anyway. When it’s especially vulnerable is when it’s trying to make you go to sleep, since you can thrust an axe in its face without fear of being attacked.

**Nightcloak Malfestio: 9/10**

Nightcloak shouldn’t be that much trouble for an SA user. Not even the wing attacks should get you that much as long as you side step at the right time. Sword Mode away at the head or tail, more often the tail, and when you trip it, break the head to disable its complete cloaking. Use Axe Mode when it does cloak to knock it out of the sky.

## Fanged Beasts

**Bulldrome: 10/10**

The hardest thing about Bulldrome is predicting when it’ll charge. But even then you can just roll behind it for the majority of its charges, so keep attacking the butt. Also watch out for the head shaking attack it does, as that has a lengthy hitbox duration.

**Kecha Wacha: 10/10**

Kecha these hands? Not today. Kecha doesn’t have many tools to attack behind itself and when it does, it telegraphs it pretty well. Make it trip then keep on attacking it, it’ll go down easily.

**Lagombi: 10/10**

Lagombi is pretty trivial, just roll behind it and attack the butt, where it’s very vulnerable. Keep up that ass-ault and it’ll go down pretty quickly.

**Snowbaron Lagombi: 9/10**

Snowbaron has a severe weakness to being attacked on the butt just like regular Lagombi. Keep up the heat by using a Fire SA and roll either behind it for some attacks and away from it for others. Learning when it can perform the divekick in G-Rank is also essential, since you can punish it as it tries to recover.

**Arzuros: 10/10**

Trivial bear. Roll past the homing claws of doom and it doesn’t have much else in the terms of threatening attacks.

**Redhelm Arzuros: 4/10**

For being the first Deviant you’re introduced to, Redhelm sure is hard for Blademasters. I highly recommend Evasion +1 here for SA to iframe through the claw attacks without having to dive or iframe them naturally. When you attack it I suggest attacking the belly, so if it decides to claw swipe you can just roll straight through it.

**Congalala: 10/10**

Congalala is less hard and less annoying due to certain nerfs that Congalala received. It telegraphs its charges now and the other attacks are just punishing bait. Roll in after it attacks and kick its ass.

**Blangonga: 7/10**

I hope you know your iframes because Blangonga will definitely test you on them. Failing the test means eating a clothesline to the face, so you’d better study up. In G-Rank, Blangonga gains an additional opening in the form of a tremor-inducing punch to the ground. If you’re caught by it, then you can dive out of the way of the followup slam, but if you avoid it, you can punish the followup slam. Regularly though, just attack the hind legs to trip it, and get rid of the Blangos too, since they’re annoying.

**Volvidon: 9/10**

More annoying than actually hard. If you’re feeling cool, try using the Down Slash in Axe Mode while Volvidon’s rolling towards you. You’ll knock it away and deal additional damage to boot. For the other attacks, simply roll past it and Volvidon can’t do much about it.

**Rajang: 8/10**

Rajang is like a book written in a foreign language. There’s patterns that you can make out, but you can’t quite translate that into your own language. But once you’ve learned enough of it you can sorta make out what things mean based on context clues. Rajang will almost always perform certain actions after other ones, and learning this as SA means effective punishes in Sword Mode. As an example, after Rajang does a backstep it tends to perform a spin attack right after. Rajang won’t always follow these patterns, but it will follow them most of the time.

**Furious Rajang: 8/10**

Furious Rajang is a fast-paced fight. As SA, stay away from it until it decides to chill out, then attack its hind legs to trip it and proceed to cut it up. Staying close to Furious Rajang usually means you’ll eat a few attacks which you don’t want to happen. The best opportunities to hit him are when it fires the laser, after the triple Rajang somersault, and after the spin attack he performs.

**Gammoth: 10/10**

Normal Gammoth here may be large, but attack her trunk and face for maximum damage, and rinse and repeat until she’s dead.

**Elderfrost Gammoth: 8/10**

Elderfrost is slightly annoying due to her propensity to dig up ice boulders incredibly quickly, then generate a large AoE in front and towards her left side. As you can imagine that gets frustrating quickly. As an SA user, snipe her trunk and head, whichever is more appropriate while watching out for the aforementioned ice boulder attack as well as her front leg stomps and trunk swinging attacks. Finally, if she decides to trunk slam you, just like normal Gammoth you can punish that very well.

## Amphibians

**Tetsucabra: 10/10**

Trivial frog. Break through the tusks to make this already-easy fight even easier, and attack the puffy tail whenever you have the opportunity.

**Drilltusk Tetsucabra: 9/10**

Drilltusk is a decent matchup against SA since you can use Sword Mode to avoid bouncing on the tusks before you break them. Just don’t try to break the boulder it digs up because that isn’t gonna happen like ever. If it does decide to bring up a boulder, then you can go behind it and attack the puffy tail, but be wary of the rock suplex G-Rank Drilltusk can do sometimes.

**Zamtrios: 10/10**

Zamtrios is susceptible to the power of SA because you can force your way past the ice armor phase by using Sword Mode attacks to break through. Once done, you can keep attacking until Zamtrios decides to puff up, at which point it becomes very vulnerable to your attacks. Watch out for the rolling attacks and the gas attack when it ends the puffy phase. Roll past it for most attacks, while diving or iframing the spinny ice beam.

## Carapaceons

**Daimyo Hermitaur: 10/10**

Daimyo Hermitaur is somewhat trivial as you can attack the legs, make it trip, and go for the head. Any attacks it does are solved by rolling under it or running away, so just keep tripping him.

**Stonefist Hermitaur: 10/10**

Stonefist can get really large and that translates to hard maneuvering around it. Not even your Axe Mode attacks can connect on the head, and more often it’ll hit the torso instead. I suggest breaking the legs, since you can do that on Stonefist. Break the right legs first, since that’s the smaller claw, and you’ll take less damage from it. After you trip it, attack the giant claw or head to your heart’s content.

**Shogun Ceanataur: 10/10**

Blade Crab is a somewhat easy fight since you can outmaneuver even the crab walks that Ceanataur does with Evade Extender. Bite at his legs to trip him then attack the head, easy peasy. When its about to do the leaping slash just roll behind it and it’ll miss. Basically, just try to get behind and to its sides.

**Rustrazor Ceanataur: 10/10**

The Rustrazor fight as SA isn’t too much different from a standard Ceanataur, but with a mostly irrelevant Gunner phase with the Gravios skull. Why is it irrelevant? Because you’re an SA and you’ll usually be right next to Rustrazor anyway, and the water beams can’t hit you if you’re next to it. The Blademaster phase is similarly irrelevant because it’s basically Ceanataur’s normal moveset but with the bootleg Glavenus spin in addition. The same strategies you used on normal Ceanataur will apply here too.

## Leviathans

**Royal Ludroth: 9/10**

Royal Ludroth is supposed to be easy but in G-Rank it gains a quite large AoE in the body slam, and it comes out relatively quickly. You can opt to either stick to his head or his tail, depending on how safe you feel, with the tail being slightly safer but you deal less damage.

**Agnaktor: 6/10**

Click-clack boy here can be difficult with the AoEs it has and spams. The most important part to reducing the AoEs is by breaking the lava off Agnaktor’s chest and Agnaktor’s tail. Breaking the tail will reduce the AoEs generated by the tail whips, while breaking the chest will reduce the effectiveness of the body slam that Agnaktor does. Take advantage of when it pops out of the ground to fire the thermal beam, or when it’s firing the thermal beam regardless to hit Agnaktor whereever you want, but probably the chest.

**Nibelsnarf: 10/10**

The Nibelsnarf matchup isn’t anything of note, since SA doesn’t really do anything particularly special in this fight. You can attack the nose when Nibel’s enraged, but that’s about it. The rest of the fight is standard. Break the claws when they’re out, then attack the uvula to break that, then fish it out and attack. Rinse and repeat.

**Lagiacrus: 6/10**

Lagiacrus’s Lightning Bites can be a real pain for Blademasters that insist on staying under the face or near the chest, since they can come out fast, hurt hard, and have a large AoE. Speaking of AoEs, Lagiacrus has a lot of them, so prepare to deal with all of the AoE spam. Finding your way past of those can be difficult, but not impossible. Watch for openings then attack the chest for maximum damage.

**Mizutsune: 9/10**

Mizutsune is an okay fight for SA, but the only weakpoints are his tail and his face, and you don’t want to be near his face often. Don’t get too greedy either as Mizu can punish greedy players with his relatively fast attacks.

**Soulseer Mizutsune: 8/10**

Soulseer requires you to play the game of getting bubbled so he can enrage and make many of his hitzones better. As with most other Blademasters, you can opt to attack the head and avoid getting bubbled, but this can backfire, as he can shoot bubbles from his head like normal Mizutsune. Once he does enrage though you can take advantage of any E+1 to roll through the attacks easily.

## Snake Wyverns

**Najarala: 7/10**

Boop this snek’s head by rolling around it and attacking the hind legs to break and trip Najarala. Then maneuver back around to the head and go to town. This is of course assuming you can get past the scale spam that it really likes to do in G-Rank. I suggest you run around until it leaves itself open to attack, then quickly get a few hits on the hind legs before it notices you.

## Brute Wyverns

**Barroth: 10/10**

The way that Barroth’s hitboxes are set up, you’ll more often hit the head rather than the claws, which is the real sweet weakspot. Alternatively, if you manage to get behind it you can attack the relatively exposed tail for comparable damage. To hit the claws though, try using your Sword Mode Side Slash. To dodge the charges, simply roll or hop to the side.

**Deviljho: 9/10**

Standard Jho isn’t that engaging to fight. Simply roll under it and attack the best while it’s enraged, or attack the relatively small head with Sword Mode. With EE you can roll out of the way of any hipchecks or stomps it might do, so take that if you’re worried about those.

**Savage Deviljho: 6/10**

Savage hits fast and hard, so if you aren’t ready to take it on expect to be Dragonblighted and pinned a lot. Roll under it to get to the chest and attack that constantly, preferably with a Thunder SA to take advantage of the weakness. Try to stick to the left leg when you’re attacking the chest or you might get stepped on.

**Uragaan: 8/10**

Stick to Uragaan’s underbelly and keep on attacking that, since most other places are more resilient to damage. If you’re not sticking under it, then the rolling attacks are very dangerous, though the more frustrating attacks you can simply roll past or roll away from it to dodge them.

**Crystalbeard Uragaan: 8/10**

I hope you brought your Water SA, because Crystalbeard here is resistant to raw of any type. Status SA being Status SA, Poison won’t work well here either. Try to stick to the stomach and attack that, keeping a watchful eye out for the Lava Rock Explosion Slam, which can hit you if you’re under him, as well as the several head slam attacks it can do.

**Duramboros: 10/10**

You can try to Axe Mode the tail, but usually if you’re under the tail, you’re about to get attacked by the tail. Aerial SA works against Duramboros since the weakspots on the back will be exposed post-mount, but otherwise you should attack the head. Just don’t get charged or flattened.

**Brachydios: 9/10**

Brachydios’s head is hard to hit normally because of his forelegs which will intercept your swings to the head. What doesn’t stop your swing is an exposed tail, which can be Axe’d. Try to roll under Brachydios for most of its attacks, aside from the ones where it sticks its head into the ground.

**Raging Brachydios: 8/10**

Raging Brachy is gonna make you sweat when you explode his primed parts but if you take EE you should be good. As soon as you attack the primed part you should dodge, as any other time will be too late and you’ll be exploded. Aside from the explody thing you can pretty much treat Raging like a larger Brachydios.

**Glavenus: 10/10**

Glavenus leaves his head exposed a lot of the time so that makes it easy for you to explode it if it’s heated. Similarly, the tail can be countered if you roll into it after the attack. You can also hit the tail with Axe Mode Upswing but Glavenus likes to reposition a lot, so don’t expect to pull this off much. Adept SA is particularly good here due to the Axe Mode counterattacks. **Hellblade Glavenus: 5/10**

Hellblade’s tail explosions can be hard to fight at first, since it’s dangerous to even be near him. Evasion +1 will let you dodge the explosive AoEs that accompany his tail as well as make the other attacks easier to dodge. Attack the head when it’s primed to make it explode, as well as the tail. Though it will be harder to hit with all the accompanying AoEs. Also, the tail nuke really hurts. Keep your eyes peeled for that, since you can iframe that with Evasion +1.

## Flying Wyverns

**Nargacuga: 7/10**

Standard Narga gets real frisky in G-Rank, since those swipes can mess you up, and they’re homing. Use Evasion +1 to dodge them then strike at its hind legs to trip it, then attack the head for maximum damage. Watch for the swipe combos too, as they’re usually followed up by a leap, which hurts.

**Silverwind Nargacuga: 4/10**

Silverwind is really dangerous to fight, since it likes to keep you at range and spam you down with his projectiles. They’re also mobile as heck and have a lot of attacks that can hit under it, so parking yourself by the hind legs isn’t risk-free. Use Evasion +1 to dodge through those attacks and take advantage of the somewhat lengthy recovery times. Just watch for the Full Moon Slash, as that really hurts if you get hit by it.

**Barioth: 8/10**

Barioth is highly mobile, and it doesn’t like to take breaks after repositioning, choosing instead to run at you or shoot an ice tornado at you. If you want to downgrade that mobility to something tolerable I suggest you break his arms. After doing that, you’ll be able to close the gap more quickly because it’ll recover from leaping to the side. Just watch out for his tail whips, which have a larger range than you’d expect, and the charges.

**Rathian: 10/10**

Standard Rathian is pretty easy as she doesn’t really attack behind or to her sides, aside from the tail whip. Stick to her legs then attack her head, or if you’re feeling especially frisky, Sword Mode the crap out of her head to chain together flinches.

**Dreadqueen Rathian: 8/10**

Dreadqueen Rathian has a variety of attacks that hit behind her, so trying to hit her legs without waiting for attacks to come out is a risky idea. Dreadqueen’s attacks also don’t hurt as hard initially, but the poison will compensate for the low damage. With EE, you can maneuver around the pools of poison that she makes and even roll under her for the WyvernsFire that she can do. Attack her legs until she trips, then go to town whereever you want.

**Gold Rathian: 3/10**

Imagine Rathian, but with threatening attacks that hurt a lot more as well as hitzones that bounce most things. That’s Gold Rathian in a nutshell. Stay to her sides and be prepared to roll past her fire breath and multiple charges. Her wings are her weakspot, but unless you’re Axe Mode, you won’t be hitting those much. Instead, try to trip and attack those wings. Also, remain calm to dodge those insta-flips.

**Rathalos: 9/10**

Rathalos may be a pain for other Blademasters, but you’re an SA, and you can Upswing while in Axe Mode to hit those claws of his, and potentially knock him out of the sky. Just, when you do so, stay to his side or you might eat an aerial charge. Also watch out for the infamous charge -> stop early -> fireball launch, which hurts.

**Dreadking Rathalos: 8/10**

Fighting a monster that always flies isn’t fun for most Blademasters, but in Axe Mode you can Upswing the guy to knock him out of the air instead of using Flash Bombs. You don’t even have to break his wings to knock him out of the sky either. Try to stay under him while he’s on the ground, and far away from him when he decides to fly, or eat a sun.

**Silver Rathalos: 4/10**

Nuclear energy isn’t fun to fight, and so is a monster where you bounce everywhere. Like Goldian, Silver Rathalos has several hard parts that will bounce you if you’re not in Sword Mode. Unlike Goldian, Silverlos’s weakspot is his back, and good luck trying to get to hit that constantly. Also have fun trying to counterattack those aerial claw swipes, since he’ll always follow those up with a nuclear blast. Flash him out of the air, it’s too risky to try to Axe Upswing the guy, lest you get nuked.

**Basarios: 10/10**

Basarios is a tutorial version of Gravios, and that means it’s a lot easier than Gravios. Sidestep the charges, roll out of the way of the gas, attack the belly. Easy peasy.

**Gravios: 10/10**

Gravios can be stabbios’d with Sword Mode on the feet to prevent bouncing. Bring a Water weapon and watch the stomach break away incredibly quickly, and being a Blademaster you don’t have to worry about the thermal beams. All you have to watch out for are the farts, and if you go Aerial, you’ll break the back, disabling those.

**Khezu: 10/10**

Khezu here can be annoying for the average Blademaster since it can punish even approaching him. You can try to Axe Mode it because of the extra range on Axe Mode attacks, or Sword if you want to stagger it. Overall just don’t get too greedy with your combos and you should be okay.

**Tigrex: 9/10**

Tigrex is a matchup made easier by your access to Evade Extender. With it, you can outmaneuver Tigrex more easily than others and attack its hind legs to trip it, or you can even try to attack the head and hop out of the way. You will have to roll after it sometimes if it really likes to charge, but this should be a good matchup anyhow.

**Grimclaw Tigrex: 7/10**

Grimclaw is gonna be slightly tougher than normal Tigrex, but you can manage to bait out its attacks more consistently than normal Tigrex at least, so that’s cool. Staying near the hind legs is still the plan here, but it can turn around and hit you with some of its attacks, so don’t overstay your welcome. Bait out the giant boulder attack and it’ll try to charge you. Take advantage of this opportunity to hit the hind legs.

**Seregios: 9/10**

Seregios is one fast boy but you can roll out of the way of most of its attacks. Close distance and get under it for the best results, watching out for the Crescent Sweeps and Frontal Swipes, since those can catch hunters that are under it unawares.

**Astalos: 10/10**

Roll under or through Astalos’s attacks, and with Sword Mode, you can hit all of its charged parts to discharge em. Since you likely have EE you can get out of the way of most of its attacks, then roll back in to punish the part that executed the attack, leading to easy discharges.

**Boltreaver Astalos: 7/10**

You can pretty much sidestep the smaller attacks coming out from Boltreaver, and if you’re feeling extra spicy, iframe the Boltblade to really establish dominance. SA, even in Sword Mode, can reach all of Boltreaver’s charged parts when they come online, so you can discharge it easily. I recommend you do so in order to make the fight easier and disable stuff like the Boltblade or Magnetic Void. This is still a tough fight though, since you can’t possibly iframe everything it tosses at you.

**Diablos: 10/10**

Attack the legs and sidestep the charges. Roll under it to dodge the tailwhips and to the side for its hipchecks and horn thrust attacks. It’s really that simple.

**Bloodbath Diablos: 4/10**

Bloodbath Diablos is much harder than normal Diablos due to its ability to attack under itself with a greater variety of attacks. Try to attack the head when it turns around, then sidehop out of the way of the next few attacks, and keep on top of your game when it decides to perform multiple charges in a row or perform a steam bomb attack. This won’t be easy.

**Akantor: 8/10**

Akantor really loves to charge a lot, which means you’ll be rolling after him, which puts a strain on your Stamina bar. Instead, sheath and wait for the monster to calm down, at which point you should get behind him and attack its hind legs and tail. Severing the tail means the attacks that it performs from there are less effective, and you can hit the hind legs more safely. Also, don’t stand in front of it unless you want to get charged or pinned, and Akantor pins hurt a lot.

**Ukanlos: 9/10**

Attack Ukanlos’s hind legs or tail since those are the squishiest parts, and Ukanlos can’t really attack behind itself that well. Attacking the head is really risky, since it does a lot of attacks that originate from the head, like the ice beam, the charge, the leap… a lot of things. Needless to say, if you stand in front of its head expect to eat a lot of attacks.

## ???

**Gore Magala: 9/10**

Gore may be an edgy boy, but you have two edges, which is twice as much. Cut away at its hind legs while watching out for the charges and its Frenzy Mode, which will power it up. If it does reach this mode, either try to mount or trip it, then focus your attacks on the head. After a few Sword Mode swings you should knock it out of that mode soon enough.

**Chaotic Gore Magala: 9/10**

Chaotic Gore has a lot more mobility, even more than standard Gore. It likes leaping all over the place, but the plan is still the same, and that’s to hit the hind legs to make Chaotic trip. Watch out for the transition attacks, where it switches from Shagaru-like attacks to Gore-like attacks, as well as the charges it does. But other than that you can treat Chaotic like a Gore with a few special attacks.

## Fanged Wyverns

**Zinogre: 10/10**

Zinogre is one easy boy, just stick to the hind legs and trip it. Then attack the head. Rinse and repeat until dead. If you need to dodge his attacks just keep rolling and it’ll almost never hit you.

**Thunderlord Zinogre: 7/10**

Stick to its hind legs and you’ll be good… mostly. See, Thunderlord is really good at turning around on a dime and attacking you, so you should watch out for it, else you’ll be eating a Thunder Claw -> Thunder Uppercut combo, and no one wants to eat those. Keep rolling behind it and you should be killing them soon enough.

## Elder Dragons

**Kirin: 10/10**

Extremely trivial. If you have trouble with Kirin, well I suggest you take a long hard look at your life and be much less aggressive, since Kirin punishes overly-aggressive play. If you play safe and wait for the openings after some of its attacks, then you’re fine. Sword Mode’s natural Mind’s Eye also helps when it’s enraged.

**Shagaru Magala: 9/10**

Shagaru can really hurt at times, especially since it has the tendency to hop forward and do the super slam attack, which hurts a bunch. Otherwise though it can’t really attack behind itself, so get at those hind legs while avoiding the Frenzy mines that can appear under you.

**Valstrax: 8/10**

A pretty average matchup made much easier if you take Evasion +1, due to the amount of ‘tight’ attacks you can roll through here. You can do without E+1, but E+1 does make fighting Valstrax a lot easier. Try to stay under Valstrax while swinging at all, since few of its attacks, minus one specific one, can hit under itself. That one attack is the one where it fires dragon blasts downward from its wings, so just roll out of the way of that one. Also, watch out for the turnaround wing smash.

**Kushala Daora: 8/10**

Funnily enough, fighting Kushala as an SA user doesn’t involve much poison. Well-timed and aimed Sword Mode swings while it’s on the ground will connect with its face. If you hit its face enough, you’ll stagger it out the wind aura, making it drop it for a while. I recommend a Thunder SA against it since it’s particularly weak to it, and Axe Mode for when it’s in the air. Stay away from it if it has a giant tornado up, since that will blow you away and most likely cause you to get hit, by either the tornado or Kushala itself.

**Chameleos: 6/10**

You’re fighting a Chameleos with SA? I hope you brought Valstrax’s SA since Chameleos is so resistant to raw damage. Try your best to focus on its hind legs while watching out for its counterattacks and poison AoE attacks and keep up the damage. I’d suggest not attacking the tail unless you really want to sever it since that’s particularly resistant to all damage.

**Teostra: 9/10**

When Teostra leaves himself open that usually means either his tail or head are open to attack, and as an SA user you can Axe Upswing the tail, or just attack his head normally. Sometimes though Teostra can be a fickle fire dragon and just charge you all the time, in which case I suggest you roll to the side and wait for an opportunity to arise. As long as you do this (and also keep an eye on his nova timer) he should go down relatively easily.

**Lao-Shan Lung: 10/10**

Lao is the number one way to experience putting Tremor Res on SA, which I do not recommend. Just use the fixed weapons to hit the guy instead and hit him with your SA while he’s down. He’ll go down easily.

**Alatreon: 4/10**

Alatreon really hurts and none of his weakspots are really accessible to Blademasters, so this’ll be a tough fight. Fortunately for you, you can whack it while it’s in the sky in its Flight Mode with your Axe Mode, and when it’s on the ground you can stick to its hind legs and very few of the attacks can target and hit you. The main things to watch out for are the Lighting Rush, the Tesla Storm, the Dragon Rush and the Dragon Claw, since those will hit Blademasters most often.

**Amatsu: 8/10**

Amatsu is constantly floating, but this means that Axe Mode’s Upswing hits it well and often. Sword Mode works too, as long as you use the Up Slash a lot. Aim for the head or tail as those are the parts closest to the ground. Aerial Style SA also works here for obvious reasons. Stay close to it, while watching out for the tail-based attacks as well as the charges. If Amatsu starts charging up a tornado, keep attacking it in Sword Mode and you’ll stagger it out of the charge. If you don’t, well expect some turbulence.

**Nakarkos: 9/10**

Nakarkos is basically a giant punching bag until G-Rank where it becomes a giant punching bag with fists. Stick to the sides, or preferably behind of Nak’s tentacles until you break one of them, then move for the head if that’s available. Stay outside his mouth-tentacle things and hit his head that way so you can stay clear of the head smash attack. Once he’s staggered and on the ground, you can either go to his weakspot for mining or attack one of the tentacle’s heads, if they’re still up. The tentacle head is a great hitzone for Blademasters and is much faster to get to.

**Ahtal-Ka: 9/10 (True family: Neopteron)**

Ahtal-Ka shouldn’t be that much of an issue since you can roll out of the way of her scythe attacks as well as her debris-tossing antics. Stick to her legs or her frontside to dish out the damage. In mech mode, break the giant feet by hitting the weakspot then cut away at the barriers to the cocoon when you go on top of it. Break those cocoons to reveal her giant cocoon, where it takes a bunch of damage. Demon Riot is super-great here because of that.

**Fatalis: 9/10**

Hug the area around Fatalis’s hind legs and it can’t hit you with many attacks, other than the lengthy tail whip it does. Roll to the side of the sweeping blast cloud, and also to the side when it shoots fireballs. Since his hind legs lead to trips a lot, you’ll be able to hit its chest, and you’ll also eventually be able to hit his head. Stand in front of it and swing to your heart’s content if this happens.

**Crimson Fatalis: 8/10**

The story of Crimson Fatalis as an SA user isn’t that much different from most Blademasters, since you basically just stand on the outside of his hind legs and nip at them. Learn those meteor patterns, since they’re not actually random, and can take one of three patterns. Watch out for the flamethrower too and roll under him. Overall not too hard as long as you recognize when meteors will come out.

**Old Fatalis: 6/10**

If only you had a source of Mind’s Eye to prevent deflection while it was enraged… oh wait, you’re SA. Still, you’re not gonna deal much damage to him while he’s like that, so you could try to hit his chest by standing in front of him. Remain wary though, since a lot of his attacks hit that area, so keep an eye out for stray lightning bolts. Also, learn his lightning patterns, since they’re the same as Crimson Fatalis’s meteors. If you can learn those, you’ll know where to stand.

# 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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