TEKKEN REFERENCE TEK-ST BOOK

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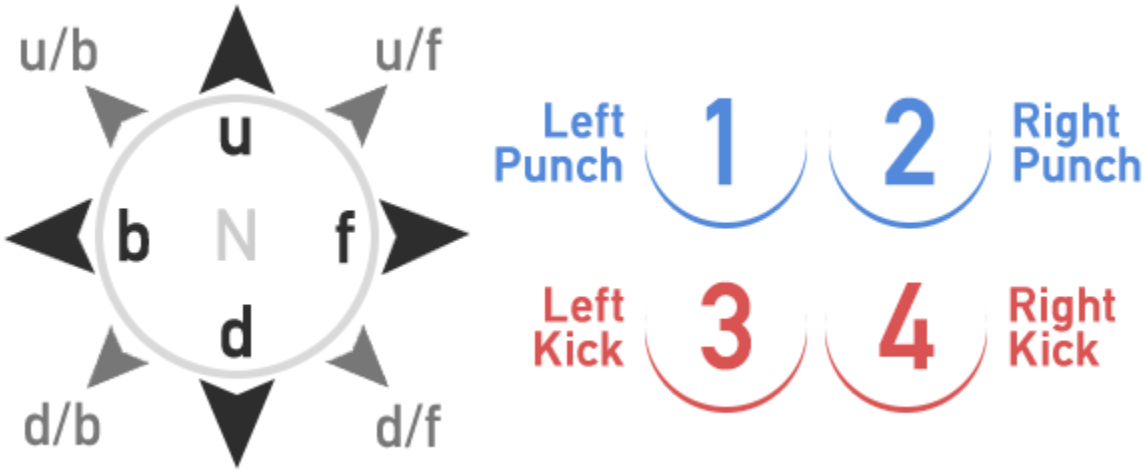
SECTION 1

BUTTON LAYOUT/DIRECTIONAL NOTATION:

I'm not normally gonna put pictures in this, because things vary between games visually. But, I will include a picture here to try to make this part more obvious. Every other part of this guide will just be words, but I'll try to organize them. And not make it too overcomplicated.

In Tekken, you don't necessarily have A or B buttons, or X and O buttons. Not every controller is the same, and obviously since the game is designed with sticks and keyboards in mind, you need to not think in terms of the face buttons on a controller. Instead, in Tekken we have 8 directions and 4 buttons: the buttons (1,2, 3, and 4,) correspond respectively to left punch, right punch, left kick, and right kick.



In the above diagram, you can also see the traditional notation for the 8 directions, as well as the 4 buttons. They stand for back/forward, up/down, down-back/down-forward, and up-back/up-forward. The N in the middle stands for "neutral," and refers to no directions being input. It is usually represented in game by a star. Bear in mind that **holding back (b) or down-back (db) corresponds to blocking. Blocking is also performed by being in neutral (n), but neutral block will not continue through all enemy strings.**

Typically, the buttons are allocated by default as such: [1, 2, 3, 4] > [X, Y, A, B] for xbox, and [1, 2, 3, 4] > [□, ∆, X, O] for playstation. I don't recommend changing this. Additionally, since there are many moves that call for multiple buttons to be pressed at

once (represented by a + sign,) you can use clicked sticks or shoulder buttons as macros for those. That would be in the game's options, under controls.
Assume that all notation is given from the right-facing (P1) direction. All moves and combos are written this way, and to do them from left-facing (P2) simply mirror the right/left inputs given.

Example: A basic move that will be discussed later, the "hopkick," is typically performed by jumping up and forward, and pressing 4 to kick with the right leg. So, when you see this written, it can be represented as any of the following: u/f4; uf4; u/f+4. These all refer to the same move, with the direction in this case being the northeast diagonal on the d-pad. From P2 side, this move is still written the exact same way, except you will use the north*west* diagonal on the d-pad.

In the game, like in the tutorial, there will be literal, pictographic representations of directions and buttons. It should all be obvious, but these notes are all for when you read other people's notation, this very guide, or look for combos/setups online.

COMBO NOTATION:

From here on out, I'll try to keep it more concise. It's just that this notation is Tekken-specific, and it gets surprisingly unintuitive if you don't play 3D fighting games. In case you don't believe me, let's look at how full combos are notated, which is essentially the only reason to actually know the community's shorthand.

Combo notation consists of a series of inputs, which refer to individual moves in a combo separated by arrows. There are abbreviations (which will be in the glossary) for certain techniques or moments, like side steps, dashes, or bounds (this is all discussed under the fundamentals section.) Combos are also presumed from the 1P side of the screen, but if a combo is inconsistent between sides (which is possible, but not too common,) it may be listed specifically as 2P. You'll know this when you see it.

Example: A combo from T7 that covers all these bases would be Armor King's df2 counter-hit combo. Typically, the combo might be written as follows: [df2 -> d3+4, 1 -> SSL -> SW]. In this case, the df2 is the move that starts the combo, the d3+4, 1 is the next move, the SSL refers to a "sidestep left," and SW stands for "Shining Wizard," a character specific technique. However, for reasons that will be explained under the fundamentals, this doesn't work from the 2P side as well. So, an alternative might be written like this: [df2 -> d3+4, 1 -> S! -> 1+2, 2 -> db2, 3]. In this case, the S! refers to a dash, and db2, 3 refers to a string. **Inputs within a single move or sequence are delineated by commas.**

Note that in Tekken, a move that starts a combo is a “launcher.” Launchers leave opponents “airborne,” which may not be literal, but it simply refers to a state where they cannot perform any inputs for a certain amount of frames. A full combo includes a “bound” which allows it to be extended, and that will be expanded on later. Any airborne attack that for one reason or another does not yield a combo with a bound is called a “mini-combo.”

FRAME NOTATION:

As you learn about combos, you will notice that frame data isn't notated exactly how you'd expect. “Frame data” in this game refers to how many frames you are actionable or inactionable for, and that's more or less exclusive. “I-frames” almost don't exist at all, so it's not like Smash or something. Every attack has a certain amount of frames it takes to start up, a certain amount of frames it takes to recover after the hitbox goes away, and a certain amount of actionable/inactionable frames after the move connects.

Say you throw a move that comes out in 15 frames. This move is called an “i15” move (which is how startup frames are notated,) and once you hit the input, 15 frames later the hitbox will start. Most moves do not have lingering hitboxes, but there are a few exceptions. In general, the hitbox is only out for a frame or two exactly when it says it will come out, to make punishment very precise. **Punishment is the most fundamental tool** for dealing damage because of this.

When that move hits, it will grant you a certain amount of frames in a few different ways. Without getting ahead of myself, the general rule is that you either get + or - frames, which are as obvious as they seem. If that move you threw out hits someone and gives you +7 frames. That means that you have 7 frames to do whatever you want, and your opponent can't input anything. So, if you get those 7 frames, and immediately throw an i10 move, they will only have 3 frames to react, hypothetically. That's an imperceptibly small window, wherein an opponent could reasonably only block or duck. Obviously, this works in reverse if your first move puts you at -7. Suddenly, your opponent has 7 frames during which you cannot input anything, leaving you at a disadvantage.

Whiffing a move of course will always leave you at - frames, with the disadvantage being however many frames the move's animation takes to recover to neutral, allowing you to input another (unless the move can be canceled.) Every move in the game has recovery frames after it happens, and + frames granted from landing attacks apply *after* recovery frames are factored in. The period between a move's recovery on hit/block and the time when its frame advantage/disadvantage apply is called “blockstun.”

GLOSSARY:

Terms in the glossary are given by their common names, with all variations delineated by commas. Their literal meaning and an example will be provided to the right. I will not include the basic movement notation shown in the above image. For more information about some more esoteric, specific, or outdated terms you may see, visit this link to an old Tekken 7 guide:
https://criticalpunchcom.wordpress.com/2019/02/14/tekken-7-understanding-tekken-notation/

Abbreviation/Term	Meaning	Example
ff, fF	**“Forward-forward.” Perform a forward dash, then hold the forward input.**	**ff2 or fF2, known as a “demon paw”**
WR	**“While Running.” Performed during a forward sprint, or by triple-tapping forward.**	**WR2, known as a “superman punch”**
WS	**“While Standing.” Perform after crouching and letting go of the crouch.**	**WS1, 2, known as a “twin pistons”**
bf	**“Back-Forward.” Can alternatively be performed by inputting b, n, f.**	**bf2, 3, known as a “Heihachi can’t do this move anymore”**
fb	**“Forward-Back.” The exact inverse of a bf input.**	**fb2, known as a “jet upper”**
SSL, SWL	**“Sidestep/walk Left.” Means exactly what it says.**	**SSL3, known as a “pump-in kick”**
SSR, SWR	**“Sidestep/walk Right.” Means exactly what it says.**	**SSR1+2, known as an “elkeid”**

Abbreviation/Term	Meaning	Example
qcb	“Quarter-circle back.” Performed by inputting d, db, b in one motion.	qcb3, known as a “hatchet kick”
qcf	“Quarter-circle forward.”Performed by inputting d, df, f in one motion.	qcf2, known as a “deathfist”
hcb	“Half-circle back.” Performed by inputting f, df, d, db, b in one motion.	b, hcb1+2, known as an “overkill.”
hcf	“Half-circle forward.” Performed by inputting b, db, d, df, f in one motion	f, hcf1, known as a “giant swing”
!	Denotes an unblockable.	B1+4!, known as a “meteor smash”
S!	Usually denotes a forward dash.	S! -> b4, a typical representation of a “steel pedal”
FC	“Full crouch.” Performed while holding d or db.	FCdf4, known as a “northern cross”
[ ] or ~	Commands surrounded by brackets must be input incredibly fast.	[4, 3], 4~3, or [4~3], known as a “wheel of pain”
GB	“Guard Break.” Refers to an attack that breaks through a block for a follow-up.	There’s like a million of these now man I have no clue why, this is not Virtua Fighter
B!	“Bound.” Refers to an attack that extends a combo.	4, 3, 4 B!, a typical combo note for Bryan
cc, CC	“Crouch cancel.” Performed by tapping u while crouching.	cc -> EWGF, referring to a stance specific technique for mishimas

Note that specific stances and techniques often have their own abbreviations specific to characters, such as EWGF to mean “Electric Wind God Fist” for mishimas. These are often explained in notes for combos, or are simply obvious from characters’ movesets.

SECTION 2

DASHING, DASH CANCELING:

Double-tapping forward or backward will give you a dash in either direction, known as a “dash” and a “backdash” respectively. During either dash, you exclusively move longitudinally, and cannot sidestep, block, or crouch. Because of this, simply spamming dashes back and forth isn't a super effective way to move to and from your opponent.

So, you can “dash cancel” instead, which is done by tapping down right after doing a dash to cancel its recovery animation, then immediately doing another. This works in both directions, but doing it forward is not only complicated by many character-specific techniques, but also made obsolete by sprinting. Sprinting can be done by triple-tapping forward, or doing a forward dash and holding it down. **Now in Tekken 8, you can double-tap and hold to dash from any distance, including point-blank**. This could allow you to access sprinting moves easily from any distance as long as you're careful with timing, which used to be a highly advanced technique.

KBD, BACKSWAY:

Since there is no way to sprint backwards, the best way to move backwards is to backdash cancel. **Now in Tekken 8, spamming backdashes is nearly as fast as backdash canceling though, making a normal backdash cancel pretty worthless**. What do you do instead?

In general, backdash cancels are ineffective when simply done exactly in sequence. [bb -> d -> bb -> d] may allow for backdashes to be canceled, but it still includes recovery frames before and after the “d” input. This is because you are technically crouching to cancel the dash. To circumvent this, many years ago the Korean pros invented a technique called “Korean Backdash” KBD) that allows you to cancel the crouch input as well, stringing dashes together into one another.

The input for this is technically as follows: [bb -> db -> b -> b -> db -> b -> …] and so on. You do a single backdash, then a “db” to do a crouching block, then back again to cancel that into a standing block. *That* back input actually counts as the first back input

for the *next* backdash, allowing you to hit back one more time and immediately be dashing again. If you're consistent, this will result in a significantly faster backdash, but it is very difficult to do cleanly. It should feel like you're simply dashing, then crouching, then sliding your thumb back up into another dash.

This technique is made especially difficult for characters with "backsway," which is a stance (more on that later) initiated by a qcb. For these characters, you have to do the KBD perfectly to avoid entering a backsway instead. Characters that use this technique include Paul and Bryan.

For everyone else, you can "cheat" a little, and do a KBD by doing this series of inputs: [bb -> d -> db -> b -> b -> d -> db ->...] and so on. This adds 1 frame per dash to your KBD, which is sloppy, but might help you feel like the technique is less precise, and help you actually get the crouch input off without failure. Think of this as doing a DP input backwards, repeatedly. If you know what a DP input is.

CHARACTER-SPECIFIC MOVEMENT:

Many characters have their own movement techniques that don't translate, such as the aforementioned backsway. Here are a few relevant examples that multiple characters share, based on archetype.

- WAVE DASH/CROUCH DASH/ウェブステップ: The signature movement technique of the Mishimas. It involves entering the crouch dash stance by inputting [f -> n -> d -> df] and then canceling the stance by pressing forward, in order to enter the stance over and over again. It's essentially a KBD but backwards, and slower. All Mishimas have some variation of this technique, and even some non-mishimas.
- FAKE WAVE DASH: A similar type of wave dash for characters who have crouch dash inputs, but can't technically cancel them the same way because they aren't considered a "stance." This is done by simply not including an extra forward input between dashes, making it incredibly fast and difficult to pull off. The only character who can consistently use this technique is King **[NOT IN TEKKEN 8]**.
- MIST STEP: A type of forward dash that also includes a sidestep, typically to the left. Lee and Kazuya can perform this, and for Kazuya it allows him to perform crouch dash moves straight from a crouching position, i.e. a single frame faster than other mishimas. This is why a "perfect god fist" is possible, which will be explained in section 4.
- SNAKE STEP/SWAY CANCEL: A type of cancel performed by characters with a forward sway stance, accessible by a qcf. This is not the same as a backsway or a dash cancel, and actually involves performing a forward sway, then

sidestepping into the background to cancel it. Characters with this technique include Bryan, Dragunov, and Leo.

There are other techniques that are even more specific, or even no longer exist (haha step, raijin cancel, SS1 cancels, etc.) but many of those are either rare or matchup dependent. You will learn them as matchups present themselves.

SIDESTEP, SIDEWALK:

Lastly, lateral movement is about as important as any other. It can be tempting to ignore sidestepping, and in some matchups it may actually be better not to. **Don't fall into the trap: sidestepping is a deliberate decision that is on equal footing with crouching or blocking. Sidestepping is also typically used to perform cancels on stances.**

To perform a sidestep, simply tap and don't hold either up or down. This allows you to avoid moves with poor tracking to specific sides, and knowing which direction to sidestep is often matchup-dependent. In general, you want to sidestep away from the side they're attacking from: if your opponent throws a right straight, you sidestep to your right to avoid it. However, not all moves come out straight, and in fact some of them are downright ludicrous. Mishimas, for example, infamously require you to sidestep *towards* the side they attack from to avoid their electric wind god fist attack.

Some moves actually track through sidesteps specifically, and they're called "homing" attacks. A homing attack is identified by a sparkly particle effect all around it. Note that some moves that aren't homing might still have pretty significant tracking.

To get further away than by just sidestepping, or to try and get your opponent's side or back to prevent them from blocking, you may also sidewalk. This is done by quickly double-tapping and then holding either up or down. Be careful not to single-tap and then hold up, which will make you jump (which prevents blocking.) Sidewalking can help avoid strings and give you better clearance than simple sidestepping, but it does prevent you from blocking.

In general, you can block or crouch after sidestepping to cancel the sidestep (unless you use a sidestep-specific move, or have a sidestepping stance.) This will shorten the distance of your sidestep, but leave you blocking. Note that sidestepping, like anything else, has a few inactionable startup frames on it. If you sidestep wrong, you will get hit–period. The exact number of frames can vary slightly, especially since not all sidesteps go the same distance, but it's generally 6 or 7 frames. For comparison, crouching takes 1 frame at its fastest. So, if you are ever at -7 or worse, do *not* try to sidestep without a hard read.

SECTION 3

ATTACK HEIGHTS:

As you know, the existence of crouching means that not all attacks hit at the same height. Unlike other fighting games though, there are actually 3 heights for attacks to hit, even though there are only 2 ways to block. The attack heights are as follows:

- HIGH: Hits at standing level, can be ducked.
- MID: Hits at standing level, cannot be ducked (there are some exceptions.)
- LOW: Hits at crouching level, cannot be stand-blocked.

Additionally, there are two other kinds of move that are far less common:

- LOW-HIGH: Hits both high and low. Can be treated as a low, since crouching will avoid both hitboxes.
- SPECIAL MID/LOW: A mid that can be blocked either standing or crouching, and can often be low-parried. The only common special mid in modern Tekken is the crouching neutral jab, known as a “dickjab.”

No other kind of attack exists in Tekken. All moves fit into one of those. Even what few projectiles there are typically count as mids or special mids, and jumping attacks typically count as highs or mids. Low and high attacks can be avoided and punished in various ways universally, making mids the strongest “kind” of attack in the game since they are the most likely to connect. Thus, they are usually easier to punish, since they are the easiest to use. They function as Tekken’s “overheads.”

FUNDAMENTAL MOVES:

Although large, varied movesets are the hallmark of Tekken, there is a lot more universal gameplay than most think. A good starting point to understanding how characters are individually designed is to understand what fundamental moves are shared amongst the cast, and how they are used to create and respond to common situations during matches. Not every character has all of these, and not every character has the same ones, but the most common moves that you can expect any character you pick to have (or at least have an equivalent to) are listed below.

- JAB: A neutral 1 or 2 input. Jabs are i10 highs with mid range that grant +1 or +2 frames on block, and around +8 on hit. They are your go-to poke no matter what character you are, and are generally the fastest moves in the game.
- DICKJAB: A neutral 1 or 2 input while crouching or crouch-blocking. These are i10 special mids and are thus less spammable than normal jabs, but what they *can* do is interrupt people who are spamming highs at you, while also doing damage. They often grant a small advantage on hit and a small disadvantage on block.

- DF1: The universal input for a simple check to see how aggressive your opponent is. These are typically i13-i15 and grant a medium disadvantage on block, with a medium advantage on hit.
- DF2: The universal input for a simple mid-launcher. These are typically i14 or i15, and in some cases cannot launch crouching opponents, even on hit. They are often -10 or -12 on block, and obviously launch on hit. Some of these are actually as low as -7 on block!
- HOPKICK: The universal i15 mid-launcher that guarantees a launch on crouchers. These are more consistent than df2 launchers because they're almost all -13 on block, and easily sidesteppable. What's special about them is that you can use them from crouch immediately since they involve a jump (uf4 or u4.)
- DELAY HOPKICK: A kind of hopkick that involves jumping, then waiting to input the actual kick part of the hopkick. Not every character can launch with these, and they can only be used from certain kinds of jumps. They are i23 and -9 on block, and used for launching blocked lows.
- DF4: A kind of mid poke much like a df1, that comes out almost universally at i12, making it more reliable. It often has a larger disadvantage on block and is easier to sidestep.
- D4/D3: Universal lows that are accessible to characters who don't have moves assigned to those inputs specifically. Generic d4 is fast (~i14) and provides decent advantage on hit, while being -11 to -15 on block and doing low damage. Generic d3 is usually slower (~i16) and provides little advantage or even disadvantage on hit, while being around -9 on block and doing more damage.
- WR3: A sprinting kick that typically takes a while to come out (~i30) but provides a huge +9 to +11 on block, with a knockdown on hit.
- WALLJUMP: A technique performed by inputting [bb, ub] with your back to a wall. This will access a kind of jumping move that can help get you out of a corner, which isn't consistent across characters.
- KI CHARGE: A move performed by pressing all 4 buttons at once. Every character can perform this. Ki charging prevents you from blocking, but gives your next landed attack either the property of a counter-hit or high damage.
- MAGIC 4: A neutral 4 input that yields an i11-i13 high kick with poor range, which can knock down on counter-hit. These used to be able to grant full launches!
- HELLSWEEP: A kind of low move that comes out at faster than i20 and knocks down or launches, making it unblockable on reaction. Many characters have some variation on this theme.

Again, not all of these are the same across all characters. In fact, with Tekken 8, a lot of fundamental moves were actually removed from the game. In general, think of it like this: **1 and 4 for speed, 2 and 3 for power**.

PUNISHMENT:

Presuming that you now know what moves are which and what they may do, you should probably now know why. I mentioned in a previous section that punishment was the most important tool you have for damage, and I do mean that. Tekken is oriented around movement, punishment, and space control above all else.

Punishment refers to the move you do to an opponent when they are at disadvantage. There is block punishment and there is whiff punishment, with the former being the more technical field (in extreme cases there is also *hit* punishment, but if you want to know about that, see me after class in my office.) In general, a move that cannot specifically be punished on block is considered "safe." Highs are generally safer than lows or mids on block, since they can always be ducked and punished from crouch.

For block punishment, the threshold for safety is (unless your name is yoshimitsu,) i10. A 10-frame punish is the *fastest* punish in the game. Punishment moves in Tekken are actually organized according to the disadvantage that they punish at, starting at weak punishes for i10 moves and exponentially becoming more rewarding as the disadvantage gets bigger. Here are the general levels of punishment on block:

- i10: Typically a jab punish, that in some cases knocks down. Usually it leaves your opponent standing, and your moveset will have options for jab strings that either do low damage and give + frames, or do high damage and give little to no frames.
- i11: A rarer case that few characters have specific moves for. Most characters will simply use their i10 punish for this. Check if your character has an i11 move for this situation! Note that most WS4 come out at i11, making this mostly for lows.
- i12: A slightly heftier punish that yields significant frame advantage and higher damage than a 10-frame. Still, few of these actually knock your opponent down. This is arguably the most common punishment situation.
- i13: This is the situation where you can expect to get knock downs on your opponents, and in rare cases a full launch. i13 punishment is generally a choice between a hard knockdown or a large frame advantage for a mix-up. Most df1 moves have extensions for this situation.
- i14: Much like an i13 punish, except more characters can launch or knockdown from a standing block now. As of tekken 8, you can now use a generic throw to punish someone at this disadvantage without it being breakable.
- i15: Standard disadvantage for getting launched. Nearly everyone can launch an opponent from +15, often with a hopkick. This is considered universal launch punish, unless your name is steve or zafina. Beyond this, there are few cases where movesets are designed with specific punishment moves in mind.

- i18: The upper threshold for standing launch punishment. Most characters have higher-damage launchers specifically for this situation, but every character has at least one.
- i23: Standard “hellsweep” disadvantage, for fast lows. Every character in the game can launch from both standing and crouching at +23.

Example: Say Kazuya walks up to you and throws a wind god fist at you, in neutral. You are both at +0 relative to each other, so nobody has any advantage or disadvantage. You block this wind god fist, which has around 11 or 12 frames of blockstun, but its disadvantage for Kazuya is -10. That means, once the blockstun has ended, you will have a 10 frame *advantage*, where you could throw an i10 move that is totally unblockable. For most characters, this will be a jab string. If that seems precise to you, since you have to visually tell exactly when a blockstun ends, don't worry–in section 4, we will discuss buffering, which solves that problem.

Bear in mind that any punish faster than the exact advantage you have will still work–you'll just be sacrificing something, usually damage. For a punish bigger than i23, essentially anything goes. Additionally, whiff punishment is far less precise and consistent, but most characters have dedicated moves for catching whiffs, usually a ff4 or a ff2.

In general, there are two kinds of block punishes: crouching and standing. If you duck to block something, all characters have a class of moves in their moveset that you access by inputting while you let go of your block to stand up, in order to punish. These are called “While Standing” moves, and they're not as consistent as standing punishment moves. For example, many characters lack i15 launch punishers from crouch, and have to hopkick instead. In addition, you can use FC moves to punish from crouch.

COUNTER HITS:

Another fundamental mechanic is the idea of a “Counter Hit,” which is exactly how it sounds. When you hit someone while they're doing something else, for any reason, if you hit them first it's a counter hit. There is a slight difference between a counter hit and a “trade,” the latter being a scenario where you both hit one another. In this case, both moves count as counter hits, or depending on the frame data, normal hits (if they are the exact same speed.) These are less consistent and often grant more or fewer frames than a real counter hit, and really have no consistent behavior to speak of.

A true counter hit however, has real properties that apply to it. Not every move changes behavior, but many of them do, and even those that don't are afforded a slight damage bonus. In general, every character has at least a few moves that act one way on normal

hit, but do something completely different on counter hit. Some characters are oriented entirely around this concept! The onus is on you to know what moves of yours behave differently on counter hit, and what kind of advantage they give you.

Example: Bryan, who is renowned for his counter hits, possesses a once-infamous counter hit mid from FC position, called the northern cross. This move is done from FC->df4, and is generally used as an i15 punish from crouching. On normal hit, it grants enough frames for a standing mix-up, and leaves the opponent on their feet. However, on counter hit, it used to launch the opponent for a sizable combo, and do extra damage on its own too. It's worth noting that the northern cross is -10 on block, making it unsafe: most moves with strong counter hit properties will be punishable on block.

Note that hitting a counter hit relies on interrupting someone *before* their hitbox comes out. After a move is done dealing damage, even if you hit them during the recovery animation, it will not be a counter hit. That's just a whiff punish.

THROWS:

Now in Tekken 8, throws work a bit differently. However, the system for breaking them works exactly the same as it did in Tekken 7.

In general, throws are unblockable mids or highs that come out at around i12 to i15, although a select few are faster or slower (Giant Swing springs to mind.) A throw is given **20 frames** to be broken from the neutral, but depending on frame disadvantage could be slower. Here in Tekken 8, **throw-break windows are frame dependent, meaning that they can be used as unbreakable punishes.** Also new for Tekken 8, **throws have 14 frame break windows on counter hit,** making them tough to break on reaction. Note also that **some** throws *cannot* be sidestepped–this was not the case previously. Normal throws track sidestep, and command throws typically don't, with some character-specific exceptions.

However many frames you have anyway, as long as the throw *is* breakable, you can break it in one of 4 ways, depending on its class:

- 1 THROW: Broken with the 1 button, generally identified by the opponent leaning in with their left arm leading. Some 1 throws have animation mix-ups with 1+2 throws.
- 2 THROW: Broken with the 2 button, looks like a 1 throw except the right arm is leading.
- 1+2 THROW: Broken with 1+2, identified by both arms leaning in at the same time quickly. Sometimes, the animations don't even use the arms, such as Law's 1+2 throw where he uses his knee. These are generally faster than other throws.

- GENERIC THROW: Broken with either 1 or 2, and not unique to any character. Everyone has these, and they are performed by pressing 2+4 or 1+3.

In addition, there are various other kinds of throw that may or may not fit into these archetypes. The breaks will always be punch buttons, however.

- SIDE THROW: A throw performed from the side, broken by pressing the 1 or 2 button corresponding to which side of yours is being grabbed. Regardless of input, these throws always have their own animations specific to the side that is being grabbed.
- BACK THROW: Unbreakable throws performed on someone's back. A few characters have options for back throws, but most of them are very similar.
- TACKLE: A move that used to be universal, but is now restricted to only a few characters. When tackled, break a tackle on contact with 1+2 or by pressing the 1 or 2 button *opposite* of the arm that your opponent is punching you with. Some characters, like King or Dragunov, have special extensions that require you to press 1+2 or even 3+4 to break.
- CHAIN THROW: A kind of throw that leads to other throws, instead of simply ending. Chain throws serve as mixups, and have routes for different extensions that change the kind of break required. In general, each route will have a break somewhere along the way that your opponent can mash to predict which route you'll select, and break the chain. Sometimes, this damages the person performing the throw!
- AERIAL THROW: An unbreakable throw used as part of a combo. Some of these transition to chain throws, which are then breakable, or bounds.
- GROUND THROW: A kind of throw used on opponents lying down. These throws can have 1 or 2 breaks, or be unbreakable. The break depends on what command is used to perform the throw, much like a regular standing throw, but also what orientation it's performed from.
- WALL THROW: A very uncommon kind of unbreakable throw used against opponents who have been wall-splat. That will be discussed later.
- UNBREAKABLE THROW: A kind of throw that may be an extension of another move or stance, and cannot be broken. These can typically be ducked, and sometimes can be accessed from walljump moves.
- CROUCHING THROW: A formerly fundamental kind of throw that is now an unbreakable crouching mixup. These are generally performed by pressing d->generic throw.

That's a lot of info for sure, but for the most part, you will learn to recognize them by playing against grapplers. Grapplers will be listed at the end of the guide, in section 7.

GETUP OPTIONS:

By far the most frustrating and under-tutorialized part of Tekken, there are actually a lot of oki options (from the japanese 起き攻め or okizeme, which refers to recovering from being thrown in judo–this is what getup is called in Tekken,) to choose from, and multiple kinds of getup situation. There are 3 main situations: normal, spike, and wall. The latter 2 will be discussed later, and for now we'll focus on the most common and most general scenario: normal.

A normal getup scenario is when you are left on the ground after a knockdown or a combo, without hitting a wall. For these times, you have a series of possible moves and techniques, but 4 different positions you can end up in. I will provide a list of these 4 positions, and every potential input from them (that I can remember, I guess:)

- FACE-UP, FEET-TOWARD (FUFT): The most common knockdown situation. The player is on their back, and their head is away from the opponent.
    - Stand: press b or db to stand, and draw back from your opponent a bit, and stand guard. Press d to stand up and immediately crouch guard.
    - Quickstand: press u to stand up without moving back, much faster. This prevents you from being hit by mids that catch grounded opponents, such as a Kazuya ff4. uf and ub should also work for this.
    - Forward roll: press df or f to roll toward your opponent and stand guard. This can close distance if you get knocked down far away, and even roll under some jumping attacks.
    - Tech roll: press 1 to roll into the background, or press 1 and hold d to roll into the foreground. Holding 1 will delay your getup, and make you roll further. This will help you avoid some linear moves and most lows, much like a sidestep. Mashing this while airborne will make it happen immediately when you hit the ground.
    - Mid kick: press 4 to stand up and do a mid kick. This is -9 on block and easy to predict, but can knock down on counter hit in some situations.
    - Low kick: press 3 to get up and do a low kick, and be left crouching. This is faster than a mid kick, but as of Tekken 8 does nothing on counter hit but provide a frame advantage. It is still -9 on block.
    - Toe kick: or “recovery kick.” Press d and either kick button to do a low kick. This is the fastest getup option and will temporarily stun your opponent, and let you get up backrolling far away. It is also unsafe on block.
    - Spring kick: press 3+4 to do a leaping mid kick, that grants frame advantage. Unlike a normal mid kick it can hop over low attacks, but being that it's a jump, you can actually be hit out of it and then combo'd.

- FACE-UP, FEET-AWAY (FUFA): Maybe the most uncommon position for oki. You have fewer options here, but generally they are the same. Instead of listing them all again, I'll list the differences:
    - Techniques: all your options for getting up are the same except anytime you are standing, you will end up backwards from where you expect to face.
    - Getup kicks: getup kicks follow the same inputs, but are much slower and even more unsafe. Toe kicks now become normal low getup kicks, and there is no spring kick. The input becomes a normal mid kick.
- FACE-DOWN, FEET-TOWARD (FDFT): Another very uncommon situation, but one with even more limited options. Your options are essentially identical to the FUFA position, except now it takes slightly longer to stand up, and tech rolls are delayed.
    - Getup kicks: Here, getup kicks are almost at their slowest, and you're limited once again to fewer options. Don't quote me on this, but I think you can still toe kick?
- FACE-DOWN, FEET-AWAY (FDFA): This is a more common position, but actually has the fewest options for getup kicks. Tech rolls are significantly delayed here, and many of these oki situations actually count as spikes (which will be discussed in the next section.)
    - Getup kicks: Here, kicks are at their slowest and most unsafe by far, and spring/toe kicks are not available. If you find yourself here, you're best off either using a tech roll or simply eating whatever attack comes next. For most matchups, this is the worst position to be in.

In the next section, I will start by covering spikes and walls, which function much the same, but have specific options limited, and new techniques available.

SECTION 4

GROUND TECH, WALL TECH:

Not every okizeme situation comes from a true knockdown, as I've said. The second kind of oki situation comes from a “spike,” which is a special variation of a knockdown that only some moves have. Visually understanding the difference between a knockdown and a spike is often difficult and depends on the match-up, but it typically involves an unusual sound cue or particle effect. Also, when spiked, you can typically see your character bounce off the ground at least once on impact.

In general, a spike will leave you FDFA or FUFT. Other cases are either so fringe they aren't relevant, or simply aren't different enough. We'll say that a spike is either FD or FU, then. Note that in any case, you **cannot tech roll immediately after being spiked. There is a significant delay. Do NOT mash 1 after being spiked. You will probably get counter hit for no reason.**

- FU: When spiked facing upwards, you have the same options for getting up normally once you hit the ground, only on a significant delay. The idea is that once you're spiked, you are supposed to *tech* once you hit the ground, meaning you need to time your getup technique. This involves holding your technique before you hit the ground.
    - Ukemi: hold forward to do a kip-up once you hit the ground. This is fast, but leaves you completely unable to block until its entire animation recovers. If an opponent gets too close to you here, this may stun them for a few frames. Not available when your feet are away.
    - Back tech: hold back to simply roll backwards out of a spike once you hit the ground. Note that you need to let go of back after being spiked then hold it *again* while airborne, which is finicky. This is fast, and gives you a ton of distance.
- FD: Face-down spikes are common, and usually intended to provide follow-ups that will flip you over on the ground. Note that you still have your normal FD getup options here, depending on your feet's position, but tech rolls are essentially impossible.
    - Techniques: from these spikes, you cannot back roll or ukemi as quickly. Essentially, your best option is to try and quickstand, despite the delay. This can beat a lot of cheesy mixups, such as Lee's infamous backflip at the wall. This position does suck though, and you're probably gonna get hit.

Note that it's not supposed to be possible to chain spikes together. Using a spiking move on a grounded opponent who has been spiked is supposed to allow them to tech roll normally, but there has been some debate about this. That doesn’t often come up anymore, however. The only case where it's relevant now is Leo's u3+4, which must be quickstood to avoid.

Wall tech is essentially the same as normal tech, except the enclosed space limits your choices. While you have all the same options as always depending on how you wind up the floor, understand that when you are against the wall you are helpless, but you can tech once you slide down to the ground. Remember that mashing tech rolls like you're airborne will work, but is very predictable. Back standing and forward rolling will not grant any distance at the wall.

CRUSHING, POWER CRUSHING:

“Crushing” refers to a system introduced in Tekken 7 that allows moves to completely negate other moves depending on move height. It is *not* the same as “evasion,” which simply allows you to move out of the path of a still-active move. Crushing a move is almost like parrying it, except that it has no special behavior besides the typical counter-hit behavior.

When a move is impervious to being counter-hit by another move, that move is said to “crush” the height of the latter move. The science of crushing is buggy and inconsistent, but a good way to tell the difference between a crush and an evasion is whether or not the animation looks horrible. If it looks cheap and makes no sense, that's probably a crush.

Example: Leo's d1+2 stance (more on that later) allows him to duck very close to the ground and access specific moves not normally available to him. One of them is his stance 2, which is a launching i16 mid. This move should reasonably be able to be caught by an opponent's mid, being that all he is doing is ducking and then doing an uppercut. However, this move is colloquially said to “crush mid,” because no mid can actually interrupt it once it has started, unless that mid hits grounded. This means the move is actually “evasion” with regards to mids, but “crushes” highs specifically.

Crushing is typically only meant for highs and lows, like jumping moves that mitigate lows or lunging moves that avoid high. The line between crushing and evasion can often be blurry in these cases, and dedicated crushing only seems evident on mids (despite the fact that the devs insist mid crushing isn't supposed to be possible. Crushing is still poorly understood.)

However, the idea of a crush (i.e. a move that nullifies another without functioning as a parry,) is evident in another newer system called “power crushing.” A power crush is a move that gains superarmor to enemy attacks, and continues even when taking damage–in fact, they now *absorb damage* and power up when being hit, as well as becoming safe on block. As of tekken 8 of course, a counter hit throw can interrupt a power crush, but other moves can too, most notably lows. **All lows can interrupt power crushes.**

Power crushes are noted by their glistening graphical effect and dull thud on impact. They typically yield knockdowns or launches, and are meant as a sort of pseudo-parry for when you have a hard read on an aggressive opponent. A rage art is also a kind of power crush, but we'll discuss that in section 6.

Note that power crushes have significant startup frames. **Even if you use one, you can be interrupted if your opponent is fast enough. Don't try to interrupt strings with power crushes!**

BUFFERING:

I considered including this in section 3, since it's basic and very important. However, it's also the most obvious technique to stumble across by accident.

Buffering, as we all know, is the idea of pressing or holding some input ahead of when it's needed, to store it for another input to happen later. This allows complex inputs to be performed faster, by reducing the need for a human to try to input buttons within small frame windows. In practice, this means that you can mash during inactionable frames such as blockstun or airborne stun, then immediately get a move or technique out once the actionable frames resume, on frame 1.

This is why if you mash 1 while being combo'd, you can immediately tech roll off the ground when the combo ends (granted you don't hit a wall.) It also means that while you're blocking, you can stupidly mash buttons and have those buttons do things immediately after the stun ends.

The idea, however, is to use this in a smart way, and **avoid mashing when not necessary**. Some moves may require you to hold or mash buttons during strings because their timing is so tight, and some moves might require you to hold onto an input while moving to allow you to perform a new move once you stop. The concept of buffering is the same in every scenario, but below I'll include a couple examples of where buffering is most important: combos and punishes.

Example: Take the example from earlier of a Kazuya throwing a wind god fist out in neutral, and getting it blocked for -10. As I said, there are more than 10 frames between the move's hitbox and his next actionable frame–there are 10 frames of disadvantage, and then even more frames of blockstun. During this blockstun, you, who blocked the move, can *buffer* an input to make your punish come out faster. Trying to wait until the exact moment the blockstun ends is almost infeasible, but if you, say, mash 1 as soon as the move hits your block, the game will keep *buffering* that 1 until your first actionable frame, where it will use it as a move input. This is exactly how punishment works in Tekken. Furthermore, say you were playing Jack against that Kazuya, and your i10 punish is a motion input, f2. Turns out, you can still buffer this! Holding forward and then mashing 2 will work the same way. Say you're king, and you want to punish with a giant swing, f->hcf1. Nobody is fast enough to do that, but in a vacuum, you can buffer all of

that motion input too! Simply perform the whole input and hold the last f input, then mash 1.

Note that the buffer is slightly limited. Remaining in neutral for more than a couple frames will drop the buffer, to save RAM obviously but also to prevent entire combos or flowcharts from being buffered. **The buffer only reads 8 frames of inputs anyway!** However, buffering is also used in combos:

Example: Say you're playing Bryan, and you want to end a combo by throwing someone far away with a 4, 3, 4, then running up and doing a b3 extension to finish. Running toward someone and then immediately pressing a backward motion input is incredibly awkward, and often leaves you too far away to land the move, because actually lifting your thumb off the controller to sprint then trying to push it down on another button to do a move costs enough frames to ruin the precise combo. The way to solve this, and land this ridiculous combo, is via buffering. Bryan doesn't have a move mapped to b3+4, and in that case there is no default. So, when you press b3+4, the game strangely defaults to b3. So, what you can do is *hold down* the 4 input from your 4, 3, 4 maneuver, and *keep holding it* when you start sprinting–as long as you don't let it go, it stays in the buffer. Then, when you close the distance to your opponent, you can simply push back, and use either a macro to push 3+4 or quickly roll your thumb over to the 3 button. This saves you the trouble of a b4 or fff3 misinput, and is also just barely quick enough to mitigate the frequent whiffing.

As you can see, buffering is a technique that you essentially never stop developing. It's the cornerstone of combo creativity, and using it cleverly with frame advantages can allow you the freedom to build full mix-ups out of simple punishment. Always know what your frame data is!

CLEAN HITS:

For something less technical and confusing, consider the scenario of the “clean hit.” A clean hit is a hit that is from a short enough range to have special properties, relative to the move. Any move with clean hit properties has its own distance to demarcate what is clean and what is normal, rather than there being a universal clean hit distance.

Clean hits often grant slight frame advantage bonuses or small damage bonuses, but in a few cases grant completely different behavior like a counter hit would. A move can technically be both, and there's no standard for which behavior (if they are different) will actually happen.

Example: Paul's demolition man, d4, 2, 1+2, has a clean hit property attached to it that actually supersedes its counter hit behavior. Typically, the move is a low kick and a high punch that can be stopped entirely by blocking the first low. On normal or counter hit, the move will simply poke the opponent's legs and then not guarantee that the second hit connects. However, on *clean hit*, the move actually knocks the enemy down to guarantee the second hit, and then a third hit is allowed to be performed to hurl them away.

PARRIES:

Parries in Tekken don't work exactly how you'd expect, as is obvious from the confusing inclusion of crushes and evasions. However, there *are* moves that act as dedicated parries, which are noted as existing explicitly for the purpose of countering specific incoming moves, not always marked by their attack height.

Obviously, a crush is a sort of parry, but as you can tell from that confusing explanation before, they're unreliable. *Real* parries come in a few different forms and have specific inputs assigned to them, and are specific to certain characters. Below are the common kinds of parry:

- GENERIC PARRY: A generic parry is done with a back input and a generic throw input timed within a few frames of an enemy attack, but not every character has them. A generic parry can catch highs or mids, but *only* punches or kicks. Knees, elbows, airborne moves, and weapons cannot be caught by generic parries. Most parries are specific to *either* punches or kicks, and sometimes to either the right or left side. Only a handful of characters have parries that affect all possible punches and kicks, and even fewer of them are subject to the now-defunct mechanic of "chickening," which you can look up if you want to know what it was.
- LOW PARRY: Low parries are universal–every character can do it, and it's always the same input. When a low is about to hit you (I think the window is like 8 or 10 frames,) hold df to nullify it and get a window for a mini-combo. Low parries, like generic parries, cannot affect knees or elbows, which are uncommon as lows anyway, but *especially* cannot affect weapons.
- SABAKI: A sabaki is a kind of parry that functions as an actual move, regardless of whether or not it parries something or not. It's almost like a crush, except that it may not affect a certain height of attack, and the window for nullifying the incoming attack is small and specific. If you throw a sabaki, it will continue to perform an attack even if your opponent does nothing, but if they interrupt it outside of when its parry frames are active, you will be counter-hit. This is between a parry and a normal move.
- PUNCH PARRY: A punch parry is a parry specifically intended to counter jabs, and is usually a directional input with a generic throw input. Some punch parries

have back inputs like generic parries and lend themselves to one and only one specific follow-up. However, a lot of punch parries are *also* sabakis, which means that they simply perform a move or enter a stance even if a punch isn't thrown at them.

- FEINT: A feint is a unique kind of parry that only ninja characters can do, that involves feigning hitstun from an attack, then teleporting toward the opponent. Characters who can perform these include Yoshimitsu, Victor, and Raven, and the follow-up is often unblockable.
- ABSORB PARRY: A now very uncommon kind of parry is an absorb parry, wherein you take damage from an incoming attack, but are granted a free attack as retaliation. In simple terms, this is like a power crush that's guaranteed to connect if someone walks into it. Devil Jin is one of few characters to still have one of these. The person performing the parry *always* takes the damage first, to prevent cheesing.

There are some parries that don't even have exact follow-ups, and simply provide frame advantage based on the move that's parried. Jin's high parry is a good example of this. These moves also fall into one of the above categories, however.

STANCES, BACKTURN

Something that's been referenced a lot already would be "stances," which are a very special kind of move in Tekken. Stances aren't specifically designed to do damage or provide a kind of advantage, but are used to give access to other moves that can't be used in neutral. It's *possible* for stances to be accessed by using moves that deal damage, but that's not a requirement. Simply put, **a stance is any state where specific moves can be accessed from within the state that are not otherwise available.**

Example: A classic example of a stance is the aforementioned "crouch dash,"or "cd," available to mishimas and a select few other characters. This is a special kind of crouching state performed by inputting [f, n, d, df], and leaves the player scooting forward and readily able to perform a few moves that cannot be done from standing. A good example is the classic hellsweep cd4, available to nearly all mishimas. This move cannot be used whenever the player is standing, and can only be used while entering the crouch dash state, eventually disappearing after the player has remained in the state for too long. Stances have an active period, but often only last for a certain amount of frames. A few characters can remain in stances for extended periods, such as Yoshimitsu or Zafina.

There is *no* requirement for what constitutes a stance besides the above criteria. A stance could be a movement technique, it could be a simple command, it could even be a move that does damage and has frame data properties. In general, you cannot block during a stance, and you want to use it as a mix-up tool when you have an advantage–this isn't universal, and some stances allow for blocking, parrying, or even automatic parrying. Also, please note that **stances cannot be buffered!**

Since stances are so nebulous, it seems to follow that many common states that don't have specific inputs could be considered stances as well. This is true, actually–crouching, grounded, jumping, and even sidestepping could be considered stances, depending on the situation. It's not worth boiling them down that far, and most of those should be considered fundamental states separate from character-specific stance mechanics; this is because they don't usually pertain to specific mix-ups. However, a couple of them *are,* because they are less common, and have more specificity qua the moves that are available.

Jumping, for one, is very strange and has a few gimmicks attached to it. That will have its own section, though, because there's one universal stance that's a little less complicated: "backturn." Backturn is the stance where you are facing completely 180 degrees away from your opponent, and many of your moves, movement techniques, and techs don't apply. You cannot block or break throws from this state, but you *can* crouch and jump, as well as perform a few moves. Some characters have moves specifically accessed from backturn, but whether you do or don't, there are a few common options for turning around during backturn to allow for normal gameplay to apply.

- TURN BLOCK: In backturn, holding b or db will allow you to turn around and immediately block, while gaining some distance from your opponent. This is the most common way to get out of backturn, but it is slightly slow, and has 5 or 6 frames of startup during which you can still be hit. Many grapplers, such as Jack, actually rely on forcing you into backturn and then preying on the time it takes to turn around, in order to trick you into taking an unbreakable throw before you can turn around.
- QUICK BLOCK: Tapping f and then blocking will make you turn around much faster and immediately stand block, preventing your opponent from quickly following-up, and allowing you to potentially break a throw. This is dangerous since you cannot crouch, and is generally a tricky and counterintuitive technique.
- BACK JAB: Jabs and dickjabs are actually still available from backturn, but using them adds the time it takes to turn around into their startup frames. In general, these are good for stopping backturn follow-ups only if you have a hard-read, but can also get you counter-hit pretty easily.

- BACK KICK: Not every character has the same kind of kicks, but most characters can use their kick buttons to perform generic crouching or standing kicks. These are very slow and often unrewarding, but can also knock down on counter-hit, making them very similar to getup kicks.
- BACK THROW TECH: A specific technique that bears explaining is when you perform a generic throw input from backturn, allowing your character to turn around (albeit slowly,) while doing a generic throw. This is especially useful against attacks where opponents get a huge frame advantage on hit, when they use it from behind–with this technique, you could turn around while also being able to counter your opponent with a throw.

Of course, other things *do* go, like jumps or specific stance moves. But, from backturn, parrying, blocking, sprinting, normal attacking, and sometimes even sidestepping are not allowed unless accounted for in your moveset.

JUST FRAMES, BLUE SPARKS

Some characters have special variations of moves that are available only by performing certain variations on their techniques. In fact, some characters *require* that you perform things at a certain speed to make them come out at all. This commonly manifests in terms of the "just frame" maneuver, which is any move that requires two or more separate inputs be input on exactly the same frame. This is obviously incredibly difficult, and very few moves actually require this–a lot of advanced combos and setups actually do, however.

Example: The iconic mishima technique, the Electric Wind God Fist, is the most iconic just frame move in Tekken. It is performed from a cd state, and done with the 2 button from this state. However, a cd2 is *actually* listed as a normal Wind God Fist, which is an i15 high launcher that is -10 on block without pushback. The Electric WInd God Fist is an i14 (or i13 if you're Kazuya or Reina,) high launcher that is +5 on block with major pushback. The difference is that an Electric Wind God Fist requires the last df input of the cd to be just frame simultaneous with the 2 input to actually work. This is a major reason why mishima characters are considered so difficult to play, since this move is so vital to their gameplan.

Not all just frame moves are so unforgiving and difficult, and many of them are only relevant during combos. A lot of them, though, are often visually distinct from their non-just frame counterparts by being surrounded by glowy blue sparks, and/or a unique audio cue. Not all blue sparks correspond to just frame techniques, however; a "blue spark" move is *any* kind of special variation on a character-specific technique that causes the blue spark effect to appear.

Example: Hwoarang possesses a special technique applied to his cd4, that much like the Electric Wind God Fist grants him a special move based on if the last two inputs are simultaneous. This causes blue sparks, but is *also* a just frame, and is actually referred to as a Just Frame Sky Rocket. A move that produces blue sparks but *doesn't* require a just frame would be Leo's db4, 1+2, 1+2 extension, only available to him with an install (more on that later). The last hit in this string is a blue spark maneuver.

It's worth checking if your character has a special, hidden move like this. Many of them are included in movesets now, and I honestly don't know who gets them anymore. Most of them were attached to now removed characters.

JUMPS

As implied earlier, jumps in Tekken are actually a sort of stance that includes some special generic moves as well as some bizarre properties. One of these moves has actually been described–the delayed hopkick–but not every character actually has such a move. In general, jumps are used to avoid lows and some mids, and can even avoid some unblockables. Jumps leave the player in the airborne state, meaning they can be combo'd, but also have actionable frames, which is what makes them special. A jump can be performed by tapping and holding any of the up directions, and depending on how long you hold it, can be either short or high.

Short jumps are actually the more common, and have more reasonable moves applied to them. Here are some of the moves available from a short jump, besides the hopkicks you already know:

- JUMP JAB: Performed by pressing 1 while in the air. Depending on when 1 is pressed, this can either be a mid or a high, that leaves you at a significant disadvantage on block but a slight advantage on hit. These can be used to interrupt opponents performing lows.
- LEAPING LOW PUNCH: Performed by pressing 2 while in the air. Once landing, the player will perform a funny-looking low punch, that hits grounded as well as low, but offers little advantage in any case, and is -11 or 12 on block.
- LEAPING POWER KICK: Performed by pressing 3 during a jump, granted nothing is attached to any of the u3, uf3, or ub3 inputs.This typically involves a strange-looking mid or high kick similar to a getup kick, with many of the same properties. These often knock down on normal and counter hit.
- LEAPING TOE KICK: Performed by pressing ub4, or 4 during a backward jump. These are mids that can knock down on counter or normal hit, but are incredibly hard to place and very unsafe on block.

Longer jumps are far less useful, but have many of the same options. The only difference is that you *cannot* launch with a delayed hopkick from a long jump, and such a kick will merely bonk your opponent in the face for minimal damage and frame disadvantage. The only new move from a long jump is a new kind of power kick, that can be used at any time, and for some characters actually provides a stun long enough to combo off of, while having even worse disadvantage on block.

Note that for any kind of jump, the frame advantage and attack height can change depending on at what point during the jump you use the move. This even applies to moves that aren't specifically jumps, but are used from an airborne position or special jump, such as Jack's ff3+4. Jumping is a very dangerous game, and few of these moves are universally helpful. There are few technical rules about these attacks from character to character!

One last thing: after you jump, when you land, you are technically considered **crouching** for a few frames, like 1 or 2 frames. Some characters like Devil Jin have special movement techniques to negate this, but all normal jumps carry this property. This means that immediately after jumping, if you mash an input at the right time, you will get the WS move equivalent of that input. You've been warned.

UNBLOCKABLES

Unblockables in Tekken are as simple as they sound–they are moves that cannot be blocked at all, and are set off by a special particle effect that varies character to character. Unblockables can hit at any height, but every character has at least one unblockable that hits mid and has an enormous amount of startup, then knocks down on hit. Often, because they are long and obvious setups, unblockables are easily interruptible but also do a lot of damage–you can assume that any unblockable that's harder to anticipate will do far less damage, or have special properties attached.

Unblockables that hit high are often faster, but have a lot of lockout allowing them to be ducked and punished. Unblockables that hit low often provide little advantage, can be parried, have very small range, or are sidesteppable (few of these actually exist.) Unblockables that hit fast, regardless of height, are typically also low on range and damage, or can be sidestepped. In extreme cases, these unblockables do not knock down or provide advantage on hit, actually giving momentum back to the recipient. Remember when I mentioned punishment on hit? Bryan's i28 meteor smash is a mid unblockable that does around 35 damage and has generous range and homing. Sounds like a perfect move, right? This move is actually -14 *on hit,* meaning if he's dumb enough to use it on you in neutral, you can make him seriously regret it.

As a matter of fact, Bryan has one of the most unique unblockables in the game, which is his i28 taunt, that deals 0 damage, but provides +16 on hit if he cancels it with a forward input. He is the only one who has this…except for, in a very, very fringe case, Yoshimitsu. Look this up if you want to, because you will literally never see this in actual gameplay.

For the most part, unblockables are simple, and highly situational. Take note of what unblockables your character has, and think about what they might be useful for if they aren't simple, generic mids.

HIT CONFIRMS

A "hit confirm" is a situation where a string or move that hits more than once can be delayed or extended, depending on whether it is blocked or not. For instance, a move that hits twice may have a safe first hit, but an unsafe second hit, and the second hit may be delayed for a few frames by holding the input for the first hit. Or, for instance, a move may hit once on block, but on hit transition to a throw with a second input. This is used as a form of poking with a little bit of added risk, by relying on the player's ability to react to the difference between a hit and block animation for a given move.

This is a difficult technique to master being that the given time to land the hit confirm can often be very short. Most moves cannot be comfortably hit confirmed, but it's worth knowing which moves for your character can. The idea behind a hit confirm is to condition your opponent to play more defensively, for fear of being counter-hit. Some characters who have a high number of delayable, hit-confirmable moves are considered to have "fake pressure," which is when their frames are technically bad, but you still have to play passively against them.

Example: King has a swath of different hit confirms that are actually easier to understand, because they don't all rely specifically on strings. A prime example for him, especially now, is his b3 power crush, which can be confirmed on hit with 1+2 to extend into a throw. A more literal example of a classical hit confirm is his jaguar smash combo, initiated by f2. This has three hits in the string, but each one is more unsafe than the last, and the first two hits don't guarantee the third. You want to try to *confirm* when you land a counter hit with either of the first two hits to make sure the last one connects, and if you don't even hit the first, make sure you abort the string to prevent being launch punishable.

SECTION 5

BOUNDING, DAMAGE SCALING

Combos in Tekken are available during states where an opponent is airborne, and you are actionable to start attacking them. As you recall, they are initiated by launchers and extended by bounds, and involve picking someone up and juggling them, often for as much damage as you can get. There are a few justifications for using certain kinds of combos and those will be discussed immediately following this component, under **optimization.**

Once you have launched someone, you can only hit them a certain amount of times until they are gradually pushed too far away or have lost too much gravity to continue being hit. Once you hit this point, you will be in a standard knockdown situation, but before you get there, you can bound your opponent. "Bounds" are moves that specifically spin/flip your opponent in midair in order to throw them to the ground for another, smaller combo to be initiated. There are multiple kinds of bound in Tekken 8:

- BACKFLIP BOUND: Formerly known as a "corkscrew," this is the common kind of bound performed by using a normal move during a normal combo. This resembles a sort of backflip and is accompanied by an audio cue, a swoosh of air, and often a camera change. It allows a combo to continue normally, and can only be performed once per combo.
- SPIKE BOUND: A new kind of bound derived from the traditional Tekken 6 bound. This is accessed from moves used during heat, and can be used *in addition* to a backflip bound, albeit only once as well. This resembles slamming your opponent back first into the ground, leaving their feet in air with slightly less time to follow-up.
- HEAT BOUND: This is a bound accessed by using a heat burst or a heat smash specifically, that can provide one of the above bounds automatically, initiating or extending a combo. Pay close attention to which bound animation a heat move utilizes.
- WALL BOUND: A specific bound, often called a "wall splat," that can be either short or long. A wall bound can allow for a wall-specific mini-combo, but wall-splat enemies can also be bounded in one of the 2 standard ways. This will be expanded in its own segment.

You will notice that both bounds do not cancel each other out, but can both be used once. This means that a "full combo" in Tekken 8 involves **bounding your opponent twice, and using a wall combo.**

However, not all combos do the same damage obviously, and since you can bound so much, combos are often very long. To make this fair, combos are subject to damage scaling, where combos do less damage the more hits that you include. This is universal: *all* combos will grow weaker the more hits they include, and the first 3 hits of your combo are generally the strongest since this scaling resembles a sort of exponential decay. Scaling generally affects everything, including rage arts and aerial throws, but there are a select few exceptions, usually for throws used as enders. **A combo is not "better" just because you can cram more attacks into it.**

Note also that combo damage scaling may affect the moves in the combo, but once an opponent is technically grounded after a combo, the scaling is over. This does *not* necessarily coincide with them being actionable, for example if you spiked them at the end of the combo, meaning that some combos can actually do more damage than they should if you delay the final hit using a move that can catch opponents grounded.

OPTIMIZATION

Now, since we know what combos do, we should probably know why we do them. Are we just trying to maximize damage? Not always. There are many factors to consider when constructing a combo, and a lot of it has to do with playing to your character's strengths. Here are 3 major considerations when working out a combo:

- MAXIMUM DAMAGE: A combo can be worked to do the most possible damage by including the highest-damage moves at the most optimal times to work around damage scaling. It's not always the case that the longest combos do the most damage, and sometimes you can sacrifice the distance gained or advantage granted in order to just do as much damage as you can while your opponent can't fight back.
- WALL TRAVEL: Also known as "wall carry." If your character does a good job of pressuring people at the wall, or generally just moves around a lot, it might be advantageous to maximize the distance you carry an opponent, either by simply hitting them more, or using movement techniques to juggle them more efficiently. Getting an opponent to the wall for a wall combo can actually yield *more* damage than a simple, damage-maximized combo if you can do good damage with the wall included, or if you're on a particularly large stage.
- OKIZEME: Many characters excel on mixing opponents up while they're on the ground, or forcing opponents into certain situations when they aren't expecting it. For example, it may be worth aborting a combo before using all your bounds, or before using a common setup that an opponent might expect, in order to spike them. This would leave them confused *and* in a situation that requires incredibly fast, specific decision-making.

Understanding what your character's strengths are is essential to deciding what combo you want to "staple." A staple combo is a combo you train yourself to do on memory, every time you get a specific launch. It's worth writing these down! Character archetypes are described in section 7, according only to my own vague classifications, but it may help influence your decision. There are also some less common concerns that might affect how you decide to combo, but are likely less relevant to your staple combos. These are highly advanced issues to be worrying about:

- AXIS: Your axis refers to the angle between you and your opponent as you face one another. If this axis isn't straight or near-straight, being "off-axis," it can make your combos miss. Consider labbing alternate combos in case you recognize this situation, or maybe even sacrificing damage/carry/setups to make it work in any situation.
- GRAVITY: Stages in Tekken actually *don't* have the same "gravity" within the game's physics engine. This is done to accommodate gimmicks like wall breaks or background effects (these will be explained soon,) but in practical terms, it means that not all stages allow you to combo characters in the same way. Some stages will have characters sink slightly faster, or move slightly further, often in very subtle ways that don't become apparent until you're frustratingly close to finishing a combo. For Tekken 8, I actually don't know what the gravity is like for every stage, but the safest bet is that stages with **floor breaks** have lower gravity. This means that you might, very occasionally, need a mid that hits higher than you think to extend a combo, or you may miss a low follow-up after a combo ends. These are usually fringe cases.
- OPPONENT SIZE: Many characters in Tekken are exceptionally large (Kuma, Jack,) or exceptionally small (Alisa, Xiaoyu,) meaning that your staple combos for most characters might whiff. Larger characters can generally be carried further or hit with slightly slower moves, allowing combos to be longer or do more damage by being altered. They also can be wall combo'd for longer. Small characters are obviously the opposite, and it's usually a better idea to try to bound a smaller character faster in case you might not be able to land every hit of your combo on them.

Of course, the biggest component of combo optimization as a new player is **"what am I comfortable with?"** It's a terrible idea to try to do the hardest or most cool-looking combos right out of the gate, because their difficulty might cause you to drop them very often. Before you think about anything else, always try to do a combo a few times before you bring it into a match.

WALL COMBOS

Wall combos are specific kinds of combos only available against opponents who have been wall-splat. They function like normal combos, and are included within the damage scaling of your total combo if performed at the end of a combo. Not all wall combos necessitate a full combo beforehand–some moves just knock your opponent backward, and will wall-splat them if they hit the wall before they hit the ground. In that case, your wall combo damage will scale as if the hit that knocked them down was the first hit. **Note that in Tekken 8, you can bind at the wall if you have not bound in your combo already!**

In any case, there are multiple kinds of wall combo. They depend on how far away your opponent was wall-splat from, but are also highly dependent on the move used to initiate them. The general kinds of wall-combo are as follows:

- STANDARD: The most common kind of wall combo, which is usually following a regular combo. This allows for 3 or 4 clean hits on the wall, or in some cases a throw or spike.
- SHORT: A wall splat that usually results from picking someone up off the ground, or from wall-splatting them from very far away. Usually you can only get 1 hit out of this, and it may be better to go for an oki setup or grounded move.
- HIGH: Any kind of wall combo where the opponent hits the wall from much higher than around eye-level. The distance up on the wall that allows this kind of wall-splat is hard to actually see, but the mark of a high combo is that you can generally land one extra power move before performing a standard combo. A good example is Bryan's jet uppercut, which sends an opponent so high that he can land a ff4 mach kick before his normal combo, for massive damage.

Things often get inconsistent at the wall, and if you're too far away or too off-axis to comfortably combo, try forgoing the combo in order to make an oki situation in your favor. Every character has 1 or 2 consistent, standard wall combos for optimal damage, which is usually the best thing to go for with a wall combo.

There is also another kind of mechanic that was introduced in the final update of Tekken 7, that weirdly still comes up occasionally in Tekken 8. This is known as a "wallcrush," and it occurs when you slam someone into a wall, and rather than being knocked down or wall-splat, they bounce off of it and land on one knee. This situation grants you a unique frame advantage situation where your opponent is completely inactionable for roughly 30 frames, *except* that they can still block high and low. The idea is that this gives you a free 50/50 setup, where you can throw out a mid or a low. Watch out for any moves that might put you in this situation!

GIMMICKS

Stages also have gimmicks, which are specific environmental interactions that allow for combos to be augmented or extended. These usually allow an extra bound within a combo by throwing an opponent back onto the ground to be picked up again, without using one of your two bounds or wall combos. Keep in mind that between stage transitions caused by gimmicks, **the game remembers which bounds you have used–gimmicks are not full resets.** You can still only use two of your own bounding moves within a combo that includes gimmicks.

Classically, there are 3 major gimmicks that can be used to extend combos:

- WALL BREAK: Slamming an opponent into a wall and shattering it, making them fall forward into a continuation of the combo. This can be worked into an existing wall combo for a lot of damage.
- BALCONY BREAK: Throwing an opponent through a railing where they fall into a whole new arena. This forces them into a sort of spike bound, which is easier to pick up off of than with a wall break.
- FLOOR BREAK: Slamming an opponent through the ground and dropping into a new stage entirely. This functions much like a balcony break, except that it includes a little more lag on your inputs following the transition animation. Some characters who are capable of flying can actually stay in the air during the animation for a floor break!

Tekken 8 has actually added a few new stage gimmicks, at least as far as I know. There could actually be more of these than I know of:

- WALL BOUND: Slamming an opponent into a wall and causing an explosion, where they are hurled back toward you overhead. This allows you to continue your combo by carrying them backwards in the other direction, without entering a new stage.
- WALL BLAST: Slamming an opponent into a wall will make them bounce off and back on the ground in front of you, allowing for a short continuation of your combo.
- FLOOR BLAST: Slamming an opponent against the floor with a spike and causing an explosion that hurls them into the air, resulting in a situation much the same as a wall smash.
- HARD BREAK: A hard wall or hard floor break is the same as a normal wall or floor break, except that it takes *two* hits to break through.

Hell if I remember what stages have what in this game, but, thankfully, you can always see what gimmicks a stage has while you're hovering them in the stage select screen.

DASH JABS

The final note about combos, and probably the most advanced “fundamental” in the entire game, is that of “dash jabs.” You absolutely don’t *need* this, and in fact I can still barely pull it off myself, but a lot of optimal combos utilize this technique, and it’s good for picking up from faraway launches.

The idea is this, and it’s pretty self-explanatory: you dash, and then you jab. Sounds easy, but it’s not. In essence, there are some situations where you will need to dash into a combo immediately after launching, and jab–without buffering–immediately after your dash animation ends, without wasting any frames canceling the dash. This is a just frame technique that cannot be buffered or canceled, and it happens with 10 or 15 frames. As such, it’s incredibly difficult to pull off (especially online,) and highly situational. Plus, it typically doesn’t work with 2 jabs if you have them, meaning some characters (like Jack,) are completely incapable of performing this technique.

If you feel like you want to try labbing this, here’s a quick video from Tekken 7 of some british guy showing you the inputs, using Devil Jin. It still works just the same in this game. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GkMOO__9O4

SECTION 6

RAGE

Rage is a mechanic introduced in Tekken 6, and it’s undergone a lot of changes. In Tekken 7 it was all the “rage,” but now that we have this heat system, it works a bit differently. You can tell when you’re in rage once you hit a certain threshold of low health, and you and your health bar will run red and glowy. This threshold is somewhere around a quarter of your health, but the health bar is segmented to make it obvious where the cutoff is.

In rage, two things change for you. Firstly, you start to do more damage in general. I think the damage is increased by a percentage, but it usually manifests in 3-6 more damage on every attack, and that will indeed be scaled during combos. In addition to this damage buff, you also have access to a “rage art,” which is a special super move invented for use in Tekken 7. Rage arts are a special kind of power crush that actually *cannot* be interrupted by lows and throws. Rage arts generally come out at around i20, and are unilaterally mids that are -15 on block. Some of them may be sidestepped or even parried depending on the situation, but in general, the best defense against them

is a simple block punish. If your opponent uses a rage art at the same time you do, the rage art that hits first will be the one that came out second.

On hit, a rage art gives access to a pre-animated super move that does around 50 damage at the lowest, but can do up to a whopping 85 at the highest. The scaling of a rage art depends on two things: how low your health is, and combo damage scaling. For the former concern, the relationship is inverse–the lower your health, the more damage you do. The values given above are for unscaled, raw rage arts thrown out in the neutral, but they are subject after calculation to combo scaling if used on airborne opponents.

After using a rage art, your rage is “consumed,” and you no longer have the visual effect or the damage buff, and cannot use a rage art again. This occurs whether the rage art hits or is blocked.

HEAT

Heat is a new mechanic in Tekken 8 that consists of a state during which a player’s moveset is expanded to include various new techniques. The state lasts, from start to finish, uninterrupted, for 10 seconds, represented by a rapidly depleting gauge beneath the player’s health bar. However, heat’s time limit can often be halted, recovered, or entirely depleted in one go, depending on a few circumstances.

Heat is afforded to both players at the start of each round, and does not begin until voluntarily activated. Heat is activated in one of two ways, both of which are known as “heat engagers.” Manually, a heat engager is always accessible from a neutral 2+3 input, a “heat burst,” which performs a non-tracking power crush move that is +1 or +2 on both hit and block mid, based on range. This is typically a variant of an existing move, albeit with lower damage. This move also **cannot end rounds,** and loses to other power crushes/rage arts. This move counts as an extra bind for combo purposes, so your combos can be longer. However, many other moves in the player’s moveset are also implicitly heat engagers, and when heat has not already been entered, landing one of these moves (i.e. not being blocked when performing it,) will give the player a free sprinting mix-up on their opponent while also engaging their heat.

While in heat, the player is usually allowed new moves, but in some cases also random buffs that may be character specific. Heat will slowly deplete while not attacking, but will temporarily halt while attacking, being hit, performing rage arts, or performing throws. It may also be recovered by performing character-specific maneuvers. Additionally, heat can be immediately spent in its entirety in one of two ways: using a “heat smash,” or using a “heat dash.”

A heat smash is a new, unique move accessed by again pressing a neutral 2+3 input (in some cases also from a stance,) except while already in heat. These are typically i16, + on block mids that grant some kind of short, pre-animated super move on hit. They can also start with lows and end with mids (a string,) that is unsafe on block to varying degrees. Some are even highs! A heat dash, however, is a move accessed by holding forward after performing certain moves specific to each character's moveset (usually whatever moves are heat engagers,) which will give the player an immediate dash forward with frame advantage for a mix-up on block. In a combo situation, this heat dash allows you to rush in and get an extra hit after having bound twice, almost like a sort of pseudo-bound.

On hit however, heat dashes can often make non-launching moves suddenly become high damage launchers. Typically this only happens for heat dash moves that are i15 or slower, or stance moves. Some of them can even be as fast as i13 however. If your heat dash doesn't full launch on hit (this is moveset specific,) it knocks down for a grounded followup.

Heat is permanently annihilated upon expiration, and is not available again until the next round. As far as I know, that's about all there is to it.

CHIP DAMAGE, RECOVERY

Recoverable health isn't *technically* new in Tekken 8, but it *is* new that everyone can do it. In previous games, only a select few characters, such as Yoshimitsu, could heal themselves, and there was no "recoverable health bar." To be fair, chip damage has also existed since at least Tekken 7, but it was, again, uncommon.

Starting with recovery, the idea is this, and it's simple: after taking a combo, you are allowed to recover a percentage of the damage done to you. For most situations, the amount of health you can recover is represented by a white bar left behind when your red bar depletes in your health meter. Attacking your opponent will recover your health based on a similar percentage of the amount of damage your attack deals. This works whether you land this attack or your opponent blocks it, and the same amount of health is recovered (the percentage is proportional to the damage's natural hit value.)

Not all attacks allow for your opponent to recover health. The white bar will only appear after taking attacks that hit you while you're airborne/grounded. Attacks that simply hit you and leave you on your feet, launch/knock you down, or throw you do not allow you to recover any of the damage you take. The window for recovering health lasts for as long as it takes for you to be hit again, encouraging aggression to recover health. Note

that some characters may recover flat amounts of health without the white bar, either through special attacks or by spending time in certain stances. These are few and far between, and you'll know by looking at your moveset if any of that silly stuff is possible.

Regarding chip damage, there are actually a few ways to deal chip damage. In general, chip damage is dealt when using specific moves against a guarding opponent, which deal damage through their block. This damage is allowed to be recovered via a white bar, as described above, and (if Tekken 7 logic still applies,) cannot be used to KO someone, reducing them to a minimum of 1 health instead (out of 175.) Moves that do chip damage are typically applied to slower, more powerful moves, heat moves, and projectiles, but many DLC characters have proven to break that rule. Every character currently possesses at least one move that can deal chip damage.

10-HIT COMBOS

A 10-hit combo is a specific series of inputs, of which every character has at least 1, that pertains to a string of moves that can be performed in sequence regardless of whether they are hitting anything, or actually part of a combo. These are holdovers from the old days of Tekken, where combos as *we* understand them didn't exist. 10-hit combos are always the same and very disadvantageous on block if they are not input completely. For this reason, they are often very precise and finicky to perform, not to mention slow and with obvious spots to interrupt, parry, or sidestep. For this reason, they aren't terribly useful or practical, but they *can* be a very cheesy way to catch someone off guard if they haven't memorized yours.

Essentially, these are trolling tools. Most newer characters' "10-hits" don't even contain 10 attacks, and might actually contain 5 or 6 that just do quite a bit of damage. Except in case of counter hit, the hits in the combo don't generally guarantee one another or jail in any way regardless, so there's almost no reason to know yours unless you want to piss someone off.

In some rare cases though, a 10-hit combo may contain a couple + on block moves or specific setups that could be useful to you, granted you don't perform the entire combo. Some of them, such as King's, even contain cheesy, often unbreakable throws to punish opponents who didn't interrupt the combo before it finished. These combos are generally upsetting, but it's worth knowing that they exist in case somebody tries to throw one at you.

SAUCE

I think these are called “installs,” but my brother Matt always called it “sauce,” so that’s what I call it too. Sauce refers to a state that some characters have access to where they temporarily have extra properties or extensions applied to specific moves. Previously, this applied to very few characters, most notably Claudio. Now, in Tekken 8, there seem to be a few characters with this mechanic, so it bears looking into.

The way sauce works is that by some metric, either by landing a certain move, entering heat, or even doing a taunt move that has no hitbox, you can suddenly enter a state where either your next move or a specific move within a set may be “powered up.” You could argue that this is a form of a stance, or that ki charging actually counts as sauce, and you’d be right in a way. In general though, sauce is a character specific mechanic that supersedes and works *with* existing stances or moves. This usually manifests as adding a move to a string or making a move faster, or stronger. Sometimes it even gives you completely new moves, like the “bruiser combo” that Bryan used to have after a taunt, or the “shimmy step hell axle” that Heihachi had after a secret input during his ki charge.

Example: Jin has a form of sauce that can be accessed by using a special kind of taunt, that does no damage, but puts him in a special ki charge state. When in this state (I think it’s called omen stance?) Jin can perform mishima-style moves like he used to be able to in Tekken 3, before his character was redesigned. The sauce ends when he actually performs one of these moves, such as an Electric Wind God Fist or a flash punch combo.

In general, you should check if your character has any kind of mechanic like this by consulting your moveset. Most of these mechanics were previously secret, but I have it on good authority that they will illustrate this to you explicitly if it’s the case. Many characters have been granted these tools in Tekken 8.

SECTION 7

TAXONOMY

There are many different kind of character archetypes in Tekken, and there’s not really any standard for what they are. Some of them are obvious, set in stone, and others are just kinda up to the community at random. After all my hours, I’ve developed a

rudimentary system of classification that should help you understand what to vaguely expect from each character, mostly because I don't have the time or the knowhow to detail every single matchup in the game within this guide. I will NOT update this for every DLC character.

Think of it like this: there are 3 main clades of character within Tekken, ever since Tekken 3. These three clades are split up by their level of aggression (even though in Tekken 8, everyone can be pretty damn aggressive,) and they are these:

- OFFENSIVE: Characters designed to rush down opponents with the explicit intent of forcing their guard open. They steal turns with quick pokes and throw out counter-hits constantly, and typically use movement techniques or stances to overwhelm opponents into hesitating to attack. That, or they simply use frame advantage pressure to *force* opponents to not fight back. Patience is key in playing against offensive opponents.
- DEFENSIVE: Characters with an orientation around punishment, usually meaning that they keep their distance and use range to control space. Some defensive characters actually also use movement significantly to deceive opponents into walking into traps, but still struggle to get in when opponents are patient. Traditionally, most characters were defensive, and high-level Tekken was oriented around this style of play.
- ALL-AROUND: Characters who can play either as defensive or offensive, and succeed at both. In a vacuum, characters who are capable of both are intended to have serious technical drawbacks, including poor combo damage, short range, bad counter-hits, or inconsistent safety on block. In the modern Tekken world though, this is often not the case, and most characters who are designed this way are infuriatingly overpowered.

Most characters fit into their own archetypes while also falling into one of these three, from which all other design patterns have emerged. Some are pretty purely styled as one of these 3 modes without any extra thought put in, and a few are even completely detached from this dogma. As we move forward, we'll see what the other obvious archetypes are that fall within these 3 groups. Note that no matter who you play, you can use whatever level of aggression you want, especially these days. But these are what each character's strengths are.

STANCE-ORIENTED

Most if not all characters have at least one stance unique to themselves, but some characters' entire gameplans are oriented around the creative use of multiple stances. Offensive stance users typically use linked stances to confuse opponents to the point of not fighting back, or perhaps to simply access stances from frame advantage situations

and force mixups. Defensive stance users are less common, but typically use their stances to parry or counter-hit opponents by lingering in their stances without actively applying mix-ups. All-around stance users can play either way, and often have an individual stance for each situation or play style.

- OFFENSIVE: Hwoarang, Xiaoyu
- DEFENSIVE: Azucena, Leroy
- ALL-AROUND: Leo

GRAPPLER

Throws are now universally much stronger, and many characters actually have complete throw games (meaning, at least one command throw corresponding to each of the 3 classical breaks,) but aren't necessarily incentivized to use them so heavily. Grapplers are characters whose gameplans revolve almost *entirely* around throws, and to whom command throws are necessary implements rather than occasional knowledge checks. Offensive grapplers use throws to push through opponents' blocks, or force them into ducking so they can apply power mids. Defensive grapplers typically use throws as mix-ups after landing punishes, or perhaps as tools to open up opponents that they lack the poking to open up. All-around grapplers use throws in both ways, but also typically use throws as a last resort as a way of surprising opponents who have gotten used to playing against a fundamental style.

- OFFENSIVE: Dragunov
- DEFENSIVE: Jack-8
- ALL-AROUND: King

MISHIMA

Mishimas are the signature, unique playstyle that Tekken has pioneered, oriented around the incredibly specific moveset of their flagship characters. There is no specific set of criteria for what constitutes a Mishima, and in fact there are actually quite a few who don't bear the actual name "Mishima," although most of those have not been added to Tekken 8 yet. In general, all true Mishimas have access to wave dashing, a full low/mid/high mix-up from that wave dash, a strong i10 punish, and a certain assortment of power mids that defines their neutral, such as a f4 that forces an opponent into crouch. Defensive Mishimas use their movement to bait opponents into making mistakes that can be punished for a knockdown, which usually goes along with a strong oki game. Offensive Mishimas use their movement to overwhelm their opponents and apply constant mix-ups, or maybe even just use strong block pressure to do the same thing. EWGF is perfect for this exact task. All-around Mishimas generally break the mold of all-around characters having weaker punishment, and their powerful movement affords them a ton of versatility. Note that not all characters who can wave dash count as Mishimas, such as Hwoarang, or King.

- OFFENSIVE: Reina
- DEFENSIVE: Kazuya
- ALL-AROUND: Jin, Devil Jin

NINJA

Ninjas are almost like a subtype of stance characters, being that they use stances significantly in their game plan as well. However, rather than just stances, ninjas also have a few common characteristics that function into their approach which are highly unique. For starters, they all use weapons (which are unparryable,) but they also rely heavily on animation mix-ups, teleportation, parries, and unblockables. Defensive ninjas typically flail around and teleport back and forth to make themselves hard to hit, sliding in and sweeping at opponents to instigate them into panicking, which allows them to then be parried or punished. Offensive ninjas use their unique features to prevent opponents from properly punishing or parrying them, and typically utilize long strings and quick unblockables to frighten opponents into submission. All-around ninjas are Yoshimitsu, and he just kinda does whatever the hell Yoshimitsu does. Your guess is as good as mine on that one.

- OFFENSIVE: Victor
- DEFENSIVE: Raven
- ALL-AROUND: Yoshimitsu

MIX-UP

Everyone has mix-ups, but some characters revolve entirely around confusing opponents with intense movement and simple low pressure. This isn't necessarily a strict class by itself, but there are many characters who use different routes to arrive at the same game plan of "piss people off" that they seem similar. Defensive mix-up characters often use unique movement or highly-evasive moves to box opponents out and create space where they can use slower moves with high range. Offensive mix-up characters tend to use strong block pressure to create the space for quick pokes that can rapidly chip away at an opponent. All-around mix-up characters rely on varying their approaches to getting in on opponents, opting sometimes to bait opponents into counter-hits, or to force + on block situations where they can apply strong 50/50.

- OFFENSIVE: Lars, Nina, Lilli
- DEFENSIVE: Asuka, Jun
- ALL-AROUND: Law

COUNTER-HIT

Counter-hit characters centralize counter hits by using every trick in the book to make opponents slip up, in every situation. They are often difficult and require significant mind games to play correctly, and a lot of characters with strong counter hits are actually

highly specific and unorthodox. Defensive counter-hit characters are incredibly passive, relying on dodging around and keeping distance from opponents–they require exceptional blocking ability and lethal precision. Offensive counter-hit characters use massive + frames on block to set up situations where counter hits are inevitable if opponents try to fight back–they often have stances as well that allow them to bait people into swinging by simply looking strange. All-around counter-hit characters can use block pressure to set-up situations for counter-hits, but can also wait for opponents to panic and start swinging, allowing for application of strong punishment.

- OFFENSIVE: [this doesn't really exist in this game right now? It used to be Fahkumram and Miguel who filled this niche]
- DEFENSIVE: Lee
- ALL-AROUND: Paul

PURIST

Some characters, mostly new ones, don't necessarily have a specific gameplan outside of simply using Tekken fundamentals to perform simple setups. They may have gimmicks that allow them to succeed in this end, but in a general sense are capable of any playstyle, and are intended for beginners. In truth, many characters are meant for beginners, but some of the other beginner characters like Asuka, Lilli, or Leo have higher skill ceilings depending on the application of their specific setups. Offensive purists typically have no other recourse than to rush down their opponents, and simply spam safe pokes or strings until their opponent gets bored. Defensive purists also have little recourse other than to simply keep moving back and forth until someone pushes them, taking advantage of counter-hits or parries to punish whiffs. All-around purists are almost redundant, and as far as I know, the only character who's boring enough to do everything and *still* not have a unique gameplan is Shaheen. All of these characters are generally good for learning fundamentals, but get old fast.

- OFFENSIVE: Claudio
- DEFENSIVE: Feng
- ALL-AROUND: Shaheen

UNORTHODOX

These characters have no good place in the above categories, and simply have their own rules. This is either because their inputs are bizarre, they don't have gameplans like anyone else's, or they simply have no fundamental tools whatsoever. Yoshimitsu is an honorable mention for this category because he's so complex, but he does fit in with the other ninja characters pretty well these days.

- BRYAN: Bryan has been in this guide a lot (because I play him, but also–) because he has been the subject of many special rules in his long tenure. Bryan's taunt canceling is already the most unique feature of essentially any

character in the game, and because of his horrible poking, incomplete throw game, difficult backdash, and lack of a normal df1 or df4, he essentially relies on it as his only way of breaking defense. Pair that with the fact that he has roughly 8 billion strings that are all virtually the same, some of the best counter hits in the game, and a new special sauce mechanic, and you see that Bryan is a character with absolutely no comparison in the rest of the cast.

- STEVE: Steve is as close to Bryan as a comparison could be, because they both emphasize counter hits and space control, and are best played defensively. However, steve is so insanely unique because this guy **doesn't have kick buttons.** That's right: pressing 3 or 4 with Steve corresponds to a special kind of sidestep stance that allows him special moves, since he's a boxer and cannot kick. In addition, he also has 3 other stances, one of which allows him to naturally guard break opponents for one of the most infamously hard techs in the game by canceling it. Just remembering all of Steve's jab strings is harder than learning most other characters, and then on top of that, you have to work around **not having an i15 launch punish, and only having an i18 WS punish.** This guy's a mess!
- ALISA: My personal least favorite matchup in the game, Alisa Bosconovitch breaks essentially every rule and mechanic of Tekken by having next to no fundamental moves. She flies around, has projectiles, has lingering hitboxes on moves, command throws with unique animations, stances that can rush across the entire stage, and all sorts of cheap strings that are impossible to react to. On top of that, she's just technically overpowered, possessing arguably the largest backdash in the game and one of the best sidesteps, the smallest hitbox, some of the longest range, and a swath of insane low attacks. There are no rules when playing against her, and her game plan is to literally–this isn't just me being bitter–spam animation mix-ups until your opponent gets so mad they forget how to react to them. She is a fundamental troll character, and in fact, when she was first introduced, she wasn't even playable. She became a popular fan character within the story since she's creepy jerk-off material, so they just cobbled together a fake moveset for her. I despise her, and her design is terrible in every aspect, including her visuals.
- ZAFINA: Zafina also doesn't play by a lot of rules, but on a more technical level. She can actually do a lot of things that make perfect sense within the systems of the game, except at such an insanely overtuned level that she defies explanation. She's *supposed* to be an evasion-oriented stance character, who plays defensively to entrap opponents into getting counter-hit. In Tekken 6 when they first introduced her, she understandably had horrible damage and useless combos as a tradeoff for being able to avoid any and all attacks on a whim and randomly crawl around the map and underneath people or whatever. Now

though, for some reason, they've buffed her pokes and her combo damage so much that she essentially has no shortcomings, and could effectively use any kind of gameplan in the game. She can evade any attack from anywhere and have a fast follow-up for it, but she also has pretty solid punishment, some of the best lows in the game, strong mid poking, immense range, and above average combo damage. Huh? I hear rumblings she's worse in T8. We'll see!

A FEW MORE TIPS

- I didn't include the bears in the previous section because there are only two of them, always have been, and they're very similar, and they're joke characters. Their playstyle is that you are slow and you suck and everything hits you, but if you sit around and jump back and forth enough, nobody will know what to do. Please don't play bears.
- You always block by holding back, and you can't attack while you're blocking. Leaving your controller neutral will also block for you, but it will *not* always block every move within a given string. As a rule of thumb, always be holding back to block if you're doing nothing else.
- Moves that "jail" are moves that hit multiple times and *don't* allow you to interrupt or move out of the way. For example, Kazuya's new df3+4 string hits 5 or 6 times and is minus on every hit on block, but you still can't sidestep or retaliate at any point during the string. You must wait until it finishes to react, which in that case would involve a simple block punish.
- If you aren't sure exactly how to punish something, but you're suspicious that you can, try jabbing at it after you block it. There is no way to lose that, unless your opponent is + on block (which is usually obvious) or opts to duck. It's a safer option than just throwing a random punisher at it.
- Speaking of which, an "option select" is a term for any technique that can be used to safely invalidate a mix-up situation by covering all of its options. For example, if someone has a mixup with a low or a high extension, crouching will beat both options.

- “Fuzzy guarding” is a vital blocking technique that in retrospect, might have deserved a segment in section 4. It refers to a kind of blocking against a mix-up situation where you suspect your opponent will either throw a hellsweep/high or a slightly slower mid. To fuzzy guard, you quickly guard low for a few frames, then immediately stand guard (or vice versa,) fast enough that if they *do* hellsweep, you would be able to recognize the stagger animation regardless and get a free punish, while still being able to stand and block a mid. It requires you to be able to immediately recognize all the block stagger animations comfortably though, so it’s the kind of option that you will learn with time.
- Every character has at least one mid that hits opponents on the ground in an upsweep motion. This is to prevent people with low stances from abusing them, and also to keep opponents from perpetually delaying their getups. Most characters also have lows that also hit grounded, or even moves only available to them when opponents are grounded. Check to see what yours are, and see where you can sneak them in.
- I have mentioned that some moves can force an opponent to crouch on the block, and yes–that is true. These moves do not prevent you from blocking, and will automatically make you stand back up if they aren’t followed up on. They’re generally used to prevent specific punishment options, or set-up power mids for a mix-up. The Mishima f4 is the classical example of this kind of move.
- The term “50/50” generally applies to situations where a player is forced to defend against either a mid or a low. Other 50/50 situations exist, but classically the mid/low mix-up is *the* 50/50 situation.
- A “natural combo” is a move that isn't really a full aerial combo, but more like a string. It's “natural” if the first hit guarantees that the rest will hit, without needing a counter-hit. Non-natural combos can be guarded, even if the first hit connects.
- A rarer kind of move that’s becoming more common is a “guard break,” which is exactly what it sounds like. Typically done out of a stance or by holding a move (which your move list will specify,) a guard break simply grants enough advantage after hitting a block that

another move can be used to follow-up. These are often as cheap as they sound, so make sure to check if you have one or not with your characters.

- You may hear some experts/oldheads talk about launchers or stuns having “classes,” but you don't necessarily need to know what they are. In the old days, classes referred to a general grouping for what kinds of combos were possible depending on how large your frame advantage was after launching. They scale upwards, with class 3 launchers generally being the largest or highest-sending launches. Additionally, many stuns had names depending on how you could tech them to prevent getting combo'd (such as double-overs or nosebleeds,) but these also don't really exist anymore. “Class 3” is the only term that you might realistically hear anymore, and it refers to moves like Bryan's jet upper or King's atlas hammer.
- As a final note: please, for the love of god, do not play like me and try to spam jabs to interrupt strings. At least 50% of my losses are because I am trying to do that, even though I know the frame data enough to know that it is often impossible. Of the remaining 50% of my losses, 30% are due to negligence, 15% are due to my own misinputs, and 5% are due to lag. Sorry, I misspoke: 100% of my losses are because of lag