

The STREET FIGHTER

Footsies Handbook

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Street Fighter Footsies Handbook — Introduction/Foreword

The ebook you're reading now is the result of a lot of effort by Maj of SonicHurricane.com to compile a guide in what's commonly known in the **Street Fighter** world as "footsies". This guide remains free to peruse and consult at his site, but I've taken the liberty of compiling it as an ebook for ease of access and portability. The contents have been copied verbatim, including images and links to YouTube videos, so as

to maintain the integrity of the handbook, sans for a couple of minor grammatical or spelling mistakes I've fixed. I hope you enjoy it and can make good use of it.

The entirety of the contents of this handbook is the product of Maj's effort into research and explanation; I claim absolutely nothing about it except having compiled it into this ebook. If you feel you can contribute with something to the handbook itself, please contact Maj; if you've found any errors or anything wrong with

the ebook, don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sh1k1

www.reddit.com/u/sh1k1

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Footsies Handbook

TOC

“Footsies” is oldschool slang for the mid-range ground-based aspect of fighting game strategy. The ultimate goal is to control the flow of the match, bait the opponent into committing errors, and punish everything.

When i first found the tournament scene back in CvS days, i remember it took me a very long time to understand what players like **Valle** and **Choi** were doing on the ground to control the match. At

first sight it seems like a bunch of spontaneous normal moves and pokes, but there's a clear purpose behind each of them.

Nobody really talks about footsies in concrete terms because it's seen as a complex and elusive subject. Hopefully these articles will help change that perception, because anyone who wants to compete at tournament level absolutely needs to know this stuff. You don't have to use it but you have to be aware it exists.

Each installment covers three or four specific tactics which you can

integrate into your gameplan to achieve practical results. Think of it like one of those chess books showing common situations and how to solve each one. If you absorb enough of these pieces, suddenly you'll have a solid gameplan.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook](#) [— Introduction/Foreword](#)

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook](#), [Chapter 1](#)

– Footsies 101 begins with three universal concepts axiomatic to all Street Fighter games, and the fighting genre in general. Punishing

whiffed attacks, intentionally making yourself appear vulnerable, and using poke patterns to set up throws are all fundamental skills.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 2](#)

– Light attacks often serve as feints due to their quick recovery time. Knowing how to shut them down is equally important as knowing how to use them.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 3](#)

– A cornered opponent can not escape your attacks by backing away. Obviously this presents an

opportunity to capitalize on a massive advantage, if you know what to do.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 4](#)

– Super moves inflict far too much damage to treat casually. For every matchup, you need several reliable ways to fool opponents into wasting meter without putting yourself at risk.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 5](#)

– Jumping is one of the biggest gambles you can take in traditional fighting games. Despite the

potential for high rewards, jumping usually leads to getting anti-aired, knocked down, and crossed up. It's risky to say the least, but there are a few right ways to go about it.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 6](#)

– Although footsies primarily occupy mid-range zones, quite a few basic footsies components can be effective in close quarters too. In fact, having a solid foundation of mid-range footsies opens up direct gateways into point-blank range. Get in there and cause some damage!

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 7

– Always be on the lookout for minor tricks which can help make you a little tougher to beat. For instance, knowing when to stand in neutral instead of crouching is a big one. It'll seem straightforward once you read it, but many players don't know about this and it's very useful.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 8

– Hopkicks are significant to the landscape of footsies even though only a few characters possess them.

Here's a basic overview explaining their advantages. If you've got 'em, use 'em. If not, figure out a way around 'em before you face someone who knows how to use 'em.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 9](#)

– Jumping is absolutely a facet of footsies, but the ground game has to come first. Having read all the previous chapters about ground fundamentals, now's a good time to look into reliable ways of setting up crossups – a major part of offensive footsies in their own

right.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 10

– Any offensive gameplan requires leaving gaps for the opponent to give you something to punish. However, it's essential to prevent opponents from picking apart your preferred waiting spots, because then they'll never hand over what you want. Occasional chaos is a good way to fill some of those hesitant pauses with feints to mess with your opponent's head, making it harder for them to read your gameplan.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Supplement A

– No discussion of footsies is complete without a tactical overview on projectiles. This entry is more abstract than previous installments, but it was too big a concept to leave out and too big a concept to cover in one article. Consider this a primer on the topic and look for more fireball strategy articles in the future.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Supplement B

– After writing so many articles about footsies, it makes sense to

write one about avoiding them entirely. Sometimes blocking is the best course of action. Running away works too, especially from easily frustrated opponents. Crazy rushdown is another option for bypassing footsies. It's always fun to do and watch, but prepare to have your heart broken sometimes.

[Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Epilogue](#)

– Playing footsies the right way demands a certain core confidence. Without it, you're just somebody's training dummy. With it, you're always making progress, always

learning, always moving forward, even when a (temporarily) superior opponent destroys you. If you want to improve your game, eliminate doubt and play without fear. The rest will take care of itself.

[What are footsies?](#)

[What is zoning?](#)

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 1

A lot of people make the mistake of assuming that [footsies](#) is something you whip up on the fly. While you certainly can do it that way, and while freestyling footsies is certainly a valuable skill, the fact of the matter is that **Alex Valle** knows more about footsies than you'll ever know. The real problem is you don't even know that you're supposed to know these things.

Footsies as a whole is such a dynamic, complex subject that it's

impossible to convey or grasp at once. So we're going to try something different. Let's approach footsies like a collection of situations and try to come up with elemental solutions to each scenario. Practice these one by one until you're comfortable enough with them to incorporate them fluidly into your gameplan.

Element 01: Momentarily step into your opponent's poke range and quickly back out instead of attacking. This is Footsies 101. To see it in action, check out [Mike Watson's HF Guile](#) demolishing

some poor bastard — two consecutive full rounds of toying with his opponent's natural reactions. This bait works well in tense matches, after extended periods of cautious zoning, or with charge characters who rarely walk forward.

Element 02: Determine which of your combos and attack strings position your opponents barely outside their effective reversal range, especially when facing characters with greater mobility. One of the best ways to trick someone into wasting meter and



handing you the match is by making yourself appear falsely vulnerable. There's no better example of this concept than the famous final exchange of the [B3 SFA2](#)

[tournament.](#)

Element 03: Once you've established a pattern of poking consistently at a certain range, use your opponent's hesitation to walk up and throw them. It's always dangerous to wander into enemy attack space, so wait until you're certain you've trained them to think twice about pushing buttons. [John Choi's CvS2 Sakura](#) does an excellent job of demonstrating this principle for the entire first round of that Evo2k7 match. There's no way he would've gotten away with such gutsy throw attempts at the

beginning of the round.

All of these plays are universally applicable to any fighting game.

That's why footsies and zoning are considered fundamentals. If you run into any questions, bring them here anytime.

Element 99: And every once in a while, try [hiding behind a table](#).

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 2

It takes a long time to look through enough footage to find clear examples of these concepts, but I'll try to continue this series on a weekly schedule as long as I'm able. Hopefully you got a chance to practice some of the lessons covered in [the previous installment](#) and found a place for them in your gameplan. Here are a few more pieces.

Element 04: When your opponent is looking to punish your standard

pokes, try whiffing a crouching light kick a few pixels outside their sweep range. If they mistake it for a slower attack, they'll leave themselves open when their counterattack misses. Be ready to [punish the whiff](#) or simply [walk up and throw them](#) during their recovery period. This tactic works best during mirror matches and against opponents who can hit your medium pokes on reaction.

Element 05: If your opponent starts overusing the feint explained above, take a quick step forward and attack with your strongest



combo in sync with their rhythm. Light attacks may be fast, but they're certainly not immune to mindgames. **Mike Watson** is known for [making excellent use](#) of such fakes, but [Ohnuki's 3S Chun Li](#)

found a way to make him pay.

Element 06: Always be on the lookout for changes in your opponent's behavior, especially when they gain access to super meter. When people start edging back and forth at mid-range, that's a sign they're fishing for something to nail with a super. Remember what Daigo's SF4 Ryu did to Poongko at Capcom's International Exhibition? Stick to quick normal moves in that situation. Don't test their reactions with slow special moves. Or better yet, lock them into block stun then bait the super from a deceptively

safe distance.

By now you should be starting to see what veteran players mean when they say everything has a counter. Footsies is more than technical knowledge. It all hinges on constant analysis of your opponent to determine which tactic to apply at any given moment. Look for patterns!

Rule #1: Never get predictable. If you can't read your opponent's intentions for whatever reason, or if you simply lose track of your opponent's train of thought, do not under any circumstances fall back

to your default gameplan. Play it safe or do something random, something your opponent has never seen you do before. Otherwise you'll find yourself walking (or flying) home with a bewildered look on your face, trying to remember [what exactly it was](#) you got hit by.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 3

This segment focuses on the massive advantages gained by cornering your opponent. As you may have noticed, the capacity to safely/stealthily withdraw from an opponent's attack space is a crucial aspect of footsies. Backing your opponent against a wall negates their ability to walk backward, giving you sole control over when you're in and out of attack range.

Element 07: Whenever you knock someone into the corner, establish a



safe position slightly outside their reach. Then as soon as you get the feeling they're about to advance or let their guard down, step forward and poke their toes with a low medium kick. Getting hit by one of these gives a lot of players the urge

to retaliate with one of their own. Simply let it whiff then [strike their extended limb](#) or [throw them right back](#) into the corner. However, keep in mind that veteran players often take a step forward before counterpoking, so you might want to give them a little extra room.

Element 08: Shortly after succeeding with a typical tick-throw setup, repeat a similar sequence except step backward instead of executing the throw. If you catch your opponent's tech attempt whiffing, [respond with a damaging combo](#). The corner

severely limits your opponent's options for escaping throws, thereby forcing them to take greater risks. They're certainly not going to walk out of your throw range, so they have to do something proactive to avoid dying to simple throw loops. Having nowhere to go also makes them an easy combo target when they get baited.

Element 09: Following a basic combo or block string, poke with a light attack from its maximum distance. The corner will ensure your attack doesn't whiff, so you lose nothing if they continue

blocking. On the other hand if they happen to press a button, yours will usually come out sooner and stuff whatever they were trying to do.

Most everyone's natural reaction to having their attack interrupted is to block, which makes it easy to [walk up and throw them](#) in their moment of hesitation. Some people have a habit of jumping instead, which can also be punished with an uppercut on reaction.

Generally speaking, there are two approaches to corner offense.

Either you can press the advantage and [rush them down](#), armed with

the confidence that your pokes aren't going to whiff. Or you can hold your ground and counter their every attempt to exit the corner, waging a battle of attrition which heavily favors whomever the corner benefits.

It's actually difficult to find good examples of corner footsies in tournament finals, because both players are fully aware that everything can be punished. Therefore the cornered player becomes extremely defensive, while waiting for a way out. Five to ten seconds can go by without

anything major happening, because the other player doesn't want to open up an escape route either. Yet it's no coincidence that the longer someone stays in the corner, the more often they tend to lose.

Rule #2: Dictate where the match will be fought. Easier said than done, but [Alex Wolfe's unbelievable EvoWest2k6 comeback](#) in the final round of an elimination bout provides an excellent example. His HSF2 N.Dhalsim catches a few bad breaks at the start, but once he manages to recover, he simply

refuses to play the game at mid-range. Usually Dhalsim dominates at that distance, but not against CE Bison. Thus he stays as far away as possible, waiting for the one mistake he can capitalize on. When the opportunity arrives, he does everything in his power to prevent Bison from escaping to reset the match.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 4

Picture this: You've been dominating the match, you've got a sizeable lifebar lead, you're nowhere near the corner, momentum is on your side, and all you have to do for a guaranteed win is stay in control for another fifteen seconds. The only obstacle in your path is your opponent's fully charged meter. What do you do?

Whatever game you happen to play, for every single significant character matchup, you need eight

to ten viable answers to that question ready to go at a moment's notice. Otherwise you'll find some [serious nightmare comebacks](#) waiting for you. There's simply no denying the decisive impact of super moves in modern fighting games. If you don't know how to bait your opponent into wasting meter, you may as well subtract the entire thing from your lifebar and try to win with whatever you've got left — not a bright idea.

Element 10: If your opponent has full meter and you can tell they're eagerly fishing to land it, stay far

away for a while then walk into their c.MK range and immediately block low. It's a relatively safe gamble and if they take the bait, you can punish them or at the very least you'll have neutralized the threat of their super meter. If you're really advanced, you can [take the hit with an airborne hop](#) then pass right through the super. (Seriously though, it's usually better to keep it simple. If your mindgames become too advanced for your opponent, your elaborate bait will fly right over their head and you'll land on a "dumb" lvl3 super.)



Element 11: While on the receiving end of lengthy combos and rush sequences, a lot of players [attempt reversal supers](#) at difficult link junctions and possible breaking points. If you've caught your opponent gambling this way and you have a direct counter to

their super move, sometimes it's worthwhile to [create an intentional gap](#) during your attack string by inserting the appropriate counter. If it works, the advantages are numerous.

Element 12: When an aggressive opponent willingly resets the match by pushing you away, don't spring for the first opportunity to make a major move. It could be a trap. Test the waters by whiffing a single low jab counter-bait or simply block patiently to see what your opponent has in mind. As luck would have it, both methods were [demonstrated in](#)

[under ten seconds](#) at Evo2k5 by **AfroLegends** and **s-kill**, respectively. Sometimes remaining calm through a tense moment is all it takes to avoid defeat.

These examples barely scratch the surface of the countless meter bait setups utilized in tournament play. They vary based on character matchups, accounting for the properties and objectives of rival supers. Pick up as many as you can from various sources such as forum discussions, [match videos](#), clever opponents, etc., and try them out for yourself. Memorize the dependable

ones until you have enough variety in your arsenal to overcome predictability.

Rule #3: Constantly monitor your opposition's state of mind. Certain aspects of footsies take advantage of an opponent's hesitation while others rely on misdirecting aggression. Thus expecting passiveness from someone who has grown impatient can lead to disaster. As you practice against different players, try to detect which psychological stimuli nudge them in one direction or the other. For example, a flashing guard bar

tends to make people jumpy with reversals and trigger-happy with supers. Conversely, having no meter against someone with full meter urges people to play it overly safe. Throwing a lot of fireballs lures some people into complacency while agitating others. Learn as many of these habits as possible and factor them into your decisions when choosing from your arsenal of tricks.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 5

One of the oldest textbook guidelines in Street Fighter is "Don't jump." That's been true since the beginning with SF2: World Warrior and it's still true today. When you jump toward your opponent, you surrender control of the joystick for two whole seconds. Think about that.

Hopefully stating it in those terms reveals the massive risk inherent in jumping. You're essentially gambling with the momentum of the

match every time you try it.

However, the confusing part of accepting this advice is that jumping can be secretly good in special instances — when set up properly. The real predicament is knowing how and when to jump. And if you don't, then you're better off adhering to "Don't jump."

Element 13: Give your opponent a good reason to throw a fireball then jump over it. Do you see how this concept revolves around what they want to do as opposed to what you want to do? It'll only work if you successfully establish, without a

shadow of a doubt, that you don't need to jump to win. Watch how **Daigo** waits [65 ticks of game time](#) before jumping forward at **Watson**. In fact, he makes it through the set's entire first round plus 50 seconds of the second round without ever leaving the ground. How long do you spend observing your opponent's rhythm before taking that chance?

By the way, the critical moment of that final round occurs at the 3:32 mark. That's when Daigo was instinctively "supposed" to jump but didn't. Watch the whole round

from his perspective and you'll feel an urge to jump at that point. That's what convinces Watson that Daigo has no interest in jumping, which prompts Watson to get a little reckless with his Hadokens. Credit Daigo for being able to detect and exploit that subtle psychological shift.

Element 14: Set up a crossup by baiting a sweep at close range. The main tactical advantage here is that it can be executed from within an opponent's sweep range, which makes it a viable tool even when you're cornered. [Choi and Bas took](#)



turns demonstrating this maneuver during the B5 SFA3 winners' bracket final. Obviously this is something to attempt sparingly. After all, it requires an irreversible committment to be based on a

predictive whim. Baiting a sweep isn't exactly easy, so save it until after you figure out your opponent's sweeping habits.

Element 15: Analyze your jump attack ranges and leverage them to construct a mixup. For instance, Zangief's j.HP has excellent reach. If you jump at someone from maximum j.HP distance, you can [cause their uppercut to whiff](#) by not pressing anything. However i wouldn't recommend trying to play air-to-ground footsies too often; not even using a character equipped with divekicks and air fireballs.

Whoever's on the ground always has better options. But if you're up against characters who force you to jump such as Sagat and Charlie, then you may as well create some measure of uncertainty for your opponent.

Here's what everyone needs to do yet nearly nobody does: Before you jump, ask yourself what you intend to land on. If your answer is, "I don't know, I'm just trying to land a combo" then you're jumping onto an uppercut. Only jump if you know what your opponent is going to do and if jumping is the best counter to

their action. That's how to turn the odds in your favor.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 6

So far we've concentrated primarily on that vital spot right outside the opponent's poke range. Now it's time to explore some close quarters combat.

Element 16: If your character has a damaging combo starting with c.LK, a good way land it is by taking a step forward after forcing your opponent to block [a light attack](#) or [a jump attack](#), or even [after a knockdown](#). This makes a lot of players twitch because it

looks like you're going for a throw, plus nobody likes letting someone walk all over their personal space. Closing the gap carries the additional advantage of enabling you to maintain offensive pressure with longer attack strings. The exact duration of your walk depends on your opponent's habits. If they like mashing buttons during block stun, then time your c.LK to stuff their jab startup. If they're extremely patient, then you'll need to taunt them by walking forward for quite a while.

Element 17: One of the dirtiest



tricks i've ever seen was **Daigo's**
ST Ryu knocking down **Jason**
Cole's Dhalsim, crossing him up
with a blocked j.HK, then walking
backward for half an eternity
before nailing him with *c.MK xx*
Fire Hadoken. It connected

because Daigo timed that c.MK to coincide with Dhalsim's recovery from j.HK block stun, so Cole got hit low as he stood up to counter-throw. This is another way to punish defensive throw attempts and it works even in games without throw whiff animation. Of course this is a variation of the element outlined above, but it's slightly more versatile because some characters don't really have c.LK combos. Since you're probably not hit-confirming the combo here, make sure to finish with a move that leaves you safe if blocked.

Element 18: Uppercut that shit!

Once you scare your opponent out of pushing buttons at close range, you get to walk forward at will. That's when the real fun begins.

Rule #4: Tactics are more reliable than gimmicks, so build your gameplan around tactics. The ideal definition of a solid tactic is a 50/50 mixup wherein both options are equally damaging, equally safe, favorable to your position over the opponent's, and designed such that no single defensive maneuver counters both options. There aren't many perfect examples out there,

but three characters immediately come to mind: [ST Vega](#), CvS1 Nakoruru, and [MvC2 Magneto](#).

Conversely a gimmick works only once, because it's a trick designed to counter the opponent's most common reaction without properly accounting for alternatives. Of course [shenanigans](#) have their uses, but only until your opponent realizes that you're bluffing about having anything else to resort to.

Your goal should be to get as close to a fully tactical gameplan as possible, because that'll actually make your shenanigans

considerably more effective as well. Remember, you don't get in trouble for using shenanigans — you get in trouble for depending on them.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 7

This week's installment highlights assorted tricks of the trade which may help refine your game further. When combined with the basic tools outlined in previous chapters, your characters will become even more elusive at mid-range.

Element 19: Whiff a crouching light attack as bait, then cancel its recovery into an evasive standing light attack. For most characters, the preferred ploy would be chaining c.LK into s.LP because the

c.LK's outstretched vulnerable area will be replaced by the relatively safe s.LP hit box. Any low poke meant to punish the low short will pass harmlessly under a standing jab. Some game engines don't allow kicks to be chained to punches, in which case c.LK to s.LK is the next best choice — especially if that character's s.LK narrows their baseline hit box by kicking high with their front leg.

Element 20: Leverage the threat of an effective poke to secure an extra step forward, then use it to set up a throw mixup. Watch **ShootingD**

follow a slow fireball into c.MK range, then hover menacingly over that spot for a moment before advancing to land the throw. It worked because prior rounds had taught his opponent to respect his precision with c.MK and fireball spacing. Of course, the direct counter to that maneuver is simply marching in without hesitation and throwing him first, as **Aniken** irreverently demonstrates shortly thereafter.

Element 21: After blocking a long-range jump attack, try walking backward instead of low blocking



if you expect your opponent to attempt anything fancy. For example, if Ryu tries to catch Guile with a delayed sweep, Guile can walk out of range to make it whiff. Obviously this tactic should be used sparingly because it would

make an awful primary strategy. However, it's a great way for solid defensive characters to frustrate opponents who already have trouble finding a way inside. Walking backward before blocking the jump attack also helps mess with their spacing.

Element 22: Make your opponent block your poke at the exact distance so that their counterpoke will barely whiff from where they end up. If you poke from too far away, they won't want to push a button. The closer you get to that perfect distance where their

counterpoke misses by a pixel, the more enticing that button will seem in their eyes. Doing this well hinges on one crucial secret principle: In most fighting games, crouching makes your character bigger and blocking makes your character bigger. [Don't crouch and don't block!](#)

Such specialized tricks may not factor into every match you play, but there are literally hundreds of them — if not thousands. Every minor advantage counts towards giving you an edge over the competition. Playing footsies

against someone means putting up
everything you've got against
everything they know, so everything
counts.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 8

One of the most useful tools in footsies is the hopkick. Not every character is lucky enough to have one, but those who do tend to rely heavily on its offensive utility and mid-range control capabilities. Let's take a look at some examples.

Element 23: Hopkicks are practically free after certain moves, at certain ranges, in certain matchups. Become familiar with all of these safe setups, because as long as your method of attack



requires huge risks to counter, you'll remain in charge of the match. Once you get your opponent thinking they need to psychic uppercut, that's half the battle won. Then all you have to do is follow through, bait it, and punish

conclusively. Hopkicks are a good offensive foundation because they automatically avoid low attacks, they're too quick to counter on reaction, and they travel forward so it's difficult to make them whiff.

They [accomplish several goals](#) even when blocked: you establish momentum, you build meter, you drain the opponent's guard bar, and you back them into the corner or push your way out.

Element 24: Up close, hopkicks can be used to [extend offensive sequences](#) or [interrupt telegraphed poke strings](#). Some are even

considered truly airborne, temporarily rendering them immune to throw attempts. Since hopkicks trump such a wide array of defensive attacks, their threat alone is enough to scare experienced opponents into blocking passively, which opens up [all kinds of throw opportunities](#).

Element 25: Characters who possess air divekicks without minimum jump height requirements can adapt them to mimic the tactical functionality of hopkicks. Examples include [ST Dhalsim's j.D+MK drill](#), [SF4 Cammy's Cannon Strike](#),

SF4 Rufus' j.DF+MK divekick,
CFE Anakaris' j.DF+K divekick,
and XSF Wolverine's j.D+MK
divekick. As long as it can float
directly over an opponent's low
attacks and recover faster than they
can react to anti-air, it'll provide a
huge offensive boost to your
gameplan.

Remember, you aren't trying to win
the match with hopkicks alone.
Never get caught up in overusing
them to the point of becoming
predictable, abandoning your
gameplan, or forgetting other
effective tools in your arsenal.

Utilize hopkicks just enough to discourage an opponent's best counterattack options and seize the opportunity to expand your offensive scope.

Element 26: What's the best way to counter hopkicks? In most cases, preventing opponents from establishing that ideal range is the wisest solution. Once they've already found it, the safest response is to block and think about what they're going to do next, then capitalize on your prediction or escape to a superior position. One hopkick by itself won't cost you the

match, but feeling pressured might. Beyond that, it's up to you to find optimal counters for each matchup. (Protip: Try [standing jab](#) — it [works against divekicks](#) too!)

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook, Chapter 9

Since jumping is such a slow commitment and since ground counters to crossup attempts are much quicker than the air time required to reach crossup position, effective crossup setups are more about anticipation than reaction.

Due to sheer damage potential, one well-timed ambiguous crossup can turn the tide of an entire battle.

Finding reliable ways to create such opportunities is essential to any offensive-minded gameplan,

sometimes to the point of passing up guaranteed damage in favor of arranging a convenient crossup.

Element 27: Eliminate the opponent's capacity to anti-air by knocking them down first. In fact, one of the primary goals of footsies is to land a sweep or psychic DP precisely for the purpose of securely jumping over them as they stand up. Simple, right?

Element 28: Bait your opponent into committing a slow attack and jump over them as it whiffs. This method is slightly more complicated and considerably

riskier, but there are several ways to get it done. You can tick with light attacks to push them into position, then fake a throw and go for the crossup as their counterthrow misses. You can catch them focusing too heavily on ground footsies and [jump over their c.MK pokes](#) while they're fishing to land a super move. You can even poke them from a safe distance until they get frustrated enough to become predictable with their counterpokes, then jump over one as soon as you feel out their rhythm.

Element 29: [Do something chaotic](#)

then go for a crossup while confusion throws off their reflexes long enough to get them into trouble. Maintain that pressure for as long as you can keep them off balance, or until they gain enough meter to tilt the risk vs reward scales too far in their favor. Back off when you sense desperation, or at least switch to attack patterns which are safe from their most tempting comeback scenario.

Element 30: Shut down an opponent's crossup attempt with a vertically aimed normal move, then time your jump to catch them with a



crossup as they land on their feet. On a related note, whoever wins an air-to-air encounter usually lands first by a large enough margin to [immediately rejump for a crossup](#) as the reeling opponent descends. Another alternative is to wait until

someone jumps from long distance, then [jump over them](#) as they come down. This works especially well in games with air blocking and air parry mechanisms, which give players an incentive to forgo attacking.

As you can see, there are countless ways to go about setting up crossups, depending on the character matchup and your opponent's tendencies. It's just a matter of developing a strong enough ground game to train your opponent to stop expecting you to jump.

At the beginning of a match, everyone tries to stay out of crossup range or to refrain from using slow attacks at that distance. Once you catch them slipping into that spot and behaving dangerously, that's when you should start looking for your chance to cross them up — without making your intentions obvious!

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Chapter 10

It takes more than a technically sound gameplan to stay ahead of the field and win consistently. No matter how dominant or reliable your tactics may be, they can still be neutralized by an opponent who sees them coming. Therefore the last missing piece of the strategic puzzle is misdirection — or as some players call it, randomness.

Element 31: A few times per round, do something completely meaningless yet relatively safe for

no reason other than to distract your opponent. For instance if your character has a poke which dominates a certain matchup, skilled players will try to make it whiff as they advance to close the gap. Avoid falling into the trap of abusing your best move at every opportunity. Pick out a few key moments and randomly whiff a jab instead of pressing the obvious button. You won't believe how often this tricks opponents into [walking right into](#) your low fierces.

Element 32: Another way to escape predictable scripts and

flowcharts is by mixing up your timing; by skipping beats rather than pressing different buttons. Walk into c.MK range but don't press it right away. Hang around that distance for a second to lure your opponent into a false sense of security, then tag them once they get restless. The next time you claim that spot, they won't expect you to [attack right away](#).

Element 33: Every now and then — especially when an opponent presumes you'll become ultra defensive — simply throw caution to the wind and [go on an offensive](#)

tear. In addition to some seriously nasty mixups, you'll need the element of surprise to pull this off, which means grasping a good sense of match flow before you flip the switch.



Element 34: Is anything less

effective on paper than wakeup c.LP? That's why it wreaks havoc on cautious players' plans; used sparingly, of course.

Element 35: Just do lots of weird, confusing things! When the tide of battle has turned against you and nothing seems to be going your way, try repeatedly stomping the ground at mid-range. If it breaks your opponent's rhythm and makes them question themselves even for a split second, it could buy you the opening you need.

It's virtually impossible to hide all of your patterns from observant

players. No matter how clever and unpredictable you think you are, someone out there will succeed in identifying and exploiting your habits. You must find ways to mask your thoughts, in order to protect your most potent tactics from being turned against you.

Whatever strategy you adopt in any given matchup, mix it up with a little freestyle creativity to throw your opponent off the trail. Resist the urge to coast on autopilot. Force yourself to try something new every round. It doesn't need to be unsafe, it doesn't need to be complicated,

but it does have to be unexpected.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Supplement A

Make no mistake about it, mid-range projectiles are absolutely a major facet of footsies. In fact, their uses are so diverse and their impact so significant that it's impossible to cover everything in one article. I'll attempt to provide a conceptual introduction instead.

Tactically speaking, a fireball is a relatively slow poke with good range. Ideally you want to rely on attacks with roughly 4-5 frames of

startup, which recover quickly. By contrast, projectile specials typically have over 10 frames of startup followed by lengthy recovery periods.

To compensate, projectiles possess one exceptional property: their active hit box is invincible.

With physical attacks, effective range and vulnerable range are approximately equal. Even if you have a full-screen normal move like Dhalsim's s.HP, whiffing it in front of Dan still gives him an opportunity to retaliate. Furthermore, Dan's invincible

Koryuken will counter Dhalsim's s.HP from any spot inside its range. These basic principles form the foundation of footsies.



The rules of engagement change

when dealing with fireballs. Counteracting the opponent's attack is no longer enough to hurt them because projectiles are independent entities. Thus, your table of counters shifts dramatically.

Most importantly, you lose the option to retaliate after standing back, because projectiles will continue advancing until they make contact, at which point you'll be pushed out of range. In fact, the longer a projectile travels before connecting, the more frame advantage it creates for its owner.

Projectiles can be [utilized as pokes](#)

just as easily as normals can. Fireballs can apply pressure, beat out mistimed normal attacks, repel aggressive opponents, and punish mistakes. There's no unwritten law restricting pokes to normal moves. Some fireballs even knock down, which makes them viable as [midscreen counterpokes](#). Even if they carry frame disadvantage when blocked, most opponents are rendered incapable of retaliation after getting pushed so far backward.

Two direct universal methods of dealing with projectiles are

jumping over them and stuffing them during startup. Jumping is always risky, but the reward is high provided you land a damaging combo. Using a quick poke to prevent the fireball from coming out involves less commitment. However, it does require you to stay within close proximity, which is a challenge against fireball characters. It's always wise to build meter as you work to close the gap, because even the threat of a super move can be [enough to discourage](#) opponents from throwing fireballs — tipping the matchup advantage in your favor.

The entire strategic landscape of Street Fighter changes dramatically once you begin thinking of projectiles as components of footsies. Fireballs are what transform Shotos from mediocre poking characters into mid-range powerhouses. The difference between a beginner and an expert player is immediately apparent from how well they apply fireballs in footsies.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Supplement B

After reading over ten chapters on footsies, by now you should have a fairly good idea of what the playing field looks like, where you stand on it, and where to go from here. Well, what if you realize you suck at footies? Worse yet, what if none of this seems appealing to you? My advice would be to keep at it. Developing solid fundamentals requires practice, effort, and time. Don't bother chasing after shortcuts.

You'll only end up with more holes.

That said, you don't necessarily have to play footsies if you don't want to. There are other valid approaches to fighting game success. Of course it's not as simple as ignoring the matter, because if your opponent knows how to play footsies properly, they'll draw you into it whether you realize it or not. You're bound to get demolished whenever you let that happen.

Therefore you must find ways to actively avoid, escape, or otherwise negate your opponent's

ability to hurt you through the offensive methods we've reviewed thus far. It's extremely difficult to manage against seasoned veterans, but then again it's probably more sensible than trying to beat them at footsies.

The universal solution can be split into two main categories: extreme defense and extreme offense. Both styles are geared toward staying out of mid-range, where skillful footsies are most effective.

Additionally, there are countless matchup-specific means of bypassing footsies for various

periods to various degrees, but they're too narrow in scope to discuss here.

Extreme defense involves a lot of blocking, [walking backward](#), and outright running away from the first sign of trouble at every safe opportunity. The goal is to take someone out of their gameplan through sheer frustration. This strategem dumbs down the game enough to level the playing field, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness of ground fundamentals. Simply put, you're trying to avoid footsies by

operating well outside that hazardous mid-range zone.

Extreme offense entails constant reckless attacking, dashing in, crossing up, and maintaining overall consistent pressure. As above, the goal is to rattle someone enough to lure them into equal or greater recklessness, abandoning their gameplan in the process. Obviously this manner of all-or-nothing gambling is highly inconsistent, but [on a good day](#) it can lead to lucky wins against even the best players. In other words, you're trying to negate footsies by

crossing over the mid-range boundary and relentlessly sustaining close combat.



Stage position is important as well. It's critical to keep out of corners at all times when fighting corner

pressure specialists like Guile and Sentinel. Against some characters, such as [Urien](#) and Gouken, it's better to stay midscreen in general because their damage potential is far more reasonable away from those combo-empowering walls.

Sometimes it's simply wiser to run away and build meter, when it would tilt the matchup scales heavily in your favor. For example, ST Dhalsim has direct reactionary counters to everything Ryu can do, but gaining access to his Shinkuu Hadoken super gives Ryu instant comeback potential. It's also

smarter to run away from an opponent who already has meter, rather than face the possibility of single-combo death when you'd need to land three combos to win.

As you can see, there are quite a few situations where it's easier to avoid playing footsies. Never underestimate the power of blocking, because it's much safer than trying to be a hero all the time. Calmly do whatever it takes to win tournaments. However in training, i wouldn't pass up the opportunity to practice footsies against better players, because you'll probably

learn more from an intense loss
than a mindless win.

Street Fighter Footsies Handbook, Epilogue

What should you do when a veteran player is outguessing you at every turn? It's happened to everyone, where every last thing you do gets hit. Your every medium-range poke gets swept, your every long-range move gets stuffed, and doing nothing opens you up to pressure.

The answer is obvious: block. Sometimes when they've got your number, just block. They're totally playing by your rhythm, so don't make any moves for a second until

they don't know how to read you anymore.

When you block, don't do it out of fear. Do it to wait them out. Do it to take away their momentum. Do it to figure out their methods. Do it to plan your next move.

The key here is that there are only two ways to beat someone who's good at footsies:

- 1) Outthink them and do everything they're doing, except better.
- 2) Work out some alternative strategies to avoid that dangerous zone entirely.

Otherwise you have no chance of winning. Playing footsies to survive is simply delaying an inevitable loss. Skilled opponents can sense indecisive reluctance and press the advantage. Give 100% effort to footsies or don't play footsies at all.

The easiest person to play footsies against is that intermediate player who hasn't quite given up on footsies, but doesn't play footsies to win. He doesn't move around much, he doesn't keep track of long-term patterns, and he plays almost exclusively on a reactionary level. He's not trying to get you to do

anything specific; he's simply reacting to where you're standing. He doesn't think his footsies are good enough to help him win whole matches. He's being lazy.

Playing footsies with that casual mindset is the mental equivalent of being backed into a permanent corner. If you're hesitant and uncertain, then your wins will come from luck and your losses will be inexorably fitting.

Do not, under any circumstances, allow your opponent to get inside your head and dictate your gameplan. If your best poke gets

beaten by a fluke counter, get over it. Don't let it startle you. Sure, losing 10% life sucks, but you'll survive it. What you won't survive is allowing one exchange to convince you to stop using your best button for the rest of the round. Giving up on moves only does one thing — it reduces your options.

If you get swept, that means you were outsmarted. It doesn't necessarily mean your opponent is smarter than you and it doesn't have to mean that you'll get outsmarted again. Remember: Sweep is 10% damage. You will get back up.

Rule #5: Forget about winning or losing. Go all out or don't even bother.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook: What are footsies?

The term "footsies" refers to *a subset of zoning focusing primarily on close range normals, where the most common goals are to knock the opponent down and set up crossup opportunities*. What the hell does that even mean?

Unfortunately it means literally *everything* at the core of competitive Street Fighter strategy. That makes it a difficult subject to cover in one session. None of the

short definitions are useful and it takes time to process conceptual ideas before they can be converted into anything practical. I'll give it a shot, but i have a feeling i'll have to come back to this on several occasions because there's always more to it.

Footsies is figuring out what your opponent wants to do and punishing them for being predictable.

Footsies is putting your opponent in a situation where they have to take risks they were trying to avoid.

Footsies is knowing both characters' attack ranges better than

your opponent does, and finding ways to exploit that advantage.

The concept is so complex, that you may as well define it as "close-range critical thinking." When you try to create a comprehensive definition of footsies, that definition refuses to end. **Watson, Valle, and Choi** could probably write books on the subject.

The simplest concrete example of footsies is walking into your opponent's attack range to bait them into poking at you, walking back out of range to let their attack whiff, then punishing their recovery

animation with a sweep. When someone decides to learn footsies, this is commonly the first tactic attempted. However, anyone who's actually tried this will tell you that (alert) people stop falling for it very quickly. Then what do you do? Well, mastery of footsies is knowing how to punish everything, including your opponent's decision not to poke.

Nowadays most fighting game players are great at explaining the basic components of intermediate play. Especially with the more "technical" games such as SF4 and

CvS2, lots of players hang out on random fighting game forums and read every article they can get their hands on. It's just that you get to a point where it's no longer about what's a safe poke and what's a good combo.

Once you cross over into the realm of mindgames, everything becomes far more difficult to pin down. And it's not necessarily necessary for success. In fact, some of the best footsies players are terrible at explaining the elements they themselves have invented. Nothing wrong with that. After all, not

everyone is interested in turning SF into an online university. Most top players are interested primarily in being top players. But for the guy trying to figure out why **Daigo** keeps walking back and forth at midrange, a straightforward explanation would be nice.

The best way to teach yourself footsies is to commit to the following rules:

- 1) Don't jump for an entire match.
- 2) Don't dash for an entire match.
- 3) Limit yourself to one Psychic DP attempt per match.

Every round you play with these

rules will help you gain a better understanding of your normal moves, will teach you how to control space by walking, and will force you to learn the meaning of patient offense. If you watch any high-end tournament match, you'll notice that all top players possess all of these skills. They don't come easy, but that's okay. You'll continue making progress as long as you remember what you're after.

Street Fighter Footsies

Handbook: What is

zoning?

Zoning means acquiring and maintaining certain positions on the screen favorable to your character's arsenal but disadvantageous and restrictive to your opponent.

Rushdown, footsies, turtling, runaway, and all other major categories of tactical gameplans employed by fighting game players involve some aspect of zoning.

In some cases, these areas occupy enormous chunks of the screen. For

example, take almost any Street Fighter character and draw an imaginary vertical line $1/3$ screen distance away from their foot. If you put Dhalsim anywhere in the remaining $2/3$ of the screen, he's automatically got a significant advantage that you'll need to overcome in order to hurt him.

Conversely, if you put Zangief anywhere within that same $2/3$ area, he's automatically got a significant disadvantage that you'll want to preserve. Of course if Zangief finds his way into your nearby $1/3$ zone without leaving the

ground, suddenly he becomes quite scary.

In other cases, these areas can overlap in complex and subtle arrangements. For instance, Guile is generally dominant from long distance because he can throw Sonic Booms at will, and your opponent has to take risks to deal with them. If your opponent somehow reaches point blank range while carrying momentum, Guile's in trouble.

However, the interval between these extremes is actually reversed. Guile has an advantage when your

opponent is a few steps away as long as Guile's still within c.MK range. That's Guile's best poke and it pushes opponents away when it connects, enabling you to throw Sonic Booms again. However if your opponent stays a few pixels outside of Guile's c.MK range, that poke becomes unsafe, severely limiting Guile's options. Therefore the entire strategic playfield looks like a fuzzy checkerboard.

In addition to character spacing, zoning also includes stage positioning considerations. For example, a runaway character like

Vega is in pretty good shape if you can keep at least 1/4 screen distance away from your opponent. However, you have to resist the urge to constantly move backward during this process, because your choices become quite a bit tougher once you end up in the corner. Either you need a strategy to consistently move forward while keeping a safe distance, or you need to plan your escape from the corner before you reach it. In contrast, a hardcore turtle character like Honda might actually prefer to stay in the corner where you don't have to worry about crossups.

The first step to understanding matchups is determining where your character has the biggest advantages and finding ways to establish that distance starting from every common scenario. How do you get there at the beginning of the round? How do you get there after you land a combo? How do you get there once you've been thrown? How do you get there after blocking a jump attack?

Of course, all of these questions are relative, because your dominant zones change drastically depending on which character you're facing.

Furthermore, they're relative to your opponent's status. Sometimes it's better to occupy your second strongest zone if it locks your opponent into their weakest zone. You may be giving up your most damaging combo setup, but it's worth it if you're also keeping your opponent at a range where they have no combo opportunities at all.

Some of this sounds overly theoretical, but it's simply a matter of trial and error. If you replay any matchup long enough, you'll start to notice where your opponent needs to go in order to inflict significant

damage. All you have to do is keep him out of that spot, or hurt him for trying to reach that spot. The most important thing is realizing when you're at a disadvantage and trying to find ways to get out of there instead of getting stuck fighting uphill battles all the time.