

Dedicated to Aaron Carter

Fundamentals:

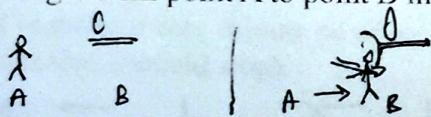
wavedash

How? Hit Y or X with your thumb and the L or R button with your index finger. At the same time, angle the analog stick diagonally to the left or right. The main thing to practice here is the timing between the jump and shield buttons. If you are jumping into the air and airdodging, you need to hit the shield button sooner. If you are full hopping, your shield command didn't go in and you need to input it later. This timing changes for every character. If you do it correctly, you will scoot along the ground a variable distance, changing depending on the steepness of the angle held with your left hand. It is possible to wavedash down.

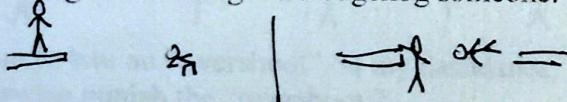
Why? Provides a faster way to move across the stage. Allows you to transverse short to medium distances and do things you can normally only do out of a stand (tilts, smashes, etc). Allows you to slide off of platforms and grab edges. This is important because dropping through platforms takes time and if you want to continue a combo or get out of a bad spot you might need to do some platform magic to survive. This particular maneuver is called a waveland, but there is no real conceptual difference between it and a wavedash.

Possible scenarios where wavedashing is useful:

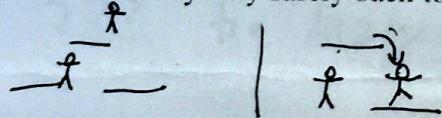
I want to get from point A to point B in order to up tilt a platform.



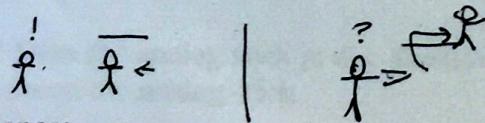
I want to grab this ledge and edgehog someone.



I want to make my way safely back to the stage with a waveland.



I want to make my opponent commit by tricking him with a waveland.



dashdance:

How? Slam the analog stick back and forth in both horizontal directions. If done correctly you should very tightly dash back and forth. If at any time you feel yourself lose control of Marth and he begins to do a weird, laggy, slippery run, you've messed up your dashdance. This happens because there are two components to a full on run: the dash, and the run. In the dash, you can change your direction or shield immediately. As soon as you travel out of the initial dash length, however, you enter the run portion where it looks like Marth is really just booking it, dude is just really hightailing.

Why? You can grab, dash attack, or shield immediately out of a dash. Dashdancing can fool an

opponent into committing. If you run at someone, they may attack preemptively or make a decision in response to the threat of the approach. Because you can run back at any time, you can dodge the potential attack (the “stuff”) or observe the response and act accordingly. This allows you to achieve desirable situations and win neutral. Practice dashdancing with varying lengths in various situations on various stages. Think of it like a movable, ambiguous threat zone. If you dash to the right longer than when you dash to the left, your “center” or “axis” of movement will end up moving right. In this way, in a completely even scenario, you can end up slowly encroaching on your opponent with very little risk.

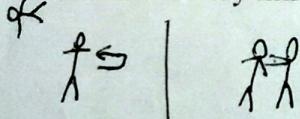
Be very careful, however. If you do not dashdance mindfully, you can very easily be punished with an attack that “overshoots” the dashdance. In effect, they can move “too far” into you and call you out by clipping you in the back portion of the dashdance, since they know you will simply run back and forth. Try to remain unpredictable.

Possible scenarios where dashdancing is useful:

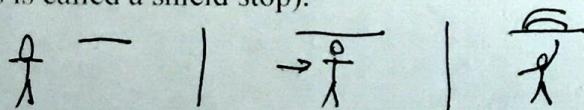
I want to make my opponent whiff an attack so I can dash back and grab him.



I want to make a very minute position adjustment before I go for a regrab.



I want to make a very minute position adjustment and perform an aerial with no horizontal momentum (this is called a shield stop).



I want to bait an “overshoot” on my dashdance, immediately put my shield up and shieldgrab or otherwise punish the “overshoot.”

?? to lazy

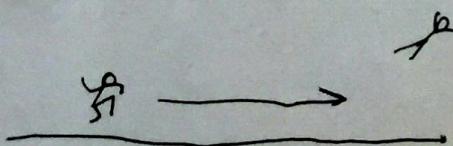
cactuar dash:

How? Slam the analog stick in one direction. Once you have entered your weird slippy slide Marth run, hit down on the analog stick.

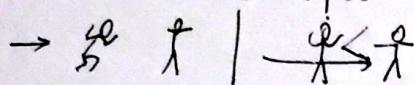
Why? Cactuar dashing allows you to transverse very large distances and perform standing actions faster than if you did them out of a bunch of wavedashes. Also, it is harder to mess up.

Possible scenarios where cactuar dashing is useful:

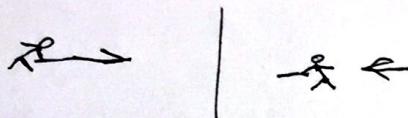
I want to run at someone I've hit across the stage and follow up on him.



I want to "cross up" my opponent, run past him and forward smash.



I want to perform essentially a long distance, down tilt dash dance (look up PPMD at Apex 2015).



short hop:

How? Hit your jump button and hold it down for as short as you can. Every character has a different timing threshold in order to input a short hop, the shortest being Fox and Sheik.

Why? Every time you enter the air, you are making a commitment. Compare getting hit on the ground versus getting hit in the air: on the ground, you can shield, spotdodge, roll, dashdance, wavedash, etc. Even if you are hit, you can crouch cancel up to a percent, retain the use of both of your jumps, and DI the attack accordingly. You do not have these safety mechanisms in the air. You can only air dodge once, and you can very very seldom use this to your advantage in returning to a favorable position effectively. You can control your drift and your fall speed, but this is very delicate and difficult, and if you are hit while fading back you will likely DI down and away, which is the worst possible scenario for most attacks. In effect, we want to minimize our time in the air, especially as Marth, who falls somewhat slowly. Whenever we enter the air, we want a good reason to do so, and we want to keep hitboxes out as much as possible to protect us while we are doing our thing.

Possible scenarios where short hopping is useful:

I want to follow up on an up throw or platform tech chase by short hop up airing.

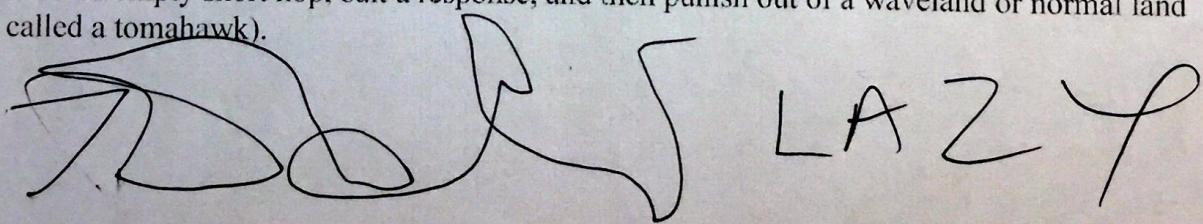
I want to space a short hop fair that is safe on shield.

I want to short hop aggressively and fair into someone's shield, land, and dashdance grab them.

I want to stuff an aerial approach with an auto cancel nair.

Z AM HO

I want to do an empty short hop, bait a response, and then punish out of a waveland or normal land (this is called a tomahawk).



fastfall/l-cancel/autocancel:

How? To fast fall, when you are at the apex of your jump, hit down on the analog stick. You will fall faster. To l-cancel, hit L or R after an aerial attack as soon as you hit the ground. It will halve your landing lag. To autocancel, perform an aerial and then land after the "attack" has completely and totally finished. You will know if you have correctly autocanceled something if your landing animation shows the circular ring that you normally have when you land out of a jump instead of the clouds of dust that occur when you do an aerial attack. Keep in mind that when you actually are doing this in matches, your l-cancel and fastfall timings will be different because of the lag that occurs when you hit someone or their shield with an attack.

Why? Reduce lag – this makes us faster. Being faster means you can do more, quicker than your opponent. That is a strict advantage in the grand scheme of things, so it is in our best interest to always fast fall everything we want to fast fall, always l-cancel everything we want to l-cancel, and always autocancel everything we want to autocancel.

Possible scenarios where you would want to be faster:

I want to fair my opponent early in my short hop and drift backwards. This auto cancels.



I want to follow up on an up air with another up air. This requires short hopping, fast falling, and l-cancelling.



I want to space a dair out of shield and move some time in the next century. L-cancel.



jump cancel grab:

How? Do a dash or a run. While doing this, hit a jump button and then immediately hit Z.

Why? Marth has two grabs: a standing grab, and a dash grab. His dash grab is this awkward lurch, which has great range but bad lag afterwards. His standing grab retains the great range, but we can move much sooner out of the grab attempt. By jump canceling the grab (hitting a jump button and then immediately hitting Z), we can do our gucci standing grab out of a dash or run. Nice.

Possible scenarios where you would want to jump cancel grab:

all of them

What makes a character good?

Characters are good because they have strong, consistent options available to them. Options include anything which allows your character to obtain stage, percent, or stock advantages, graded via the

metrics of risk, reward, predictability, and feasibility. So if your character has good moves, they are more likely to be good. If your character is fast, they are more likely to be good. If a character has a quick short hop, that can make them good. If a character has a fast fall speed, that can make them good. It's very circular, but what makes a character good in relation to other characters is what makes them good. The main takeaway is that a good character has numerous, viable, powerful options available to them in their bag of tricks in most or every scenario – if they do not have great coverage, then they can make up for it by excelling in forcing a particular scenario where they have a massive advantage. For instance:

Fox is really fast, has a short short hop and a tall double jump. This means that he can do really scary, fast aerials and hit standing targets, while still being able to follow up on people he hits. He has a dangerous projectile, powerful grabs, a very versatile tool in shine, and very strong recovery. Almost everything about him excels: he has the options with the most power and depth in the whole game.

Ice Climbers are astoundingly average. They have decent lag on all of their aerials and moves, decent range, an okay projectile, and meh recovery. Their grab range is very poor. However, what makes Ice Climbers good is the fact that they can wobble: they can theoretically end a game in four grabs. When that particular scenario is forced (Ice Climbers gets the grab) optimal play dictates that the Ice Climbers receive a massive advantage (stock). An “average” character like Icies is still good.

What makes Marth good?

Marth is fast (1st or 2nd best dashdance in the game, blazing fast run, huge wavedash, can use back air to turn around midair, longest tech roll in the game). He has huge range on all of his moves, including his grab, and they do not extend his hitboxes in relation to his attacks; it is “disjointed.” In effect, his huge sword lets him hit people without being able to be hit back. He has very potent combos out of grab, a ridiculous spike in dair, and utility on almost all of his moves. This means that Marth excels in situations where he can put people in bad spots. If he plays patiently enough, he will almost always be able to keep them in that bad spot once they are in it.

What makes Marth bad?

He's at a really gross weight which allows him to get thrown around by a lot of the cast. He has trouble killing people at high percent due to the lagginess of his kill moves. He's a tall guy so he'll get hit by high lasers, and his shield isn't the greatest so you will need to work on your out of shield game a lot. Sometimes you get put into bad situations and you have to commit to tough 50/50s, and if you choose wrong you will just get taken for a ride. His combos require a lot of work to master. This means Marth gets junked when you're lost in a matchup, confused, being outplayed, and when you're in a bad spot, you will probably remain in that bad spot until you die. Remember, Marth is a person. When he gets put in a blast zone, he dies.

How can I make Marth good?

You need to cultivate and maintain a precise, intelligent mentality in order to play Marth. You can't just run around dair shine turnaround laser grabbing whatever the fuck you want like you're a spacie. The three moves that PPMD thinks are the most important on Marth are his grab, fair, and down tilt. Grab is attached to his incredible movement options, is somewhat noncommittal, and sets up for most of his combos. Almost all of the time, you just want to get the grab. Down tilt is a great poke which is safe on shield when spaced, has very little lag, and will stuff every ground approach in the game. Fair is useful

for swatting people out of the air and hitting them with follow ups after combos. In general, dtilt and fair will provide you everything you need to keep people out.

Once your opponent is forced to respect the zoning power of dtilt and fair, you can use that pressure to claim stage control and apply the mental game. Because of the incredible threat attached to all of Marth's movement (you need to become very adept at wavedashing, dashdancing, shorthopping, precisely, + out of shield), high level Marth play becomes a very engaging and interesting game of feinting, investigating, and deconstructing your opponent's character and gameplan.

Move utility:

Jab: Used to stuff spacie side-b's to the ledge, because it's so quick (use double jab). Use first hit of side-b if you want to jab reset.

Ftilt: Not as committal as fsmash, decent knockback tippered. Doesn't see a lot of use, not seen as that important to the Marth metagame.

Utilt: Covers platforms, good anti-air, side-b into utilt is the "floaty killer." If tippered can be used in chaingrabs, can throw midweights into this at low percents.

Dtilt: Already discussed, part of the Marth trifecta. Can keep people off the ledge if they try to sweetspot. Stuff ground approaches and apply pressure – keep in mind you don't get a ton off of hitting with this move. You get percent and information – how does your opponent respond after being stuffed on the ground or being poked in their shield? Again, to play Marth at a high level, you need to be able to use the dtlt data you download.

Fsmash: Its good. Don't overuse it in neutral. You'll start to really feel how laggy it is when you start facing good people who can sniff it out. Dips below the ledge when used to edgeguard.

Usmash: THUNDERCATS, HOOOOOOOOOOO. Not seen as important to the Marth metagame. Usually a sign of a missed utilt, but PPMD did an insanely dope combo that ended in tipper usmash once.

Dsmash: I've seen it used to tech chase Sheik and Falcon off of downthrow at high percents. Comes out quite fast, actually, the problem is the crazy lag afterwards. Has its uses.

Nair: One of Marth's few lingering hitboxes. Can stuff aerial approaches when autocanceled in place, as discussed before. Can be used with dash attack to tech chase forward throw and cover platform techs. Avoid approaching with this, unless you fade back or cross it up.

Fair: Second in the Marth trifecta. Get a lot of mileage out of this move. L-cancel and fast fall the crap out of it except when you're drifting back and autocanceling. You can also do two in one shorthop, but its very hard to do and situationally useful. It is very strong on paper, though.

Bair: Used to turn Marth around in the air, also used as a drop down edgeguard tool for spacie recovery.

Uair: Juggles when tippered and combos into itself. Practice fast falling and l-canceling this.

Dair: Puts people in the dumpster. Can be used as an out of shield option if your name is Mang0. If you

don't tipper it, it doesn't spike, instead it sends them up. Ken combos. Horrendous lag if not I-ceeled, merely awful if it is.

Neutral b: Can be used to edgeguard, dips below the ledge. Can also be used to follow up fair strings, or as a sort of charged fsmash you can use while falling. Has its uses, looks to be still being developed.

Side b: The first hit scoops your opponent up, the third hit is sometimes angled down for a shitty swag spike or for tech chasing. The fourth hit down is a poor man's multishine. Keep in mind it is definitely possible for your opponent to DI out of the remainder of the hits even if they do get caught in it. It is important to mix up the timings if you're going to use this move in neutral. You can use this in the air for creative combos and extensions. Also useful for horizontal recovery while falling and making recovering to the stage more ambiguous/safe.

Down b: Used a ledge getup option and spacie recovery edgeguard tool. Pretty much only for that. The lag is not worth the potential hit, because you don't even get much off of a successful counter since Marth is too busy screaming in Japanese or something.

Up b: Decent out of shield option. You land on the top platform in Battlefield, Yoshi's, and Dreamland from the floor pretty safely. I have seen Ken tech chase out of a dash dance with this move. Get adept at reversing this so you can recover to the ledge and force the tipper hitbox when using it offensively. Really satisfying.

Throws: Up throw is integral to a lot of matchups because it starts juggle strings. Wait until Marth's arm goes completely down before trying to move. Forward throw is mostly for positional advantages. Downthrow and backthrow both send them behind you and can be used to techchase with smashes or regrabs.

Matchup specifics:

Fox: Things to learn include chaingrabs, spacie edgeguards, out of shield options, platform tech chases, and movement. He is fast, but so are you. Requires a lot of mindfulness, foresight and precision.

Falco: Learn how to punish badly spaced lasers and shield pressure, otherwise you will be completely lost in the matchup. This means wavedash out of shield, rolling, spot dodging, shield grabbing intelligently and with correct timings, etc. You cannot chaingrab Falco at 0. You have to throw him forward and regrab twice in order to get him to the proper percent.

Peach: You have to play the long game with Peach. Turnips are like lasers in that they are a massive pain in the ass. A hard matchup to play, because you need to literally win neutral about 100 times in a row before you can finally kill her. Meanwhile she can blender you once and smack you with her crown and you're probably dead.

Sheik: Make neutral as hard as possible for her, because if she gets on top of you you will have a lot of trouble. Things to learn include proper DI, proper usage of movement in neutral, stuffing approaches.

Marth: Fthrow, fthrow, tipper fsmash is guaranteed unless they DI hard away. This matchup is all about punishes, so respect his massive range in neutral.

Falcon: You will need a way to deal with his dash dance and nair in neutral. If you dtilt a run in, he can

nair over it, and if you try to fair a nair, you might get outspaced or punished when you land. This is where the grody 50/50 can start to come in, so avoid those sort of situations if you can. You're both ridiculously fast and mess each other up ridiculously hard. If he gets offstage, ideally there is no way he ever gets back on since his recovery makes him unable to perfectly sweetspot.

Jigglypuff: Pretty strongly in your favor. If she does get an opening in on you when you're in the air, you will have a real bad time. Be very intelligent with your jumps. You will probably not be getting a ton of mileage out of grab and dtilt in this matchup. You are much faster than her, and she must outplay you in the air to win the matchup.

Icies: Keep them separated. Nair is useful for this. Play conservatively and do not make stupid risky approaches, because you'll just get grabbed and die. You're both fast and approximately the same weight. Grabs may not end up working out for you, because you can only grab one and sometimes Nana will fuck you up.

Stage specifics:

Yoshi's: Previously thought a Marth stage due to low platforms and small size allowing for randy early kills. The small size means its hard to use your movement and spacies get to be all over you. You'll probably get lots of easy fsmash tippers if you can get them on platforms at low levels of play.

Battlefield: Same as Yoshi's re: platforms, except they're a bit higher. Well balanced stage, good to strike to. Recovery isn't affected as much by being battlefielded, question mark?

Dreamland 64: Offers you plenty of room to run around. Fsmash doesn't cover the side platforms, so you have to up tilt or upair instead.

Final Destination: Show off your chaingrabs. Will most likely get banned. Take advantage of your strengths in neutral here and hug the sides of the stage when you recover.

Pokemon Stadium: Rapidly becoming the new Marth stage. Jank doesn't do you many favors in particular, but the side platforms and the lips and the size give you lots of fun stuff to do. Your up b is the perfect length to sweetspot the cliff during the fire transformation. You can get "pineappled" here if you go too low.

Fountain of Dreams: Pretty nice for Marth. You have good survivability and movable platforms which your smashes and aerials cover. High vertical ceiling allows you tons of room to combo in the air and still live.

A lot of it is preference. I personally prefer Battlefield, FoD, Stadium, FD, Dreamland, then Yoshi's (from most to least favorable for me). This is probably wrong, but Marth generally wants room to work his neutral, platform jank that favors his tech chasing, and vertical room for offstage edgeguards. How much you prioritize each of these individual metrics is up to you to develop.

All in all, that's a very basic primer for playing Marth in Melee or PM.