

# Exalted 3rd Ed. Combat Primer & FAQ For Players

Some things about this system aren't easy to grasp right away. This FAQ should help. This advice applies to any (Solar) character with any combat ability. This advice refers to combats that are an actual threat - not insignificant opponents who haven't figured out their own insignificance yet.

## **Generally speaking, when should I spend motes in combat?**

1. If you have Awareness as caste or favored, you should spend motes to double your Join Battle roll.
  - a. This will allow you to go earlier, and provides you with initiative (which acts as a kind of health) so that you will not be crashed in the first round.
2. When defending (you're under attack) in the first round, you should spend motes to increase Parry or Evasion. Raise them as high as you can when you have to use them.
  - a. This not only keeps you safe in the near-term, it denies Initiative to your opponents, which keeps you & your party safe in the long-term.
3. Your first attack
  - a. Must be a Withering attack
  - b. Spend as many motes as you can on this attack.
    - i. Full Excellency + any Charms that will help.
    - ii. It is not unreasonable to spend 20+ motes on this attack, if you can.
  - c. This attack in the first round sets the stage for the entire rest of the fight. If you gain an early advantage, it's easy to control the battle.

## **I have a charm that gives me a free full Excellency in X, shouldn't I use that before I spend motes?**

No. This is actually a waste of motes. You will regain 5 motes per round, up to your cap. If you avoid spending motes in the first round, you have thrown away the 5 motes you would have otherwise regained. Save this ability for mid to late combat.

## **Is there a minimum amount of motes I should spend per round?**

There is a minimum. The minimum is 5. If you spend 5 motes per round, you will never run out, because you regain 5 motes per round. You can spend 5 motes per round from your Personal mote pool and never even raise your Anima banner. You should spend at least 5 motes per round, even if you think the enemies are all chumps. The only exception to this is when you're getting low on motes and wish to regain some.

## **Is there a maximum amount of motes I should spend per round?**

You should only worry about spending too many motes once you get down to 15 or so. At this point, you want to make sure you leave enough motes to trigger crucial defense or escape charms.

# Exalted 3rd Ed. Combat Primer & FAQ For Players

## Won't all of this advice make my Anima go Iconic within the first 2 turns?

Yes, but if this fight is an actual threat to your life, your character is probably more concerned with immediate survival than long-term social & political repercussions.

## Won't I run out of motes incredibly quickly like this?

Not as quickly as you might think. Here's a chart:

Starting Mote Pool (1 essence)	46	Total Motes Spent	Total Motes Regained
1st round Motes spent	-20	-20	
2nd round Motes available	31		5
2nd round Motes spent	-16	-36	
3rd round Motes available	20		10
3rd round Motes spent	-10	-46	
4th round Motes available	15		15
4th round Motes spend	-10	-56	
5th round Motes available	10		20

Even when spending very aggressively, you'll still have enough motes by round 5 to power almost any charm. You will also have spent more motes by round 4 than you have in your total mote pool.

## What is the single most important thing in any combat?

Initiative. Initiative is what wins & loses fights.

## What is the best way to gain initiative & prevent your enemies from having it?

Succeeding at Withering attacks against your enemies. Making sure your enemies fail their Withering attacks.

## What should my first attack be? Withering or Decisive?

Withering, almost always. There are very few exceptions to this. Exceptions:

- Grappling
  - The difficulty of the grapple check is only 2
  - You only need 5+ Init to hit that check
  - After the grapple check you need to win a strength + brawl contested roll
- Characters who are built for making a decisive attack right out the gate
  - Someone with a natural join battle roll of 10+, who spends motes to roll 20+ join battle, could do a decisive attack 1st, or someone with very specific charms meant to deliver Decisive attacks in round 1.

## Who should the target for my first attack be?

# Exalted 3rd Ed. Combat Primer & FAQ For Players

Any enemy you can hit in the first round, who isn't already Crashed. You're trying to crash them and gain Initiative for yourself. It doesn't matter if it's the Big Bad or his minion - his minion is likely to be easier to farm for initiative anyway.

Attacking in the first round should take priority over moving to attack the optimal target or re-positioning for Cover (the Cover mechanic doesn't provide that much defense, anyway).

## **When should I make a decisive attack?**

When your initiative is high enough to reliably remove 6-10 health levels. Because there are no double 10s on Decisive damage, the probability of a hit goes down. Calculate  $(2.1 * (\text{Health levels you wish to remove}))$ , if your initiative is at least that high, a decisive attack is appropriate. Playing this way largely removes any concerns with Hardness against most opponents. If an opponent's Hardness is 16+, you may want to Crash them first.

## **When should I do a Gambit, like Disarm, or Grapple?**

When your initiative is high enough to reliably hit the Gambit difficulty. Calculate  $(2.1 * (\text{gambit difficulty}))$

## **If I use the (somewhat aggressive) strategy that is proposed in this FAQ, won't my ST catch on and counter it?**

1. Your ST might thank you because combats no longer drag on forever.
2. It's actually really difficult to counter.
  - a. Even with really high defenses and high soak, it's hard to stop a Solar rolling 25+ dice, and further improving their withering attacks with Charms.
    - i. If their defenses are this high, it's even more important to dump motes into the attack.
  - b. The only real counter is for NPCs to use low-cost attacks that force you to spend loads of motes on defense, only to discover that you needn't have bothered.
    - i. If this happens, the NPCs are still not actually making any gains early on in the fight, and you are.

## **Isn't playing this way simply power-gaming?**

No. This is combat working as intended by the authors. It's not meant to drag on for 10+ rounds. It's meant to be epic, thematic, and then over.

## **Fighting like this would be bad roleplay. My character would never fight like this.**

They would if they're supposed to be good at combat in the world of Exalted. This is simply how the system works. The most unique hero in the world still has to obey the fundamental laws of nature of the world they live in.