

Ultimate Fighting Championship FAQ

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Ultimate Fighting Championship
Strategy FAQ
v1.1

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1.0 Introduction

Ultimate Fighting Championship, (abbreviated UFC) is, in the opinion of this author, one of the most interesting fighting games to appear since Soul Calibur. Although not as polished as the forementioned product, it takes a lot of risks in terms of gameplay, and for the most part, these succeed. Controlling a fighter is deceptively simple, since moves are easy to pull off but hard to use properly. Rather than making the moves complex, Crave decided to make the situations complex. This lends itself to a very different sort of fighting game experience.

I decided that a different kind of fighting game calls for a different kind of FAQ. Instead of writing an exhaustive move list, it seemed that this game required something more like a strategy guide. A lot of what I learned about playing this game required a lot of painstaking experimentation. Ignore at your own risk.

Each of the sections addressed by this FAQ deals with a different situation that you will run into in the Octagon. These sections are in turn broken into two parts, the first part detailing the kind of moves you can use, the second part dealing with the strategies you should employ in this situation.

2.0 Overview

There are several unique aspects of combat in UFC. First, there is the health bar. Most fighting games have a single health bar, and when it is depleted, you die. UFC has two health bars. One is the Stamina bar, and the other in the Endurance bar. When your fighter takes damage, he usually loses a big chunk of Stamina and a small chunk of Endurance. A little bit of Stamina is also lost every time you make an attack. When Stamina reaches zero, the fighter is KO'ed.

However, it's not quite this simple. If your fighter rests, he will regain Stamina. The amount of Stamina that he can recover up to is his (or her) current Endurance level. On screen, this is represented by a red bar right next to a blue bar. If all you see is a blue bar, then Endurance and Stamina are currently equal. If you see a red bar, this indicates the difference between Stamina and Endurance; as you rest, the red bar will gradually turn blue. Note that when there is no blue bar at all on screen, your Stamina is down to zero, and the next hit will kill you unless you get some rest first.

Management of Stamina is very important. Getting hit is par for the course. If these hits all take place over a very short period of time, you stand a good chance of getting dropped. However, if your Stamina is low but you take the time to rest, you will find that your fighter sticks around a lot longer.

Another difference between UFC and most fighting games is its very comprehensive representation of grappling. In most fighting games, grappling is represented as simply a short range attack that you can't block normally, but need to hit a special button to counter. This is also true in UFC, but so is a lot more. Instead of being used to inflict damage, grappling is more often used to change the situation. A successful shoot (a shoot is a kind of tackle) will land you on top of your opponent's chest, relatively free to rain down blows on his head. From here, your hapless foe can reverse you, or escape, or launch his own attacks.

Another innovation of UFC is the use of submission moves. These are special grappling attacks that, if not properly countered, will cause the victim of the attack to lose instantly, regardless of Stamina. This isn't as overwhelming as it sounds, because most submissions are easy to counter, and they can only be launched from specific grappling positions. Even so, when used unexpectedly, they can end a fight very quickly.

Finally, the last crucial distinction between UFC and most fighters (but not all) is the comprehensive countering system. Almost every single move in the game can be countered or even reversed. Mastering these counters is absolutely crucial to mastering the game.

Let's talk about each of the different situations that you'll encounter in a bout.

3.0 Standing

When both fighters face each other standing, it's mostly about punching and kicking. However, this can change quickly depending on each player's eagerness to take it to the mat.

3.1 Standing Moves

In this section, we will go into detail about the punching and kicking system, and various defenses against it.

3.1a Basic Striking

Let's first talk about punching and kicking, or striking, as we'll refer to them together. Striking moves are pretty simple. Each of the four buttons executes an attack with one of the fighter's limbs. On the Dreamcast, they are mapped as follows:

X: left punch (LP)
Y: right punch (RP)
A: left kick (LK)
B: right kick (RK)

Pressed individually, these will launch strikes. Of course, you have more than four attacks at your disposal. One thing that increases the number of strikes that you can launch is the fact that many strikes can be comboed. Each fighter has his own set of combos. These are strikes that are launched in quick succession.

Another factor that adds to the number of available attacks is the existence of step attacks. To launch a step attack, tap the controller in one of the four basic directions (forward, back, left, right) and then press an attack button before the fighter comes to a stop. To further complicate, there are stepping combos, where the fighter begins by stepping in a certain direction and then launches a combo. Note that your combos from an unmoving position are usually

different from your stepping combos, and your stepping combos are different for each direction that you step in.

3.1b Strike Defense

Defending against strikes is pretty simple. All you have to do is pull back on the controller. However, if your fighter is in the middle of a step or a move, he can't defend himself, and this includes the backwards step (as opposed to just moving backwards). There aren't any high strikes or low strikes that must be defended against differently, just strikes.

In addition to defense, there are also striking counters. Most strikes can be countered. To do this, press both punch buttons simultaneously right before a punch lands, or both kicks together right before a kick lands. If you do this, you will usually grab that offending limb and take the attacker down to the mat. This cannot be countered. However, some fighters have different sorts of counters. For example, several fighters will, upon catching a right punch, punch the attacker in the face. One or two will, upon countering a particular strike, perform a submission hold. These special counters can in turn be countered. A punch countered into a punch can itself be countered by hitting both punch buttons. This will cause the caught attack to duck the counter punch. Yes, I know, this sounds pretty complex. Submissions are countered normally (see later for details on submissions).

3.1c Striking Effects

>From what I've described so far, there might sound like there's no reason to risk a strike. After all, defending is easy, and you might even be countered. However, this isn't all there is to standing combat. There are several factors that make a turtle defense untenable. First, several strikes, even when blocked, cause the defender to be staggered. Staggering causes the defender to stumble backwards, momentarily unable to defend himself. If a fighter staggers into the Octagon fence, he will receive a small amount of damage. And if there is a fence behind him, he will not move backwards very far, making it easy for the attacker to follow-up with a combo while he's defenseless. Thus, if you spend all your time blocking, a good opponent will force you towards the fence and then pound you against it mercilessly.

Some strikes are considered what are called counter strikes. This can be confusing, since the word 'counter' is also used to describe moves that defend or reverse other moves. However, there is some similarity here. Counter strikes are those which arrive while one's foe is in the midst of another animation, like starting or ending his own attack or stepping. A counter strike does extra damage because it catches the victim unready. Also, when a powerful counter strike lands, the victim may be stunned. This is different from being staggered. When a fighter is stunned, he drops to one knee in place. Like staggering, he is temporarily defenseless, but unlike staggering, there are special moves that can only be performed on a stunned foe. Almost all fighters have a standing submission hold that can be launched on a stunned foe. These holds are performed by pressing either both lefts or both rights. Also, every fighter has several strikes that do extra damage to stunned opponents. These moves are classified as "rival stun" moves. To distinguish counter strikes from counters OF strikes, we will define 'counter strikes' as strikes used to interrupt strikes, and 'strike counters' to be moves used to grab a strike.

3.1d Shoots and Shoot Defense

Another aspect of standing combat which makes turtling non-viable is shoots. Most shoots are launched by pressing both rights or both lefts, either with or

without a preceding step. A successful shoot will takedown your opponent in a mount or guard position. The shoots that are launched from a standing position are pretty short range and easy to counter. They can be countered in turn by either both rights or both lefts. They can also be countered with both legs; this will not only stop the shoot, but punish the attacker with a knee to the head. However, the knee can be countered by hitting both punches, which causes the shooter to grab the shootee's knee and take him to the mat. Another kind of counter is left punch and right kick pressed simultaneously. This must be pressed very early in the shoot for it to work, but if it does, the shoot will be reversed and the defender will end in a backmount! You'll see why that's so devastating later on. Finally, the last possible counter is to do two full revolutions of the d-pad. This counter is less effective than all the others.

Before getting further into takedowns, I should mention that timing tends to be very crucial when countering them. The earlier you hit the counter, the better your results are likely to be. Some counters won't even work unless they are performed immediately, and reversal effects also require you to be quick on the draw. If you are very late on a takedown counter, you might end up in the bottom guard instead of the bottom mount. This will make more sense later on.

3.1e Takedowns and Takedown Defense

More effective than these standing shoots are the stepping shoots, or takedowns. A backstep shoot causes the attacker to step back and then shoot forward, which is great for throwing off your opponent's timing, but otherwise just like a standing shoot. Most forward-stepping shoot fall into several categories. There are shoot into strikes, low shoots, slams, single and double leg takedowns, tackles, fast tackles and trips. Which ones a particular fighter performs depends on the fighter. Unlike unmoving shoots, a fighter will launch different grapples with a RK+RP stepping grapple versus a LK+LP punch stepping grapple.

A shoot into a strike will cause the attacker to grab his opponent, then punch him. This can be countered with both punches, or both kicks if the strike is a kick. If it's a kick, though, it can be caught and reversed into a takedown by pressing both kicks. A low shoot is a normal shoot in most respects, but the timing is different and the fighter ducks down before launching it.

Slams accomplish the same thing as shoots, and involve picking your opponent up and throwing him to the mat. Like all normal grapples, they may be countered by rotating the d-pad. Otherwise, they can't be countered, and they can't be reversed by LP+RK. A slam is identifiable as a move that picks one's opponent off the canvas, holds him in the air for a second and throws him to the mat. Some slams actually do a small amount of damage.

Leg takedowns are pretty similar to shoots, but again, they are harder to counter. For some fighters, they can only be countered with d-pad rotation. With others, they are countered like any other shoots. Double leg takedowns can only be countered by d-pad rotation, though. LP+RK tends to work against single leg takedowns, fortunately.

A tackle is basically a normal shoot with a little more range. They can be countered the same way. Fast tackles, however, are special in that they happen very quickly, giving one's opponent less time to counter. They can be countered with both rights, which will actually result in a reversal. They can't be countered with d-pad rotation or LP+RK, though, since they happen too quickly.

By trips we are talking about takedowns that target the legs. Some of these can be countered by pressing both legs, and if you press it early enough, you may get a reversal. Many trips are launched in unusual ways, like forward step followed by both kicks. Only a couple of fighters have trips.

In addition to the takedowns mentioned, there are plenty of unique grapples that individual fighters possess. Since this isn't a movelist, you will have to go elsewhere to learn these. Such idiosyncratic grapples tend to have difficult counters, like d-pad rotation or both lefts. Experiment and learn.

This covers all the general technical aspects of standing combat. Of course, a few fighters have idiosyncratic moves. For instance, with at least one fighter, you can perform a leg takedown with a forward stepping RK+LK that can only be countered by RK+LK by the defender. A couple of fighters have combo strikes that end in a tackle. You should experiment with each fighter that you want to work with.

3.2 Standing Strategy

Fighting while on both feet allows for the maximum amount of variation in what can happen. Sometimes, the fight will never go to the mat, and be decided by combos and defense. Or a fighter might launch a powerful counter strike that stuns his opponent, and follow-up with a standing submission to end it all. This is where you have to be most flexible to what your opponent does.

Whenever you have an opponent who is sticking too strongly to one strategy, you can take advantage of it. The best defense is actually unpredictability. Let's talk about how to respond to each kind of approach. Let's talk about the different kinds of approaches to standing combat, and how to deal with them.

3.2a Strike Fighting

If your opponent is concentrating too heavily on strikes and combos, the best bet is to use counters. Get a sense of the timing of his attacks by defending a little while, and then counter a punch or kick. Most attacks are punches, but some fighters are kick-heavy, and since kicks tend to be slower, they are easier to counter. If you have a sense of which combos your opponent is using, counter becomes especially easy. The best bet here is to defend most of the combo shots, then hit RP+LP or RK+LK to grab a strike towards the end of the combo. If your fighter is a good striker (e.g. a boxer or kickboxer), a good strategy is to wait until the end of the combo and then launch your quickest attack.

On the other hand, if you are the one succeeding with a lot of strikes, you have to be careful lest one of these strategies be used on you. If you have gotten in a lot of combos and your opponent start to do a lot of blocking, he may be getting down your timing for a counter grab or counter strike. If you don't want to switch to a new strategy just yet, a good trick is to make use of staggers. Once you've got him backed up against the fence, pummel away with your fastest attacks so he has no time to do anything, or keep staggering him into the fence and following-up with fast combos. Yet another solution for this situation for some fighters is to shoot into a punch. This can't be blocked, but it can be countered. If he isn't expecting it, though, it can be a nasty surprise.

If your fighter is good on the ground but your opponent is a good striker, chances are he'll keep a steady offense going to keep you from launching a shoot or other takedown. If he's particularly good at mixing up the punches and kicks and keeping the timing unpredictable, it may be hard to get a strike counter (as opposed to a counter strike :). One option that certain fighters have from this situation are quick combos that end in a grapple. These combos can be just what the doctor ordered for these situations. Use the quick strikes to interrupt an opponent's attacks with counter strikes, and follow-up with the takedown before he can regain momentum. To use this strategy, you will have to learn the specific combos.

3.2b Shoot Fighting

If your enemy is grapple-happy, the first thing to remember is to be ready to counter at any second. Generally, leaning towards using both lefts is a good idea. If you keep the distance open, it's easy to stop grapples by using quick jabs and low kicks. Another strategy is to prepare to use LP+RK to get the backmount. Getting in the top backmount often leads to imminent victory.

If you are leaning towards grappling, there are a few ways of preventing these sorts of strategies. First, learn your fighter's grapples and how they are countered. If you expect your opponent to be waiting to counter into a backmount, use a grapple that can't be reversed this way. Feel out your opponent and find out which grapples he is best at countering. He may not even know how to counter certain ones. Even if he does, mix it up so he can't rely on one counter for all situations. Throw in a few strikes to keep him guessing, especially if he gets used to your grappling and stops defending.

At this point, let me mention that some counters are rarely useful. D-pad rotation will counter almost anything, but it isn't always intuitive and it takes forever to do. As for LP+RK, don't try this one unless you are quick on the draw or ready for it. If you want a good all-purpose grapple counter move, quickly press both rights and then both lefts. This way, unless it can only be countered by a d-pad rotation, you will at least prevent the maneuver. Of course, this will not help against a shoot punch or certain unusual moves.

4.0 Ground Fighting

Fighting on the ground is a very different experience from fighting on your feet. There is a little less variation, but not by much. An important distinction in ground fighting is between top and bottom positions. In general, the fighter that is in the top position has the advantage in a number of ways. Another important distinction is between guard and mount. In the guard position, one fighter has his back on the ground and his legs wrapped around the torso of his opponent, who is on top of him and facing downwards. In the mount, the fighter on top has his legs around the bottom fighter. Moves are slightly different in each position, and the top mount is more advantageous than the top guard. Thus, in ground fighting, there are four common positions: mount top, mount bottom, guard top and guard bottom. There are also the backmount top and backmount bottom, but these two positions are fairly different from the others, and will be discussed separately.

4.1 Ground Moves

There are a few moves that are pretty general to all ground positions. D-pad rotation is a bit more important in ground fighting. When it's not being used as a counter, two revolutions of the d-pad works to raise your position one "step". Thus, if you are on the bottom mount, a successful d-pad rotation will put you in the bottom guard. If you are in the bottom guard, d-pad rotation gets you to your feet. If you are in a top position, the d-pad rotation brings you both to your feet. While this may not seem useful, there are occasions where you will want to do it. The d-pad rotation can be interrupted if one's opponent can get a move in before it is completed. Note, if a fighter in the bottom guard uses a d-pad rotation to get to his feet, the top combatant may counter this with his own d-pad rotation.

Let's get into some specific features of ground fighting.

4.1a Ground Punching and Ground Punch Defense

Also, ground punches are possible from both top and bottom positions for guard and mount. There is no stepping involved, but some fighters have ground punch combos. In general, the top fighter punches faster and harder than the bottom fighter, and the mount top fighter punches the fastest and hardest of them all. The kick buttons are used for body punches on the ground, and these are generally faster, but do less damage.

There is a special twist to ground punching. When a top fighter punches and the bottom fighter blocks, a small amount of damage still occurs. Stamina and Endurance are reduced at equal rates by blocked top punches. However, even if the bottom fighter's Stamina and Endurance are reduced to zero, he won't be taken out so long as he blocks all the punches. It is possible to spend your time on the bottom blocking ad nauseum, but it isn't a winning strategy.

Punches can be caught just like standing punches are caught; just hit both punches right before it lands to catch a punch. When one fighter catches a punch, his position will better. If he is on the bottom, he will reverse positions. If he was in the guard bottom, he will move to mount top. If he is in mount bottom, he moves to guard top. When a top guard fighter catches a punch, he moves into the top mount. If he catches a punch from the mount top, he moves into the backmount top.

Punches from the guard top are pretty easy to catch. To make it easier for this position, many fighters have feint punches from guard top. These are performed by pressing right then left or left then right punches in succession (not simultaneously). The two punches must be of the same "level" (i.e. both body punches or both face punches).

4.1b Submissions and Submission Counters

An important part of ground fighting are the submissions. When a fighter is on top, pressing both rights or both lefts tends to throw a submission, through sometimes it will launch a grabbing punch. A neck or arm submission can be countered by hitting both punches, while a leg or foot submission can be countered with both kicks. They can also both be countered by a d-pad rotation. If the counter occurs early enough, the fighter will reverse positions, otherwise, it will simply prevent the submission. D-pad rotation is generally too slow to get a reversal. A grabbing punch can be countered the same way as when you're standing; hit both punches.

Sometimes, a bottom fighter will have a submission move or two, especially in the guard. However, when these are countered, if it is countered quickly enough, the top fighter can move into a backmount. Instead, bottom fighters generally have reversals. All of these are performed with both rights or both lefts. Bottom submissions are countered the same way as other submissions (both punches or both kicks), but reversals can only be countered by a d-pad rotation. Also, many fighters in the bottom guard are able to perform a grabbing punch by pressing both kicks. This is countered with the usual RP+LP.

4.1c Backmount

The backmount deserves special mention here. The top backmount can be a devastating position. The mounter can launch very powerful attacks on his opponent from here, as well as submissions. Some of these submissions are countered the usual way, but some can only be countered with a d-pad rotation. Some fighters from the bottom are able to perform a reversal move or a punch counter in the usual fashion, but mostly they are confined to slow elbow attacks. The only universal option for the backmount bottom other than elbowing is using d-pad rotation to escape into a better position.

>From the backmount top, pressing LP+RK will cause both fighters to get to their feet.

This covers the basics of ground fighting techniques.

4.2 Ground Strategy

Ground fighting requires its own set of strategies that are distinct from standing fights. Some fighters are clearly better at ground fighting because they have more moves or punch combos, or can take or deal a lot of punishment. However, like standing fights, ground fights require unpredictability to be successful.

4.2a Waiting Him Out

>From the bottom position, you have a couple of options. If your foe has a poor Stamina, you may want to block his punches. If you do this, your Endurance will be whittled away while his Stamina goes down. After doing it for a while but not too long, you will reach a point where the bottom fighter actually has a better Stamina. At this point, you want to either punch back or first reverse the position. However, if you give the top fighter time to rest, then he will end up with the advantage.

4.2b Ground Punch Countering

Another option from the bottom position is to catch punches. The nice thing about this is that when you succeed, your reversal can't be countered. However, if you fail, you get a damaging punch to the face. Timing is crucial here. It is best to first defend and get a feel for your opponent's timing before trying to grab his punches.

The top combatant may defeat this strategy by changing-up his timing to throw off the bottom fighter. In this situation, the top fighter often pauses between blows. If you're on the bottom, there are two ways you can respond to this. One is to go for a reversal. If the top fighter is quick on the d-pad, though, this may not be easy. The other is to use the d-pad to better your position. While this can be countered when done from the bottom guard, it can't be countered from the bottom mount. From the bottom guard you're barely at a disadvantage, though, and you can try to counter punches from there pretty easily, or launch your own attacks.

If you are the top fighter and your opponent on the bottom shows a propensity for throwing punches of his own, try for the counter. If you get it in the mount, you will end up in the backmount, which can be decisive.

4.2c Submission Strategy

Using submissions from the top or bottom should be done sparingly. Submissions are easy to counter into a reversal. Use them as surprise moves when they are busy with a d-pad rotation. Leg submissions are nice to use when your opponent is waiting to counter your punch, because their fingers are on very different buttons.

This is as good a place as any to mention that the same strategy applies to submissions in all situations. Most of the time, submissions don't work. The defender usually has plenty of time to counter them, and there are only two moves you need to know to counter almost all of the submissions. A couple of fighters have submissions that require a d-pad rotation to counter. A complete player has to know who can execute such maneuvers in what situations.

4.2d Backmount Offense and Defense

>From the backmount top, the best thing to do is often rain down destructive blows. If your fighter has a backmount submission that can only be countered by a d-pad rotation, you may want to use that. Otherwise, by attempting a submission you risk giving up your backmount for naught. Be careful if the guy on the bottom has a punch reversal from this position. However, if the person in the backmount bottom is trying to punch, reversing that with a RP+LP will often counter with a submission. These submissions can only be countered with d-pad rotations.

If you're in the bottom backmount, you have very few options. If your enemy is near-death, only then should you use the elbow attacks (performed with punch buttons) as anything more than to keep him guessing. Your main objective should be to get out of this mess. If you have a counter from this position, get ready to use it. If you have a reversal, get ready to use that. Otherwise, be ready with the d-pad rotations to either escape or counter a submission, and spend most of your time blocking.

In general, if you have a good ground fighter, your objective should be to remain on the ground, preferably (but not necessarily) on top, while if you are outclassed in this department, you want to escape. A good way to get off the ground completely is to get into the top position and use d-pad rotation to get off. The same can be done from guard bottom, but it's harder to pull off.

5.0 In Closing

I hope all of this helps. I've left out a lot of details about individual fighters (all of them, actually) but that isn't what this FAQ is about. This is a compilation of the information I've accumulated after lots of searching and playing. Most of the information here was derived from the discussion forums on www.gamefaqs.com and www.cravegames.com, the Prima strategy guide (which, despite having a few things to teach me, represents a new low from Prima) and Evan Oxfield's own movelist FAQ and email correspondance with him. Thanks to you all (even Prima)! And of course big-ups to Crave for making a completely original fighting game that rocks the house!

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