

Final Fantasy Tactics Quickening FAQ

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Final Fantasy Tactics "Quickening" FAQ
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This FAQ is written in notepad, and is formatted to be no more than 75 chars wide per line. The line of asterisks and integers above acts as a ruler; if 'EOL' is visible at the end of line then you will be fine. 640x480 screensize compatible.

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I wrote this FAQ, with the contributions of those mentioned in the Acknowledgements section. Feel free to rip the info in this FAQ as long as you mention where you got it from. I would ask that you don't go off making money on it; not like you'd be able to market some obscure strategy for a video game anyway. At any rate, this FAQ is submitted ONLY to gameFAQs.com. If you're reading this on another site, then they've ripped it off of gameFAQs.

Version History:

* Version 1.0 [23 MAY 2003]

In the first version I introduced the 100% Quickening. It involved the use of wave fist to start Critical Quick, under the assumption that wave fist has no chance of generating a critical hit. However, while playing the Monk SCC I discovered that earth slash causes critical hits. And therefore, wave fist and throw more than likely cause critical hits as well. This seriously threw a wrench into the original 100% Quickening algorithm, making it...well, no longer 100%.

* Version 2.0 [3 JUN 2003]

Big jump from 1.0 to 2.0 because the entire Quickening process had to be rewritten. However, the good news is that a cleaner and more elegant 100% Quickening is the result.

* Version 2.1 [6 JUN 2003]

Additions include sections on dealing with damage split reactions, speed values, and counter Quickening. Also, correct various little errors from the Version 2.0 upgrade.

* Version 2.2 [14 DEC 2004]

Corrected an error regarding initial speed values. The algorithm remains unchanged. Also, the BMG has been upgraded recently; therefore I've eliminated mentions of "the BMG doesn't say this or that" since it now covers those points.

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* Note: to quickly go to a section just do Find on "[n]" where n is the appropriate section number.

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Section [1]: INTRODUCTION
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The Quickening is a carefully orchestrated strategy in which your characters get an infinite number of turns, without letting the enemy get a single turn in between. As the name implies, this strategy revolves around the Time Mage's reaction ability Critical Quick. Briefly, this ability causes a character who is in Critical status (<.2 max HP) and receives HP damage to receive an immediate turn (CT=100) brave% of the time. The idea is that all of your characters have Critical Quick (from now on called CQ), and somehow they keep triggering each others' CQ. Exactly how this is done is explained in the next section.

I in no way claim that I created the quickening; in fact I first heard about it in the gameFAQ FFT message board. However, to the best of my knowledge I am the first to have created a way of setting up the Quickening with 100% accuracy. That method along with other notes on the Quickening are described in this FAQ.

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Section [2]: BASIC QUICKENING LOOP
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Let's take things one step at a time. The most basic quickening involves two characters. Let us assume that both have 100 Brave and 0 Faith, Math skill with Fire learned, and Critical Quick. Also, assume that both start with CT=100 (if you are not sure what CT means, please see the Battle Mechanics Handbook), and both are already in Critical status.

Ok, so the first guy goes and calculates CT:5:Fire. Since both characters have CT=100, both are hit. Here is the first interesting bit: the calculated fire spell does 0 damage since Faith is 0, BUT CQ is still activated anyway. This is good for us since it means we don't have to worry about healing.

Since both characters have CQ, you're thinking that both get triggered right? WRONG. Here is the second interesting bit. A character CANNOT trigger his or her own CQ with math skill. It just doesn't happen.

If this was possible, then a single character could set up a quickening loop.

So the first guy's calculation hits both characters, but only the second character's CQ is triggered (100% accuracy, due to 100 Brave). The first guy then waits, meaning CT drops to 20. This is very important! The second character now takes the quick turn s/he got from CQ, and calculates CT:5:Fire. This is why the act-wait was important; if the first character had act-moved, CT would have dropped down to 0, meaning the second character could not target the first with math.

Anyway, the second character's calculation hits both for 0 damage, and triggers the first character's CQ. The second character waits. We are now back where we started. This repeats as long as you want. Since CQ happens instantly, no other characters get their CT incremented, meaning they never get to act at all.

But what's the big deal? These two characters are just sitting there wasting time. Well now we add a third character, and things get interesting.

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Section [3]: DOING WORK  
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Obviously we want the Quickening to do something, namely to kill the enemy. So far the two characters just 'bounce' CQ activations back and forth without affecting the enemy at all. Now assume that there is a third character with 100 Brave and Critical quick, who also starts with CT=100 and in Critical status. For this third character, Math skill and 0 Faith are not required. Let's call this third character the worker.

Now, setup is very important. As described in the battle handbook, if two or more characters have CT>=100, then ties are broken according to their character_list position. Character_list position depends on the starting spatial location. If character X is to the left of character Y (from their perspective), then X will ALWAYS go first if both X and Y have CT>=100.

So we want the worker to be furthest on the left, and both the math guys to his/her right (all in the same row). Now let's see what happens. The worker goes first due to position. Do nothing and wait; CT drops to 40. First math guy now goes, doing CT:5:Fire. This hits the worker and the other math guy, causing both CQ to trigger. But because of position, the worker goes first. Do nothing, CT -> 40. Now the second math guy casts CT:5:Fire. The worker and the first math guy are hit and get CQ activated. Again, the worker goes first due to position.

Since the worker is to the left of both the math guys, with each iteration of the loop the worker will ALWAYS go first, leaving one of the math guys to continue the loop. But the worker isn't doing anything?! Well, instead of doing a full wait, the worker can either act or move each quick turn. CT will drop to 20 instead of 40, but that can still be targetted by CT:5. As long as the worker doesn't move AND act, s/he can go around the whole board killing everything on the battle field while the math guys continue the quickening.

This group of 3 characters forms the most basic unit of a FUNCTIONAL Quickening.

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Section [3.1]: NOTE ON CT:5
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I should now mention why CT:5 has been used in the prior two sections. Height is not consistent, since as characters move around they may not necessarily stand on common calculable heights. Also, experience points-- and by extension, levels--fluctuate due to constant actions. Therefore, CT is the only consistent calculable attribute, *assuming* that your characters are not at level 99. However, if your characters *are* level 99, then simply replace all mention of CT:5 with Level:3, and you're set. This has the added benefit that the worker can now both move AND act.

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Section [4]: PRELIMINARIES
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In the above two sections I made some assumptions on Brave, Faith, and status. Now obviously a character cannot start the game with 100 Brave, nor with 0 Faith, nor already in Critical status. So getting from a realistic starting state into the ideal Quickening state is the purpose of the next few sections.

There are several ways of manipulating Brave and Faith; in fact entire FAQs have been written on the subject. Briefly, a mediator's Talk Skill includes abilities that can fully alter both stats, and Ramza has Cheer Up which raises Brave.

As mentioned earlier, Critical status is when current HP is less than one fifth of the maximum HP, rounded up. To make achieving Critical status fast and easy, you'll want to synchronize your characters so that they can deal just enough HP damage to land inside the Critical 'zone'.

There are two main ways to do this: manipulate spell damage and manipulate HP. Spell damage can be raised or lowered by changing MA; this is accomplished using either job change or items. It can also be altered simply by choosing different spelllevels (i.e. Fire, Fire2, Fire3). HP can be raised through a large range using items, and can also be raised or lowered by changing jobs. More extremely, the level-up-down trick can change MA and HP through stat growth. It is also important to consider Zodiac compatibility.

Now let's see what we can do.

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Section [5.A]: 100% QUICKENING SETUP
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This section describes a method for setting up the Quickening that has 0% failure rate. It assumes that all of your characters get a turn (in a specific character order) before any of the enemy. This assumption should be relatively easy to fulfill: story-battle enemies are relatively slow, while speed-boosting items can handle high-level random battles.

4 characters are required. R: Ramza with Guts and Talk Skill. M1: Math Skill. M2: Math Skill. M3: Math Skill. The key abilities are: Cheer Up, Threaten, your choice of damage spells, and Doubt Faith. All four characters have 95 or higher brave and 82 or higher faith.

The characters are placed in this order from left to right (their perspective): R, M1, M2, M3. Ideally their Speeds should be the same for simplicity. Speed values are very important, since you want to make sure that after a character acts, his/her CT can still be targetted by Math.

To test whether a speed value will work, do the following. Take 100 divided by the speed, and round up; now multiply by the speed. This is the starting CT value of the characters (assuming all have the same speed). Now subtract 80 from the above value; this is the CT after a single action. If this post-single-action value and the number 100 do not share either 3, 4, or 5 as a common factor, then the chosen speed will not work. Please note that even if a character's CT is actually higher than 100, for the purposes of Math Skill his/her CT counts as *exactly* 100.

To save you some time, the only speeds from 1 through 25 that do NOT work are: 3, 6, 17, and 19. Of course, if you are using Level:3 calculation instead of CT then you can happily ignore all this and just focus on having high Speed. An additional bonus of being at level 99 is that the characters can have different speeds (from R being fastest to M3 being slowest, of course).

Their HP should be coordinated such that one calculation from M1 will do enough damage to put all four characters into Critical status. Also, R's MA should be at least 10.

The Quickening is setup as follows (7 steps):

- 1) R goes first. Cheer Up (100%) on self, Brave now 100.
- 2) M1 goes second, calculates a damage spell so that all four characters are hit and reduced to Critical status. Since magic does not cause critical hits, the damage spell will not accidentally kill a character. R activates CQ (100% due to Brave). Also, M2 and/or M3 might also activate CQ.
- 3) R will take a quick turn first, but things get a little tricky here. After R will be either M2 or M3's turn. Exactly who is determined as follows:

From step 2, M2 and M3 may or may not activate CQ (they probably will due to high brave). M2 will go before M3 in the following situations: a) neither activates CQ, b) only M2 activates CQ, c) both M2 and M3 activate CQ. However, if only M3 activates CQ then M3 will go *before* M2. For convenience, let's rename whoever is going next to be 'Alpha', and whoever is going after Alpha to be 'Omega'.

R uses Cheer Up on Alpha; Alpha's Brave is now 100.

- 4) It is now Alpha's turn. Alpha calculates Doubt Faith. Since the Y value of Doubt Faith is 150 and faith values are 82, that means $.82 * .82 * 150 = 100.86\%$ chance of it working. So now all four are Innocent. Also, remember that Alpha now has Brave 100 due to Cheer Up from the last step.

- 5) Omega now goes, and calculates a damage spell. Since the characters are Innocent, they all take 0 points of damage. R and Alpha activate CQ for sure due to 100% brave. M1 might activate CQ also.
- 6) R takes his quick turn first, and Cheers Up Omega. That character's Brave is now 100.
- 7) If M1 also activated CQ, have him/her wait. Now Alpha takes a quick turn and calculates a damage spell. R and Omega activate CQ for sure.

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Section [5.B]: 100% QUICKENING EXECUTION
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At this point the Quickening is fully stable. Ramza will always go first, while Alpha and Omega take turns driving the loop using Math (remember, if Alpha is M2 then Omega is M3, and vice versa). Now Ramza runs around using Threaten (100% due to MA 10) to neutralize any potentially fatal reaction abilities. If you are using CT calculation, remember not to have Ramza move AND act. After reactions are neutralized, whack away. Of course Accumulate (particularly in combination with bare fists) helps to speed things up here.

Note that M1 might very well be activating CQ, getting a quick turn between R and Alpha/Omega each iteration. So M1 can also go around and kill things. If M1 doesn't activate CQ, that's not a problem; the only use of M1 is to put everyone into critical status. After that, M1 is disposable. Of course, you can make one of Ramza's actions--after the Quickening is stable--be to Cheer Up M1. This would make M1's activations consistent.

Of course, a fifth character can be added. The fifth character should have 97 Brave and Critical Quick, and should start anywhere after M3. Proceed exactly as above until the Quickening is fully setup (meaning the fifth character doesn't do anything). Now have Ramza Cheer up the fifth character, then use Dash or Throw Stone to slowly bring the character down to Critical.

You may be thinking, "Hey doesn't Innocent status run out?" Well Innocent has a duration of 31 clockticks. BUT, since the Quickening happens entirely within the CR phase, that means the S+ phase (which is the definition of a clocktick) never comes around. So, yes, Innocent has a limited duration, but that is not a concern since time is effectively stopped.

It should be pointed out that this 100% Quickening method is robust against Damage Split. Suppose the enemies have Damage Split; this would mean that after M1 calculates its attack spell it will most likely be killed by the resulting Damage Splits going off. But M1 doesn't play a role after the initial damaging calculation anyway, meaning the 100% Quickening proceeds as usual. And even though M1 is dead, its counter will never decrease because of the same reason that Innocent won't wear off.

Finally, Ramza doesn't HAVE to be used, it's just that Cheer Up is very convenient. A character with Praise and a MA of 50 or higher also has a 100% chance of raising Brave. However, the only way to get a MA that high is through massive level-up-down-ing as a MIME. Talk about tedious.

Note that this is the new 100% Quickening method. The old method had 12 steps before the Quickening was stable; this one only has 7. In addition the Math users are now free to be whatever job, where as in the old method they had to be monks.

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Section [6]: COUNTER QUICKENING
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Ok so now you have the 100% Quickening at your disposal. Let's go into a very theoretical problem now, which is: What if the enemy also has the Quickening? Now obviously the computer AI is never going to pull off the Quickening. And despite some people using debug programs to run player versus player battles, in the NORMAL game there is no versus mode. So, this is really just a thought experiment.

Assume the enemy has the Quickening. If M1 calculates enough damage to put all of your characters in Critical status, it can be assumed that the same calculation will also put the enemy characters in Critical status. And, it appears that the computer always wins ties in case of equal CT. This would mean that if M1 puts the enemy into Critical, and their CQ fire off, then the enemy has effectively 'hijacked' your Quickening, and you lose.

So what to do? Well instead of M1 using Math skill to damage everyone into Critical, use Earth Slash. Obviously M1 has to move from its starting position to the end of the row in order to be able to target the other three characters. And this means that M1 won't be part of the quickening, since it can't hit itself with Earth Slash.

In addition, the problem here is that Earth Slash has a chance of doing critical hits, which are potentially fatal. This means that the Quickening is no longer 100%. The chance of a critical hit is "approximately 5%" according to the battle manual. So, the probability for Earth Slash NOT to do a critical hit on all three other characters is:
 $.95 * .95 * .95 = .857375$. While 85% isn't great, it's not bad either. So there you have it: an 85% Quickening that is immune to enemy Quickening.

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Section [7]: OTHER QUICKENING METHODS
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Several other ideas have been tossed around on the FFT message board. One involves using Elemental. However, Elemental attacks will always do a significant amount of damage unless you want to do reverse level-up-down to get a low MA. Which means being a MIME. Add in the status effects and you've got a mess on your hands.

Another idea is to start off with low HP, then use Equip Change to raise the maximum HP. Since the current HP doesn't change, the difference causes Critical status. The only problem with this is the massive amount of level-up-down-ing necessary to decrease HP to a low enough amount. Furthermore, doing this kind of ruins the character for anything OTHER than the quickening.

Also, the Attack command (as well as Earth Slash, Wave Fist, or Throw) is

another way of bringing a character down to Critical, as mentioned above. The problem with these commands is that there is a chance (albeit a small one) of critical hits. Now, a Critical-causing attack must do at least 4/5 of the total HP in damage. But, a critical hit has the potential to do almost twice normal damage. $2 * (4/5) = (8/5) > (5/5)$ meaning the character is dead.

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Section [8]: ANALYSIS
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The advantage of the 100% Quickening method is that only the Brave and Faith scores have to be altered. This is significantly easier to do than, say, changing PA or HP drastically; no level-up-down is necessary. All other stats remain at 'normal' levels, meaning characters can remain effective when not part of the Quickening. And an added bonus: since faith only has to be 82, you won't get those annoying anti-war warnings after each battle.

What if there is insufficient starting space to line up the characters? That's not a problem, since character_list positions wrap around. So, instead of:

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(Characters face this way)  /|\
                             |
R  M1  M2  M3              |
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You can set up as:

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R  M1  M2
M3
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And the ordering would still be the same.

The Quickening offers invincibility through team work, similar to the Chantage/Transparent combo. The difference is the Quickening works for male characters as well! Also, the Quickening can be set up relatively early in the game, even earlier than when Chantages are available. The 100% Quickening is easily available starting at Chapter 2 (when Ramza gains Cheer Up). If you really want to push it, I guess it can be had in Chapter 1 after Cellar of the Sand Mouse (using Zeklaus Desert to level-up-down for 100% Praise). This means invincibility is technically available at the 7th battle of the game!

So the Quickening is perfect right? Well, not exactly. First, consider the amount of time needed to raise the Brave and Faith values, not to mention opening up the Calculator class. And if you want to use Level:3 for calculations, everyone has to be at level 99. Finally the WORST part about the Quickening is the animation speed. If you're unlucky, Math is gonna hit EVERYTHING on the battle field. So, take the Fire/Ice/Lightning animation and multiply by 8 or 9. THEN there's the Critical Quick animation, which is just as slow. Now go through that over and over and over...you get the idea.

I have tested the 100% Quickening method many times, using it to wipe out entire battlefields. However, it can take up to half an hour (or more!) on battles that should have taken about 5 minutes using run-up-and-attack.

Add in the fact that you can't use the Quickening for item-finding (due to high Brave requirements) or for SCCs, and the Quickening seems kinda...well, pointless. But nevertheless it's a good mental exercise to figure out how to do and it's undefeatable when executed. And that's good enough for me.

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Section [9]: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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- * Notepad: old school, yo!
- * Squaresoft for making Final Fantasy Tactics. It's the only thing keeping me sane when I'm injured and off the bike.
- * GameFAQs for hosting the FFT board.
- * Aerostar, Aaditya Rangan, and Town Knave for the Battle Mechanics Handbook. How can you play when you don't know the rules? Excellent body of work.
- * Metroid Composite, whose post about the ninja-math method was my initial inspiration.
- * Aaditya Rangan, for part of section 7.
- * MunkiBleedsGreen for the SCC FAQ, without which I would not have been playing the Monk SCC, and therefore probably would not have found out about Earth Slash doing critical hits.
- * The FFT Board for all sorts of random FFT crap.

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APPENDICES
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Note: 'Shinmen Takezo' is from a Japanese television series and is the original name of a famous samurai. So, no, my name is not Shinmen Takezo. My email however is <FFTFQAQREG@yahoo.com> Feel free to contact me if there are glaring errors or you want to contribute something to this FAQ. I'll make the changes and give you props in Section 9.