

# Final Fantasy VII LLNIENACMO Challenge FAQ

by Thundaka

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FINAL FANTASY VII: LOW LEVEL/NO ITEMS/INITIAL EQUIPMENT/  
NO ACCESSORIES/COMMAND MATERIA ONLY CHALLENGE  
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## VERSION HISTORY

v1.00: First version of this FAQ posted on GameFAQs. Any suggestions or corrections which could improve this FAQ are encouraged.

v1.10: Made numerous corrections and additions, most significantly the presence of a bed in Corel Prison.

v1.20: Made a few minor alterations, mostly involving the use of Cross Slash and Meteorain.

v1.30: Added a few improvements to the existing strategies, and corrected a few more typos. Barring flagrant errors, this will be the final version.

v1.40: Fixed a few flagrant errors. Also added two VERY important strategy changes to the Motor Ball and Hojo battles (thanks Garland), making two of the hardest battles in the challenge into two of the easier ones and making the challenge as a whole significantly less frustrating.

v1.50: Made a small but VERY important alteration to the battle plan, to allow Cait Sith to better survive the final Submarine Crew battle. Also added a clarification to make Proud Clod much easier.

## INTRODUCTION

In December 2004, soon after GarlandG had completed the formidable Low Level/No Items/Initial Equipment/No Accessories challenge, Necrosis posted this on the GameFAQs message boards: "I've been thinking lately, and I believe that this challenge could be possible using command materia only." After much thought and planning, it was agreed that it could be possible to beat the game with those restrictions. Five months later, in May of 2005, GarlandG finally completed this behemoth of a challenge.

The rules of the LLNIENACMO challenge are as follows:

1. No character can exceed Level 29 at any point in the game.
2. You may never use the Item command in battle.
3. With the exception of the Save Crystal in the Northern Crater, you may never use the Item submenu under the field menu.

4. You may never use the Equip command under the field menu.

5. Only command materia, and more specifically only the Sense, Enemy Skill, Manipulate, Deathblow, and Double Cut materia, may ever be used. (Steal, Throw, Morph, and W-Item violate the No Item restriction, while Mime and Slash-All are impossible to reach.)

6. When the game forces you to equip materia other than those listed above--Lightning and Ice on Cloud in the Sector 1 reactor, Fire and All on Red in the Sample:H0512 battle--you must not use the abilities these materia provide. Remove all banned materia at the first opportunity.

7. Cait Sith's Slots limit may only be used once, in the Hojo battle. When it is employed, you must not use the instant victory combo (three Cait Siths). All other combos are fair game, though for practical reasons you must avoid the Cait Sith/Cait Sith/BAR and three Moogle combos.

Though superficially this challenge seems similar to LLNIIENA, in reality it is an entirely different beast. Prior to getting the buggy in Corel, you do not have access to Potions, Cure, or any healing enemy skills; Aeris' and Yuffie's limit breaks are the only sources of healing. Since Aeris will lose more HP than she can gain from Healing Wind (without Fury, anyway), many Midgar battles can turn deadly if they drag on too long. And when neither healer is present--most notably against Sample:H0512, Rufus, and Dyne--you cannot heal at all; you must end the battle before the designated survivor is killed, using inns to heal between battles.

Also note that there are only three ways to revive fallen characters: inns, Aeris' Pulse of Life limit break, and the Angel Whisper enemy skill. Pulse of Life takes too long to charge for use in the earliest battles, and since Angel Whisper is learned in the Northern Crater it can only be used in a few random encounters and against the final bosses. This means that there is simply no way to revive fallen characters in most battles, including all battles on Disc 2.

Besides removing the ability to heal and revive, the CMO restriction takes away a number of other useful functions of your materia. Stat boosters like HP Plus and Magic Plus go out the window. In addition to being available earlier, basic magic materia like Restore, Heal, and Barrier cost much less MP; since you are forced to use the more expensive White Wind and Big Guard, MP is usually more of an issue than in LLNIIENA. You cannot poison your enemies, so the Materia Keeper battle (and to a lesser extent Bottomswell and Red Dragon) is completely different. No elemental or status protection is possible, making Big Guard and White Wind even more crucial.

On the other hand, your characters do have some advantages in this challenge. In order to defeat certain bosses, your characters will learn some higher-level limit breaks: Meteorain for Cloud, Planet Protector and Pulse of Life for Aeris, and Slots for Cait Sith. In addition to possessing more powerful limit breaks, the extra EXP from killing enemies to learn these limit breaks will boost your characters' stats. It is because of this extra EXP that the maximum level for this challenge is Level 29, rather than Level 28 as in most LL challenges. You also get Yuffie earlier, granting your party a second healer and long-range character not long after leaving Midgar. And because there is no need to buy items or materia, you will never have to fuss over conserving gil or picking up items and equipment to sell.

As with LLNIIENA, you will frequently need a calculator in this challenge. Five bosses must be defeated without access to Sense--the first four Midgar bosses plus Rapps--and most of the last few bosses are immune to Sense. To

assist you with this, HP values are provided below each enemy's name. Where it is relevant, I will list MP values as well. This will tell you how much MP you can gain from them with Magic Hammer, and in some cases how much you must take away to disable their attacks.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that LLNIIENACMO is THE elite challenge for the FFVII gamer.

#### BATTLE PLAN

In order to complete any Low Level challenge, you need a battle plan. The battle plan lists all forced encounters and boss battles in the game, as well as any other EXP-earning battles you must win in order to defeat all the bosses. Examples of the latter include battles in which you learn a new enemy skill, or low-EXP enemies you defeat to learn a new limit break.

With the exception of the Icicle battles on Gaea's Cliff, only one character can be alive at the end of any battle. This will ensure that only one character gets active party EXP, allowing everyone to stay below Level 30. Survivors in the active party get full EXP, characters not in battle get half EXP, and active party members dead at the end of battle receive nothing. (Characters are considered to be in the party if you can access their materia via the Exchange command. Cid is not in the party when you fight Palmer, and Yuffie is not in the party during the Wutai sidequest; hence, they do not receive any EXP during those times.) Since she will not be around to receive the EXP from the enemies on Discs 2 and 3, Aeris will be the designated survivor in most Disc 1 battles.

Enemy	EXP	Survivor	KO
MP x2	32	Cloud	
Guard Scorpion	100	Cloud	Barret
106 x (Mono Drive x3)	5724	Cloud	Barret, Tifa
Air Buster	180	Cloud	Barret, Tifa
54 x (Whole Eater + Hedgehog Pie x2)	3456	Aeris	Cloud
Aps	240	Aeris	Cloud, Tifa
Reno	290	Barret	Cloud, Tifa
Mighty Grunt x3	150	Cloud	Barret, Tifa
Sample:H0512	300	Barret	Cloud, Red
Heli Gunner	250	Barret	Aeris, Red
Rufus + Dark Nation	310	Cloud	
Motor Ball	440	Barret	Cloud, Aeris
Ark Dragon + Crawler x3	252	Cloud	Tifa, Red
Mystery Ninja	160	Cloud	Red, Aeris
Bottomswell	550	Yuffie	Cloud, Aeris
Midgar Zolom	250	Aeris	*
Jenova-BIRTH	680	Aeris	Cloud, Yuffie
Death Claw x2	192	Barret	Cloud, Red
Dyne	600	Barret	
Zemzelett	70	Aeris	Cloud, Yuffie
Beachplug x3	285	Cloud	Barret, Yuffie
Harpy	148	Aeris	Cloud, Yuffie
Stinger	290	Aeris	Cloud, Red
Stinger	290	Aeris	Cloud, Red
Gi Nattak	1400	Aeris	Cloud, Red
Materia Keeper	3000	Aeris	Cloud, Yuffie
Palmer	1800	Aeris	Cloud, Yuffie

Attack Squad x2		600	Aeris		Cloud, Barret	
Attack Squad x3		900	Aeris		Cloud, Barret	
Rapps		3200	Aeris		Cloud, Barret	
Red Dragon		3500	Aeris		Cloud, Cid	
Demons Gate		3800	Aeris		Cloud, Cid	
Razor Weed x2 + Tail Vault		1190	Cloud		Barret, Tifa	
Touch Me		170	Cloud		Barret, Tifa	
Harpy		148	Cloud		Barret, Tifa	
Jenova-LIFE		4000	Cloud		Barret, Tifa	

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END OF DISC 1

Icicle		500	Cloud, Yuffie		Red	
Icicle		500	Cloud, Yuffie		Red	
Icicle		500	Cloud, Yuffie		Red	
Schizo		4400	Cid		Cloud, Yuffie	
Jenova-DEATH		6000	Cloud		Tifa, Cait Sith	
Stilva		1000	Cid		Cloud, Tifa	
Beachplug x3		285	Cid		Barret, Red	
Zemzelett		70	Cid		Barret, Yuffie	
Attack Squad x2		600	Cait Sith		Cid, Yuffie	
Submarine Crew x2		1700	Cid		Cloud, Red	
Submarine Crew x2		1700	Cid		Cloud, Red	
Submarine Crew		850	Cid		Cloud, Cait Sith	
Submarine Crew x2		1700	Cid		Cloud, Barret	
Underwater MP x2		1640	Cloud		Barret, Tifa	
Carry Armor		5700	Cait Sith		Cloud, Red	
Submarine Crew x2		1700	Cait Sith		Cloud, Red	
Submarine Crew x2		1700	Cait Sith		Cloud, Red	
Submarine Crew x3		2550	Cait Sith		Cloud, Red	
Attack Squad x2		600	Cloud		Barret, Red	
Attack Squad x2		600	Cloud		Barret, Red	
Attack Squad x2 +		1530	Cloud		Barret, Red	
Senior Grunt						
Rude + Attack Squad x2		4000	Cid		Cloud, Cait Sith	
Senior Grunt		930	Cid		Cloud, Cait Sith	
Diamond Weapon		35000	Cloud		Cait Sith, Cid	
10 x (Whole Eater +		640	Cait Sith		Cloud, Tifa	
Hedgehog Pie x2)						
Proud Clod		7000	Yuffie		Cloud, Cait Sith	
Hojo		25000	Cait Sith		Cloud, Yuffie	

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END OF DISC 2

Pollensalta		1000	Cloud		**	
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EXP Remaining Before Level 30  
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Cloud: 706

Barret: 1104

Tifa: 20

Red: 1437

Yuffie: 777

Cait Sith: 422

Cid: 1472

\*If Cloud or Yuffie is thrown out of the battle, they receive inactive party EXP. Whether they are thrown out or are dead when the battle ends, you will

be able to adhere to the battle plan so long as Aeris is the only character standing.

\*\*The rest of the party receives no EXP if this battle is fought before the party members are collected at the bottom of the Crater. Hence it does not matter which party you use, so long as only Cloud is alive at the end of the battle.

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LLNIIENACMO STRATEGY GUIDE  
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\*\*\*\*\*DISC ONE\*\*\*\*\*

This sordid story begins in the city of Midgar, as a train rolls up to the Sector 1 Mako reactor.

I. Midgar - Sector 1

Head off the train, and go forward to engage in your first battle.

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MP x2  
30 HP

Two physical attacks will take care of them. Not too tough... yet.  
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Head on to the next screen to talk with the AVALANCHE members, then name Cloud and Barret. (I will be using default names for all characters except Red XIII.) Place Cloud in the back row. It is time to start practicing the fine art of running away. Have Cloud defend on his first turn, then do nothing until he successfully exits the battle. Don't bother moving Barret back; you will have to kill him in the first boss battle, so the more damage he takes the better.

Take the elevator down to the reactor, and take advantage of the first save point. As you may have noticed, there's no way for you to heal right now. For the moment you need to just concentrate on minimizing the damage Cloud receives. Keep Cloud in the back row, and walk up to the reactor to trigger the first boss fight.  
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Guard Scorpion  
800 HP

Before attacking, Guard Scorpion will use Search Scope on his intended target. This will give you plenty of opportunity to defend or change rows if you deem it necessary. It's best to enter your commands during Guard Scorpion's attack animation, so you don't accidentally trigger Tail Laser. Despite his reduced attack power, the lower damage from Guard Scorpion's attacks makes moving Cloud to the back row well worth it. Cloud still does a respectable 20 damage, while Barret does 35 damage. Both limit breaks do around 120 damage.

The first time he raises his tail, simply wait until he lowers it again. The second time have Cloud defend and Barret attack several times. Guard Scorpion will counterattack with Tail Laser, doing 70 damage to Barret and

just under 20 damage to Cloud. He also gains a big Defense bonus in this stage, so your attacks will only do half their normal damage. Be aware that Barret will gain limit breaks twice before he dies; you need to make sure Guard Scorpion has enough HP left to survive a second Big Shot plus a few physical attacks.

Have Cloud do nothing except defend after he gains his limit break. Depending on how many times Barret has been targeted, it may take two or three Tail Lasers to put him at low enough HP. Kill him off with physical attacks, then have Cloud finish Guard Scorpion with Braver. Be careful not to trigger Tail Laser after Barret has died; it will do 50% more damage then, and Guard Scorpion will still only take half damage.

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Once Cloud has won the battle, save immediately. If he stays in the back row and defends, Cloud should have no trouble surviving the random encounters. I managed to make it out with 100 HP and a little over seven minutes to spare. Time to head back to the hideout. (Note that Cloud's HP is automatically restored after you escape the reactor.) Buy a flower if you wish, then head south. When you meet the three groups of soldiers, choose "Later!" each time. After a number of cutscenes, you'll be back in Sector 7. Home sweet home.

## II. Midgar - Sector 7

Head straight for Tifa's bar, in the southwest corner of town. Do not be tempted to start the Mono Drive battles just yet; besides giving Barret extra EXP, this will cause Tifa to join at a higher level. Go through the cutscenes at the bar, and the party will get to rest up. Go upstairs, skip the materia tutorial, and Tifa will enter the party. Now that you have access to the Materia menu, unequip Cloud's Lightning and Ice right away.

Before boarding the train, Cloud has to learn Meteorain by defeating 320 enemies. You will be killing Mono Drives, since they give the least EXP of any enemy outside the Number 1 reactor. To fight them, head right past the train platform to enter the train graveyard. They appear three at a time; together with the two MPs from the beginning, it will take 106 battles to learn Meteorain. Move Cloud to the front row before entering the train graveyard.

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Mono Drive x3

28 HP

Have Cloud attack each of them once. If Barret and Tifa are still alive, finish them with physical attacks before killing the final Mono Drive.

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Apply the above strategy 106 times, resting at the inn above the weapon shop when your HP falls below a certain amount. (50 HP would be a safe minimum.) Though no enemy here is unusually powerful--the most damaging attacks are Sweeper's Smoke Shot and W Machine Gun, each of which does about 25 damage--with no healer it doesn't take long for the Sweepers and Guard Hounds to wear down your HP. When Cloud reaches 29 Strength, most likely at Level 12 or Level 13, he will be able to consistently kill them in one hit from the back row; placing him there will allow you to last twice as long between stays at the inn. Don't bother switching Cloud's limits any time soon; Blade Beam and Meteorain charge extremely slowly, and you want to learn Cross Slash soon anyway.

You can expect the whole process to take three to four hours. If you have trouble finding the patience to learn Meteorain here, it would be wise to quit the challenge now. You'll have to do the same thing when you get Aeris in Sector 5, and several boss battles require similar amounts of patience. This is no speed run. But if you do have the patience for it, this is one of the most exciting challenges available.

There is no need to count the battles one by one, as after battle 106 the words "Meteorain gained" will appear on the EXP screen. Rest at the inn one last time, move everyone to the back row, save your game, and then board the train.

### III. Midgar - Sector 5

When you approach Tifa in the railroad car, the alarm will go off. Just head straight out of each car, ignoring the people with items and the guy who steals your money. If you reach the last car, you will only have to cross one screen to reach the security sensors. Go down the hole, take the ladder up to where Jessie is, and then go left to reach the save point. From now on, make it a policy to be in the back row and defending unless otherwise noted. Save your game, and slide down to the Number 5 Reactor.

Don't wander around down here for too long. Not only do the enemies deal more damage, but Smogger's Poison can be painful at the highest battle speed. Descend into the reactor, taking advantage of the save point down there, set the bomb, and go back up to the stairs leading to the elevator. You will have to push the button at the same time as Barret and Tifa. Hopefully this won't take more than a few attempts. Finally, run to the save point. If Cloud has much less than 300 HP, you may want to consider reloading from a previous save.

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BOSS: Air Buster  
1200 HP

This battle is an automatic side attack, meaning everyone will get a turn before Air Buster. It is not a normal side attack, however. Air Buster takes five times normal damage from attacks to his weak side, rather than the standard double damage; but his weak side is not always his back. His weak side is whichever side he did not attack from last. If his last move was Big Bomber, Energy Ball, or his bodyblow counterattack, Air Buster's weak side will be the back. If his last attack was Rear Gunner, he will take extra damage from the front.

Have Barret and Tifa attack continuously while Cloud defends. Air Buster's counterattacks should finish them off quickly, but you should still be careful that you don't kill him too quickly by attacking his weak side. (If Big Shot hits his weak side it will do 500 damage, and more than likely will end the battle prematurely.) The instant both Barret and Tifa have been killed by Air Buster, activate Cross Slash. This does 900 damage to his weak side, and should guarantee the win.

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Air Buster explodes, you land in a bed of flowers, and Cloud's HP is restored. Go figure. Say hello to Aeris. This lovely lady is our salvation for Disc 1, so be nice to her. Before you can save, you'll have to take care of some Shinra troops. To avoid the forced battles, have Aeris run from the first soldier, "Hold on!" for the second, and run from the third. To take care of the second soldier, push the top barrel. Your HP will be restored when you

exit the church. Save right away.

You can start the Planet Protector battles either before or after going to Aeris' house. Either way, you won't be able to rest until you go through the events there. As always, walk past Aeris' room rather than running. Head toward the Sector 6 exit to get her back in your party, then save your progress.

You need to win 54 Whole Eater + Hedgehog Pie x2 battles for Aeris to learn Planet Protector. This enemy formation is found in front of the church, on the screen with the save point, and immediately in front of the Sector 5 village. Despite the smaller number of battles and Aeris' ability to heal, this is much harder than the Mono Drive battles. The Hedgehog Pies attack for 10 damage, and their Fire does 25 damage. The Whole Eater is even worse; its physical attack does 30 damage, and he is able to attack twice on the same turn. You also will frequently encounter two Whole Eaters together in this area, though you can defend and run away from that battle. Move Cloud to the front row, but keep Aeris in back.

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Whole Eater, Hedgehog Pie x2  
72 HP, 40 HP

Focus on killing the Whole Eater first, then the Hedgehog Pies. Be certain you've killed Cloud before you finish the last Hedgehog Pie. Your exact strategy depends on how strong Aeris is; see below.

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At first, you will have no choice but to rest after each battle. Aeris will start with less than 250 HP, dealing a little over 20 damage per hit in the front row. If Cloud attacks the Whole Eater first, Aeris will be able to take it out with one physical attack; she can then move to the front and kill each Hedgehog Pie in two hits. However, after Cloud has died she has little hope of killing the Whole Eater quickly enough. Even with Healing Wind, she most likely won't live long enough to survive his double slashes plus the Hedgehog Pies' attacks.

Things become much easier after Aeris has used Healing Wind seven times against the Hedgehog Pies, earning her Seal Evil. (If you escape from a battle in which Healing Wind is used, that use does not count toward Seal Evil.) This stops all enemies for a minimum of three rounds, more than enough time to kill the Whole Eater, and also silences the Hedgehog Pies. Even at relatively low HP, Aeris should have no trouble winning the battle if she's able to get out Seal Evil. Still, even using Seal Evil she can usually only survive two battles before resting. Don't try entering the battle without at least 150 HP and a halfway full limit gauge.

Critical hits can easily screw up your strategy. If Cloud's attack goes critical and accidentally kills the Whole Eater in two battles, you can no longer risk his help; should he kill another Whole Eater, Aeris will be one battle short of Planet Protector. Likewise, you don't want Aeris accidentally killing the last Hedgehog Pie before Cloud is dead. After she reaches Strength 17 (at Level 6 or 7), you can do this: return to the back row once only one Hedgehog Pie is left, and have Aeris attack it. This won't kill it even if Aeris gets a critical hit, but will still allow her to finish it in one hit after Cloud kills himself.

Expect this to take as long as learning Meteorain, if not longer. After the 54th battle, you will be notified that Aeris has learned Planet Protector. It would be wise to keep a save here for the duration of the challenge, in case



you badly screw up the battle plan and have to start from the beginning. This way, you won't have to learn your level 3 limit breaks all over again.

There's one more task to take care of before you can move on to Wall Market: learning Pulse of Life. Fortunately the process is quite easy, and doesn't give you any EXP. Set Aeris' limit to level 3, then allow her to be attacked until she has Planet Protector ready. (You will have to rest at least once for this to happen.) Get into a battle with Vice. Use Planet Protector, then wait for the Vice to steal an item and leave. Even though he escapes, the use of Planet Protector still counts because the EXP screen is shown. After you do this five times, Pulse of Life will be yours. You lose the items the Vice steals, but you would have no use for them anyway.

#### IV. Midgar - Sectors 6 and 7

Set Aeris' limit breaks back to level 1, and move both Aeris and Cloud to the back row. Rest and save one last time, then head north to Wall Market. There is a small chance you will be attacked from both sides by a group of Whole Eaters along the way, rendering you unable to escape. If so, focus your attacks on the single Whole Eater; eliminating the enemies on one side will allow you to escape. Make sure that Cloud and Aeris both have limit breaks before you start the Wall Market mission.

To avoid fighting Don Corneo's lackeys, Cloud is going to be his date. Here's how to get him picked:

Ask the man at the Honeybee Inn about Tifa. Go all the way north, and talk to the guard at Don Corneo's mansion. After talking to the girl in the clothes shop, go to the bar on the second screen and talk to her father. Tell him you want a dress that "feels soft" and "shimmers." Upon returning to the clothes shop, you will receive the Silk Dress. Now go to the gym, and hit Square-X-Circle over and over to beat Big Bro. This will earn you the Blonde Wig.

Don't visit the clothes shop yet. Instead, enter the restaurant just north of the item shop. Sit down and order anything on the menu; when prompted say, "It was alright." Take the Pharmacy Coupon you're given to the item shop, and exchange it for a Digestive. Now go all the way north to the bar, and talk to the woman in the bathroom. Offer her the Digestive; in relief and gratitude, she will give you the Sexy Cologne. Finally, talk to the man in the shop on the northeast corner of the first screen. Accept his offer, stay at the inn, and buy the 200 gil item from the vending machine. He will give you the Diamond Tiara.

So to recap, you need four items: Silk Dress, Blonde Wig, Sexy Cologne, and Diamond Tiara. With these, Cloud is guaranteed to be chosen. Be aware that after you put on the dress, it is no longer possible to leave Wall Market to charge your limits. Save one last time, and enter Corneo's lair.

This place gives me the creeps. Head into the basement to find Tifa, then back upstairs to be picked by the Don. After some further unpleasantness, you'll be thrown into the sewers.

-----  
BOSS: Aps  
1800 HP

The key to this battle is being able to manipulate Sewer Tsunami. In addition to damaging the whole party, it also hurts Aps. If used under the right circumstances, Sewer Tsunami can help Aeris finish Aps while ensuring that she

is the only one left alive. There are two versions of this move: a forward version that does 180 damage to Aps and 50 damage to the party (assuming they are in the front row), and a backward version that does 45 damage to Aps and 100 damage to the party.

Aps will open the battle with the forward version of Sewer Tsunami. Use both Cross Slash and Seal Evil immediately after he does, immobilizing him for a long while. Continue attacking Aps until one more hit will put him below 600 HP. At the lowest battle speed, you can easily do this before Aps starts moving. Then attack Cloud and Tifa until they have less than 140 HP remaining. While you are doing this, Aps will only use Lick on Tifa or his tail attack. If he uses Lick, make sure Tifa has less than 80 HP remaining. (Sadness will reduce the damage she receives by one third.) Have Aeris defend rather than move to the back row; moving her back causes her to be the target of all his tail attacks.

When the above conditions have been met, start attacking again. Once he falls below 600 HP, Aps will enter "Tsunami mode." He will skip his first turn, use the forward Sewer Tsunami, skip his third turn, and finally use the backward version of Sewer Tsunami. Have Aeris defend after the first Sewer Tsunami, and otherwise just keep attacking until he has no more than 60 HP remaining. The backward Sewer Tsunami should kill Cloud and Tifa, and either kill Aps outright or weaken him enough that Aeris can kill him in one hit.

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After battle, move Aeris to the back row and raise the battle speed to help you escape from random encounters. Ignore the Steal materia, and take the ladder into the train graveyard. It is perfectly possible for Aeris to make it through the train graveyard by herself if you take the most direct route.

When you reach Sector 7, Cloud and Tifa are revived. Save your game, and run to the top of the pillar. Talk to Barret, and proceed directly to the battle. No need to open the menu.

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BOSS: Reno  
1000 HP

Damage is not a problem here; both Reno's staff strike and Electro-mag Rod do about 60 damage, and Barret will only take half that. The problem is finishing the battle with only Barret alive, since Pyramid on your only surviving character is a Game Over. Attack Reno until Barret is able to kill him in one hit. Then kill Tifa, and lower Cloud to critical HP. (I recommend keeping Cloud alive because he can target the Pyramid with his limit break. Tifa's limit break hits a random target, and has a very good chance of accidentally killing Reno instead.) Whenever he uses Pyramid, break it immediately; characters alive inside a Pyramid at the end of battle will still receive full EXP.

It is critical that Reno deal the killing blow to Cloud. This ensures that he cannot use Pyramid immediately after Cloud dies, and will give Barret time to win the battle.

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Swing on the rope to escape the collapsing pillar. When the cutscenes are over, Cloud will be revived with full HP. Move him to the back row, and run south to make Barret and Tifa join you. Now head back to Sector 5 to witness the cutscenes at Aeris' house. When all is said and done, take advantage of the bed and use the save point.

## V. Rescuing Aeris

Time to return to Wall Market. On the way there, be sure to pick up the Sense materia. This is the first materia you are allowed to equip, and the only one that will be of any use prior to the world map. I recommend putting it on Tifa. Rest at the Wall Market inn if you've lost too much HP, buy the batteries from the weapon shop, and climb up the maze of pipes and wires to reach Shinra Headquarters.

Move everyone to the front row. Save your game, then soft-reset and reload. Prior to guessing Mayor Domino's password, it is impossible to escape from random encounters; if you get one while crossing floor 59, you will have to reset and climb all 59 flights of stairs again. Resetting your game should prevent you from getting a random encounter. Head left from the save point, and start climbing. The stairs occupy nine screens; the party will stop for a cutscene on the sixth. When you reach Floor 59, you will be forced to fight one battle.

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Mighty Grunt x3  
230 HP

Eliminate two of them and Sense the third. Reduce his HP to the point where Cloud can kill him in one hit, then have Cloud move to the back row and defend. Meanwhile, Barret and Tifa should work on killing each other off. Finish him once they are both dead. (After sensing him, you can keep track of his current HP by pressing Select to open the help window.)

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Take the elevator to Floor 60. The next part is one of the most annoying portions of any Low Level challenge. Cloud, Barret, and Tifa must run past both pairs of guards without being noticed, or you will get a forced encounter and have to climb the stairs and defeat the Mighty Grunts again. The middle gaps are the most dangerous part, since there is always a guard looking through them; you need to cross as soon as you see them moving to make it. The guards on the right are much faster, so be extra careful when passing them. Once Tifa has made it past the second set, you can breathe easy for a bit.

(It is possible to take the elevator down to the first floor and save before doing this part, but I really don't recommend it. Even one random encounter at this point will screw up the battle plan, and you have to worry about encounters both on the way to the save point and on the way to the floor 1 elevator. Consider yourself warned.)

Walk up the stairs to floor 61, and talk to the man walking along the bottom of the screen to receive Keycard 62. Then go up, and get Keycards 63-65 from Mayor Domino. Simply guess every option until you get the password. Ignore floor 63, and head straight up to floor 64. Finally, a save point and some beds. Rest to revive Barret and Tifa, move them all to the back row, and save your game.

Open all the suitcases on floor 65 to receive Keycard 66, then eavesdrop on the meeting. If Cloud or Barret has lost a substantial amount of HP, it would be a very good idea to rest again on Floor 64. Follow Hojo up. When you reach the save point, put the battle speed at the slowest setting; this will help to minimize poison damage. When your old friend Nanaki joins the party, do him a favor by giving him a better name than Red XIII. (I will simply call him Red.) Tell Tifa to leave with Aeris.

-----  
BOSS: Sample:H0512

1000 HP

Depending on your luck, the Sample can be the first really nasty boss of the challenge. He will always be in the back row, so Cloud's and Red's physical attacks only do half damage. His Shady Breath will usually poison the whole party, a definite problem in a battle where you can't heal. And his little helpers can be pretty nasty as well: Rolling Attack does 30 damage in the back row (Sample:H0512's attack does about the same damage), and their Fire and Ice do more than 70 damage.

If the initial Shady Breath misses Barret, consider yourself lucky; it should make his survival much easier. Paralyzing the boss with Cross Slash can prevent him from poisoning you for several turns. Use Red's first two turns to move him to the back row, then Sense the Sample. After that, there's really only one thing you can do: physically attack the Sample. You may attack the little guys to get rid of your limit breaks at the end, but you must not kill them; the EXP from one of these guys is enough to push you to Level 30. Reduce the Sample to the point where one more attack from Barret will kill him, then move Cloud and Red to the front row. In addition to taking more damage from the little guys' attacks, this will increase your characters' damage so they can kill themselves more quickly. Have Barret defend during this time. (See note below about defending while poisoned.) Unfortunately, if the Sample and his buddies start a Barret killing spree you can't win. You just have to hope that doesn't happen.

-IMPORTANT NOTE ON POISON: You should be aware that being poisoned interferes with Defend. Normally, after a character chooses to Defend they will take half damage from physical attacks until they enter a different command. But after the numbers indicating poison damage appear above a character's head, the defensive stance is broken and the character takes full damage again. To return to the defensive stance, you must select Defend again soon after the damage has appeared. This fact is of limited importance in this battle and the Hundred Gunner+Heli Gunner battle, since it is possible to survive even if you never defend. However, it is the difference between life and death when fighting Rapps.

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## VI. Escape from Shinra HQ

After the battle, you will have to form a party. Pick Cloud, Aeris, and Red. Remove Red's Fire and All materia, move him to the back row, and raise the battle speed once again. I shouldn't have to remind you, but pick up the first Enemy Skill materia; you can't complete the challenge without it. Return to floor 67 and save.

Take the stairs back down to floor 64, and rest to revive the party. Do not enter the elevators yet. Set Cloud's limit breaks to level 3, and get into a random encounter on floor 65 to fill his limit gauge. If Sword Dance's Slap puts Aeris into Fury, you can do this without resting; otherwise, you'll have to use the beds on floor 64 at least once. While you're at it, let them charge Red's and Aeris' limits. When everyone has a ready limit break, save one last time. It would be wise to make a permanent save here as well, at least until you finally get to the world map; if you screw up after being captured, it will be very difficult to charge your limit breaks again. Once you are ready, enter the elevator.

After you are captured, the party's HP will be restored. Escape the cells, then follow the trail of blood to floor 69. Save your game. If Aeris still doesn't have a limit break, get one now. When you discover President Shinra's body, your HP will be restored again; but you now only control Cloud.

(Unfortunately, whenever your HP/MP is restored Fury and Sadness will be automatically removed as well. Hence, putting Aeris in Fury to increase your healing will do no good at all.) Unless you want to watch that cutscene again every time you die to Heli Gunner, you'll want to take Cloud back down and save again. Walk outside to talk with Rufus. Take Aeris to the elevator, and hope you don't get any random encounters along the way. Before taking the elevator, make sure that everyone is in the back row and the battle speed is at the slowest setting.

-----  
BOSS: Hundred Gunner

1600 HP

Aeris' and Red's physical attacks cannot reach him. Because of this, it is doubly important that Barret attack him every turn he gets. Have Red open with Sled Fang while Aeris defends. Follow up by having Red Sense him, then do nothing; he can only damage Hundred Gunner with Sled Fang, and defending slows your limit breaks down. The more often he attacks Aeris in the beginning, the better off you are. Once either Barret or Aeris is just above half HP, restore them both to full health with Healing Wind. Like Red, she cannot afford to defend most of the time; Healing Wind is vital for keeping Barret alive to the end of the battle. The only exception is if her limit gauge is just barely short of filling, and you are sure she will get Healing Wind even if she defends. This will save her some precious HP, allowing her to survive a little bit longer against the pernicious Heli Gunner.

Once he falls below 1066 HP, he will stop using single-target attacks and start using Main Artillery on the party every turn. This can be quite painful, and you will probably need the first Healing Wind early in this phase. Keep attacking, and hopefully you'll be able to reduce him below 533 HP. He now uses the more powerful Wave Artillery. While this is more damaging--it hits the whole party for about 50 damage--this phase is easier because he needs two turns to charge every time he uses it. Keep attacking with Barret and Sled Fang, and soon enough Hundred Gunner will be toast. When Aeris gains her second Healing Wind, use it immediately.

Heli Gunner

1000 HP

Before you win this battle, you are going to have a burning hatred for this tin can. Like Hundred Gunner, Heli Gunner can only be reached by Sled Fang and Barret's attacks. He also has good evasion, so Barret will miss him about 20% of the time. But the thing that makes him evil is his status effects. He can inflict Sleep with AB Cannon (used at the beginning of battle), Poison with C Cannon, and both Poison and Sleep on the whole party with Firing Line. Each does about the same damage as Hundred Gunner's attacks. If Barret is put to sleep, you won't be able to hurt Heli Gunner until he wakes up. Use a physical attack from Aeris or Red to wake him. (Heli Gunner's physical attacks will also wake him up, but he will lose time and suffer more damage as a result.) Aeris or Red falling asleep isn't as big a problem, except if Aeris is put to sleep just as she gains Healing Wind. You really do need three Healing Winds for Barret to survive this battle, and especially if Aeris is poisoned it's quite possible for an extra physical attack to kill her before she can use the third.

Poison is even worse. Unlike Sleep it can't be removed, and the longer the

battle drags on the more it will hurt you. If Barret is poisoned early, his prospects of living to deal the killing blow aren't good. Similarly, if he poisons Aeris early and doesn't attack her very often after that, she most likely won't live to use the final Healing Wind. And of course, it screws up Defend as mentioned in the Sample:H0512 strategy.

Barret still must attack Heli Gunner all the time, and Red and Aeris still must not defend unless only a miniscule amount of damage is required for a new limit. Have Red use Sense at the beginning of this battle. Once Aeris uses the third Healing Wind, have her do nothing but defend; she won't get another one, so she should stay alive to serve as an alternate target for as long as possible. If you somehow manage to get him below 250 HP with Barret at high HP and Poison-free, you are one lucky dude. Instead of status effects, he starts attacking single targets with the powerful Spinning Bodyblow and Flying Drill; the last does almost 100 damage even in the back row. Be aware that he receives a big Defense bonus in this form, so you need to get his HP even lower than previous bosses. Red will most likely get a Sled Fang just before he dies, so make sure Heli Gunner has at least 160 HP remaining before he uses it. Have Barret defend--be sure to reenter the command when needed if he is poisoned--and move Red to the front row. Hopefully he won't target Barret too often before the others die, and Barret will be able to deal the finishing blow.

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Congratulations: you've just beaten perhaps the toughest (and certainly the most luck-reliant) battle in the challenge. Just two more battles, and the freedom of the world map is yours.

After the battle is over you will be in control of Cloud on the rooftop. Open the menu, move Cloud to the front row, and raise the battle speed all the way to the maximum. You need quick fingers here.

-----  
BOSS: Rufus, Dark Nation  
500 HP, 140 HP

As soon as you are able activate Meteorain. If you manage to use it before the Dark Nation casts Barrier, you can take out most of Rufus' HP in the first round, but that won't usually happen. Two hits of Meteorain, or one hit of Meteorain followed by one physical attack, will be enough to kill the Dark Nation. Once it is gone, attack Rufus nonstop. The Barrier will wear off pretty quickly, and without Dark Nation to recast it Rufus should die soon enough. Rufus will often waste a turn laughing, giving you additional time. Cloud will probably be at low HP when the battle is over, but you should win.

-----  
Make a beeline for the floor 69 save point. If Cloud gets killed in a random encounter before reaching it--well, if that happens you have some unbelievably bad luck. Just hope that it doesn't happen. After saving, talk to Tifa. Move Aeris towards the entrance, and after a cutscene it will be motorcycle time. Fortunately, your characters are revived after this. Form a party of Cloud, Barret, and Aeris. Move them all to the front row, and lower the battle speed. Equip Sense on Barret. Then initiate the motorcycle minigame.

To survive Motor Ball's assault, you must prevent the Shinra assault troops from dealing too much damage to either Barret or Aeris. Simply killing them before they reach the truck is a frustratingly unreliable approach. The minigame controls make it very difficult to hit a target that's even a little behind or in front of Cloud, and the enemies are very good at ducking out of the way. Fortunately, there's a much safer way to protect your party (thanks

go to BrutalAI for this strategy):

First, you need to make sure that three red assault troops are present. The assault troops come in two varieties: the weak red motorcycles and the tougher, more aggressive orange motorcycles. The red ones are easily intimidated, and can be forced back by Cloud waving his sword around, while the orange ones will charge forward regardless. Attack any orange bikes that come your way, killing them as quickly as possible, but do not touch the red bikes. (You can keep the red ones out of your hair by randomly swinging the sword while you wait for the orange ones to approach.) Once only the red assault troops remain, position yourself so you are directly behind the truck, then just keep swinging that sword until the minigame ends. So long as you keep "attacking," the troops will stay behind you and never get a chance to damage your party members.

Be aware that this strategy is not QUITE as easy as it sounds. The truck will drift from side to side quite a bit. Let it move too far away from you, and the troops may be able to approach the truck. (This is especially a problem near the end, when the camera angle changes for a few seconds. Wait until the camera angle returns to normal before adjusting your position, since you're just as likely to swerve in the wrong direction.) Also, you really do need to wave the sword nonstop; even a second of relaxation is enough for the troops to mob the vehicle. But if you follow these directions, you should reach Motor Ball with plenty of health to spare.

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BOSS: Motor Ball  
2600 HP

If either Aeris or Barret has less than 320 HP remaining, give up now. Unless you get very lucky with the wheel attacks missing, Rolling Fire will wipe them out. This is a Back Attack battle, so the rows are reversed: since everyone was in the front row they now are in back, and receive half damage from Motor Ball's physical attacks. Also, Motor Ball will use Arm Attack before anyone gets a chance to move; half the time he will use it twice in the same turn. It will always target the character with the highest HP, usually Cloud.

Move Aeris forward on her first turn, and have Cloud and Barret attack. He will use Arm Attack again. Move Cloud to the front row, and pound away with physical attacks. Unfortunately, Motor Ball's evasion is almost as good as Heli Gunner's; you have to hope that he doesn't make too many of your attacks miss, because he will wipe the floor with you if he lives long enough to use a second Rolling Fire.

Motor Ball will then change into his compact form and use Twin Burner. This does 80 damage to everyone, but unfortunately probably won't give anyone a limit break. Unless Aeris started the battle at full HP, you need to move her back now. If she has between 210 and 230 HP remaining, her next turn should be to defend; this will allow her to save 10 HP from the coming wheel attack, possibly saving her life. The same goes for Cloud and Barret, though their HP is generally higher than hers. Once the wheel attack has been used, it is safe to move Aeris to the front row for a while. He will skip the first turn after Twin Burner, use the wheel attack (40 damage to all, 20 if in the back row), and return to his upright form. Then comes Rolling Fire, for a devastating 200 damage to the party. Cloud must be in the back row before Rolling Fire is used. If everyone survives, they will all get limit breaks. Activate Healing Wind, Big Shot, and Meteorain in that order; if you're quick and wait until the last moment to activate your limit breaks, you may be able to get two or three physical attacks on the same turn. Meteorain does 600-800 damage, depending on how many critical hits you get, and is quite vital for

shortening the battle.

After you've used all your limits following Rolling Fire, Motor Ball should have around 1000 HP remaining. Have Barret Sense him, while Cloud and Aeris continue attacking; once the second Arm Attack has been used, move Cloud to the front. When he falls below 375 HP, Motor Ball skips whatever his next move was going to be and instead transforms into his compact form to use Twin Burner. (If he is already in the compact form, he will waste another turn changing to the upright form.) Have Cloud and Aeris attack themselves, but make sure at least one is still alive when he uses the second Twin Burner; it will do 120 damage if Barret is the only one alive. Except for his wheel attack, which does 30 damage if Barret is the only target, Motor Ball will do nothing for the three turns following Twin Burner--plenty of time for Barret to finish him off.

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Goodbye and good riddance, Midgar. Never before had I spent so many hours and gotten so many Game Overs just trying to get out of the place. It will no doubt be a pleasant change to hear the world map music again, and to have more at your disposal than just your physical attacks and limit breaks.

## VII. Midgar Area, Mythril Mines, and Junon Area

Once you decide to leave Midgar you will have to form a new party. So long as Aeris is in it, you are fine. Set Cloud's limit breaks back to level 1, move everyone to the back row, and raise the battle speed again. Obviously, you should save. Head northeast to Kalm, and enter the inn to begin the flashback of Cloud's past. Just do it like you normally do; there's nothing you can change here. The party will automatically be rested, and when you leave you receive the PHS. You can now change party members at will. Yay! Go to the world map and form a party of Cloud, Aeris, and Red. I recommend making your final permanent save here. Should you screw up later on, this save will allow you to fix things up without having to face Motor Ball or watch the Kalm flashback again.

Make your way to the chocobo farm. If Levrikon's Flaming Peck puts Aeris under Fury, save immediately. You can now switch her limit breaks to level 3, allowing her to fully restore your HP and MP and revive dead characters with Pulse of Life. On the other hand, if Elfadunk inflicts Sadness either reset or rest at the chocobo farm immediately. Limit breaks are still the key to your survival, though they will no longer be your sole offense. Stick around the chocobo farm for a little bit to build Cloud's and Red's limit breaks.

Time to cross the Midgar Zolom's swamp. You'll be kicking his butt soon, but only after getting Yuffie. For the moment do this: Walk across the swamp until you see the Zolom appear at the edge of the screen. Immediately open the menu (you must be quick, as he can force you into the battle even after the menu button has been pressed), and save your game. Soft-reset quickly after closing the menu to avoid the battle. You will be at the same place you stopped, but the Zolom will be far away. Using this trick, you should be able to make it across the swamp in two or three legs.

Once you see the cutscene with the impaled Zolom switch Aeris for Tifa. Give Enemy Skill to Cloud, and save your game. Go right once you enter the Mythril Mines, then run around inside the room with the Long Range materia until you run into an Ark Dragon accompanied by three Crawlers. If you get attacked from both sides by two Ark Dragons, kill one of them with limit breaks and reset once you've escaped.



-----  
Ark Dragon, Crawler x3  
280 HP, 140 HP

Wait for the Ark Dragon to use Flame Thrower on Cloud. When he does, immediately activate both Cross Slash and Sled Fang to kill him. (Flame Thrower heals him, so don't use it.) Once he's gone, it should be quite simple to kill Red and Tifa and finish off the three Crawlers.

-----

Go back outside, save, and make your party Cloud, Aeris, and Barret. Go through the Mythril Mines, and once back on the world map head southwest to Fort Condor. Climb the ladder, talk to the man at the table, and accept his offer to gain access to their beds. Even if you don't need to rest now, you will before fighting the Zolom. Replace Barret with Red once you leave.

Now head west to the forest near the beach. Put Aeris and Red in front and Cloud in back, then save your game. 1 of every 8 encounters in the Junon forest will be with the Mystery Ninja; run around inside there until you find her. The enemies here can do some pretty vicious damage--Capparwires come in groups of five and use the powerful Grand Spark, Formula's attacks do about 100 damage, and neither can be reduced by defending or changing rows--so be ready to reset if it looks like Cloud won't survive the Mystery Ninja.

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Mystery Ninja  
600 HP

You must kill her within 10 rounds, or she will automatically flee. Cross Slash is helpful, as it paralyzes her for a few rounds and does over 200 damage. Sense her and beat her down with Flame Thrower and your physical attacks. Using Flame Thrower on your allies makes it much easier to kill them quickly; the Mystery Ninja's attacks will help as well. Beware if she turns Cloud into a frog, as he will no longer be able to use Flame Thrower and his physical attack will only do 20 damage. If that doesn't happen, it should be easy enough to finish her with Flame Thrower. You shouldn't need to heal, so take care not to use Healing Wind or Pulse of Life.

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You can now get Yuffie. You MUST NOT open the menu at any time, or she will escape and you will have to reset. Pick the following responses:

"Not interested."  
"...petrified."  
"Wait a second!"  
"...That's right."  
"...Let's hurry on."

Yuffie has joined the party. Remove her Throw materia immediately, then return to Fort Condor and rest. Make your party Cloud, Aeris, and Yuffie, moving everyone to the back, then pass through the Mythril Mines again to reach the edge of the Zolom's swamp. Do not cross it; just run around here until you encounter a group of Levrikons. Defend and wait for them to inflict Fury on both Aeris and Yuffie. When they do, head back to the Junon area.

Walk all the way west to Junon itself. Give Sense to Aeris, and make sure she is using her level 3 limits. Save, and enter the village. (From now on, it is safe to assume unless otherwise noted that all characters should remain in the back row.) Walk down to the shore to trigger the next boss battle.

-----  
BOSS: Bottomswell

2500 HP

Yuffie is going to learn Clear Tranquil in this battle. While the prospect of waiting for Bottomswell to charge her limit gauge while he's using Waterpolos may not seem appealing, I can assure you that the other method for learning Clear Tranquil before fighting the Zolom is no better. It requires that Yuffie join the party with the minimum Strength possible (27), and gives your characters 378 EXP from killing Custom Sweepers. Believe me, this way is preferable.

It takes 8 Greased Lightnings to learn Clear Tranquil. If none of them go critical, Yuffie will need between one and three physical attacks to finish him. If one goes critical, the final Greased Lightning will kill him. If two go critical, reset. Cloud and Aeris will never attack him, acting in a purely defensive role. While he is in his initial stage, Aeris should use Pulse of Life whenever one of your characters is at low HP. She needs to be in the front row at all times. (Pulse of Life also restores Cloud's MP, ensuring he can cast Flame Thrower whenever it's needed.) Cloud should defend constantly, as should Aeris once her limit gauge fills. You can move Yuffie to the front to fill her limit gauge faster, so long as you are careful that Aeris is able to heal the damage fast enough.

After the third Greased Lightning, Bottomswell will begin convulsing up and down. Though he becomes able to hit the entire party with Moonstrike, this phase doesn't really become dangerous until the next Greased Lightning. At that point he will trap a character in a Waterpolo, immobilizing them and quickly reducing their HP to zero. The Waterpolos are immune to physical damage, so you can't just hit them the way you killed Reno's Pyramids. If Aeris or Yuffie is targetted, you can simply have Cloud break it with Flamethrower. (Wait mode is helpful, as it can allow you to avoid taking any damage during Flame Thrower's spell animation. Note that you can't just target the afflicted character, but must press up above their head to target the Waterpolo.) If Cloud is trapped, however, you'll need to kill him before you resume attacking. Have Aeris and Yuffie attack him until his HP falls to zero, then revive him with Pulse of Life. Fortunately Bottomswell returns to his initial attack pattern after Waterpolo, so you have all the time you need to kill Cloud--a luxury you will not have in the next phase.

After the fifth Greased Lightning, move everyone to the front row; you need limit breaks more than ever, and the faster you can kill Cloud the better. Bottomswell convulses even higher, and alternates between hitting the whole party with Big Wave and trapping a character in a Waterpolo. Since the Waterpolo puts Bottomswell in the back row, cutting Aeris' and Yuffie's limit gains in half, it's even more important that you kill Cloud quickly. If both Cloud and Yuffie are trapped in Waterpolos, have Yuffie defend until Aeris can use Pulse of Life to revive Cloud; getting all the Greased Lightnings out becomes much more difficult if she loses Fury. It's a small mercy that he can't use Waterpolo on your only free character, though if both Cloud and Aeris are trapped too soon you will still lose.

After the Pulse of Life following the sixth Greased Lightning, you can wrap up the battle. (If Yuffie has lost Fury, you will need to wait until after the seventh Greased Lightning.) Move Yuffie to the back row, and kill off Aeris and Cloud as quickly as you can. Flamethrower works wonderfully for this. If he imprisons one of them, concentrate on killing the other. Under Fury and in the back row, Yuffie will have enough HP to use the final two Greased Lightnings and still survive the final Big Wave. If none of the limits have

gone critical, one to three additional attacks will be needed prior to the final limit.

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Revive Priscilla with five full lungfuls of air, then exit Junon. DO NOT sleep in the old lady's house yet, or you will not be able to learn Beta until it is too late. Instead, save your game on the world map now. Switch out Aeris and Yuffie, then walk to Fort Condor. Rest there, put Aeris and Yuffie back into the party, and cross through the Mythril Mines. Equip Enemy Skill on Aeris and Sense on Cloud. Set Cloud's limit to level 3. Once again, allow Levrikon to put Aeris and Yuffie under Fury; also allow them to charge Meteorain. Put the battle speed at the slowest setting, and save your game one more time. Now stand in the swamp, and simply wait for the Midgar Zolom to approach you.

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Midgar Zolom  
4000 HP

While this is not exactly a hard battle, it depends heavily on luck. The Zolom is able to kick a character out of battle twice. Since Aeris is the designated survivor, and the one with Enemy Skill, she must be the character who remains. Though in principle you could allow Yuffie to be killed and then let Aeris deal the finishing blow, I have never beaten him without having two of my characters kicked out.

For the most part, your pattern of attack is pretty simple. Cloud senses the Zolom at the beginning of battle, then defends until it's time to use Meteorain. Aeris and Yuffie attack with Flame Thrower and physical attacks respectively. In Fury, one attack from the Zolom will be enough to trigger Clear Tranquil or Pulse of Life. Be sure to take advantage of the limit break system, and attack before using the limit breaks to take advantage of the fast recharge times. Unfortunately, Aeris cannot survive a critical hit; just hope he doesn't hit her with one.

When you reduce the Zolom below 3000 HP, he will rise into an upright position. Though he will only rarely do so at this point, it is now possible for him to kick out a character on his turn. Hopefully he won't do so, but as long as Aeris isn't the target it is winnable at least in principle. If he hasn't removed a character yet, he counterattacks by doing so when he falls below 2000 HP. Get him as close to 2000 as possible--Flamethrower is good for this, since it cannot go critical--and activate Meteorain. This will reduce the Zolom to around 1200-1300 HP, and remove Cloud in the process.

This part is extremely important. If you attack the Zolom in your current state, Beta will wipe you out and you will earn no credit for having learned the skill. Instead, wait for him to charge both Aeris' and Yuffie's limit breaks. Don't use Aeris' limit for the moment; instead, defend and wait until Yuffie has her limit ready. Then restore Aeris to full HP, and put up Planet Protector. You are completely immune to all damage for the next half dozen or so turns. Attack once to trigger Beta. (If he kicked Cloud out before the counterattack could be triggered, Beta will be cast the instant his HP falls below 1500.) Once Aeris learns it, she can cast Beta twice against the Zolom for close to 700 damage each time. Unfortunately, because of Fury one or both castings will likely miss, and she will only have enough MP for at most two castings of Flame Thrower. If she had full HP before she used Planet Protector, you can work around this. Simply attack normally until Planet Protector wears off, then allow the Zolom to attack her. She can now restore her MP with Pulse of Life, giving her as much time to cast Beta as she needs. (Be sure to enter her commands during the Zolom's attack animation; otherwise

she will not get her next turn until after her limit gauge has filled, losing the fast-recharge effect and leaving her no time to do anything other than heal.) If Yuffie is kicked out before Planet Protector, both Betas must connect; Aeris cannot survive once Planet Protector wears off, and without two successful Betas there is no way she will kill the Zolom before that happens.

Since the Zolom can still kick Aeris out and Pulse of Life will revive Yuffie, it is safer to wait for Yuffie to be kicked out rather than killing her. (If you do try to kill her, make sure that Aeris has a chance to kill the Zolom before his next turn.) Aeris can keep casting Beta and restoring her MP until it finally connects and kills the Zolom.

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Now that you have Beta, you can leave the continent. Set Cloud's limits to level 1; you no longer need worry about dealing massive amounts of damage in one turn, and because it recharges quickly Cross Slash is more effective for long-lasting boss battles. Return to Junon, and sleep in the old lady's house. Cloud will be by himself when he wakes up, and until the party regroups on the cargo ship it will stay that way. Approach Priscilla's house to initiate the next cutscene, then head to the beach and get into the water with Mr. Dolphin. Press Square twice without moving, and you will reach the platform and be on your way to upper Junon.

Up on top, go through the routine with the parade. Like most of the minigames, it is quite irrelevant to the challenge; the only useful thing you can gain from it is gil, and you should never be short on that. However, once Cloud is dismissed there is one very important task to complete. Enter the last doorway on the first screen of Junon proper (the one you see Rude cross), and talk to the soldier on the first floor. He will move out of the way, and Cloud can jump into the room below. Down here is the second Enemy Skill materia. Pick it up. From now on, I will refer to the Enemy Skill materia in the order you get them--the new one is Enemy Skill #2.

Continue on to the dock, and send off Rufus. It doesn't matter how well you do, though I always aim for the Force Stealer regardless. Once it's over, board the cargo ship.

#### VIII. Cargo Ship, Costa del Sol, and Corel Area

Talk to Tifa and Red, then talk to Aeris. Head to the left side of the ship and talk to Barret twice to continue the plot. When everyone regroups, form a party of Cloud, Aeris, and Yuffie. Give Sense to Cloud and Enemy Skill #1 to Aeris, then save. (Don't bother setting Cloud's limit to 3; the battle won't last long enough to use Meteorain.) The faster the battle speed is, the better. Descend into the ship to meet Sephiroth for the first time.

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BOSS: Jenova-BIRTH  
4000 HP

With both Aeris and Yuffie able to heal the party, this is a pretty easy battle. Have Cloud sense Jenova at the beginning of battle. Aeris should attack with Beta and Flame Thrower until she runs out of MP, then join the others in meeleing him. Once Pulse of Life charges, she can restore her MP and resume casting spells. Before she can use it, Yuffie must use Clear Tranquil to heal her once.

The only real danger is from Stop. It won't last very long at the highest battle speed, but if it's used at the wrong moment--if Yuffie's limit gauge is

about to fill, and he starts attacking her nonstop--you could be in trouble. Jenova can only cast it three times per battle, fortunately, and if Aeris puts herself under Planet Protector she will be immune. Since all of Jenova's attacks are physical, you can ensure that only Aeris is left standing by having her defend while Cloud and Yuffie move forward. Once they are both dead, finish Jenova with a final Beta.

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Exit this room to disembark from the cargo ship. After two short cutscenes, you will be in the Costa del Sol. In case you were wondering, the cargo ship is temporarily out of service under Heidegger's orders. You won't be able to board it again until you are freed from Corel Prison and get the buggy. Rest at the inn, then head west toward Mt. Corel. Keep both Aeris and Yuffie in the party, and healing should not be an issue.

From the Mako reactor, head south to reach North Corel. Mash Circle to jump over the collapsing tracks; falling down for the items is a waste of time. The bridge just before reaching the town is potentially dangerous: you will sometimes be attacked from both sides by three Cockatolises, all of whom can inflict Slow-Numb. Kill the group of two with Beta, then escape as quickly as possible. The next time you risk an ambush from both sides is in the Gongaga area, and by then you'll be able to cure status effects with White Wind.

Save on the world map just outside North Corel. Fill Barret's limit gauge now. Stay at the inn, then enter the Gold Saucer. You will definitely have enough gil for the 3000 gil ticket, perhaps even enough for the lifetime pass. Enter the main station area to trigger a cutscene. Once Barret runs off to Wonder Square, choose to go with Yuffie. In Wonder Square you will meet Cait Sith. Contrary to what some may say, Cait Sith is an excellent character; he will become very important on Disc 2. Remove Transform and Manipulate from him, then head over to the Battle Arena. Cloud will automatically run in, and as a result get the whole party thrown into Corel Prison.

If you are attacked from both sides by a pair of Bandits, I would advise you to just defend and allow them both to escape. One of them will most likely steal an item and escape before you're able to flee, and if that happens the EXP from killing the first Bandit will ruin the battle plan. Run to the save point, then run to the cabin. (Note that you can rest in the front seat of the Shinra truck, southwest of the cabin.) After Barret gives his long speech about Dyne, form a party of Cloud, Red, and Barret. Give the Enemy Skill materia to Cloud and Red, and Manipulate to Barret. Use the save point again, move Cloud and Red to the front row, and head to the first "desert" screen past where you entered. Take care not to wander into the desert proper. It is easy to get lost out there, and chances are good you will get a Game Over before you make it back to the prison. Run around here until you encounter two Death Claws by themselves. Beware of the Bullmotors, whose Matra Magic can inflict deadly damage.

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Death Claw x2  
400 HP

Have Barret manipulate one of the Death Claws as soon as possible. If Cloud has Cross Slash ready, use it on the other one; this will keep it immobilized long enough for him and Red to finish it with Flamethrower and physicals. Once the first Death Claw is under Barret's control, you can get to work. Cast Laser on both Cloud and Red, then kill them off with Flame Thrower. The Death Claw should use all its remaining MP reducing itself to low HP with Laser. Have it use a physical attack on itself to end the battle.

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Now save, go back to the cabin, and replace Red with Aeris. Give Enemy Skill #1 with Beta to Barret. Save one last time, and go through the junkyard. If Barret gets killed along the way, run back to the Shinra truck so he can rest and recharge his limit gauge. He must enter the boss battle with Big Shot. It might be wise to reduce the battle speed to at least the default level before you initiate the cutscene with Dyne.

-----  
BOSS: Dyne

1200 HP

Barret will be fighting alone, so he has no way to heal. Though his 550-600 HP is a lot for a Low Level game, he still won't last for a long time: Dyne's attacks do 70-80 damage each, and he's able to attack twice on the same turn. That is why you learned Beta. Despite Dyne's very high Magic Defense, Beta will still do over 350 damage to him. Since Dyne is only able to use his double attacks when he has less than 600 HP, two Betas will ensure that he only uses his double attacks once. If Dyne ever gets a critical hit, or Barret's attacks ever miss, consider it a Game Over.

Open the battle with Big Shot. Do your best to get the first attack in, or Barret's survival becomes difficult. Use Flame Thrower, then two physical attacks. Barret should gain a second Big Shot now; use it. (If any of Dyne's attacks prior to this point miss, you can have Barret defend after his second physical attack. This will allow Barret to survive one more attack, which could very well make the difference between living and dying.) At this point Dyne should have just over 600 HP remaining, just short of triggering the double attack phase. Cast the first Beta, and Dyne will use a double attack. Unleash the second Beta, and Dyne should be dead. There's a 50% chance he will use Molotov Cocktail as his final attack. Depending on Barret's HP, the final attack may or may not kill you; it definitely will if Dyne also attacked first. If it doesn't, breathe a sigh of relief. Never again will you have to fight a battle without the ability to heal.

-----  
Time to go chocobo racing. To win the race easily, switch to Manual mode and hold down R1+R2. This will reduce stamina consumption to nothing while riding normally, and greatly reduce it when dashing. Tap Square repeatedly to make your chocobo speed up, dashing if necessary to build up a lead. Once you're on the finishing stretch, do an all-out sprint. You're home free, and the buggy is yours.

#### IX. Corel Area, Gongaga Area, and Cosmo Canyon

Once back on the world map, save immediately. Harpy lurks in the Gold Saucer desert, and if you're unprepared its Aqualung will kill you. The grass in the Gold Saucer area isn't much safer, since Joker can inflict Death. Replace Barret with Yuffie, then head northeast to Costa del Sol.

When you enter the Costa del Sol, cross the bridge back to the harbor. Talk to the sailor in front of the ship, and pay him to be a stowaway. Once in Junon, talk to the sailor to catch a helicopter flight out to the world map. Equip Enemy Skill #1 on Aeris, Enemy Skill #2 on Cloud, and Manipulate on Yuffie. Reenter the town to sleep at the old lady's house, then run around the grassy areas until you encounter a lone Zemzelett.

-----  
Zemzelett

If the Zemzelett casts Thunderbolt before you are able to manipulate him, run away. After Thunderbolt he will no longer have the MP to cast White Wind. Otherwise it's straightforward enough. When White Wind has been learned, kill Cloud and then Yuffie. Aeris can finish him with Beta. (Be aware that Zemzelett is immune to both gravity and water.)

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Now any of your characters can restore the party's HP and remove status effects at will. Be aware that White Wind has a pretty high MP cost, and that its healing is weak when the caster's HP is low. Replace Aeris with Barret. Now give Enemy Skill #1 to Cloud and Enemy Skill #2 to Barret. Make sure Yuffie is in the middle position. Sleep at the house in Junon, then go down to the seashore. Press Square a few times at the water's edge, and eventually Mr. Dolphin will give you a ride on the ship back to Costa del Sol. Save when you get back to the world map. Now run up and down the Costa del Sol beach until you encounter a group of three Beachplugs.

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Beachplug x3  
200 HP

Manipulate one of the Beachplugs, and have it cast Big Guard on Cloud and Barret. Then kill Barret and Yuffie, and finish the Beachplugs with Beta. Easy enough.

---

Put Aeris back in the party, and rest again at the Costa del Sol. Give Enemy Skill to Cloud and Yuffie and Manipulate to Aeris. Get back into the buggy, then take it into the Gold Saucer desert. You should reduce the battle speed to at least the default level.

---

Harpy  
800 HP

Put up Big Guard as soon as possible, then manipulate the Harpy. Cast White Wind if the Harpy reduces any character's HP below 300, or if it poisons Aeris. Once the Harpy is manipulated and Aqualung is learned, have it kill Cloud and Yuffie with Poison Storm and physical attacks. Then have it kill itself with two Aqualungs.

---

Save your game, then rest in the Costa del Sol one last time. (If Aeris has a limit break ready, you can use Pulse of Life instead.) Head southwest past Gongaga, taking care to avoid the forests. Now head up into the Cosmo area. This place is awesome, simply because it's so easy to get your characters under Fury here. Encounter a Skeeskee and have Aeris cast Laser on it; it will automatically counter with Rage Bomber, putting Aeris under Fury. On the other hand, Griffin can wipe out your MP in one shot with Peacock. Pulse of Life is quite important here.

---

Enter Cosmo Canyon, and go through the opening cutscenes with Red. Make your way to the observatory at the top to meet Bugenhagen. Climb down the ladder, then enter the door on the bottom right to find Cait Sith. Talk to him, and form a party of whoever you wish. Return to the observatory for a rather lengthy cutscene. Then go back down, and meet with the party at Cosmo Candle. Talk to Tifa, Barret, Aeris, and finally Red. When you are prompted to form a party, make Aeris your third character. (Did you even need to ask?) Give

Enemy Skill #1 to Cloud, Enemy Skill #2 to Aeris, and Sense to Red. Save your game, follow Bugenhagen up to the third story, and enter the Cave of the Gi.

On the first screen, enter the third cave from the left and break the rock open to continue on to the second screen. Simply head up to reach the third screen. Try to rely on White Wind for healing in the random encounters. This spell is especially nice here, since it removes Heg's Poison and Paralysis. Pulse of Life should be reserved for restoring MP and reviving fallen party members. Go through the second tunnel from the left, and walk through the spider web to trigger a forced encounter with a Stinger.

-----  
Stinger

2200 HP

Have Aeris cast Laser, Cloud cast Beta, and Red use a physical attack in that order. The Stinger will counterattack with Sting Bomb against Cloud and Red, taking off 75% of their HP. Move them both to the front row while Aeris defends; Stinger's physical attacks will make short work of them. If he uses his third and final Sting Bomb on Aeris, have her use Pulse of Life to heal. (You will have to kill Cloud and Red again if this happens.) Otherwise, finish him with Aqualung.

-----  
If Aeris gets into a random encounter, wait until she gains Pulse of Life. Use it to revive her allies, then run away. Move up to the next Stinger.

Note that you will sometimes be attacked from both sides by two Gi Spectors on this screen. Kill one with Aqualung, then escape from the other. Unfortunately, if you get this encounter before your allies are revived a Game Over is all but guaranteed.

-----  
Stinger

2200 HP

The strategy is exactly the same as last time.

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Head up a bit to watch the cutscene just before you engage the boss, then immediately backtrack to exit the cave. Save. Reenter the cave, and walk to the screen with the boss. Put the battle speed on the slowest setting.

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BOSS: Gi Nattak

5500 HP

Unlike virtually every other challenge out there, you will not get to insta-kill him with an Elixir or a Life spell. This will be an honest, mano a mano match. It's still not that hard, though due to his tendency to steal HP and MP it would be quite impossible without Pulse of Life.

The real danger is Fire2 from the Soul Fires that accompany Gi Nattak. This does over 250 damage, enough to kill Aeris in two hits but not quite enough to charge Pulse of Life. After Gi Nattak uses Take Over the Soul Fire will focus all its spells on the selected character, meaning you will need to heal that character every turn. Expect to be casting White Wind more than you attack during this phase, particularly if Cloud is the target of Take Over and Aeris is not. (Don't bother healing Red, since he has fairly little to contribute offensively or defensively.) Fortunately, the Soul Fires can only



cast it 10 times before they run out of MP, and they will waste much of their MP casting it on themselves. After that, it's a pretty easy battle.

Besides Take Over, Gi Nattak will damage one of your characters and heal himself for just over 100 HP with Drain, and occasionally spear one of your characters for about 300 damage. He will also very rarely steal your MP with Aspil. Since these are all single-target attacks, it could be difficult at times to get Pulse of Life so you can restore your MP.

Have Red use Sense at the beginning of battle, then use physical attacks. Cloud and Aeris will attack with Beta and White Wind, respectively. Both hurt Gi Nattak and heal the Soul Fires, ensuring you don't gain unnecessary EXP from killing them, and White Wind's accuracy is unaffected by Fury. (Gi Nattak and the Soul Fires are both immune to Aqualung, so don't bother.) Since you often won't have enough MP to cast the desired spell, physical attacks and limit breaks are going to form a major part of your offense. Both Cloud and Aeris should set aside 34 MP for White Wind on the party, just in case an emergency arises.

Since Gi Nattak can heal himself with Drain, and since your only sources of healing affect the whole party, it may be difficult to end the battle with just Aeris alive. Flame Thrower and Laser help a lot, as they allow you to quickly kill one character without affecting the others. Don't attempt this before the Soul Fires have run out of MP, as Fire2 will complicate things too much. As soon as Cloud and Red are dead, activate Planet Protector; in addition to keeping Aeris from dying, it also stops the healing from Drain. Finish him off with one or two White Winds.

-----

After Red gets some father-son bonding time, it's time to leave. Form a party of Cloud, Aeris, and Yuffie once again. Remove Red's Sense, and give it to Yuffie. When you return to the world map and Red rejoins you, the party's HP and MP will be restored and Fury will be removed.

## X. Nibel Area and Rocket Town

Raise the battle speed back to normal and save your game. Wander around the dirt area until you encounter a Skeeskee. Have Aeris use Laser on it, Yuffie use a physical attack, and Cloud defend. If the party has been hit by Peacock, be sure to use Pulse of Life before exiting the battle. Save again, and head north in the buggy toward Nibelheim.

There's nothing for you to do in Nibelheim. Simply walk north, saving just outside the Nibel Mountains. The enemies on the way up Mt. Nibel do a lot of damage, and often come in large groups. Expect to use White Wind a lot, as well as your healing limit breaks. While crossing the bridge, there is a chance you will be attacked from both sides by a pair of Sonic Speeds. Cast Aqualung to kill one, then have everyone defend while you escape from the other.

Inside the mountain, things aren't much better. In addition to the nasty Lay Flat bugs, you've also got Dragon. Both Flame Thrower and his physical attack do 500 damage; White Wind will be vital here, as you need to make sure everyone is at full HP in case you run into one. (It also ensures you're prepared for fighting Materia Keeper. He is similar to Dragon in a lot of ways: he's immune to gravity and most disabling status effects, absorbs Fire, has very high HP and Magic Defense, and his Hell Combo does about the same damage as Dragon's physical attack.) Slide down the number 1 pipe to land right next to the save point. Set the battle speed to the slowest setting,

save your game, and approach Materia Keeper. Press X to initiate the battle.

-----  
BOSS: Materia Keeper

8400 HP

At the beginning of the battle, the key thing is to keep everyone's HP above 400. That's the damage Hell Combo, or any other attack gone critical, does in the back row; stay above that, and you will probably be fine. Pulse of Life and Clear Tranquil should take care of most of your healing, though you will occasionally need to use White Wind. If Hell Combo goes critical, it will almost certainly kill the target. If Cloud or Yuffie is killed, it will be inconvenient but probably not debilitating. If Aeris is killed, you obviously must start over. Yuffie uses Sense at the beginning, then uses physical attacks. Cloud and Aeris should cast Aqualung until they have just over 34 MP remaining for White Wind, then join Yuffie in meeleing him. Aqualung does about 400 damage, way better than physical attacks despite MK's high Magic Defense. (Because Beta is fire-based, it will heal Materia Keeper. Never use it.) A Big Guard early in the battle could be useful as well, since Haste will allow you many more attacks during the slow first half of the battle. Once Pulse of Life is used, your MP will be restored and you can continue casting Aqualung.

After he's been reduced below 4200 HP, make sure one of your characters has at least 56 MP set aside for Big Guard. When Materia Keeper casts Cure2 on himself, put up the Big Guard immediately; he will follow up with Trine, which deals close to 600 damage to the party if you're not under MBarrier. Despite the heavy damage, there are some definite advantages to his Cure2+Trine combos. First, you now have the Trine enemy skill. Trine is much more damaging for each MP spent, dealing about 275 damage for a mere 20 MP; you should never have to resort to physical attacks if you start casting Trine instead of Aqualung. You can still use Aqualung just before your MP is restored by Pulse of Life, provided it won't prematurely kill Materia Keeper. Second, Cure2 makes it harder to accidentally kill him too fast. (See the paragraph below.) Third, at the lowest battle speed your barriers will last for a long time. They will easily last to the second Trine if you're using Wait mode, saving you 56 MP, and Barrier greatly reduces the healing load from his physical attacks. And finally, Trine charges your limit gauges very fast. One Trine will instantly recharge Cloud's and Aeris' limit breaks, as well as Yuffie's if she is still under Fury.

Materia Keeper will use the Cure2+Trine combo six times, and will cast Cure2 by itself an additional time. After that he will have 16 MP remaining, and will not be able to cast any more spells. I advise you to wait until he has cast the seventh Cure2, then sense his MP to be sure he can no longer cast any spells, before attempting to end the battle. Cure2 will complicate things too much otherwise. Reduce him below 250 HP, so one Trine will finish him. When you're ready, move Cloud and Yuffie to the front while Aeris defends. His normal attacks now do 400 damage, while Hell Combo will kill its target at full HP. Once they are dead, use Planet Protector to make Aeris invulnerable. Cast Trine until it connects and Materia Keeper dies.

-----

Raise the battle speed back to normal. It's quite possible for Aeris to make it to Rocket Town on her own. Still, use the save point just to be safe. Go out the right end of this screen and take the path to the world map, then walk all the way north to Rocket Town. Fully restore Aeris' HP with White Wind in a battle on the world map.

Go through the back of Cid's house to look at the Tiny Bronco. Then climb the

rocket to speak to the Captain. One guess what I'm naming him. Go back to the world map, and save your game. Enter Cid's house, and go through the cutscenes there. Finally, go back to the Tiny Bronco once more. No need to lower the battle speed for this battle.

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BOSS: Palmer  
6000 HP

Palmer is more of a practical joke on the player than a real boss. While his Mako Gun does 450 damage--pretty good damage for this point in the game--it is very easy to survive. And he can only cast it 10 times before his MP runs out, rendering him helpless. The first Mako Gun will instantly charge Pulse of Life, allowing Aeris to fully heal herself and revive the others as well. Have Yuffie sense him and then attack, while Cloud and Aeris cast spells at him. Aqualung does 600 damage, while Trine does 400. If either Cloud or Yuffie falls below 450, heal them with White Wind immediately. If Aeris is targeted with Mako Gun again, your MP will be restored and you can continue attacking as before.

After he has used the tenth Mako Gun Palmer will have 20 MP remaining, just short of one more Mako Gun. Reduce Palmer to a few hundred HP, kill Cloud and Yuffie, and have Aeris cast Trine until it ends the battle. The ending is just as bizarre as the battle itself.

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XI. Wutai, Gold Saucer Area

After the battle Cid joins the party, and you get the Tiny Bronco. World mobility is yours. Follow Yuffie's advice, and go west to the Wutai beach. Switch Yuffie for Barret, and save your game. If you know what's coming up, you probably know how much it's going to suck with a low level party and no use of items or accessories. But you have to do it to avoid the Turks in Midgar, who really are impossible, and because Aeris and Yuffie are your only healers (and Yuffie is unavailable during the sidequest) it has to be done before the Temple of the Ancients.

Head north, and Yuffie will stop the party. Some Shinra troops will ambush you, and in the confusion Yuffie will get away with all your materia.

-----  
Attack Squad x2  
1300 HP

This battle sucks, no doubt about it. Because you have no materia, you have to use physical attacks. But the Attack Squads love inflicting Sleep and Darkness with Smoke Bullet, and use it as an automatic counterattack when reduced below 833 HP. While Sleep may slow you down, it is temporary and easily removed. Darkness is the real pain: it lasts for the entire battle (unless Cloud or Barret is killed and revived by Pulse of Life), and makes the battle nearly twice as long. It's a real shame you don't have access to White Wind. This is a long battle, and you will be heavily dependent on Big Shot and Cross Slash for your damage.

Because Sense is stolen as well, you must keep track of the exact damage you do to the second Attack Squad. If possible reduce him to less than 50 HP, so Aeris can kill him with one or two physical attacks once Cloud and Barret are dead. The procedure is the same as usual: Cloud and Barret move forward to assist the Attack Squad in killing themselves, while Aeris defends. If Aeris'

limit gauge fills before she can kill the Attack Squad, she has no choice but to revive her allies. (If she uses Planet Protector you will never make it to the village alive.) Between Sleep, Darkness, Fury, and the Attack Squad's fairly high damage, it could take a very long time to deal the killing blow with just Aeris alive.

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Save again, and run as fast as you can to the north end of the Wutai continent. While your materia is gone the encounters in the dirt areas of Wutai are the most dangerous in the game, even more so than the Stilvas, Evilheads, and Malboros that reside on Gaea's Cliff. The nicest enemy you will encounter here is Tail Vault, who does 200 damage in the front row; he's the one you'll want to use to recharge Pulse of Life. Bizarre Bug does the same damage with his normal attacks, and his Toxic Powder inflicts Poison and 300 damage to the whole party (400 if Aeris is the only one alive). Thunderbird's Lightning is virtually guaranteed to wipe out the party--it does over 400 damage to everyone--and his physical attack does as much damage as Tail Vault's. And naturally, all of these enemies come in large groups and will attack you from behind or ambush you in a full quarter of the battles. Very rarely you will be attacked from both sides by a Thunderbird, a Tail Vault, and two Bizarre Bugs; unless barring truly miraculous luck, you will die.

Since the dirt area covers so much ground, I would recommend saving at least twice: after crossing the first pair of bridges, and after crossing the final bridge. The enemies on the grass are far less dangerous; the most powerful attack is Edgehead's Electric Burst for 350 damage, and Edgehead is a pretty rare enemy. Enter Wutai, saving on the world map one last time.

From the entrance, enter the Turtle's Paradise on the left edge of the screen. Talk to Elena to initiate a short cutscene with the Turks, then exit the bar. Go due north to the item shop. Pick up the MP Absorb materia in the chest, and Yuffie will automatically steal it from you. Exit the shop, and enter the house on the right side of the screen near the entrance. Fold back the screen to find Yuffie and make her scurry out of the house. Finally, examine the pot outside the Turtle's Paradise and punch it three times. Yuffie will give up (or so she says) and several cutscenes will take place.

When Yuffie has escaped again, exit the house and use the save point. Go northwest to the screen with the pagoda. Examine the bell to your left to open a secret door. Go down through the door to meet Don Corneo. Of all the rotten luck. Follow Corneo up the stairs, and then you'll have to eliminate some incompetent Shinra grunts.

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Attack Squad x3  
1300 HP

Just like the last battle, except that there is one more enemy. The strategy is exactly the same, and Aeris once again is the sole survivor.

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Exit this building, then talk to Reno to continue the sidequest. Before you can face the boss you need to recharge Barret's limit gauge. Revive him with Pulse of Life and get into a battle with Razor Weed at the base of Da-Chao Statue. (Razor Weed is ideal for building limit breaks. He does good damage, but not so much that Pulse of Life can't keep up with him, and the only status effect he inflicts is Fury.) When Barret has a full limit gauge go back and save. Now run up the statue, going right, then left, and finally down. Set the battle speed to the slowest setting before triggering the boss fight.

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BOSS: Rapps

6000 HP

While Rapps' first move is the most dangerous part of the battle, it doesn't get much better. While he has MP Rapps is able to cast Aero3, a powerful magic attack that is guaranteed to kill its target. Have Barret use Mind Blow immediately to eliminate Aero3. Don't rush; if you select the limit break too quickly, you may accidentally use Big Shot and screw yourself as a result. As many as half my attempts ended on the first turn, when he immediately killed Aeris with Aero3.

Once his MP is gone the real chore begins. You have to remove all of his 6000 HP using nothing but physical attacks and limit breaks. Dealing the damage isn't a problem, though it is certainly a long battle. Barret and Cloud both do over 40 damage from the back row, and you will get plenty of use out of Big Shot and Cross Slash. Unlike the Attack Squads, actually dealing the damage is easy.

The real problem is keeping Aeris alive to the end of the battle. It takes one and a half attacks from Rapps--one taking normal damage plus one defending--to charge Pulse of Life, while Aeris can survive two and a half. Rapps can use both his wing attack and Scorpion's Tail twice in the same turn, which he does much more often near the end of the battle. You can be assured that Aeris will be the target of both hits several times during the course of the battle. He also gets critical hits quite often. While a double attack or critical hit will instantly charge Pulse of Life, it creates a severe problem: if Aeris has already taken normal damage from one wing attack or Scorpion's Tail, and Rapps then uses a double attack or a critical hit on her, she will be killed before she can use her new limit break. Far from being a freak case of bad luck, this will be your inevitable death if you don't pay attention to the damage she's receiving.

At first the problem is easy enough to solve. If Aeris joins the men in attacking while at full HP, then defends or uses Pulse of Life immediately after she is hit, she'll be safe enough. But Scorpion's Tail inflicts Poison, and poison damage breaks the defensive stance. (See the note under the Sample:HO512 strategy.) The lower battle speed saves your life here. Besides reducing the rate at which you lose health to poison, it also makes the numbers appear less often. What Aeris needs to do is this: except for the end she should never attack once she is poisoned. Have her do nothing until Rapps attacks her, then select Defend immediately after the poison damage appears above her head. Have her stand by a bit longer. If the poison damage appears before Rapps attacks, immediately select Defend again. While this will usually prevent Rapps from attacking just after the defensive stance has been broken, it can be treacherous: it's quite possible there will be times when the poison damage appears, and half a second later Rapps kills Aeris with a double attack. Wait mode can be a lifesaver here, as it allows you to avoid spending extra time and suffering unnecessary poison damage during your own attack animations. If you manage to employ this tactic successfully, the only way Aeris will die is if she is attacked twice and one of the hits goes critical. (I did lose an attempt this way, but it痴 incredibly rare.)

Do not defend before Aeris has been attacked. If Rapps uses a double attack or critical hit on Aeris while she is at full HP, and she takes full damage from it, Pulse of Life will be instantly charged; this will often allow the men to survive longer and get extra limit breaks. Failing to do so will require more time to heal Cloud and Barret, and since they are more likely to die the chances of Aeris ending up alone--a situation that greatly increases

the danger of untimely double attacks or critical hits--become much higher.

Even when you've whittled Rapps to less than 50 HP and you're ready to end the battle, you're not out of the woods yet. You will move Cloud and Barret forward at this point, and once they are both dead Aeris can cast Planet Protector. But it takes some luck for this to happen. If Aeris gets a limit break while Cloud or Barret is still alive, she must use Pulse of Life and revive them in order to survive. You will have to wait until Rapps uses a lucky combination of moves that ends with only Aeris alive; it may take a long time, but if you're patient it will happen. If she then lives to get another limit break, you can finally cast Planet Protector. (As you may have noticed, the poison does 0 damage now. God, I love Peerless.) Move Aeris to the front row, and swing at Rapps until she connects. If Rapps had less than 50 HP remaining, one hit should be enough.

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If there was ever any doubt of Aeris' awesomeness, it's gone now. With nothing but physical attacks and limit breaks, your Low Level party just smited one of the cheapest bosses in the game--and with Aeris surviving by herself, no less.

Once you return to the world map, raise the battle speed back to normal and save. Also, set Cloud's limits to level 3. Go back into the town, return to the screen with the pagoda, and this time enter the house on your right. Enter the room to your left and rest. Return to the world map, give Enemy Skill to Cloud and Aeris again, and run around the grassy area until you encounter a Razor Weed. Use Spaz Voice to put Aeris under Fury once more. It's tempting, but you are not getting Magic Hammer just yet. You won't need it until you get the third Enemy Skill materia, so there's no sense in wasting 1190 EXP on an extra battle.

Save your game, and walk south to the buggy. Things aren't quite as bad on the return trip, though the Thunderbirds can still easily wipe you out. It's a real shame you can't just smite them with Aqualung. Once back in the Tiny Bronco, go east through the river crossing the continent and get off in the Gold Saucer area. Head north into Corel, switching characters if one is killed by Joker. Go to the Gold Saucer, buy another ticket, and visit the Battle Arena. Look at the Keystone, and Dio will challenge you to a match in the Arena. Though you won't get very far with no status protection and no Magic Hammer, he gives you the Keystone anyway.

Attempt to leave, and you will find that you are stranded for the night. You go through some dialogue in the Ghost Hotel, Cloud dates one of the party members (most likely Aeris), a certain mischievous toy steals the Keystone, and you have to form a party with Aeris. As if you weren't going to anyway. Make Cid your third character, and give him Sense. Then leave the Gold Saucer, save, and return to the Tiny Bronco.

## XII. The Temple of the Ancients

Before entering the Temple of the Ancients, head west to make a quick stop at Wutai. Go to the grassy area east of the beach, and run around here until you encounter a Razor Weed. As before, have Aeris attack it until Fury sticks. Get back into the Tiny Bronco, take the river to the other side of the continent, and get off on the island with the Temple. Save at the beach, as there's a chance you will get attacked by Slaps. These guys are able to inflict Sadness with Bug Needle, as well as disable your characters with Berserk Needle, and can ambush you from both sides. If you manage to pass through unscathed, climb the temple stairs and get the Keystone from Tseng.

It would be wise to go outside and make a backup save before using the Keystone, just in case you screw up inside and need to backtrack to the world map.

The random encounters inside the Temple aren't too bad, though Toxic Frog's Frog Song can be annoying. Make your way past the cylindrical boulders, then watch the cutscene. There is a command materia here, but it's the item-producing Morph. You need it not. Talk to the Ancient to save your game. Never choose to rest while inside the Temple; Pulse of Life is very important, and to ensure it's used often enough Aeris needs to be under Fury.

In the clock room, head straight for the six o'clock door. Make sure to avoid the second hand, as you will fight a forced battle if you are knocked into the room below. Once the Ancient gets away, jump down to the second level and enter the second door from the right. Jump down to the bottom edge and enter the rightmost door. Then exit this area via the clock room, and immediately reenter. This moves the Ancient to the top level, so you don't have to make the trip to the top again if you have to reload your game. Put the battle speed at the slowest setting, save your game, then enter the mural room. A long cutscene commences (way too long, if you ask me), and then...

-----  
BOSS: Red Dragon  
6800 HP

Don't be fooled by the fact that he only uses single-target attacks. If you're careless about your MP, Red Dragon can easily kill you. Cast Big Guard as soon as possible, and hope he doesn't use Red Dragon Breath before Big Guard is up. Red Dragon Breath is a guaranteed kill without Big Guard, and even with Big Guard it does more damage than anything save a critical bite attack. Because of this, you need to keep Cloud and Aeris above 450 HP at all times. Cid has little importance, beyond Sense and the occasional Boost Jump, so don't worry about healing him. He'll probably be taken care of when you use White Wind to heal Cloud or Aeris.

Though you can cast Trine while your MP is high, I don't recommend doing so when you have less than 100 MP remaining. If he doesn't target Aeris very often, MP will quickly become a serious issue. Be especially careful when a character's barriers are running out, as you'll need 56 MP for Big Guard in addition to any MP needed for White Wind. When Pulse of Life is charged, and Red Dragon has well over 1000 HP remaining, have Aeris and Cloud cast Aqualung. Cloud's Aqualung does around 400, about the same as against Materia Keeper, while Aeris' Aqualung does almost 600. (It should go without saying, but Red Dragon absorbs Beta.) Your limit breaks will compose a big part of your damage as well. Boost Jump does a good 450 damage, while Meteorain does over 700 damage. With luck, and a few uses of Pulse of Life, it shouldn't take long to reach the end of the battle.

When his HP is below 200 or so, move Cloud and Cid to the front row. This can get difficult if he targets Aeris too often, as you will have to either use Pulse of Life or waste MP casting White Wind repeatedly to keep Aeris alive. When both Cloud and Cid are dead, use Planet Protector and proceed to cast Trine until he is killed.

-NOTE ON BARRIERS: Contrary to appearances, Barrier and MBarrier status does not disappear as soon as the Barrier gauges to the right of your characters' names empty out. Instead, your characters will remain under Barrier and MBarrier for a full "tick" after the gauge has completely emptied. (A "tick" is a discrete unit of time, as indicated by the movement of the color in the Barrier gauge.) Hence, if you recast Big Guard as soon as the gauge appears

empty the spell will miss, and you will remain vulnerable for the next turn. The best solution to this is to enter Big Guard as the last of your three commands, and allow your current barriers to expire during the attack animations.

---

Head right and examine the model to advance the plot. When the cutscene is over, exit the room and save your game. Return the battle speed to its normal level if you wish, and return to the mural room. Run around here until you get a random encounter, and wait for Aeris' limit gauge to charge while she heals with White Wind. If you run into a group of Ancient Dragons, you can cast Laser to kill one or two of them and reduce the damage to a more manageable level. Once Aeris has gained Pulse of Life and revived the others, escape from battle. Try to make sure everyone is at full health, or at least above 400 HP.

Put the battle speed at the slowest setting and save your game. Head through the clock room to the 12 o'clock door, then attempt to leave.

---

BOSS: Demons Gate  
10,000 HP

While this guy is the bane of most Low Level challenges, in this one he's quite easy. He must not kill Aeris, but otherwise there are relatively few ways he can screw up the battle. Pulse of Life will revive anyone Demons Gate has killed and fully restore everyone's MP, so you can fight him for as long as you want. In fact, because he will quickly refill Aeris' limit gauge with Cave-In he is substantially easier than Red Dragon.

The first move is the most dangerous. Cid can survive an unprotected rock drop without Barrier (or equivalently, a critical hit/double rock drop under Barrier) at full HP, but Cloud and Aeris cannot. Note that a critical rock drop or double rock drop on Aeris will kill her, no matter what, so you do need a little luck with Demons Gate's attacks. Everyone should survive if he opens with Cave-In or the charge turn for Demon Rush. Assuming that Aeris wasn't killed, cast Big Guard at your first opportunity. Cid uses Sense, then always uses either a physical attack or a limit break. When Cloud or Cid is killed and revived by Pulse of Life, cast Big Guard as soon as they are revived to make sure they remain protected as well. 400 HP is enough to ensure that everyone will survive a rock drop; cast White Wind to make sure everyone has enough health. If he uses Petrify-Eye you will need to cure it; but wait until he attacks again before doing so, so White Wind will recover some HP as well as curing the status effect.

Due to Demons Gate's infamously high Magic Defense, physical attacks and limit breaks are the most effective way of damaging him. Even so, I recommend having Aeris and Cloud cast Aqualung just before you activate Pulse of Life. You don't lose any MP, and it still does over 100 damage to him. Meteorain and Boost Jump are as effective here as they were against Red Dragon, and even from the back row Cloud and Cid can hit for decent damage. Obviously you need to watch your Barrier gauge carefully, so you can ensure Big Guard is recast just after Barrier has worn off.

Whittle him down to less than 100 HP, taking care not to use limit breaks when his HP falls too low. Now move Cloud and Cid to the front row while Aeris defends. (It might be wise to fill Aeris' limit gauge before you do this, and heal her with White Wind.) The men should die pretty quickly, though if Aeris' HP falls too low before they do you will need to use Pulse of Life. Once they are gone, put up Planet Protector to guard Aeris. Finish him with



Trine or Aqualung.

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### XIII. Searching for Aeris

Some cutscenes commence, Cloud goes berserk, and... Aeris is gone? What?!

Sadly, she's never coming back. Never again will you be able to see her lovely face, or take advantage of the powerful Planet Protector or Pulse of Life. Since your characters will now have to take care of protecting themselves and restoring their MP the hard way, you have some work to do. First, though, you must get the third and final Enemy Skill materia.

Restore the battle speed to normal, set Cloud's limit breaks to level 1, and save. Go south to get into the Tiny Bronco, head all the way north to the Icicle area, and enter Bone Village. Talk to the guy in front of the shack, and tell him you want to dig up the Lunar Harp. Climb the ladder to the top level, then move Cloud so he is obscured behind the plume of white smoke rising from the shack below. From the south edge of this level take a few paces north, so he is still obscured by the smoke. There's no need to order a search; simply select "Done" immediately, set off the bomb, and press Square to designate the dig spot at your current location. You should get the Lunar Harp within a few attempts this way. Head through the forest, then through the trail beyond it, and on to the City of the Ancients. Take the right fork as you enter, and choose to rest in the second building. When the party wakes, walk behind the beds. You will find the third Enemy Skill materia lying on the floor.

Now leave the City of the Ancients and return to the Tiny Bronco. Give Enemy Skill #1 and Manipulate to Cloud, Enemy Skill #2 to Barret, and Enemy Skill #3 to Tifa. Get off at the Wutai beach, and run around in the grassy area east of the beach until you meet a Tail Vault and some Razor Weeds in battle. This way, you can avoid the dangerous trek to Wutai proper.

---

Razor Weed x2, Tail Vault  
1000 HP (145 MP), 960 HP

Have Cloud attempt to manipulate one of the Razor Weeds. When he succeeds, cast Magic Hammer on all three characters. Once everyone has learned the spell, have the Razor Weed attack itself to break Manipulate. (Unfortunately, casting White Wind prior to learning the spell will leave the relevant character with 0 MP, completely destroying their spell-casting ability.) Kill Barret and Tifa, use Magic Hammer to restore Cloud's MP, and allow him to end the battle with one Trine and one Aqualung. Fortunately for him, the Razor Weeds cannot counter magical attacks.

---

Save your game, and get back into the Tiny Bronco. Rest at an inn--I would suggest Nibelheim--to revive Barret and Tifa. Get off just south of the Gold Saucer desert, save on the world map, and enter the Gongaga Forest. Run around the first screen until you meet a solitary Touch Me.

---

Touch Me  
300 HP (74 MP)

Manipulate it, then cast Frog Song on Cloud, Tifa, and Barret in that order. When Cloud is put to sleep, wake him with a physical attack and use Frog Jab

to remove Toad. Let Barret and Tifa kill themselves, have it use Frog Jab on itself to remove Manipulate, and let Cloud finish it with Trine.

---

Return to the world map, save, and get back in the Tiny Bronco. Get off near Nibelheim, and go into town to use the inn. The buggy should be nearby. Get into it, and take it through the Cosmo and Gongaga areas to reach the Gold Saucer desert. (Magic Hammer will prevent Griffin's MP-destroying Peacock, while Frog Song will stop most other enemies.) It would be wise to lower the battle speed.

---

Harpy

800 HP (200 MP)

Have Barret or Tifa cast Big Guard while Cloud attempts to manipulate it. If he succeeds, cast Aqualung on the party and end it the same way you did the first time. If the Harpy casts Aqualung on its own, you could employ an alternate strategy. Frog Song will immobilize the Harpy, and two Magic Hammers will prevent it from casting Aqualung or Poison Storm when it wakes up. Just make sure that both Barret and Tifa are dead before the battle is over.

---

Save the game, and go back the way you came to reach the Tiny Bronco. Make a brief stop at Bone Village, and revive your party members by ordering a quick search. (To do this, call for a dig and immediately end it by selecting your current location as the dig site. The party will get to rest for free.)

If Cloud doesn't already have Cross Slash charged, build his limit gauge in a random battle until he does. Head to the extreme east of the world map, so you are on the beach near the chocobo farm. Run up and down the beach until you encounter an Elfadunk. Manipulate it, and use its Shower to put Cloud, Barret, and Tifa under Sadness. Change your party to Cloud, Yuffie, and Cid, and put them under Sadness as well. (Whenever I tell you to meet an Elfadunk in the future, just follow the same procedure.) You can also put Red and Cait Sith under Sadness for good measure, but you don't have to. Put Barret and Tifa in your party again, return to the Icicle area, and save.

The following is important, so read it carefully. To make the upcoming bosses as easy as possible, you need to make your way through the Great Glacier and Gaea's Cliff without resting. This means that none of your characters are allowed to die, at least not until the battle plan says they are supposed to, and hence all healing and MP restoration must be taken care of with White Wind and Magic Hammer. It's really not as bad as it sounds; Frog Song will immobilize every enemy on Gaea's Cliff, and with Sadness everyone except Tifa (who will be dead and out of the party anyway) can survive the most powerful single-target attack, Malboro's Frozen Beam.

Be sure to put Hungry to sleep with Frog Song if you run into him. When he casts Mini on a character and then removes them with Eat, that character will lose Sadness. You cannot afford for that to happen. Take the middle way now, following the shining path to the water altar. Replace Cloud's Manipulate with Sense, save your game, and approach Aeris.

---

BOSS: Jenova-LIFE

10,000 HP (300 MP)

The only potential danger lies in the first move, if Jenova casts Aqualung

before Cloud can move. It is far too powerful for the party to survive. Otherwise, use Cross Slash to paralyze Jenova. You will easily be able to cast three Magic Hammers before she moves again, eliminating her MP. (Cross Slash is necessary because Jenova counters all magic attacks with Reflect.)

With no MP, Jenova cannot attack at all. Sense her HP, move everyone to the front row, and start attacking her. You can spend your MP attacking with Trine if you wish, but mostly you will have to rely on physical attacks. (In any event Cloud must have at least 3 MP after the battle, so he can restore his MP with Magic Hammer.) At least you can stay in the front row this time. Kill Barret and Tifa once she has a few hundred HP or less, and let Cloud end the battle.

-----

More than ever, Aeris' death leaves a sting this time. That's why we're going after Sephiroth, so we can stick it right back to him.

\*\*\*\*\*DISC TWO\*\*\*\*\*

XIV. Corel Valley, Icicle Area, and Great Glacier

Don't rest. Instead, go south to return to the world map. Change your party to Cloud, Yuffie, and Cid, transferring Enemy Skill #2 to Yuffie and Enemy Skill #3 to Cid, then save. There will be no need for Cloud to use his higher-level limit breaks for a long time, so leave him at level 1. From now on, you will follow the same basic procedure in most random encounters: Hold L1+R1 for a while, on the off chance that you're able to escape immediately. If you don't, cast Frog Song to put your enemies to sleep. Heal with White Wind if necessary, steal some MP with Magic Hammer, and then proceed to flee. Since you can't heal out of battle, the time spent restoring your HP and MP while the enemies are asleep is vital for your survival. (You should save Clear Tranquil for the Icicle or Schizo battles, since it takes so long to charge under Sadness.) No matter what, be absolutely certain that your characters have 3 MP or more at all times. If not they won't be able to restore their MP, and hence will be rendered virtually useless.

Follow the path Sephiroth took into Corel Valley, then hop up the spiral path to reach the cave. To get through the cave, follow these directions: climb up the crack at the bottom, go left, climb up the next crack, go right, climb up the next crack, go left, climb up the final crack, then take the ladder up to the top. Exit onto the world map. Walk west until you are past the mountains, then head north to reach Icicle Village. Save here. Enjoy the pleasant world map music, because this is the last time you're going to hear it.

As you enter the town, enter the building on the right side. Grab the map off the wall inside. Attempt to exit the back of the town, and Elena will arrive with some Shinra goons. To dodge her punch and save a little time, press the Cancel and left directional buttons. Now go into the middle house, talk to the boy, and take his snowboard. Finally, go out the back of town to start the snowboard minigame. Don't these people have anything better to do than set balloons and igloos in the middle of an enormous snowboard slope?

Do not spend too much time wandering in the Great Glacier, or Cloud will collapse and you will have no choice but to rest at Holzhoff's cabin. My directions will assume that you turned right at both intersections on the snowboard course. Head north until you encounter a frozen lake, and continue to the northeast. Head right on the screen with the lone tree, and from there just keep going north.

When you reach the snow field, take note of the horizontal and vertical lines in the snow. Simply walk along one of the vertical lines, tapping X frequently to set markers behind you. When the screen starts to turn, stop moving; the markers will help to point you in the right direction. You will walk past an igloo in the middle of the snow field; if you enter and exit the igloo, the screen will be oriented with north on top again. You can and should use the save point inside Holzhoff's cabin, but do not talk to Holzhoff himself.

#### XV. Gaea's Cliff and Whirlwind Maze

This is a pretty fearsome place in LLNIIENACMO, though not necessarily because of your inability to revive your characters. The most powerful single-target attack is Malboro's Frozen Beam, which does about 675 damage with Sadness. Everyone will survive it if they are at full HP, though to ensure this you need to cast Frog Song, White Wind, and Magic Hammer in essentially every random encounter. (Without exception, every enemy on Gaea's Cliff and in the Whirlwind Maze will be put to sleep by Frog Song. It is enormously valuable for neutralizing Malboro, Stilva, and their irritating smaller brethren.) The true dangers are two full-party attacks: Stilva's Magic Breath, which does 2400 damage to all characters (1600 with Sadness), and Malboro's Bad Breath, which poisons and immobilizes the party while he cuts them down one by one with Frozen Beam. If either is ever cast--before you're prepared for it, anyway--consider it a guaranteed Game Over.

While in the outside areas, you must always keep your body temperature above 26 degrees. Otherwise you will return to Holzhoff's cabin and have to make the ascent all over again, though you are no longer required to rest there. The faster you get out of there the better, to avoid the Malboros as well as the button-mashing to stay warm. Inside isn't quite as bad, though you still need to put Stilva to sleep to prevent him from casting Magic Breath. Evilhead's Ultrasound is also pretty bad; use Frog Song to immediately put them down (Aqualung if they attack from both sides), and cast White Wind if anyone is silenced. Push down the rock in the first cave area to clear the path, make it through another chilly outside area, and use the save point.

Replace Cid with Red, transferring Enemy Skill #3 to him. Go out the door to the right, curving around the outside to reach the top of the cavern. If Red is hit by Frozen Beam, he will die. But that's alright, since you can win all three Icicle battles without him. I strongly recommend putting the battle speed on the slowest setting and using Wait mode.

-----  
Icicle, Evilhead x4  
3000 HP (300 MP), 740 HP (45 MP)

The Icicle itself cannot attack; it is the four Evilheads and their Ultrasound that will cause all the trouble. If Red is still alive, cast Frog Song on the Evilheads one by one. If one of your characters is hit with Ultrasound, have Cloud or Yuffie cast White Wind immediately; Silence is very bad in these battles. Once they are all asleep, kill Red. Restore your HP with White Wind if you haven't already, drain the MP from the Evilheads (the Icicle counters Magic Hammer), and cast Laser on the Icicle. Since Icicle is weak against gravity, Laser will automatically kill it.

If Red is dead when you enter the battle, use the strategy listed below.  
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After the battle, you will be given the option to jump down into the cavern. If you're feeling uneasy about these battles, you can use the save point and fight them one at a time. For the moment, I would recommend trying to fight all three battles in a row. If worse comes to worse, you can always escape.

---

Icicle, Evilhead x4  
3000 HP, 740 HP

If all four Evilheads get to act before your turn, there is a 42% chance that both Cloud and Yuffie will be silenced by Ultrasound, rendering them defenseless. If that happens, activate Clear Tranquil immediately and escape. Otherwise, enter into a menu and wait for the Evilheads to finish their attack animations. Have the one not hit by Ultrasound heal with White Wind, removing Silence in the process, and the other end the battle with Laser.

---

Continue to the left.

---

Icicle, Evilhead x4  
3000 HP, 740 HP

Same strategy as above.

---

Jump down now. No need to fight the fourth Icicle.

Run to the save point and switch Cid back in. Swap your materia around, giving Enemy Skill #2 to Cid and Enemy Skill #3 to Yuffie. Return the battle to normal speed and save your game. Hop over the newly created stepping stones to reach the other outside area, then curve around left to reach the final chilly set of ledges. Once again, don't allow your body temperature to fall below 26 degrees; it's a long walk to get back.

When you reach the next cavern area, lower the battle speed and save immediately. Do not, I repeat, DO NOT use the healing spring; without Sadness it's quite difficult to beat Schizo. If you run into a Blue Dragon along the way, Big Guard is an absolute must; he is immune to sleep and paralysis, and his attacks can easily kill you even with Sadness. Be absolutely sure that everyone is at full HP before entering the battle.

---

BOSS: Schizo (Right), Schizo (Left)  
18,000 HP (350 MP), 18,000 HP (350 MP)

With no protection at all, Schizo's breath attacks do about 1000 damage. This is about the same damage as Malboro's Frozen Beam, so with Sadness everyone can survive one attack before Big Guard is up; after that, everyone can survive a double attack. Hopefully they won't both attack the same character, or both Cloud and Cid, before you can cast Big Guard. Yuffie casts Magic Hammer on one of the heads, Cloud or Cid (whoever has lower current HP) casts Big Guard, and the remaining character casts White Wind after the breath attacks. Then have everyone cast Magic Hammer, using White Wind only if someone is left with less than 400 HP. Your first and foremost priority is to eliminate one head's MP by casting Magic Hammer on it four times. Removing its MP will disable that head, and you will be down to one attack per round. After it uses three breath attacks, the other head will do nothing for two rounds--plenty of time to stop the painful double breath attack.

With no MP, Schizo can no longer use its breath attacks or earth-based counterattack. Even so, you are not out of the woods yet. Its final attack does not require MP, and since each head uses the final attack separately you have to be very careful when you kill them. Sense both heads, move everyone forward, and use your limit breaks. Since Yuffie has nothing better to do with her MP, have her cast Aqualung until she runs out. Cloud can cast Trine a few times, but make sure he has at least 90 MP remaining. Cid should save all of his MP, in case he needs to use White Wind a few times after battle. Once everyone has cast their respective spells, start meleeing one of the heads; I usually target the left one first. Once it has less than 400 HP remaining, stop attacking. Now target the other head, reducing it to just under 400 HP.

This phase is crucial. The final attack does 1300 damage to all targets, which is reduced by Sadness and MBarrier to around 450 damage. To ensure that Cloud and Yuffie die, it is enough to put their HP below 400. Laser is ideal for this, as it ignores MBarrier and automatically rips off half your HP. (Cid would need to cast it; Cloud still needs to save his MP.) Kill off Yuffie before killing the heads, but keep Cloud and Cid at full health. When you are ready, have Cloud cast Big Guard. Attack the first head for a few turns, and it should quickly die; the final attack will leave the party wounded, but still alive. Fully heal with two White Winds, then attack Cloud until you're sure he will die. Spend whatever remaining MP Cloud has on Trine, and if necessary use physical attacks to finish Schizo. The other final attack should kill Cloud and leave Cid with 300-400 HP.

-----

DO NOT return to the spring now. Due to a glitch, if you get a random encounter before leaving this screen you will be unable to escape; that cannot be allowed. Instead, exit to the bottom of the screen. You can immediately head back if you want to, but I wouldn't advise it; Cid has next to no chance of surviving Blue Dragon in his current state, and the Evilheads can also annihilate him easily. Instead, continue on into the Whirlwind Maze. The only way you're likely to get a Game Over is if Gigas casts Quake3 before you can put him to sleep, and there's only a miniscule chance of that happening. Don't bother using Magic Hammer on Grenade, since he has no MP.

When you get to the second screen of the Whirlwind Maze, Tifa will force herself into the active party. In the process, Cloud and Yuffie will be revived and everyone will be healed. Form a party of Cloud, Tifa, and Cait Sith. Transfer Enemy Skill #2 to Cait Sith and Enemy Skill #3 to Tifa. Run to the left edge of the next screen to witness the cutscene with the Highwind, then use the save point.

The windy passes in the Whirlwind Maze are one of the most irritating parts of a Low Level challenge. If you are knocked down you will get into a forced encounter with Wind Wing, Rapps' nasty younger brother. Since you will have to cross these passes close to a dozen times before you end this section of the game, the whole process can get quite irritating.

Though it is possible to beat Jenova-DEATH in your current state, it is very risky. Jenova can easily kill Cloud and Tifa before your first turn, ending the battle before it starts. It would be much wiser to put everyone under Sadness and charge Cross Slash. To do this, get into an encounter with a Gremlin on the screen just past the first whirlwind. Cast Frog Song on all your enemies as usual, then cast Laser twice on one of the Gremlins; being at low HP makes it use the Sadness-inflicting Bad Mouth much more often. Cast Frog Song on it again, then wait for it to use Bad Mouth on all three characters. Bad Mouth does 1000 physical damage, making Defend quite important. Once you're ready, continue on.

In addition to the wind, you must also avoid the cyclones in the second windy pass. Once you reach the second screen, immediately lower the battle speed all the way.

---

BOSS: Jenova-DEATH  
25,000 HP (800 MP)

Sadness gives you a huge survival advantage, reducing her Red Lights from around 800 damage to just over 500 and allowing everyone to survive them. Cast Big Guard as soon as possible, use Cross Slash to paralyze Jenova for a few rounds, and heal with White Wind if she got the first attack in. Unless someone's HP falls too low or Jenova silences you, in which case you heal with White Wind, use Magic Hammer every chance you get. Like the previous Jenova, she is absolutely powerless when her MP is gone. Restore Cloud to full health, sense her, and move forward. Tifa and Cait Sith are free to use up all their MP casting Trine and Aqualung; after that, start meeleing her to death. When she gets down to a few hundred HP kill Tifa and Cait Sith, then finish Jenova.

---

Once you have given the Black Materia to a party member, return the battle speed to normal and head north to the save point. A little luck is required, as Wind Wing's Aero3 is certain death if Cloud isn't able to escape or cast Frog Song in time. Assuming you do live to use the save point, replace Cait Sith with Cid and transfer Enemy Skill. Head south, past both windy passes, to exit the Whirlwind Maze. Backtrack all the way to Schizo's lair, then use the healing spring. Return to the Whirlwind Maze area, taking care that no one dies.

Before leaving this place, all three Enemy Skill materia are going to learn Trine and Magic Breath. Trine is a superb, cheap Enemy Skill, one that everyone should have access to, and Magic Breath is more powerful than Meteorain even to single-target enemies; the latter spell is vital in the Junon battles. The problem is that Stilva's Magic Breath does well over 2500 damage, very severe for a party whose strongest character barely has 900 HP. To learn it, Cid must be under Sadness. Once again, you will be using the Gremlins; enter the Whirlwind Maze again, and get them to use Bad Mouth on all your characters using the strategy listed prior to Jenova-DEATH.

(If you have the patience for yet another trip into the Maze, you might want to replace Cid with Cait Sith and having the Gremlins put him under Sadness as well. This will allow him to survive Malboro's Frozen Beam, making him vastly safer and possibly saving you much aggravation on the return trip.)

Backtrack again, this time all the way to the cavern where you fought the Icicles. Lower the battle speed to at least the default level, and change your materia configuration: give Enemy Skill #1 and Sense to Cloud, Enemy Skill #2 to Tifa, and Enemy Skill #3 and Manipulate to Cid. Run around near the save point until you encounter Stilva.

---

Stilva  
2000 HP (300 MP)

Begin by casting Big Guard while Cid attempts to manipulate Stilva. If he casts Magic Breath before you're able to manipulate him, reset and fight him again. Otherwise heal everyone to full HP, sense Stilva, and have Stilva cast Trine on the party. You may cast Magic Hammer ONCE if the need arises; do not

use it any more than that, or Stilva will not have enough MP to make this strategy work. (It is imperative that everyone be alive after Trine, or not all of the materia will learn Magic Breath.)

Heal Cid to full HP, and then use Magic Breath on the party. Cloud and Tifa will be killed, while Cid will survive with less than 100 HP. Now that both skills are learned, have Stilva cast Magic Breath on himself. If that doesn't kill him, and it usually will, an additional Trine will finish the job.

-----

Go back to the save point and switch Cid for Cait Sith. Give Cait Sith Enemy Skill #1 or Enemy Skill #2. Unfortunately, neither Cloud nor Tifa can be removed from the party right now. Cait Sith will have to make it past the Malboros on his own, without Sadness. Keep the battle speed where it is; this makes Frog Song's Sleep last longer, and improves the chances of putting Malboro to sleep before he can act. This will probably take a few attempts. Once Cait Sith makes it back to Schizo's lair, use the healing spring to revive Cloud and Tifa. Save, and head to the end of the Whirlwind Maze.

The third and final pass requires you to avoid the wind, cyclones, and periodic lightning strikes. If you cross after the third cyclone goes by, you should be safe. Head forward for a long progression of cutscenes, and say goodbye to vicious Gaea's Cliff.

#### XVI. Escaping from Junon

No sooner do you control Tifa again than the Shinra barge in and march you off to your execution. Simply have Barret follow Tifa and the guards down to the execution chamber. Make sure to give him Enemy Skill #1 or Enemy Skill #2. There is a save point along the way, though you don't really need to use it.

When Sapphire Weapon attacks, Cait Sith will join you and you will enter battle with some Attack Squads. Contrary to appearances, you can escape from this battle. (Which begs the question: where do the Attack Squads go?) After attempting to open the door to the execution chamber, exit the room and head for the airport. Frog Song is quite effective against Soldier:2nd, who can deal some pretty severe damage with Sword of Doom. Yuffie will join you along the way. Once you make it to the parked airship, the scene will shift to Tifa.

Press X, X, Triangle, Triangle+X, Circle+Triangle, Circle to free Tifa from the chair. Then push the left button to stop the gas, and attempt to open the door. With some help from Weapon, Tifa is able to escape the execution chamber and climb/fall down to the Sister Ray. Give Scarlet a few slaps for payback, then leave Junon on your brand new airship.

#### XVII. Mideel, Fort Condor, and Corel

Once on the Highwind, you will have to form a party with Tifa as the leader. It doesn't really matter who you choose, since this party isn't going to fight any battles. Head to Mideel Village, on the southeast corner of the map. Once the cutscene initiates, Tifa will leave the party for a while. The party now takes on a new mission: protecting the Huge Materia.

Form a party of Cid, Barret, and Red. Give them all Enemy Skill, granting Enemy Skill #3 to Red, and head over to Fort Condor. Before you start the mission, climb up to the materia shop and buy two Manipulate materia. You have nothing else to do with your gil, so you might as well give all your



characters the ability to manipulate. Start the mission, turn up the battle speed all the way, and allow the enemy units to reach the shack. You will enter a forced battle with Commander Grand Horn. No need for a separate boss strategy; just suicide with Aqualung. Your entire party is left with 1 HP, and Fort Condor is lost for good, but you are still alive.

Save your game, get back into the Highwind, and rest at an inn. I usually use the house in Junon, though you can also rest in the airship operation room. Set down in the Costa del Sol area, give Manipulate to Cid and Red, and run up and down the beach until you encounter a group of three Beachplugs.

---

Beachplug x3  
200 HP (100 MP)

Manipulate one of the Beachplugs, and have it cast Big Guard on Red. Kill Barret and Red--Laser and Flamethrower are the most effective tools for this, as usual--and have Cid finish them with Trine. Very easy.

---

Replace Red with Yuffie, transferring the appropriate materia to Yuffie. Set down anywhere in the Junon area, and get into battle with a solitary Zemzelett.

---

Zemzelett  
285 HP (36 MP)

As before, if he casts Thunderbolt you cannot learn White Wind. Manipulate him, teach White Wind to Yuffie, then kill her off. Casting White Wind on him is a good way to remove Manipulate, by the way, particularly since Zemzelett cannot break the manipulation on his own. At this point one Flamethrower will be sufficient to kill him.

---

With the exception of Laser, all the important enemy skills can now be cast by all three characters. With that done, you can move on to the Corel mission. Swap out Barret for Cait Sith, making sure that the two living party members have Enemy Skill #1 and #2. Set down just outside North Corel, then walk north to the reactor. Since you 值 need to kill Cid before you win the next battle anyway, I suggest you finish him off in the first convenient random encounter. Don't 稚 worry about surviving with just one character; the enemies from earlier in the game are far too weak to threaten you now, and previously threatening attacks such as Petrify Smog can be completely negated by White Wind. When you reach the reactor, you will be forced to fight a few Shinra soldiers.

---

Attack Squad x2  
1300 HP (100 MP)

Cast Magic Breath to win the battle in one turn.

---

After that, the Huge Materia will be hauled out on a train and the party will follow them. Since you cannot afford the EXP from any of the train battles, simply allow the ten minute timer to expire. Once it does, you'll need to rest at an inn.

Replace Yuffie with Red, then rest if you haven't done so already. Take

the airship to the beaches by the chocobo farm and manipulate Elfadunk to put the party under Sadness. Return to Mideel, lower the battle speed all the way, and save on the world map. After talking to Tifa, the party will be forced to fight Ultimate Weapon.

-----  
BOSS: Ultimate Weapon  
100,000 HP (400 MP)

If he casts Quake2 before you are able to put up a Big Guard, your chances aren't good; it will reduce Cid and Cait Sith to very low HP, making healing with White Wind difficult, and will usually kill Red. Otherwise, one or two White Winds will be enough to fully heal you. Ultima Beam is the real killer, as it does 650 damage even with MBarrier and Sadness. Make sure at least once character has that much HP before the Weapon's third turn (and that you've cast Big Guard, of course), and you will live to see the battle end on its fourth turn.

Though it is possible to prevent Ultima Beam by casting Magic Hammer four times, you will not have time to do so with only two survivors. Only use this approach if Weapon opened with Quake2 but Red still survived, since the Big Guard strategy is much more reliable.

-----  
Shortly thereafter, the Lifestream sequence initiates. So much time, so little to do. Once you've had your fill of Cloud's past, you will be back on the Highwind. When you control Cloud and try to exit the operation room, it will be time to form a new party. Make it Cloud, Cid, and Red. If Cid survived Ultima Beam, head straight for Junon; otherwise, rest at an inn and put Cid under Sadness first. Give everyone Enemy Skill.

#### XVIII. Junon

Bribe the guard to get into upper Junon. Don't forget to use the save point. Head for the tunnel with the soldiers (well trained, they are), then enter the elevator.

-----  
Submarine Crew x2  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Cast Frog Song on both Submarine Crews, then kill Cloud and Red. One Aqualung plus one Trine will kill them; draw MP from them as needed.

-----  
Once you leave the elevator, you will be forced to fight another battle without saving.

-----  
Submarine Crew x2  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Exactly the same as the last battle, except this time only Cid can fight. Kill them once more with Aqualung+Trine, healing with White Wind if necessary.

-----  
Head down to the elevator now. Swap Red for Cait Sith, save your game, and continue on to the Underwater Reactor save point. Once you get there, save again. When you head forward, be sure to talk to the single soldier first;

otherwise you will be forced into an attack from both sides, screwing up the battle plan.

---

Submarine Crew  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Cast Frog Song, kill Cait Sith, then kill the Submarine Crew as usual.

---

Return to the save point, replacing Cait Sith with Barret. Now go forward to face the group of two.

---

Submarine Crew x2  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Exactly the same as the other battles. Remember to kill Barret.

---

Before you can fight the final pair of guards and continue on, you have to make a long detour. Save your game, then head back to the surface. Leave Junon, rest at an inn, and form a party of Cloud, Red, and Cait Sith. Have Elfadunk put them under Sadness, and return to Junon. Form a party of Cloud, Barret, and Tifa, and return to the Underwater Reactor. If Cloud is hit by Goannai or killed along the way, reset and load the game from your last save.

Back in the Underwater Reactor, approach the final group of guards.

---

Underwater MP x2  
1000 MP (100 MP)

Despite their low HP, these guys are much more trouble than the Submarine Crews. Each Underwater MP will attack your characters three times in a row, and can also use Hand Grenade for some pretty severe damage. Cast Frog Song on them, kill Barret and Tifa, and finish them with two Trines.

---

Head onto the next screen to watch the Huge Materia be taken out of the reactor. Then head to the dock to see it put into the submarine. DO NOT approach Reno just yet, or you will prematurely trigger the boss fight. Instead, backtrack to the save point and make your party Cloud, Red, and Cait Sith. Give them Enemy Skill and your two Sense materia, and fully restore your HP and MP in a random encounter. (The Hard Attacker+Senior Grunt formations are best; both enemies are susceptible to Frog Song and carry plenty of MP.) Save your game, then return to the dock. It is crucial that you put the battle speed at the slowest setting before approaching Reno.

---

BOSS: Carry Armor, Left Arm, Right Arm  
24,000 HP (200 MP), 10,000 HP (100 MP), 10,000 HP (100 MP)

The thing that makes this battle deadly is Lapis Laser. Even with Sadness, it does close to 1200 damage to the whole party. Carry Armor can use it as a sneak attack at the beginning of battle, and he also may get to use it before the party's first turn; if either happens, you will have a Game Over. Cast Big Guard as soon as a character gets a turn. Once you're under Big Guard, two White Winds will fully heal you from Lapis Laser; make sure Cait Sith casts the first one, as he will nearly always have the highest HP. At the

earliest opportunity, have each of your characters cast Magic Breath once.

Once you have drained all the MP from the body, Lapis Laser can no longer be used. However, you cannot afford to just use Magic Hammer twice at the beginning of battle, because then you will not have enough MP to eliminate the arms. Instead, cast it once your characters have less than 50 MP remaining. If your characters have only a little more than that, cast Trine to do a bit of additional damage. You should really only need three Magic Hammers, two on the body and one on an arm; the 100 MP from the other arm can be used in an emergency, such as if he uses two or three Lapis Lasers or too many of your spells miss. Trine will do 600-700 damage, while Magic Breath does 1500 damage. Once Magic Hammer has been used twice on the body, sense both arms.

Even when Lapis Laser is disabled, Arm Grab is still an enormous threat. He uses it much more often when at low HP, so that below 2500 HP each arm has a 50% chance of Arm Grabbing a character. Needless to say, this is bad; you will lose the victim's spell-casting ability, since there is no way to revive them, and if Cait Sith is Arm Grabbed you have no choice but to give up. To avoid Arm Grab, cast three Magic Breaths in quick succession once both arms have less than 4000 HP remaining (probably after the fourth Magic Breath). Assuming none of them miss, the most dangerous phase of the battle will be bypassed entirely. If Cloud or Red is Arm Grabbed at this point, cast Magic Breath anyway; you will have to finish them off with Trine, but the battle should still be possible.

With his arms gone and his MP eliminated, Carry Armor is helpless. Sense him, heal Cait Sith with White Wind if necessary, and move forward to start meleeing him. Cloud and Red can use up all their MP casting Trine, but Cait Sith needs to save a minimum of 13 MP for the next battle. Once Carry Armor has only a few hundred HP remaining, kill Cait Sith's allies and end the battle with a few physical attacks.

-----

Since you cannot leave the area before starting the next three battles, Cait Sith will have to fight solo. Though you don't need to fight at the slowest speed any longer, keep the battle speed fairly low; this will ensure that the enemies don't wake up before Cait Sith has cast all the necessary spells. Make sure Cait Sith is on the far right (or far left) to minimize the damage in the final battle.

Approach the guards, and the battles will be triggered automatically.

-----

Submarine Crew x2  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Cast Frog Song on both guards. Use Magic Hammer on the first Submarine Crew, then White Wind and Aqualung. Drain the other Submarine Crew's MP, and end the battle with Trine.

-----

Submarine Crew x2  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Exactly the same as above, though Cait Sith will have some extra HP from leveling up. He must end the battle with full HP and at least 83 MP.

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Submarine Crew x3  
1500 HP (85 MP)

Your inability to revive is pretty painful here. This is an attack from both sides, so all three Submarine Crews will get to move before you do. To survive, Cait Sith must eliminate the group of two with Magic Breath and then put the surviving enemy to sleep. Unfortunately, the single Submarine Crew will get another attack from behind before you're able to do so. If you placed him on the far right or left Cait Sith will be able to survive three back hits (barely), though if any go critical you are still dead.

Once you've successfully put the Submarine Crew to sleep, drain his MP with Magic Hammer and finish him off with Magic Breath. Fortunately there's no need to heal.

-----

Use the save point on the sub and enter the control room. Choose to take the troops hostage. You must win the minigame with the sub, or it will be impossible to get the Key to the Ancients later on. Fortunately it's quite easy: just stay a little bit behind the leader sub, mash Square, and you will win in a matter of seconds.

#### XIX. Rocket Town and the Ocean Floor

When you return to the surface, immediately get back into the sub. If you want it, the sub with the Huge Materia is in the southwest corner of the ocean. The Sunken Gelnika is also down there, though I recommend leaving it alone for the moment. At the north end of the ocean is a trench. Head west in the trench as far as you can, and then head north through the hidden tunnel. Pick up the Key to the Ancients, then return to Junon and rest. Get back in the airship.

Form a party of Cloud, Cid, and either Tifa or Yuffie. Now set down by the beaches in the chocobo farm area, and save your game. You want Elfadunk to put Cid under Sadness, but not Cloud. If Shower lands on Cloud, either rest or reload your game. Trust me, this makes a big difference in the Rocket Town battles.

Set down outside of Rocket Town and form a party of Cloud, Barret, and Red. Make sure Cloud has either Enemy Skill #1 or Enemy Skill #2, so he can cast Laser. Set the battle speed to whatever you used for the submarine battles, save your game, and approach the rocket. You will have to fight three battles in quick succession.

-----

Attack Squad x2  
1300 HP (100 MP)

Cast Frog Song on both Attack Squads, then kill Barret and Red. One Aqualung and one Trine will kill them. There should be no need to heal in this battle.

-----

Attack Squad x2  
1300 HP (100 MP)

The procedure is the same, but because Cloud is fighting alone their Sleep-inducing spray can really slow you down. Be sure to heal Cloud and restore his MP before ending the battle.

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Senior Grunt, Attack Squad x2  
2600 HP (245 MP), 1300 HP (100 MP)

Cast Frog Song on the Senior Grunt first, since he will be doing the most damage. Eliminate the Attack Squads with Magic Breath, cast Laser on the Senior Grunt, heal with White Wind, top off your MP, and finally end the battle with Trine. If Cloud doesn't already have a limit break, he should be close; wake up the Senior Grunt and let him build Cloud's limit break until it is ready. Aqualung is of little use, since the Senior Grunt takes half damage from water.

-----  
At this point Cid will demand to be on the front lines, and you will get to change parties. Make your new party Cloud, Cid, and Cait Sith. Equip Enemy Skill on all of them--make sure Cid has Enemy Skill #1 or Enemy Skill #2 now--and lower the battle speed to the slowest setting. Climb up the ladder to square off with Rude.

-----  
BOSS: Rude, Attack Squad x2  
9000 HP (240 MP), 1300 HP (100 MP)

As soon as possible, use Cross Slash on Rude. The limit break will paralyze Rude immediately after the current attack, and could well prevent him from dragging the battle out by casting MBarrier. Have Cait Sith cast Big Guard while Cid eliminates the Attack Squads with Magic Breath. Cait Sith follows up with a Magic Breath of his own, Cloud casts Aqualung, and then everyone casts Magic Hammer to eliminate Rude's spell-casting abilities. For the rest of the battle, use nothing but Aqualung (and possibly Trine at the very end).

The big danger here is Grand Spark. Even with MBarrier it does almost 300 damage (200 to Cid), and Rude will use it three times in a single combo against random characters; since White Wind heals the whole party, it can be difficult ending the battle with just Cid alive. Laser and Flamethrower are a godsend here, since they make it much easier for Cloud and Cait Sith to die quickly. Cid's Sadness is also very helpful, since you don't have to heal nearly as often to keep him alive. (As long as he has more than 600 HP and is under MBarrier, Cid will survive no matter what Rude does.) The instant only Cid is alive, have him end the battle.

-----  
Head into the rocket for the fifth and final battle.

-----  
Senior Grunt  
2600 HP (245 MP)

Easy, easy, easy. Frog Song, Laser, Magic Breath, and if necessary one or two Magic Hammers will be enough to end the battle.

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Head through the door, and after a few cutscenes you will be launched into space. If you want the Huge Materia, enter the following passcode: Circle, Square, X, X. Otherwise, just head down the ladder. Follow Shera to the escape pod, and watch some more cutscenes.

## XX. Cosmo Area, Icicle Area, Midgar Area, and the Sunken Gelnika

Take the airship due south and set down in the grassy area to the west of Cosmo Canyon. Enter Cosmo Canyon, go up to Bugenhagen's observatory, and talk to him in order to continue the plot. Now fly north to the Icicle area, setting down on the grassy area immediately south of the City of the Ancients. Enter the city, take the left path, and head for the center platform in the room with the Aurora Armlet.

Once the cutscenes here are done, return to the world map and board the airship. Weapon is on the rampage... again. Rest at an inn, then form a new party. It doesn't matter who you choose, except that Cid and Cait Sith can't be in it. Have Elfadunk put Cloud under Sadness. Then form a party of Cloud, Cid, and Cait Sith, giving them Enemy Skill as usual, and set down in the Midgar area. When Diamond Weapon stops moving, save and walk toward him.

---

BOSS: Diamond Weapon  
30,000 HP (30,000 MP)

Diamond Weapon is immune to Sense, so you have to use a calculator. Cast Big Guard at the beginning of battle, then whittle down his HP with Trine. You may use ONE limit break, preferably Dice, but no more. If you use a second limit break he will start the countdown to Diamond Flash, which silences the party and hence dooms them to extermination. Instead, rely on Trine for your damage, healing with White Wind and recasting Big Guard as needed. His spit attack does 800 damage unprotected (550 to Cloud), while the foot stamp does over 1000 damage (750 to Cloud). Note Diamond Weapon's virtually unlimited MP stock; having enough MP should never be a problem.

Most of the battle is extremely easy. The only really difficult part comes at the end, when you have to kill Cid and Cait Sith. Like Rude, Diamond Weapon has an infuriating tendency to attack the characters you don't want to be hit. Laser won't help nearly as much, since the foot stamp always targets whichever character has the highest HP. Hopefully you see why Cloud needs to be the only one with Sadness; by reducing Cloud's healing load, it becomes much easier for Diamond Weapon to kill your other characters before healing Cloud becomes an issue. When Cloud is the only one still standing, end the battle with Trine or Magic Breath.

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Before you head for the North Crater, there are two things that need to be taken care of. First, head over to Junon. Rest at the house, save your game, and get into the sub. Enter the Sunken Gelnika, in the trench near the Gold Saucer area. Once inside, go through the door just right of the save point. In the northeast corner of the room is the Double Cut materia, partially obscured by the chest on the walkway above. (Even though the materia appears purple on the map, it is still a command materia.) The enemies here--Unknown 3 especially--can inflict deadly damage on your party members, so be sure to put them to sleep with Frog Song immediately. Expect at least one party member to die in this room. When you've collected the materia, exit the Gelnika and return to the airship.

Second, Cait Sith needs to learn Slots. Make a quick trip to Bone Village to dig up the Key to Sector 5. Tell the staff to dig next to the cockpit of the crashed airplane by the entrance. After a few attempts, the key will be yours. Return to the Midgar area, and form a party of Cloud, Tifa, and Cait Sith. Save on the world map, then enter the city through the Sector 5 gate. Cait Sith will learn Slots by killing Hedgehog Pies, in the same formation Aeris used to learn Planet Protector.

-----  
Whole Eater, Hedgehog Pie x2  
72 HP, 40 HP (52 MP)

In the first battle, kill Cloud and Tifa with Laser and Flamethrower. Draw MP from the Hedgehog Pies when needed, and win the battle with Trine. Cait Sith can heal himself with White Wind, but since the enemies here do so little damage that probably won't be necessary.

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After winning 11 of these battles, "Slots gained" will appear in the EXP gained screen. Don't switch limit breaks yet, though; Cait Sith needs to use Dice for a while. Leave Midgar and return to the airship.

If you don't have a lot of practice with Slots, I advise saving now and practicing on a separate file. The ideal place for building limit breaks is on the world map just outside of Nibelheim. Manipulate Valron, and have him use Dive Kick on Cait Sith. Dive Kick takes off 25% of Cait Sith's maximum HP; with Fury, two uses are sufficient for Cait Sith to gain a limit break. To avoid accidentally killing the Valron with Toy Box or Toy Soldier, use a Shrivel to put him under Mini status.

The reason you need Slots is for the Mog Dance combo, obtained by lining up three star symbols. Mog Dance acts like a Megalixir, fully restoring the party's HP and MP. Most of the difficulty in getting this combo comes from lining up the first slot, since the reels spin too fast for very precise targetting. The easiest way to do this involves pausing the reels with the Square button. Press and hold Square repeatedly, glimpsing the symbol on the first reel as best you can, until you land on the Cait Sith symbol. (It will appear as a dark blur on the screen.) If you press the Confirm button immediately after releasing Square, you should land on the star. You can do this for all three slots, though if you simply stop the other two reels randomly there is better than an 80% chance that they will line up on their own. (Thanks to GarlandG for this tip.)

When you feel ready, fly to the Northern Crater to initiate the next major mission of the game. Time for your final trip to Midgar.

## XXI. Midgar, Sector 8

Fly into the airspace over Midgar to parachute into the city. Make your party Cloud, Cait Sith, and Yuffie. Use the save point once on the ground, then descend into the Sector 8 underground. The random enemies are pretty nasty here, and only Behemoth among them is susceptible to Frog Song. (Manipulate will work on the robots, though it misses too often for my liking.) Crazy Saw is especially bad, as his physical attack inflicts Confusion in addition to pretty high damage; have another character heal with White Wind if possible, and otherwise defend while you are escaping.

As soon as you've entered the railroad track area, you'll be confronted by the Turks. They would be quite impossible in LLNIIENACMO, even if you didn't have to worry about your severely limited MP supply. Fortunately, because of the Wutai sidequest you don't have to fight them. Go your separate ways, heading north for Shinra Headquarters. At the first fork in the road go right. Then go left at the next fork, and climb the ladder to reach Shinra Headquarters. This place brings back memories, doesn't it?

Get into the elevator near the front desk, and take it up to floor 64. Use



the beds here, give everyone Manipulate, and walk around for a bit on floor 65. Encounter some Sword Dances here and have them inflict Fury on everyone with Slap. Once this is done, take the elevator back to the bottom. Give Double Cut to Yuffie, then save your game. Head back into the tunnels and backtrack to the first of the two forks, this time taking the left path. Head up toward the Sister Ray, then prepare for the least exciting battle in the game. Do yourself and set the battle to Wait mode and the speed to the lowest setting.

-----  
BOSS: Proud Clod, Jamar Armor  
60,000 HP (320 MP), 20,000 HP (300 MP)

Like Rapps earlier, you must rely on physical attacks and limit breaks for your damage. Since Proud Clod is immune to Sense you must manually subtract the damage done by each hit. Cast Big Guard as soon as possible. While Barrier and MBarrier will wear off pretty quickly, Haste will stay with you for the whole battle. At the slowest battle speed it will allow Yuffie plus one of her partners to act twice every round, greatly increasing your damage output.

The battle itself is simple enough, though you do need a bit of luck. Yuffie attacks with Double Cut every turn, except when she uses Clear Tranquil to heal the party. With Fury, Clear Tranquil will hopefully take care of nearly all your healing needs. Cloud and Cait Sith will use Cross Slash and Dice when they gain limit breaks, but otherwise need to defend. While this will slow down your damage, it is necessary in case Proud Clod avoids Yuffie for a long time and forces you to do without Clear Tranquil. White Wind should be reserved for emergency situations, such as if Yuffie suffers a particularly nasty critical hit and has very little HP remaining before Clear Tranquil, or if Cloud or Cait Sith has less than 500 HP remaining and no Clear Tranquil is ready; you simply don't have the MP to use it all the time. Cast Magic Hammer on Proud Clod first, then on Jamar Armor once Proud Clod's MP is gone.

The only really dangerous attack is Proud Clod's machine gun. This does 550 damage to a character, and like all his physical attacks it can be used twice in the same turn. If it goes critical on Yuffie, or she is targeted by both attacks, there's a strong chance she will die and you will have to fight Proud Clod again. To avoid this, PAY ATTENTION to his attack pattern. At first he only uses this move directly after his hand attack (or the rarely used Materia Jammer), so everyone can defend then and resume attacking. But once the Beam Cannon phase starts--see below--it is a lot more common: he always uses it after standing up, and has a chance of using it after any other attack. Thanks to Haste you can still perform two attacks that round, but after that everyone must defend.

When Proud Clod kneels down and brings out the cannon, cast Magic Hammer on him nonstop. He will spend an additional charge turn on the ground, then unleash Beam Cannon for 1200 damage on the party. To prevent that, you must cast your third Magic Hammer on the body before his two charge turns are up. Fury will cause Magic Hammer to miss fairly often, so this may take a few tries. Once his MP is gone have everyone melee him until the message "Proud Clod's skill power is used up" appears. After that Cloud and Cait Sith go back to defending while Yuffie continues to attack.

You can no longer target him with Dice below 2400 HP (though you can safely release it on Jamar Armor), must and stop attacking altogether when he has less than 300 HP. Allow Proud Clod to build Yuffie's limit break one more time, and have her defend while an ally casts White Wind. (If you followed my advice and relied on Clear Tranquil for your healing, Jamar Armor should

still have at least 100 MP remaining.) Then move Cloud and Cait Sith forward, and let Proud Clod kill them. Reflect from Proud Clod's Materia Jammer can cause some problems here, as it prevents Cloud and Cait Sith from killing themselves with Flamethrower and Laser. Fortunately Reflect will wear off after your characters have bounced Laser off themselves four times. Do not use Flamethrower, since unlike Laser it is able to kill Proud Clod. Once both guys are dead have Yuffie finish the battle with Greased Lightning.

---

The instant Proud Clod falls, run back to Shinra HQ. Though the Sister Ray save point is closer, Grossspanzer appears in every random encounter there. This guy does 1300 damage even in the back row; if you encounter one before reaching the save point, Yuffie will die and all the effort you just spent killing Proud Clod will be wasted. Heal with White Wind in a Shadow Maker battle, if possible, and otherwise do your best to avoid getting killed by Crazy Saw before you reach the save point. (If he does attack you, Defend ASAP; most of the time you can escape before Yuffie starts attacking herself.) Take the elevator up to floor 64, then rest for the final time. Switch Cait Sith's limit to Slots at this point.

Save outside the building, then go to the save point at the base of the Sister Ray. Equip Sense on Cloud and Cait Sith, transferring Enemy Skill #3 to Cait Sith. Save your game and ascend the stairs. If anyone dies along the way, simply reset and make the trip again. (Big Guard is an absolute necessity for surviving the Grossspanzers.) When you get to the screen with Hojo, put the battle speed at the slowest setting and put the ATB mode on Wait. You can't afford for Hojo to be using Combo while you try to line up the reels.

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BOSS: Hojo, Bad Rap Sample, Poodler Sample  
13,000 HP (250 MP), 11,000 HP (120 MP), 10,000 HP (200 MP)

This is the easy part of the battle; enjoy it while you can. Cloud and Yuffie put the samples to sleep with Frog Song, while Cait Sith Hastes the party with Big Guard. Sense Hojo, then start meleeing him to death. The samples should wake up twice, once at 7000 HP and again shortly before finishing this part of the battle. Recover your MP with Magic Hammer on Hojo and the Samples, have Cait Sith cast Big Guard, and finish him with Double Cut from Yuffie. Cloud should stand by for the moment.

BOSS: Helletic Hojo, Left Arm, Right Arm  
26,000 HP (200 MP), 24,000 HP (400MP), 5000 HP (300 MP)

Killing the Right Arm is your priority; while it is dead, no attack except Sleepel can be used. To kill it quickly, cast Laser, two Aqualungs, and Trine in that order. Don't enter your commands too quickly, however; he is able to cast Confu in this form, which may cause Aqualung or Trine to land on your own party. Once the Right Arm is dead, start using physical attacks and limit breaks on the Left Arm. (The battle will end once both arms are dead, so attacking the body is unnecessary.) Draw your MP from the Left Arm first; the longer the body can cast Sleepel, the less MP you'll have to spend killing the Right Arm.

Be very careful about how you finish this form. Cait Sith's and Yuffie's MP need to be as high as possible going into the next form. Cloud must be ready to act immediately after the battle ends. Finish him with Trine.

BOSS: Lifeform-Hojo N  
30,000 HP (100 MP)

As soon as the final form appears have Cloud cast Magic Hammer. This will steal all his MP in one shot, eliminating the deadly full-party Slow. While this is necessary, it prevents you from taking any more MP for the rest of the battle. This is no small matter. His Combo inflicts Poison, Darkness, Sleep, and around 800 damage; you will be completely dependent on White Wind to heal the target. But because White Wind costs a hefty 34 MP, before long you will run out of MP. Add that you have to rely on physical attacks and limit breaks for your damage, because Trine/Aqualung/Magic Breath would waste even more MP, and you have a serious MP crisis. Clear Tranquil would be useless here, so have Yuffie use Greased Lightning instead. Predictably, Hojo is immune to Sense; you will need a calculator one last time.

Obviously you cannot survive this battle without Mog Dance. If you've mastered the trick described earlier, getting the combo should be a piece of cake. Of course, you cannot use Mog Dance if Hojo decides to ignore Cait Sith. To ensure that he gets as many limit breaks as possible, never have Cloud or Yuffie attack unless Cait Sith is able to attack immediately after them. Due to a quirk in Hojo's AI, he has a strong tendency to attack the character that attacked him last; hence, if Cait Sith is always the last attacker he will be the target of most Combos, guaranteeing him plenty of chances to use Mog Dance. Combined, these two strategies will recover far more MP than you need. You can scythe through his HP with Trine or Aqualung if you're good enough, though you should be careful to leave at least 68 MP (102 if you're especially paranoid) in case he decides to target someone else for a while or you screw up the reels a few times. (In the latter case, physical attacks and Cloud's and Yuffie's limits will be your primary form of damage.)

As mentioned in the rules, you must stay away from the Cait Sith symbols. The instant-win combo (three Cait Siths) is explicitly forbidden, while the automatic Game Over (two Cait Siths plus a Moogle) is detrimental for obvious reasons. However, both effects are so rare that this will probably never be an issue. The real danger comes from the Transform combo (three Moogles). It renders the battle unwinnable, since Combo's Sleep+Poison will quickly destroy you and the transformed Cait Sith can no longer use Slots, and even if you did win Cloud and Yuffie would get half EXP from the battle, pushing them up to Level 31. If the first reel lands on either symbol, stop both reels immediately to abort to the Toy Box combo.

Assuming you are able to employ the Slots well, Hojo's critical hits are the big danger in this battle. Combo's hits are not of equal strength; the first three hits do 100, 250, and 150 damage respectively, while the final Sleep-inflicting hit does a whopping 350 damage. Have Combo's target defend the instant one of the first three hits goes critical; this will cut the damage from the remaining hits in half, and could very well save your life.

Once Hojo has 2000-3000 HP remaining, you can safely lower his HP with Trine. When you're sure Cait Sith will be able to kill him with one more spell, it's time to wrap up the battle. Let Yuffie die first. Then move Cloud forward, and have him attack once. (Be sure Hojo has more than 200 HP.) If he targets Cait Sith, cast White Wind and wait a little longer. When he targets Cloud, pay close attention. In order for Cait Sith to win the battle alone, Cloud must die on the fourth hit of Combo. Otherwise the remaining hits will land on Cait Sith, and if he is put to sleep he will most likely get damaged and put back to sleep by Hojo's Combos until he finally dies. If either of the first two hits goes critical, have Cloud defend immediately; the powerful final hit will definitely kill him, but he should have just enough HP left to survive the third. Once Cloud is dead, immediately unleash the most powerful spell available to kill Hojo.

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It's done. Hojo has been defeated, and a disc without the ability to revive has drawn to a close. Watch the cutscenes on the Highwind, and revel in the fact that the challenge is all but completed.

\*\*\*\*\*DISC THREE\*\*\*\*\*

XXIII. Northern Crater

Before you go down, change Cait Sith's limit back to level 1 and return the battle speed to normal. Climb down the ladder, then slide into the Northern Crater. The first chest contains the Save Crystal, the one item you are allowed to use in this challenge. Pick it up. If you encounter a Dark Dragon on the way down, make absolutely certain to put him to sleep before casting Magic Hammer; otherwise he will counter with Ultima, wiping out the party.

Continue down four screens. At this point you must select the party you will be using to learn Angel Whisper. You can use any party you like, as only Cloud will gain any experience; I suggest leaving Barret and Tifa out, since the second materia slot will be very important. When the party splits, send Cloud and his two teammates to the left, while everyone else goes right. Send them all down at the second split point.

Go all the way to the bottom of the Crater, plant the Save Crystal in the final room, and save your game. DO NOT COLLECT YOUR PARTY MEMBERS; doing so will put everyone back in the party, pushing Tifa to Level 30. Walk back up all the way to the first split point, and this time go right.

You should now be on a spiral pillar. Give Enemy Skill and Manipulate to all three characters, and Sense to at least one of them. Walk up and down this pillar, taking care not to go too far down. The random encounters here are quite nasty. There's Dragon Zombie, whose Poison Fang will easily kill its target even with Sadness and in the back row; Death Dealer, who will occasionally attack the party from both sides and inflicts pretty devastating damage with his physical attacks; and Malboro, who still is able to devastate the party with Bad Breath and Frozen Beam. The enemy you are looking for is a lone Pollensalta.

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Pollensalta  
4000 HP (220 MP)

Use Manipulate on Pollensalta until it succeeds. Have her cast Angel Whisper on all three characters, then eliminate her MP with one Magic Hammer. Use your limit breaks, then lower her HP with Laser. (She absorbs Fire, so don't cast Flamethrower, Beta, or Magic Breath.) Once she has only a few hundred HP remaining, move the party forward and kill everyone except Cloud. It will only take a few hits for him to end the battle.

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Now run up the pillar and get out of here, hopefully without another random encounter. In the next random encounter, use Angel Whisper to revive Barret and Red. Finally, you can revive fallen characters at will. Return to the bottom of the cave and make your final save, using the same route as before.

XXIV. The Final Battles

It's time to end it once and for all. When you're ready, head down the

stepping stones of doom. Make your party Cloud, Barret, and Yuffie; give everyone Enemy Skill as usual, and give Double Cut to Yuffie. Frog Song works against every enemy here; use it immediately, as Iron Man and Dragon Zombie are more than capable of cutting down one of your characters in a single turn. You will need to cast White Wind and Angel Whisper a lot to keep your characters alive. Once at the bottom, just before you face Jenova, turn the battle speed down to the slowest setting.

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BOSS: Jenova-SYNTHESIS A, B, C

60,000 HP (600 MP), 10,000 HP (600 MP), 8000 HP (600 MP)

Put up a Big Guard on your first opportunity, then have everyone cast Aqualung. If you don't need to heal, it will take four rounds to kill the arms. Jenova's tentacle slap can be a serious problem, as it can inflict Fury and cause your attacks to miss quite often. You can partially protect yourself by putting everyone in Sadness beforehand, but there's a chance he may hit the same character twice and inflict Fury regardless. (Also, anyone killed on the way down will lose Sadness.)

Assuming no one is under Fury, the rest of the battle is a piece of cake. (If someone is under Fury, have them renew Big Guard protection right after the arms are revived; you'll have to count on Jenova getting at least one attack in before she dies.) When revived, the arms will have 25% of their maximum HP; three Aqualungs are sufficient to kill them again, keeping Jenova permanently immobilized the same way you immobilized Helletic Hojo. While the arms are dead, rely on physical attacks and limit breaks. When a character falls below 100 MP, use Magic Hammer on the body.

When Jenova has less than 15,000 HP remaining, she will begin the countdown to Ultima. Fully heal Cloud, and use Magic Hammer on the body until its MP is fully depleted. If Cloud doesn't have full MP, have him use Magic Hammer on an ally. When the count reaches zero, Jenova will fail to cast Ultima and the battle will end automatically.

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When the cutscenes following Jenova's defeat end, form a party of Cloud and two new characters. Cait Sith and Cid are the obvious choices because of their limit breaks. Enemy Skill is the only materia you need, so make sure everyone has one. Raise the battle speed to the highest setting, and show Sephiroth what you're made of.

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BOSS: Bizarro Sephiroth, Head, Left Magic, Right Magic, Core

40,000 HP, 2000 HP, 4000 HP, 4000 HP, 10,000 HP

Both Bizarro and Safer Sephiroth have "infinite" MP: each turn, the MP for all of Sephiroth's parts is fully restored. This is quite fortunate, since otherwise these battles would be completely impossible.

Before you can have any hope of killing the body, you must first destroy the Core to stop Bizarro Enegy. You can't just start attacking it, though, as initially it cannot be damaged. To make the Core vulnerable, you must kill Left Magic and Right Magic. These guys absorb Fire and Lightning, respectively, so you will be attacking them with Aqualung. However, you still can't just kill them right away, because you would also kill the Head. If both the Head and the Core are alive on the fourth turn of Bizarro's eight-turn attack cycle, Bizarro will use Stigma. Stigma is a full-party attack that does 2000 damage and also inflicts Poison and Slow. You cannot survive it without Big Guard, and even with Big Guard the status effects make Stigma

dangerous. By killing the Head immediately, it is all but impossible to avoid this move.

Cast Aqualung twice at the beginning of battle, then stand by for a while. You have to wait for Bizarro to kill two of your characters with Bolt3 and Quake3; revive them with Angel Whisper. After Quake3, immediately follow the Angel Whisper with a third Aqualung. This will ensure that the Head dies just in time to prevent Stigma. Bizarro will use a physical attack instead, and you will have plenty of time to kill Left Magic and Right Magic with two more Aqualungs. The Core can now be killed. To kill it, you must cast Aqualung 11 times within the next eight rounds. Don't bother healing; reviving with Angel Whisper is faster, and in any case he usually won't kill anyone before the Core dies. So long as you cast Aqualung more often than Magic Hammer or Angel Whisper, you will kill him in time.

Once the Core is dead, the battle is very easy. Restore your MP when needed, cast Trine or Aqualung to damage the body, and cast Angel Whisper whenever a character dies. Healing is pretty much a waste of time, since he reduces everyone to 1 HP with Heartless Angel. When you hear a rumbling sound, it's time to end these games and face the big boss himself.

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BOSS: Safer Sephiroth  
80,000 HP

Safer will cast Wall on his first turn. This is nothing to worry about right away, as you probably need to restore your MP right now, but Wall needs to wear off before you can do any serious damage. Safer attacks in a fixed sixteen-move pattern, listed below:

1. Wall
2. Shadow Flare
3. Wing attack
4. <Rises into the air>
5. Pale Horse
6. Super Nova
7. Break OR Heartless Angel
8. <Comes down>
9. DeSpell
10. Deen
11. Wing attack
12. <Rises into the air>
13. Pale Horse
14. Super Nova
15. Break OR Heartless Angel
16. <Comes down>

Break is used initially, to be replaced by Heartless Angel when Safer has less than 20,000 HP remaining. Shadow Flare, the wing attack, Pale Horse, and Break all kill one character, requiring one of the others to revive them with Angel Whisper. The character hit by Shadow Flare will quickly become your most important character, as they possess the most powerful enemy skill in the game. The only attack which can kill everyone at once is Deen, which requires its own strategy.

After Pale Horse, have one of your characters stand by while the other casts Angel Whisper. If you are using Wait mode, staying in the menu during the attack animation will prevent the passage of time, and ensure that everyone is able to move immediately after Super Nova. As long as the animation is, you

cannot just sit back while it is going on. Super Nova has a 30% chance of inflicting Confusion, Silence, and Slow on each character. Confusion and Silence are two of the deadliest status effects in this battle; your characters' low HP after Super Nova ensures that an attack from a Confused ally will kill them, and Silence renders them almost defenseless. If you notice a character's Enemy Skill command is blacked out, have them defend immediately. That character will be afflicted with Confusion, and therefore must skip his turn so he can't act until after Confusion is cured. (Confusion, Silence, and Slow are always inflicted together.)

Even if Enemy Skill is not blacked out, a character may still be afflicted by status effects. To know for certain, watch carefully when the animation ends. As soon as the damage appears, the white bubble symbolizing Silence will appear over all afflicted characters. You have three to four seconds to make all afflicted characters defend, before the battle resumes and Confusion can destroy your party. Have whoever is unaffected cast White Wind to heal the rest of the party of their status effects. If everyone is affected, you have just lost the battle. There's a chance of this happening, though in the dozens of times I've endured Super Nova it only happened twice. So be it; by now you should be used to that sort of necessary luck.

Safer will follow Super Nova with either Break or Heartless Angel, depending on his HP. Either way, you must cast Angel Whisper on someone. His Wall will be gone now if you're using Active mode, meaning Shadow Flare can do its full damage. It may take a bit longer with Wait mode, depending on how much time you spend in the menus, but in any case it will last no longer than Deen. Make sure you have at least 160 MP before casting Shadow Flare, in case an emergency arises. Everyone who does not have Shadow Flare should cast Aqualung instead. As always, Cloud's and Cait Sith's limit breaks don't cost MP and do a whole lot of damage; Cait's Dice are the only thing you have that isn't reduced by Wall. Just make sure you don't forget about your defense, as you are entering the most critical part of the battle.

When Safer descends, have the target of Angel Whisper cast White Wind to fully heal the party. Next comes DeSpell, and then Deen for 1600 damage to all. To live through Deen, you must cast Big Guard immediately after DeSpell. After everyone survives, you can go back to the normal pattern of reviving your allies and casting Shadow Flare. Once again, try to ensure everyone gets a turn right before Super Nova. When he descends again, get in your last barrage of Shadow Flares and Aqualungs; he is about to recast Wall, which means you have to go back on the defensive.

That's the battle in a nutshell. Chances are good that everyone will know Shadow Flare before the battle ends, greatly speeding up the killing process. Excluding the remote chance of Super Nova silencing the whole party, there's really nothing that can screw you up.

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Sephiroth  
1 HP

The simplicity of a hands-free counterattack, or the marvel that is Omnislash? Your choice.  
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The LLNIENACMO challenge is now complete. If you managed to complete it, you rank as one of the best FFVII players out there.

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