

Final Fantasy Tactics Zodiac Learning FAQ

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Errors in this? Contact me at sugarlessdel@yahoo.com.

Introduction:

In Final Fantasy Tactics, which is a great game that I unfortunately didn't appreciate properly for far too long, there are several types of magic. Most can be used by the Calculator character, which is good to know, because you're going to want one of these if you go much further in this FAQ.

One type that can not be used by the Calculator is Summoning Magic. This magic is slower than moss climbing uphill, uses up an inordinate amount of MP, and is among the most devastating of anything in the game.

Whether you like the use of summoning, or if you just have beaten FFT and need to go through again and burn out every single little secret, you will want to learn Zodiac, as it's the most powerful summon in the game. Unfortunately, Zodiac (like Ultima) can only be learned by having a mean monster guy who's trying to kill you cast it on the person you want to learn it. Even more unfortunately, the person you want to learn it will only learn it if he somehow manages not to become dead during the process.

The only monster in the game that will cast Zodiac is the Serpentarius Zodiac Monster on the bottom floor of the Deep Dungeon (End). There are lots of FAQs on how to get to this encounter; go read one if you like. I would highly recommend you try the fight at least once before continuing to read this FAQ; you might come up with a better strategy than me, and I would like to hear it if you do.

(By the way, the reason there are no recommendations for levels or things like that in this document is that if you can make it to the End level of the Deep Dungeon, you don't need me telling you how to get your fighters dressed. You know how to kill monsters. This FAQ is not about killing monsters; it's about making them do your bidding by teaching you Summons.)

Strategies:

Commonly seen strategies for not getting killed by Zodiac can include boosting the bejeezus out of the Magic Defense of the character you want to learn the spell (henceforth, the "Student"), or using the MP Switch technique. You have to do something -- Summoners tend to be pretty lame in the old HP department, and taking the full brunt of Zodiac is quite likely to kill them. But I don't like either of those two strategies, because tweaking the numbers like Magic Defense gives stupid ol' me a headache, and because MP Switch takes forever to learn, unless your Summoner is also a master Time Mage.

I usually learn Zodiac as an afterthought; the Student is generally Cloud. Who, it goes without saying, is not a master Time Mage.

Another effective technique, requiring a Mediator, is to talk the

Student down to an abysmally low Faith, let him learn Zodiac, then talk it back up. You may have that sort of time; I sure as heck don't. Do this instead.

Eight major steps to easily and quickly learning the Zodiac summon:

1. Skills known by party members should include: Battle Skill, Math Skill, and (if you like) Two Swords. Two Swords will make things quicker. I would personally bring at least two guys with Battle Skills (and if one's a ninja, then that adds a lot to his abilities here), and usually I like to make Orlandu a knight, because you don't want this fight to be fair, you want it to be completely lopsided and to manhandle your opponents. You can play fair next fight.

2. Defend all characters against the Poison Frog attack. The 108 Gems accessory defends against both Poison and Frog, so it would be a good choice. (If you haven't tried fighting Serpentarius, he uses three attacks- Poison Frog (which simply turns you into a poisoned frog), Zodiac, and Midgar Swarm. The latter two are just summony magic. He can attack physically, but he's a weakling, so he won't unless you make him. Which you will.)

3. Speed up the Math Skill character. Note I do not say Calculator; Calculators are ungodly slow. Make him either a Black Wizard (for higher MA figure) or do like I did and make him Ramza and a Squire. He can Scream, he'll have a faith of at least 70... and you can give him the very effective Excalibur, lending him Haste and strengthening Holy.

4. Start the fight by using some Math Skillage to cast Holy and wipe out all the opposing Apandas. They will only get in the way. First priority should be the ones closest to you, then work your way up using only the Math Skills.

5. There should now be seven creatures left standing: the Byblos, the Serpentarius, and your party. The Byblos, you might want to turn to stone or Speed Break him into a slow oblivion while Math Skills are doing their job; he has some mad attacks which can kill the Serpentarius before you're ready.

6. Cast Innocent (Doubt Faith) on everyone. At the very least, make sure you catch everyone who will go near Eldibs in step 7.

7. Send up people with Battle Skill to Mind Break the Serpentarius until they stop getting Exp and JP for it. (Obviously, the reason Ninjas are so useful for this is that you can drop his MA by as much as 6 in a single strike.) When that happens, it means he's down to an MA of 1. Maintain Innocence on everyone until this happens.

8. Allow Innocence to expire. Corner the Serpentarius (which isn't really that hard, if you're using two Knight/Ninjas and your Summoner). Don't feel a need to Speed Break him; he'll get around to casting Zodiac shortly and you'll get a chance to learn it. Note that if he does cast Zodiac while the Student is innocent (and therefore takes zero damage), the Student won't learn it. He's actually going to need to lose some HP to make it happen.

Miscellaneous:

Remember that there is no shame in casting Cure 3 on everyone if he does some damage by physical attacks or he casts Midgar Swarm too many times or anything like that. You may heal the Serpentarius. It

doesn't matter. Without his magic, outnumbered five to one, you can take him, I promise.

Also note that if you have room in your party after this battle, and you haven't sent the Byblos to the great beyond, he will join your party for good. Better than a Black Chocobo!

Props:

Heavy thankfulness to Fritz Fraundorf and the GIA (erggibbon@aol.com and www.thegia.com, if you will) for writing a stupefyingly good FAQ and raving madly about the game so long that I was forced to continue giving it another shot until I finally learned how to play. Massive thankfulness to Square for publishing such a gem of a game and forcing people around the world to dig through the most horrible piece of crap transation since Zero Wing to find it. Way to go, guys!

Nonsense:

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