

Final Fantasy VII Aeris-Only Challenge Guide

by HurrikaneX

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AERIS-ONLY CHALLENGE GUIDE

By Ben Heins
a.k.a. HurrikaneX

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I. INTRODUCTION

For this challenge, I will assume you have played through FFVII more than five times and you want to try one of many exciting new challenges. Of course, we all know why this guide does not go beyond Disk One. Aeris has a short but sweet stay in Cloud's company, and is generally not used too much because of it. The purpose of this challenge is to focus strictly on Aeris and her amazing power. But your quest does not have to stop with her death. In fact, if you read my other FFVII guide, the Cid-Only Challenge, you can pick up right after the Temple of the Ancients on a similar quest using only Cid Highwind. For this challenge, however, I will NOT assume you are doing that.

Aeris is a force to be reckoned with. Her magic power is better than any other character and her Limit Breaks are incredible. Simply put, if she were in the entire game, she would be the ultimate team member.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail me. Any hate mail or flames will be disregarded and I will find you where you live. :)

By the way, here's your *SPOILER WARNING* ... if you did not know that Aeris dies at the end of Disk One, you obviously have never played this game before, and should not be reading this anyway. :)

II. RULES

- Before you get Aeris, there are no rules.

- After you get Aeris, you must use her and only her until she leaves the team permanently. Kill off all other teammates in battle.
 - When you cannot use Aeris, you must run from every random battle. There are four Boss fights where Aeris cannot be used (Walkthrough Sections e, g, h, and r). For the first three, you must use only Cloud, and for the fourth you must use only Barret. There are also two Mighty Grunts you must fight on Floor 59 in Shinra H.Q. Use only Cloud.
 - Do not get Yuffie or Vincent to join your team.
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III. TIPS

- Before getting Aeris, not too many events take place. You can try leveling up, but it would be a huge waste of time. Aeris comes in the party at a very convenient time because nobody is (or should be) above Level 10, and there are not many items to get beforehand. As a sidenote, I fought every random battle, so when I got Aeris she was at Level 5.
 - The only item you need before getting Aeris is the All materia from the Sector 7 slums. Don't bother buying the Fire materia because Red XIII comes equipped with one that has a good chunk of AP.
 - As far as Enemy Skills go, you will not have to worry about them until the after Midgar. I will notify you when, where, and how to get the ones you need when the time is right. :)
 - I have purposely skipped Fort Condor, Gongaga, the Lost Number optional Boss, and the Umbrella weapon sidequests because they add nothing to your quest except wasted time and a little more aggravation. Most of the benefits from them are useless to Aeris because she will not be around after Disk One. The Great Gospel Limit Break is detailed in Section VII because some people may still want it for creating some kind of "super Aeris" later, but it is ultimately useless in this challenge.
 - Give all Sources to Aeris.
 - MOST IMPORTANTLY, this is a "loose" guide. I will not be covering every little detail of the game. Also, I am only strongly suggesting these methods, so if you have a better way of doing things, by all means use it. If I do not mention a change in equipment or materia, it is because the current set-up I have suggested is sufficient at that point in time.
-

IV. WEAPONS

Aeris' physical attacks are definitely not her strong point. All of her weapons are listed below in the order you will find them throughout the game.

- GUARD STICK
 - ATK: 12 / ATK%: 99
 - SLOTS: 1 unlinked
 - GROWTH: Normal
 - NOTE: Initial equip
- MYTHRIL ROD

ATK: 16 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 2 linked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Bought at Wall Market (370 gil)

- STRIKING STAFF

ATK: 32 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 2 linked / 2 unlinked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Steal from Eligor in Train Graveyard

- FULL METAL STAFF

ATK: 22 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 2 linked / 1 unlinked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Bought at Kalm (800 gil)

- WIZARD STAFF

ATK: 28 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 3 unlinked
GROWTH: Double
NOTE: Found when falling left through Mt. Corel train tracks

- UMBRELLA

ATK: 58 / ATK%: 118
SLOTS: 0 linked / 0 unlinked
GROWTH: None
NOTE: Won from Gold Saucer Speed Square (5,000+ Points)

- PRISM STAFF

ATK: 40 / ATK%: 105
SLOTS: 4 linked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Bought in Cosmo Canyon (2,600 gil)

- FAIRY TALE

ATK: 37 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 4 unlinked
GROWTH: Double
NOTE: Won from Turks in Gogaga (kill Reno first)

- WIZER STAFF

ATK: 33 / ATK%: 100
SLOTS: 4 unlinked
GROWTH: Double
NOTE: Won from Gi Nattak & Soul Fires

- AURORA ROD

ATK: 51 / ATK%: 110
SLOTS: 4 linked / 1 unlinked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Bought at Wutai (5,800 gil)

- PRINCESS GUARD

ATK: 52 / ATK%: 111
SLOTS: 6 linked / 1 unlinked
GROWTH: Normal
NOTE: Ultimate weapon. Found in Room IV of the clock room in the Temple of the Ancients. Damage inflicted will be MUCH higher because other team members are dead.

V. LIMIT BREAKS

Aeris' Limit Breaks revolve around healing, which is great news. The only bad aspect of her Limits is that a few should not be used at all. Breath of the Earth cures Aeris of all status ailments, including good ones like Big Guard. Bad idea. Fury Brand fills up your other teammates' Limit Gauges. Another bad idea. Pulse of Life will revive and fully heal all party members (even worse of an idea), and Great Gospel will give all team members full HP and grant them temporary invincibility (unbelievably bad idea). :) Great in the normal game, but they are all setbacks when using only Aeris.

You will need Healing Wind and Seal Evil for the better part of the quest, and when you finally get Planet Protector (sometime around or before arriving at Wutai), THEN you should switch Limit Break Levels.

NOTE: These figures are based off of my own personal calculations. They may vary from game to game.

- HEALING WIND (LEVEL 1.1): Initial Limit.
- SEAL EVIL (LEVEL 1.2): Use Healing Wind 7 times.
- BREATH OF THE EARTH (LEVEL 2.1): Kill about 70-80 enemies.
- FURY BRAND (LEVEL 2.2): Use Breath of the Earth 6 times.
- PLANET PROTECTOR (LEVEL 3.1): Kill about 80-90 enemies.
- PULSE OF LIFE (LEVEL 3.2): Use Planet Protector 5 times.
- GREAT GOSPEL (LEVEL 4.0): Give Aeris her Limit Break Manual found in the Weapon Seller's house, south-east of Gongaga. Further explanation in Section VII.

VI. WALKTHROUGH (after getting Aeris)

a. Church

This area is ninety percent plot. When you get a chance, equip the Titan Bangle you just won from Air Buster and attach the Restore, Ice, and Lightning materia. Follow the story and make Aeris fight all three battles. If you want to be nice, you can have Cloud drop barrels on the guards, but Aeris will be needing all the experience she can get. A quick Bolt or Ice spell will take care of a guard or a Guard Hound.

Once you have escaped, head west and north toward Sector 5. Make sure to kill Cloud if you get into a fight.

b. Sector 5 & Sector 6

Take time to visit the house on the lower east side. Go to the second floor and talk to the kid laying on his bed. Check the "hidden" drawer and leave the 5 gil alone.

Before entering Aeris' house in the next area, grab the Ether in the garden. Go in, follow the plot, and grab the items in Cloud's bedroom. Have Cloud tip-toe out and run over to Sector 6.

Once Aeris rejoins the group, kill Cloud. Watch out for Hell House. Healing Wind and Bolt will definitely come in handy here.

For Wall Market, you want Cloud to be chosen by Don Corneo. In order for this to happen, you need to have all the right things for Cloud's girl costume (oh, the things he'll do for friends). :) First, go to the right and talk to the man in red outside the Honey Bee Inn. Ask him about Tifa. Now head all the way north to Don Corneo's mansion. Talk with the guy at the entrance, then head back to the upper left part of the first area (clothing store) and talk with the guy behind the counter. Go back north to the second area, and go in the first door on your left. Talk to the old man at the bar, and tell him you want a dress that is "soft" and that "shimmers." Now return to the clothing store and get your Silk Dress.

Cloud will try on the dress, but will be needing more things. Go back to the second area inside the tent and challenge Big Bro to a squat contest. Tap Square, X, and O rhythmically and whoop his butt to get the Blonde Wig.

Okay, now go back to the first area (*yawn*). :) Go in the door at the top right and tell the man you will happily stay overnight at the Inn to see what it is they are selling.

Next, stop at the restaurant in the upper middle of the first area. Order some food (70 gil) and get the Pharmacy Coupon for saying it was all right. Go south and enter the pharmacy (house with capsule in front of entrance). Exchange your Coupon for the "digestive."

Go south a bit more and enter the Inn. Stay one night (10 gil) and buy the most expensive item in the vending machine (200 gil).

Head to the opposite side and talk with the red-looking guy to get his Member's Card. Enter the Honey Bee Inn and choose a room. Do your business and walk away with some sort of underwear. ;)

Now return to the man's house on the upper right side of the first area. Give him the item you bought at the Inn, and he will give you a Diamond Tiara.

Back to the second area. Go in the bar again and hand the person in the bathroom the "digestive" you got at the pharmacy. She will give you the Sexy Cologne.

Whew. Anyway, now you are ready to go drag. :) Go back to the clothing store and change, then save. Head north to Don Corneo's mansion. Along the way, go in the Weapon Shop (right side of second area) and pick up the Mythril Armlet (350 gil). Equip it on Aeris, but keep her materia set up the same for now. Don't bother picking up the Mythril Rod.

Follow the plot inside. Make sure to nab the Ether in the basement and the Hyper behind Corneo's bed (Cloud will undoubtedly be chosen). It does not matter what choice you make for Corneo's question - either way, you're goin' down. :)

c. Sewers

Talk to the women quickly so that you will not fight random monsters. Time for Aeris' first Boss fight!

BOSS: Aps
HP: 1,800

STRENGTH: None
WEAKNESS: Fire
DIFFICULTY: 3/10
WIN: Nothing

First, kill your teammates. It may take quite a few turns, but just have Aeris defend. Since you do not have the Fire materia, use Bolt spells on Aps. Use Healing Wind and Potions to make sure Aeris' HP stays above 100. Aps will wind up hurting himself a lot, so this is not really a tough fight at all.

Heal Aeris and continue through the sewers. There is a Potion up the stairs from where the party fell and a Steal materia near the exit ladder. Run from all random battles down here because you probably do not have too much MP, and Ethers are precious. Replace the Ice materia with Steal.

d. Train Graveyard

Use your only Tent and save. Run through the first train and check the barrel for a Hi-Potion. Continue on top of the train and pick up another Hi-Potion. Check the next barrel for an Echo Screen. Navigate through the rest of this area, and do not miss the two Potions. The enemies here, particularly the Deenglows, have high HP and really are not worth fighting.

In the next area, you MUST find a monster named Elignor. It looks like a half-man, half-wheelchair-of-death thingy. :) Steal the Striking Staff from it. To the left of the entrance is a Potion and an Ether (in a barrel). Hop in both trains, and do not forget the Hi-Potion on the middle one.

Exit once you have the Striking Staff. You can probably take on Deenglows now using only physical attacks. However, do not start switching up materia, because Aeris is going to take a short leave of absence...

e. Support Pillar

You can sell your Phoenix Downs and Guard Stick to the man in red before you scale the pillar. Buy 4 Tents here before entering the gate. Then equip the Titan Bangle on Cloud and attach the Ice-All combination to the Buster Sword, and Restore and Steal to the Bangle. Save.

As you climb the pillar, make sure to kill Tifa in battle. Before you go on to fight Reno, you MUST get Cross-Slash (if you do not have it already). Basically, use Braver in random battles until you get it. Once you do, heal using a Tent and save at the bottom of the pillar again. Now go all the way back up to meet Reno. Cloud should be around Level 10 for this fight, with a Cross-Slash Limit Break ready.

When you are prompted to access the menu before the Boss, make sure to put Barret in the back row, and leave Cloud in the front. This way, Barret will receive much less damage in the upcoming fight.

Be warned, this fight may be easy in the normal game, but in the Aeris-Only Challenge, this is one of the toughest Bosses around.

BOSS: Reno (Cloud-only fight)
HP: 1,000 (runs when near death)
STRENGTH: Halves Lightning
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 7/10
WIN: Ether

This fight is not about killing off Barret. Reno will put him out of commission with one of his Pyramids eventually. Have Barret do NOTHING unless Cloud gets put in a Pyramid. Have him shoot it down pronto when that happens. When Barret is under a Pyramid, have Cloud use Cross-Slash and follow up with an Ice attack, THEN destroy Barret's Pyramid. Do this attack pattern again and again until Reno runs away. You may only attack when Barret is under a Pyramid. If Barret dies, use Ice like there is no tomorrow. My reason for this strategy is simple: it is impossible to kill Reno using only Cloud within 3 or 4 turns after Barret is KO'd. After those 3 or 4 turns, Reno will indefinitely cast another Pyramid around Cloud, resulting in an automatic game over. So, Cloud either needs an insanely high-level Limit Break (which he does not have) or he needs to use his enemy's attacks to his advantage. This strategy may seem a little too thought-out, but there really is no other way to win under the circumstances. Anyway, you only need to pull off 8 or 9 attacks on this loser until he escapes. A good time to heal would be right after you break one of Barret's Pyramids. If you mess up with the strategy, or if Reno kills you (happened to me once), try, try again, and never give up. :)

Whew. Latch onto Barret and get the heck outta there.

f. Plan for Revenge

You can pick up the Sense materia in the playground, but it is not necessary. Head back to Aeris' house, killing Barret and Tifa along the way. Put Cloud in the back row. Also, make sure to talk with the sleeping kid again to get the Turbo Ether he bought with his 5 gil.

After talking to Aeris' mother, backtrack to Sector 6. Stop in the Item Shop and fork over 2,000 gil for 4 Tents. Buy Batteries from the Weapon Shop where you picked up the Mythril Armlet, and follow the kids near Corneo's mansion east to the giant wall.

When climbing through the wire maze, make sure to get the Ether in the third area by using a Battery.

At the entrance to Shinra H.Q., choose the stairs. Replace the Ice materia with Lightning and save.

g. Shinra H.Q.: Floors 1-68

For the first 58 floors, all you need to do is run up. On the fifth set of stairs there is an Elixir. Below is a list of strategies to get each key on Floors 60-68.

Floor 59: Use Bolt spells on the Mighty Guards using only Cloud. They should not pose much of a threat.

Floor 60: Dodge the guards whenever they start walking or running. This may be tedious, but you should be able to get past them in one shot.

Floor 61: Talk to the man walking around by the elevators and choose the ellipsis ("...") as your response.

Floor 62: Read each sign on the four rooms, and find the book inside that has nothing to do with that subject. Count letters left to right in accordance with the number shown to the left of the misplaced book's title. Generally, if you find one or two letters, you can narrow down your decision with Mayor Domino by selecting the only word that has the letter(s) in it. The only catch is, you MUST get this correct. :) The Elemental materia is essential for Aeris' future survival. If you mess up for some reason, I would suggest reloading your save file at the entrance to Shinra H.Q.

Floor 63: Here, turn on the computer and move to the north section of the room. Open the door on the top, then the second door to the south, moving left. Enter the nearby room and get Coupon A. Climb up into the duct and move to the middle. Drop down, grab Coupon B, and go through the door. Open the security door to your left (Cloud's right). Get the last Coupon and go back through the middle duct to exit out the right side duct. Exchange your Coupons at the computer for a Star Pendant accessory, Four Slots armor, and All materia. Equip the Star Pendant on Cloud.

Floor 64: Use a Tent to heal Cloud and save.

Floor 65: Just put the Midgar parts in the model. The Sword Dance monster will probably put Cloud under Fury, which is excellent news for the upcoming Boss.

Floor 66: Enter the bathroom duct to spy on the Shinra corporate meeting, then leave.

Floor 67: Here, you MUST steal two Carbon Bangles from Moth Slashers and the Hardedge sword from a SOLDIER. Equip a Carbon Bangle and Hardedge on Cloud. Continue through the area and follow the plot. Attach the Ice materia in place of Lightning and save near the elevator after using a Tent to heal Cloud. There is a Poison materia here you can pick up, too. When you are ready, go up the elevator.

Floor 68: Time for another Cloud Boss fight. Follow the plot and send Barret away with Aeris.

```
*****  
BOSS: H0512 & Samples (Cloud-only fight)  
HP: 1,000 (H0512); 300 (each Sample)  
STRENGTH: Halves Lightning (H0512)  
WEAKNESS: None  
DIFFICULTY: 3/10  
WIN: Talisman
```

First, make sure to kill off Red XIII (Tifa should already be dead). Now just use Ice spells on H0512. Avoid attacking the Samples. Cross-Slash will come up frequently due to Cloud's Fury status, making this a rather short fight. Poison attacks will not be hurting Cloud because of the Star Pendant. Just make sure to heal when Cloud's HP drops near 100, and the thing should be dead in no time. :)

```
*****
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After the fight, form a team of Cloud, Aeris, and Tifa. Remove the Star Pendant from Cloud and equip the other Carbon Bangle and Star Pendant

on Aeris. Remove all of Cloud's materia and attach it to Aeris, but replace Ice with Lightning, and use the All materia from Red XIII. Grab the nearby Enemy Skill materia and explore the area a bit. The man on the catwalk will give you the next key. There are four Potions here, too. Before continuing, it would be wise to return to Floor 64 using the stairs to heal using a Tent and save. Aeris should be at Level 10 or higher before continuing, so if she is not, return to Floor 65 and fight around a bit. Enter the elevator when you are ready.

h. Shinra H.Q.: Escape

Tseng and Rude will capture the crew. After a heated talk with the President, Cloud and company will be in the Floor 67 prison cells. Follow the plot, and head up to Floor 69. Kill Cloud and Tifa along the way so that Aeris is back in control. SAVE BEFORE GOING UP THE FINAL STAIRS. Trust me. :)

After some events unfold and Rufus takes over Shinra, it is time for Aeris, Red XIII, and Barret to get on the elevator. This is going to be a doozy of a fight, so make sure Aeris is fully healed.

```
*****
BOSS: Hundred Gunner & Heli Gunner
HP: 1,600 (Hundred Gunner); 1,000 (Heli Gunner)
STRENGTH: None
WEAKNESS: Lightning
DIFFICULTY: 6/10
WIN: Mythril Armlet
```

First thing's first, kill Barret and Red XIII. After that, lace into the Gunners using Bolt spells. Use Healing Wind and Cure spells to keep Aeris in the fight, and use an Ether after Hundred Gunner kicks the bucket. Watch out when fighting Heli Gunner because its speed is very high in the beginning. This fight will take a long time, so hang in there. If you lose, never give up. :)

```
*****
```

From here, the game will cut back to Cloud. Use Square to take off all of Aeris' materia, then go to the menu by pressing Triangle. Use the Lightning-All combination on the Hargedged along with Restore, and put the Steal materia on the Carbon Bangle. Make sure he is in the back row. This next fight is really easy, but if you lose, you will have to fight the Gunners all over again. So don't. :)

```
*****
BOSS: Rufus & Dark Nation (Cloud-only fight)
HP: 500 (Rufus); 140 (Dark Nation)
STRENGTH: None
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 2/10
WIN: Protect Vest & Guard Source
```

Attack Dark Nation with 2 Bolt spells to kill it. Then go after Rufus using more Bolts. Easy, right? If you get a Cross-Slash in, I feel bad for Mr. Shinra. :)

```
*****
```

Okay, now for the tricky part. Head downstairs and SAVE BEFORE TALKING TO TIFA! Sorry, but you do not want to have to go through all that junk again.

Anyway, follow the plot. When the screen comes up to explain how to do the upcoming highway game, make a new team consisting of Cloud, Aeris, and Tifa. Then, put all of Cloud's materia on Aeris. Give her the Guard Source you picked up from the recent Boss fight, and equip the Protect Vest. Put the Fire-Elemental materia combination on her armor for some much-needed insurance. Move her to the front row, and put Cloud and Tifa in the back. Trust me. :) Start the mini-game.

Make sure Aeris does not take too much damage before the Boss. If she has around 200 HP after the mini-game, she should be in the clear for the most part. Time for the final Midgar showdown...

BOSS: Motor Ball
HP: 2,600
STRENGTH: Halves Fire
WEAKNESS: Lightning
DIFFICULTY: 6/10
WIN: Star Pendant

Oh, boy. Tap the two shoulder buttons (L1 and R1) to make the team turn around and take minimal damage from its initial attack. Heal Aeris and have her defend while killing off Cloud and Tifa. Once they are dead, hammer away at Motor Ball with Bolt spells. Aeris will receive at least 50-150 damage per turn, so make sure you use Cure and Healing Wind when she is near 150 HP. Motor Ball only uses Rolling Fire in its second form (when it is in an upright position), so be sure to defend before it does to only receive around 100 damage instead of around 200. Bolt will be dealing about 250 damage, so hang in there. As long as you completely avoid Rolling Fire and heal when necessary, you should be fine. By the way, Aeris will be getting hurt... A LOT. :)

Take a moment to breathe. Follow the plot, and form a party of Cloud, Aeris, and Tifa. Get the heck outta Midgar and don't look back. :)

Put Aeris in the back row, and the other two in front. Before going on to Kalm, save and hunt down a Custom Sweeper monster in the area. Kill off your teammates in battle and steal the Atomic Scissors from it. Make sure to learn the Matra Magic Enemy Skill. From now on, keep the Enemy Skill materia on Aeris at all times. Also, you should drop the Fire-Elemental combination (move Lightning-All to the Carbon Bangle).

i. Kalm

Not much to do here except play through a (lengthy) flashback and pick up some items. Gather the three Ethers and Guard Source, along with the Peacemaker weapon that can score you some gil for selling it. Buy 4 more Tents from the Item Shop (2,000 gil) and the Earth materia from the Materia Shop (1,500 gil). Yet another town Aeris will never see again... :)

j. The Midgar Zolom

To cross the swamp, you can do the long way or the easy way. Either way, make sure to get the Choco/Mog summon from talking to the chocobos at the ranch and attach it.

For the long way, buy the Chocobo Lure materia from Choco Billy (2,000

gil) and a green or two, then hunt down a chocobo on the tracks with the materia attached. Feed it in battle, and kill all the enemies around it to capture it. Ride the chocobo across the swamp.

For those people who hate wasting time and gil (like me), go to the very edge of the swamp near the piece of land that sticks out the farthest. Alter the camera angle so you can see the south-west area of the swamp. Wait patiently until the Midgar Zolom goes deep into this area, and run, run, run to the other side of the swamp. If you were careful to wait until the right moment, the Midgar Zolom will not catch you. Ever. :)

k. Mythril Mine

Head right and pick up the Ether and Tent. The Long Range materia is up on the ledge, so get it and attach it right away. Make sure to get the Flame Thrower Enemy Skill from the Ark Dragon monster. Use Choco/Mog if you get in a jam.

Continue back to the main area and grab the Mind Source. The Turks will stop you, but who cares. :) Go into the nearby area and get the Elixir and Hi-Potion. Now crawl up the vine and get out of here.

On the road to Junon, you can stop at Fort Condor if you enjoy killing your teammates. :) Make sure to save before entering Junon. Aeris should be around Level 12 and fully healed.

l. Junon Harbor

Head to the beach.

```
*****
BOSS: Bottomswell
HP: 2,500
STRENGTH: Invulnerable to Earth
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 3/10
WIN: Power Wrist
```

Good news: Bottomswell will not use Waterpolo on Aeris. That said, you probably just took a sigh of relief. :) Lace into this beast with Flame Thrower and Choco/Mog. When Aeris falls down around 150 HP, make sure to heal her. You will probably use an Ether, but that's okay. :)

```
*****
```

Give Priscilla CPR by filling the lung gauge up until it is just near the top, and releasing it. Five big breaths, and the girl will wake up. I hope she's thankful. :)

After the night at the old lady's house, go to Priscilla's house and she will give you the Shiva materia. Return to the beach, call Mr. Dolphin, and get up to the upper tier by pressing Square twice without moving.

m. Junon

Follow the plot and make sure to save. During the march, try to get 6 Ethers (40%-49% approval rating) by tapping O in the march.

In Junon, you do not need to buy anything. Just remember to collect the

4 Sources in Upper Junon and the Speed Source in Lower Junon.

When you are ready, head to the docks. Perform the commands until the President's approval rating is between 60 and 90, that way you will receive an HP Plus materia.

n. Shinra Boat

Run around the first area and get the Ether. Talk with Aeris here, and head upstairs to talk to the other teammates. Return downstairs and talk with Aeris again, then go back up and talk with Barret. Form your team (Cloud, Aeris, Tifa) and give Aeris the HP Plus materia in place of Steal, the Star Pendant accessory, and the 5 Sources you collected earlier. Detach the Lightning-All combination and Choco/Mog to give her a little more health. Save, then head downstairs into the cargo hold. Approach the guard, and it's time to meet the second toughest Boss in the challenge...

BOSS: Jenova-BIRTH
HP: 4,000
STRENGTH: None
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 8/10
WIN: White Cape

First, be sure to kill off Cloud and Tifa. Have Aeris defend and heal herself in the meantime. Once they are dead, wait for Jenova to use Stop 3 times. Try to only attack if you are at full health. Use Flame Thrower. Once she has used up the Stop spell, you are a little more safe, but not by much. Attack her with Flame Thrower when Aeris is above 350 HP. Be sure to have the battle sequence on "Wait" so that you can wait out Jenova's attacks, then make a better decision on whether to heal or attack. This fight will take a very long time, and you may go through as many as 6 Ethers. Have patience, and if you fail, try, try again. :)

Pinch yourself to make sure you actually killed her. Grab the Ifrit materia and attach it. Replace the Star Pendant with the Protect Vest, and pick up the Wind Slash on the upper platform for later profit in Costa del Sol. Welcome to the new continent!

o. Costa del Sol

Finally a break! After the helicopter scene, it is time for your first friendly equipment check. :) Aeris should have on the Striking Staff and a Carbon Bangle, and should have a Protect Vest accessory equipped in place of the Star Pendant. For materia, she should have Long Range, HP Plus, Enemy Skill, Restore, and Ifrit.

Run across the bridge and enter the house. Head to the basement and pick up the Motor Drive, Fire Ring, and Power Source (the first one you can sell, but keep the other two). Go back outside and walk into the bar area in the middle of town. Talk to the guy on the far left of the room to sell some useless junk you have picked up thus far. Leave paradise, pitch a Tent, and save. Move out!

p. Mt. Corel

This is a pretty long and tough area for Aeris to get through. Run fast through everything and attack enemies using Matra Magic. You will come to a Save Point on the railroad tracks. Use a Tent here - you will need it. In this area, you only need the Turbo Ether on the second "hump." Continue to the next area, flip the switch, and backtrack across the bridge. When the tracks start snaking, take the low road behind the wall and into the cave. Here, nab the Power Source, Mind Source, and Tent, then leave and continue back down the tracks. Use Ifrit if you are facing four or more enemies (which will be quite frequently). Run from all Bomb battles on the big, big track stretch so you stay safe.

q. Corel, The Gold Saucer & The Desert Prison

Okay, you're safe. :) Go outside of town and save. You do not need anything here, so head over to the Gold Saucer.

When you get to the loading dock inside the Gold Saucer, run over to the lady and buy a day pass (3,000 gil). Have Aeris go with Cloud, and dive into the Wonder Square to meet Cait Sith. Remove his Silver Armlet and put it on Cloud. After that, go to the Battle Square and follow the plot. Eventually, you will wind up in the Desert Prison.

Move fast and don't get mugged. Run south through the gate, past the Save Point, and into the house to the right. Barret busts someone up and rejoins the party. Move him to the back row, and have him, Cloud, and Aeris run back north, escaping from every random battle (do NOT kill any of your teammates). At the Save Point, switch Cloud's Silver Armlet onto Barret, and all of Aeris' materia onto him also. Give him the Atomic Scissors you stole way back when along with the Power Wrist, and save. Head north, through the gates, and hang a right once you come to the vast desert. You should be in an area with wrecked cars; go north. After this fight, you will use only Aeris for the rest of the challenge.

BOSS: Dyne (Barret-only fight)

HP: 1,200

WEAKNESS: None

STRENGTH: None

DIFFICULTY: 3/10

WIN: Silver Armlet

Kill Dyne fast. Rip into him with physical attacks or Flame Thrower, and nail him with Limit Breaks when Barret gets them. If Barret falls down to around 300 HP, heal him to be safe. You probably will not lose this fight, and it will go by quickly. Barret, your job is done. :)

Follow the plot. When Cloud is up in the jockey lounge, be sure to grab the Ramuh materia. Win the chocobo race by switching to manual mode (press Select) and holding down all four shoulder buttons (R1, R2, L1, L2) to regain stamina. Easy, huh? :)

You will now have the Buggy. This thing's a beast! Take off Barret's materia and Silver Armlet, then detach Cait Sith's Manipulate materia, and put them all on Aeris. Remove Barret's Power Wrist and switch him for Tifa. Immediately drive to the beach south of the Gold Saucer to encounter a monster named Beach Plug. Kill off your teammates first, then manipulate the Beach Plug and have it use Big Guard on Aeris. This is the best defense Enemy Skill Aeris can get. Run from the monsters

and detach Manipulate. Use a Tent, then Save! :)

If you wish, you can pick up a very strong weapon for Aeris called the Umbrella right now. It will require 40,000 gil, though. Since you do not have that much at the moment, I will continue this guide as if you chose to skip this part. If you still want it, fight around a lot, then refer to Section VII-k of my Cid-Only Challenge FAQ for more information (instead of winning Cid's Flayer weapon, you will win the Umbrella). However, it is not necessary to waste time on this.

Anyway, drive into Costa del Sol (you heard me). :)

r. The Sleeping Man

If you do exactly what the above sentence says and head back to the Eastern Continent via the Shinra Boat (100 gil), you should come out of Junon in the Buggy! Drive south, then east around the mountain, and north over a river to arrive at the Sleeping Man's cave.

In order to receive the accessory you need (the Bolt Ring), you must fight until the last two digits of the number of times you fought are the same and are even numbers (example: 344, 266, etc.; NOT: 300, 211, etc.). Since you do not know this number, fight a battle and walk back inside the cave until he tells you. Then keep track of how many battles Aeris fights. Once you reach the special number, the Sleeping Man will wake up and hand you either the Bolt Ring or a Mythril. This varies, so if you receive a Mythril, just go back outside and fight 22 more battles, then re-enter the cave and talk with him again to get the Ring. Aeris will probably gain 1 or 2 Levels in the process. Use a Tent if you need HP/MP. Trust me, this was worth it. :)

You will probably get Aeris' Level 2 Limit Break, Breath of the Earth. Both of her Level 2 Limit Breaks are pointless in this challenge, so leave her at Level 1.

Hop back in the Buggy and haul butt all the way over to Cosmo Canyon (past the Gold Saucer and Gongaga).

s. Cosmo Canyon

You're safe. Follow the plotline, and Red XIII... er, Nanaki, will force himself onto the team. Assemble a team of him, Cloud, and Aeris, then save. Before you dive into the Cave of the Gi, there are a few items you should pick up.

First, buy the Prism Staff from the Weapon Shop near the Save Point (2,600 gil) and equip it. Head upstairs to the Materia Shop inside the first area to Cloud's right. Buy a second HP Plus from the shopkeeper (6,000 gil) and attach it. Use some of your remaining gil to buy 5 Ethers from the Item Shop north-east of the Cosmo Candle up the ladder (7,500 gil). Use a Tent and save again, then go through the giant metal door with Bugenhagen. Aeris should be around Level 17.

t. Cave of the Gi

Spooky place. Run east, south, east, north, and into the cave on Cloud's immediate left. Crack the rock open, and pass through the door. It is worth noting that when you get in a random battle, you should kill off Nanaki, and RUN. The enemies here are tough, and it would waste time and supplies to have Aeris kill them all. Keep running from

battles and healing.

In the next area, WALK left around the top of the gooey brown liquid to avoid flying into the spikes. Slip south and go back to the first area to pick up the Added Effect materia. Now backtrack across the goo. If you run down the stairs to the north and wrap around under the bridge, you can grab an Ether. Leave through the exit.

The third area is a bit tough. Take the fourth tunnel from the left first to meet up with the first of three Stinger monsters. These things are not as bad as they usually are. Use Seal Evil when Aeris gets a Limit Break so that you disable its Sting Bomb attack. Each Stinger has 2,200 HP. Be sure to keep Aeris' HP above 300 and attack regularly with Flame Thrower and/or Ifrit. After fighting one, heal Aeris fully, then bump up her MP with an Ether. You should not have to retreat to Cosmo Canyon. After killing the first Stinger, grab the X-Potion north of its web. Go back out the fourth tunnel and enter the second tunnel from the left to meet another Stinger. After killing it and healing, go fight the third one. You really do not need the Fairy Ring, but you should definitely take the Turbo Ether to the left of the third web. When you are ready, head north for the easiest Boss fight ever.

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*****
BOSS: Gi Nattak & Soul Fires
HP: 5,500 (Gi Nattak); 1,300 (Soul Fire)
STRENGTH: Aborbs Fire (Soul Fires); halves Earth (Gi Nattak & Soul
          Fires)
WEAKNESS: Holy (Gi Nattak)
DIFFICULTY: 0/10
WIN: Phoenix Down & Wizer Staff
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Haha. Throw the X-Potion at Gi Nattak and watch the fireworks. *Yawn*
*****
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Haha... hm, ha... Anyway, ahem, grab the Gravity materia and follow the plot. Go back to the Materia Shop and buy a third HP Plus (6,000 gil). Leave Cosmo Canyon with a party of Cloud, Aeris, and Tifa. Kill Cloud and Tifa as you continue across the continent.

u. Nibelheim & The Shinra Mansion

This is by far the creepiest town in the game. Talk about desolation. Anyway, there are two Luck Sources, one in the first house, and another in the house at the end of the wooden walkway. Pick those up from Sephiroth's followers, along with the Elixir in the second house from the town's entrance and the Turbo Ether in Tifa's house (next to the wooden walkway). Finally, buy about 15 more Hi-Potions from the Item Shop (4,500 gil).

In the Shinra Mansion, the only item you really need is the Magic Source on the right wing of the second floor. I would recommend picking up the other items for a good profit, though. I must emphasize that it is not necessary to fight the Lost Number or visit Sephiroth in the basement. Odin is a very powerful summon, but it is not essential to continue, and is certainly not worth fighting that nasty Number for. Just leave, and don't look back. Oh yeah, save please. :)

v. Mt. Nibel

This is the hardest part of the entire challenge. Equip the Bolt Ring

on Aeris, along with Ramuh in place of Ifrit, then RUN, RUN, RUN. Around the bend, across the bridge, and down Chute No. 1. Escape from every random encounter and stay at full health. Don't bother picking up any items. Use a Tent at the Save Point near the Materia Keeper, then run into the beast for a very rude awakening.

BOSS: Materia Keeper
HP: 8,400
STRENGTH: Absorbs Fire; invulnerable to Gravity
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 9/10
WIN: Jem Ring

Don't expect to win this on your first try. When I finally beat this bastard, I had used about 15-18 Ethers, 30 Hi-Potions, 2 Elixirs, and a Turbo Ether. Make sure you are prepared. With the 3 HP Plus materia, Aeris should have around 800 HP. The worst part about this fight is that the Keeper can land a critical on Hell Combo when Big Guard is not up and drain around 775 HP. So, you don't want that happening. :) First thing's first, you NEED to keep Big Guard up when the Keeper is not paralyzed (use Seal Evil whenever Aeris gets a Limit Break, which will be almost every 2 turns). Since Big Guard drains MP like crazy, you are limited to physical attacks for half the fight. With the Prism Staff equipped, Aeris will be doing around 100-125 damage. This is obviously the most intense part of the fight due to your serious lack of decent attacks. Ramuh will come in handy, but can only be used once. Now, when Big Guard is up, Cure will not work well, so you are limited to Hi-Potions. When the Keeper is paralyzed, you have 2 or 3 turns to give Aeris an Ether, Hi-Potion (if needed), and a Big Guard. Keep her HP above 400 at all times, and above 600-700 when the Guard is down. You will be fighting like this for quite sometime until the Keeper uses Cure2. This signals the halfway point. Right after Cure2, it will usually attack with Trine, which is great news. Not only will the Bolt Armlet nullify the attack, but Aeris will learn it, and can use it against the Keeper from then on. Now for the bad news. It uses Cure2 a lot. So, now you have to keep up Big Guard and still have enough MP to cast Trine as your regular attack. Expect to run out of something, like Ethers or Hi-Potions. Trust me, Elixirs and Turbo Ethers WILL come in handy. Then, eventually, it will die... but trust me, it will be close. When you lose, re-evaluate your strategy and try again. This thing can be beaten with time and effort. Don't give up. Ever. :)

SAVE! For the love of God, SAVE. Nab the Counter Attack materia, attach it, and get the heck off that mountain! Rocket Town is located around the mountain range to the right. Now pat yourself on the back. Good job. :)

w. Rocket Town

Immediately duck into the Item Shop located in the northern part of town near the launch pad entrance and buy some Ethers. About 5 should do for now (7,500 gil). Sell off your useless junk while you're at it. If you get rid of all status prevention accessories and other party member's weapons, you should make a big profit (if you have not done so previously, you will make a HUGE profit...). All you will need are Potions, Ethers, Elixirs, the Fire Ring, Bolt Ring, and Power Wrist. Keep the Bolt Ring on Aeris for the upcoming fight, though. The only other item you need to get here is the Power Source in the house next

door to Cid's house (far right of the town).

Talk to Shera inside Cid's house, then run up inside the rocket to meet Cid. Go back to his house, and follow the plot. Soon you will face the laziest Boss ever.

BOSS: Palmer
HP: 6,000
STRENGTH: Invulnerable to Gravity
WEAKNESS: None
DIFFICULTY: 1/10
WIN: Edincoat

What a loser. Use Aeris' Seal Evil to paralyze him, then lay him down with Trine. If he nails you with the Mako Gun and it is not a Fire-based attack, heal right away. You will use an Ether, but that's okay.
Yawn :)

Follow the plot and you will wind up out at sea in the Tiny Bronco. If you wish to get the Great Gospel Limit Break, cut to Section VII and do so now.

Before going to Wutai, ride the Tiny Bronco north to Bone Village and buy a Diamond Bangle (3,200 gil). Equip it, along with the Bolt Ring. You can sell the Edincoat and Cid's Gold Armlet now, if you wish. When you are ready, backtrack to the shores of the Western Continent.

When crossing the mountain range, be sure to use Trine to knock off the monsters, along with physical attacks. For the Thunderbirds, use Matra Magic. Heal often, and use a Tent if you get in a jam (you should only have 2 or 3 of these left).

x. Wutai

If there were ever a time to take a break, this is it. The calm before the storm...

Buy the Aurora Rod from the Weapon Shop near the town's entrance (5,800 gil), and sell back the Prism Staff, then go item shopping near the Save Point. Buy about 10 Ethers and 5 Tents for now (17,500 gil total). I would recommend getting Nanaki's Hairpin and Yuffie's Magic Shuriken from the secret chambers in the house near the giant pagoda, along with Cid's Dragoon Lance on Da-Chao Mountain, and selling them for more profit. There are no other items that you need here, but there are some great ones you can win from monsters on Da-Chao Mountain.

Save before scaling the Mountain. Run around the first Mountain area to get in fights with Bizarre Bugs, which drop X-Potions indefinitely. You will also probably pick up a few Remedies, too. Run from the monsters named Garuda, as these can drain all your MP and inflict some serious damage. Your goal here is to gather about 10 X-Potions and learn Aeris' Level 3 Limit Break, Planet Protector. You will also probably learn Cure2, which is a plus. When you run low on MP, return to the Save Point, use a Tent, save, then go buy another Tent and head back to the Mountain until you have all the X-Potions and the Limit Break learned.

Here is a final equipment/inventory check before departure. This will change as Aeris goes through the Temple of the Ancients:

Aeris at around Level 23 in back row
Limit Break Level 3 set

Weapon: Aurora Rod
Armor: Diamond Bangle
Accessory: Bolt Ring

Materia: HP Plus (x3), Long Range, Counter Attack, Restore, Enemy Skill
(remove Ramuh; keep Elemental and Earth in stock)

Items: Elixir(s), X-Potions (at least 10), Hi-Potion(s), Turbo Ethers
(1-4), Ethers (at least 20), Tents (3 maximum, for outside use
only), Power Wrist, Fire Ring (regular Potions are unnecessary
at this point)

Aeris will now be ready to go through the final push. Leave the
continent and board the Tiny Bronco. Ever get the feeling that
something bad is about to happen?

y. Search for the Keystone

First, go to the Weapon Seller's house (north-east of Gongaga). Talk
with him, then head over to the Gold Saucer and enter the Battle
Square. Talk with Dio in the trophy room and accept his challenge
(Cloud will be dead, so you will not be fighting).

Time for a date! If you were nice to Aeris, this could be the happiest
night of her life. If not... well, you're just evil. :) Oh yeah, don't
forget the Elixir in Cloud's bedroom.

Follow the plot. Form a team of Cloud, Aeris, and Tifa, then head back
to the Tiny Bronco, killing off Cloud and Tifa in battle along the way.
Go south-east to get to the Temple of the Ancients.

z. Temple of the Ancients

Give this one all you've got. Try to run through the labyrinth as fast
as possible, making sure not to miss the Turbo Ether before the third
set of vines and the Mind Source on the ledge where those vines lead.
In the clock room, you need the items at the end of Rooms IV, V, and
VIII (Princess Guard, Ribbon, and Megalixir, respectively). Equip the
Princess Guard and Fire Ring; save the Ribbon for later.

When you come across an Ancient, make sure to NOT choose the "Rest"
option and just heal using magic and Ethers. I would recommend you save
to a second file because there is no way out of this place now.

When you are ready, head to Room VI. To catch the Ancient, simply jump
down one ledge and go in the third cave from the left. Save, and enter
the main door. This is the final stretch...

BOSS: Red Dragon
HP: 6,800
STRENGTH: Absorbs Fire; invulnerable to Gravity
WEAKNESS: Poison
DIFFICULTY: 4/10
WIN: Dragon Armlet

Okay, good news. Aeris' regular physical attacks will do around 700 damage (!). That means this will be a short fight. :) The Dragon's fire-based attacks will not harm you, so just heal if it gouges too deep. If you get a Planet Protector, try to save it for the next fight and let Counter-Attack do the rest of the work.

Grab the Bahamut materia! Get out of that area, and equip the Dragon Armlet you just won along with the Ribbon. Attach Bahamut and the Earth-Added Effect combination, and use an Ether to regain MP. Ask the Ancient to save. Last Boss, folks... :)

BOSS: Demon's Gate

HP: 10,000

STRENGTH: Halves Earth damage; invulnerable to Gravity and Poison

WEAKNESS: None

DIFFICULTY: 7/10

WIN: Gigas Armlet (and the challenge!)

If you have Planet Protector, set it up pronto. Use Bahamut for a cool 2,400 damage, then get the physical attacks rollin'. The Earth-Added Effect combo will nullify one rock attack, which is nice, but the rest will land 600-700 damage if you are defenseless. Moral to the story: Keep Big Guard and Planet Protector up at all costs. You should never attack the Gate unless you have Planet Protector up, because Aeris will be in desperate need of healing. BUT, while you are keeping her in the fight, she will be counter-attacking almost half of the Gate's attacks. So basically, it's a waiting game. Even if you lose, do not get discouraged - this is tough, but it is certainly not the toughest Boss in the challenge.

Congrats!! And, no congrats... the challenge is over, sadly. Pat yourself on the back for giving Aeris the recognition she deserves and for basically playing through a tragedy. If it helps, though, Aeris does live on in a spiritual way. She saves the Planet! I just wish there were a way to keep her in the team the rest of the game.

VII. GREAT GOSPEL LIMIT BREAK

This is a brief step-by-step guide to getting Aeris' Level 4 Limit Break Manual, Great Gospel. Ultimately, this is pointless to this challenge. But I feel it is necessary to include because some people may want to max out Aeris' abilities. Too bad, though, 'cause she DIES! haha, sorry. Actually, it is lots of fun to save a different file and build up her stats. Also, it is a good chance to go to Shinra Mansion and Gongaga to pick up the Odin and Deathblow materia. Give it a shot! :)

1. Wait until after getting the Tiny Bronco to do this.
2. Get the Mythril from the Sleeping Man, if you have not already done so (see Section VI-s).
3. Go to the Weapon Seller's house, north-east of Gongaga.
4. Talk with the Weapon Seller, and start changing the subject on him.
5. Give him the Mythril, and open the little box on the wall upstairs (the big box on the first floor has a Gold Armlet in it).

Make sure you have learned Aeris' 6 other Limit Breaks, then teach her this one

using the Limit Break Manual. Presto! You now have the greatest Limit Break in FF7, and simultaneously the most useless one in this challenge! :)

VIII. CREDITS

- Aeris Gainsborough for breaking my heart every time I play this game and showing me that dying for something you believe in - something for the better good of humankind - is the ultimate sacrifice. Rest In Peace. :)
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- Squaresoft for making the game that has taken several beautiful days out of my life... the game that gets better and better every time I play it. :)

***** for Kane *****

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