

Star Ocean: The Second Story Skill System Guide

by Sherman Tam

Updated to v1.13 on Apr 19, 2000

Star Ocean: The Second Story
Skill System Guide (US version)
version 1.13
written by Sherwin Tam (sct8@cornell.edu)

---CONTENTS---

Introduction
Version Changes
Skills
Talents
Specialties
Super Specialties
Skill Guild Offerings
Miscellaneous
Disclaimer
Credits

---INTRODUCTION---

This is a guide to the skill system in the Playstation game Star Ocean: The Second Story (US version). It is intended to be a general overview of what skills and the associated abilities are, how they interact, and what you can accomplish by learning them. Note that this guide only covers the skills, talents, and specialties in the game. For a more comprehensive look at the game, please check the links at the bottom of the guide for other people's contribution to the workings of the game.

---VERSION CHANGES---

1.13 (4/19/00): And more formatting corrections.

1.12 (1/11/00): Minor formatting corrections.

1.11 (12/2/99): Silly me, didn't add it to the table of contents.

1.1 (12/2/99): I got a good suggestion to add the cities where one can get certain skills, so it's now been added under Skill Guild Offerings.

1.03 (8/29/99): More minor corrections. Change of e-mail address.

1.02 (7/27/99): Minor addition to Comprehension comments.

1.01 (7/26/99): Corrected some typos, added extra comment to Sixth Sense.

1.0 (7/22/99): Revised comments on Piety, Strong Blow, Cancel, Body Control, Counterattack, Provocation. Added Float skill. Added talent comments. More miscellaneous tips. Lots of people to thank.

0.93 (7/12/99): Submitted to www.gamefaqs.com. All later versions (not that a whole lot of people saw these versions) will be posted there.

0.92 (7/7/99): Changed more comments. All I need is that Float skill now...

0.91 (6/25/99): Corrected various comments, added notes for stat building.

0.9 (6/24/99): First version. All new! Probably still some stuff to add, so suggestions are welcome.

---SKILLS---

DESCRIPTION

Skills are learned abilities a character can acquire and improve through the accumulation of Skill Points (SP). Skill points are given as characters rise in level or through other occasions. Each skill is rated on a level scale of 0-10, with 0 representing no ability and 10 representing mastery. However, none of the skills start off as visible except the ones your characters begin with until you start buying skill sets at Skill Guilds. One combat skill is not available at a guild and must be found. Skills are used to build up Specialty levels. Certain skills also increase particular character statistics, and, in the case of combat skills, may add new abilities for the battlefield.

SKILLS LIST

The skills are listed in their respective groupings, with the following format:

Name

Skill Point Progression (the number of SP needed to raise a skill's level)

Game Description (taken from game text)

Statistical Benefits (taken from game text)

Related Specialties

Extra Comments (if any)

--Knowledge 1--

Mineralogy

1 / 2 / 4 / 6 / 9 / 12 / 16 / 20 / 40 / 70

Description: Knowledge About minerals and gems.

Benefits: Skill Level x 3 INT increase.

Related Specialties: Identify, Metalwork, Alchemy

Comments: A cheap skill, good INT increase for spellcasters.

Herbal Medicine

2 / 3 / 5 / 8 / 12 / 17 / 23 / 30 / 38 / 47

Description: Knowledge about medicinal herbs.

Benefits: The amount restored by blue and blackberries is increased by Skill Level x 3%.

Related Specialties: Identify, Compounding, Survival

Comments: Another cheap skill, with good benefits.

Recipe

1 / 1 / 2 / 2 / 3 / 3 / 5 / 5 / 10 / 20

Description: Knowledge about cooking ingredients.

Benefits: Effects vary according to whether favorite items are eaten or not.

Related Specialties: Cooking

Comments: Makes a huge difference in the restoration power of each character's favorite food item.

--Knowledge 2--

Musical Notation

2 / 4 / 8 / 16 / 32 / 90 / 40 / 50 / 70 / 90

Description: Knowledge about musical notation.

Benefits: Skill Level + 1 AGL increase.

Related Specialties: Musical Talent

Comments: Musical Notation and Musical Instrument are the only skills that contain a (large) "bump" in their SP progression.

Biology

12 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 62 / 80 / 82 / 85 / 90 / 95

Description: Knowledge about the science of life.

Benefits: Skill Level squared x 10 HP increase.

Related Specialties: Compounding

Comments: The only skill that raises max HP.

Tool Knowledge

1 / 5 / 9 / 13 / 17 / 21 / 25 / 29 / 33 / 37

Description: Knowledge about different tools and weapons.

Benefits: Item selling prices increase by Skill Level x 3%.

Related Specialties: Identify

Comments: One party member should have a high level for this skill, as the highest is taken for selling purposes at shops.

--Knowledge 3--

Mental Science

8 / 14 / 20 / 26 / 32 / 52 / 62 / 82 / 90 / 95

Description: Knowledge about the mysterious powers of the mind.

Benefits: Skill Level x 5 MP increase.

Related Specialties: Compounding

Comments: The only skill that raises max MP.

Piety

5 / 7 / 9 / 11 / 13 / 33 / 43 / 53 / 63 / 80

Description: Knowledge about faith and the gods.

Benefits: Skills increase somewhat.

Related Specialties: none

Comments: The benefit is somewhat misleading. The actual effect of raising Piety is a random increase in one of the character's statistics, ranging from no increase to 5 or more. Piety may also increase item creation chances.

Fairyology

40 / 41 / 42 / 43 / 44 / 45 / 46 / 47 / 48 / 50

Description: Knowledge about fairies and the origins of life.

Benefits: Skill Level + 1 INT increase.

Related Specialties: Alchemy

--Sensibility 1--

Courage

1 / 2 / 4 / 5 / 7 / 28 / 30 / 31 / 43 / 55

Description: With courage you won't be nervous even in front of a large of people.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Pickpocket

Patience

2 / 4 / 7 / 11 / 16 / 22 / 29 / 37 / 46 / 56

Description: The willpower to endure difficulties and sadness.

Benefits: Skill Level x 2 CON increase.

Related Specialties: Practice, Survival

Comments: The only skill to raise CON.

Esthetic Sense

10 / 20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 99

Description: A feeling, the degree of maturity that enables an understanding of love and beauty.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Art, Metalwork

Good Eye

2 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 10 / 20 / 22 / 24 / 26 / 28

Description: The ability to choose good cooking ingredients.

Benefits: HP restoration amount increases.

Related Specialties: Cooking

Comments: Allows for greater effect when a character eats a food.

--Sensibility 2--

Playfulness

12 / 14 / 16 / 18 / 20 / 22 / 24 / 26 / 28 / 30

Description: An open mind to forgive the God of Creation for thinking up silly things.

Benefits: A gift from heaven!

Related Specialties: Oracle

Comments: The "gift from heaven" in this case results in an increase in Fol for each level of the skill. The exact formula for the amount of money is determined by the recursive formula (previous payment) + (Skill Level - 1) x 600, with a starting base of 100. Thus, Playfulness pays 100 Fol at level 1, $100+(2-1)\times 600=700$ Fol at level 2, $700+(3-1)\times 600=1900$ at level 3, and so on until at level 10 Playfulness pays 27100 Fol.

Danger Sense

2 / 3 / 5 / 7 / 10 / 13 / 17 / 21 / 26 / 40

Description: A feeling, high sensitivity to murderous intent.

Benefits: Skill Level x 3 STM increase.

Related Specialties: Scout

Comments: A good skill for all to learn, as STM is important for HP and MP recovery after each battle.

Perseverance

8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8 / 8

Description: The willpower to continue effort.

Benefits: Reduces the number of SP required to learn skills.

Related Specialties: Practice

Comments: Each level of Perseverance reduces the amount to learn every skill by 2, down to a minimum of 1 SP (with the exception of Perseverance itself, which always costs 8 SP to learn. This is probably the most powerful skill as well as one of the cheapest, and all characters should devote their SP to this skill as soon as it is available.

Poker Face

5 / 7 / 9 / 11 / 13 / 33 / 43 / 53 / 63 / 80

Description: The ability to keep a straight face under any circumstances.

Benefits: Skill Level x 3 GUTS increase.

Related Specialties: Pickpocket

Comments: A more suitable name for this skill might be Stoicism. The only skill to increase GUTS.

--Sensibility 3--

Functionality

15 / 25 / 35 / 45 / 55 / 65 / 75 / 75 / 85 / 85

Description: A feeling, the ability to balance beautiful form with function.

Benefits: Skill Level x 6 STR, DEX, AGL, INT increase.

Related Specialties: Customize

Comments: The only skill that raises more than one statistic, and has the highest rate of increase for DEX, AGL, and INT.

Radar

20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description: Supernatural powers that enable reception of messages from unknown beings.

Benefits: A gift from heaven!

Related Specialties: Oracle

Comments: The "gift from heaven" this time is a random item that appears in your inventory.

Effort

20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 90

Description: The willpower to achieve one's goals.

Benefits: Lowers the needed experience to gain levels.

Related Specialties: Practice

Comments: Each level reduces the needed experience by about 4%. A great skill to learn, the earlier the better.

--Technique 1--

Whistling

1 / 2 / 4 / 6 / 12 / 20 / 25 / 30 / 35 / 40

Description: The ability to put fingers to mouth and whistle loudly.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Familiar

Copying

40 / 50 / 50 / 60 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description: The ability to grasp the true characters of things and make them your own.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Reproduction

Sketching

5 / 10 / 20 / 30 / 50 / 70 / 90 / 90 / 90 / 90

Description: The ability to grasp and reproduce the forms of objects.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Art

Kitchen Knife

2 / 4 / 8 / 16 / 32 / 40 / 50 / 55 / 65 / 90

Description: The ability to use a kitchen knife, essential to any respectable chef.

Benefits: Skill Level x 20 STR increase.

Related Specialties: Cooking

Comments: Apparently everyone starts martial training with a kitchen knife, as this skill is the fastest way to increase your STR and attacking power. Fighters should invest in at least a few levels.

--Technique 2--

Mech Knowledge

6 / 10 / 14 / 18 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 52 / 62 / 80

Description: Knowledge about machines.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Machinery

Craft

2 / 4 / 7 / 11 / 16 / 22 / 29 / 37 / 46 / 56

Description: The ability to do jobs that demand manual dexterity.

Benefits: Skill Level + 2 AGL increase.

Related Specialties: Customize, Metalwork

Animal Training

20 / 21 / 22 / 23 / 24 / 25 / 26 / 27 / 28 / 30

Description: The ability to tame and train animals.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Familiar

Writing

3 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 11 / 14 / 20 / 25 / 40 / 60

Description: The intellectual ability to create literature.

Benefits: Skill Level + 2 DEX increase.

Related Specialties: Authoring

--Technique 3--

Musical Instrument

2 / 4 / 8 / 16 / 32 / 90 / 40 / 50 / 70 / 90

Description: The ability to play a musical instrument.

Benefits: Skill Level + 1 AGL increase.

Related Specialties: Musical Talent

Comments: Musical Notation and Musical Instrument are the only skills that contain a (large) "bump" in the SP progression.

Metal Casting

3 / 6 / 12 / 24 / 48 / 58 / 68 / 78 / 88 / 98

Description: The ability to cast metals.

Benefits: Skill Level x 2 DEX increase.

Related Specialties: Customize

Scientific Ability

6 / 10 / 14 / 18 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 52 / 62 / 80

Description: The ability to use laboratory equipment such as a still.

Benefits: Skill Level x 10 STR increase.

Related Specialties: Metalwork

Comments: Another good skill for fighters to learn a few levels.

Mech Operation

12 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 62 / 80 / 82 / 85 / 90 / 95

Description: The ability to operate machines successfully.

Benefits: none listed

Related Specialties: Machinery

--Combat 1--

Note: combat skills differ from the other skills in that they are solely for battlefield purposes and don't contribute to specialties or statistics. Each combat skill has a certain probability for it to work, and raising skill levels increases that probability, but none of them are guaranteed to work 100% of the time. Most combat skills, when used successfully, will be indicated during as part of a message on the side of the screen. As you may not want to use certain skills at all times, all combat skills can be toggled on the skills screen by selecting a skill and pressing Square.

Spirit Force

20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description: Increases defensive powers.

Below the Belt

40 / 40 / 50 / 50 / 60 / 60 / 70 / 70 / 80 / 80

Description: The ability to ignore the enemy's defenses while attacking.

Strong Blow

20 / 21 / 22 / 23 / 24 / 25 / 26 / 27 / 28 / 30

Description: The ability to blow the enemy away.

Comments: When Strong Blow succeeds, the enemy will be knocked back, possibly preventing a follow-up attack or combo. The enemy may be instead knocked in the air for certain Killer Moves.

Cancel

10 / 20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 99

Description: The ability to eliminate the gap between normal attacks and immediately use a killer move.

Comments: Hit L1 or R1 to execute the killer move immediately after you hit an opponent to catch them while they're still recovering from your first attack. Cannot be used with aerial attacks.

--Combat 2--

Flip

12 / 14 / 16 / 18 / 20 / 22 / 24 / 26 / 28 / 30

Description: The ability to flip around the enemy and attack from behind.

Comments: Use of this specialty is potentially dangerous, as the extra time your character takes while running behind the opponent leaves you vulnerable to attack from another opponent.

Gale

5 / 7 / 9 / 11 / 13 / 33 / 43 / 53 / 63 / 80

Description: Increases one's combat speed.

Comments: Everyone can use some extra running speed...

Feint

12 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 62 / 80 / 82 / 85 / 90 / 95

Description: The ability to improve aim.

Mental Training

4 / 7 / 14 / 21 / 28 / 35 / 42 / 49 / 56 / 63

Description: The ability to increase attack power.

--Combat 3--

Counterattack

5 / 10 / 15 / 20 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 85 / 99

Description: Increases the probability of counterattacking when attacked by an enemy.

Comments: Similar to Cancel. Attack by pressing X as you're hit and you'll counter, but you still take the damage. Note that this skill can also work when you parry, so getting hit doesn't necessarily mean that you'll have to take damage to counterattack. Also note that counterattacking will make your character move within normal attack distance to counter, which may or may not be a good thing.

Parry

12 / 22 / 32 / 42 / 62 / 80 / 82 / 85 / 90 / 95

Description: An increase in the ability to parry the enemy's attack.

Body Control

10 / 20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 99

Description: Prevents fainting.

Comments: Besides preventing fainting (on rare occasions), Body Control can prevent dizziness ("peeping") and status ailments. While it doesn't happen often enough to ditch those Stone Checks, this skill is quite useful for any character.

Motormouth

40 / 50 / 50 / 60 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description: Reduces the time it takes to cast Heraldic spells.

Comments: The only combat skill exclusively for spellcasters.

Provocation

20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description: The ability to use the SELECT button to taunt an enemy during combat.

Comments: Can only be done once per battle. A successful taunt may focus the enemies' attention on you and raise your stats a little, depending on your skill level. Each character has up to 4 different taunts.

--Combat (special)--

Float

20 / 30 / 40 / 50 / 60 / 70 / 80 / 90 / 90 / 99

Description:

Comments: Only available as a special item from the bonus dungeon. Float only works on normal attacks. A successful Float will pop the enemy into the air, leaving them temporarily defenseless. The time span of this float is quite short, and only fast cancels will be guaranteed damage. However, this skill can also be combined with the Strong Blow skill, resulting in some truly silly air times for the enemy.

---TALENTS---

DESCRIPTION

Talents represent the natural abilities of a character. To use some specialties effectively, a character must know the right talent. Talents are inherited when the character joins the party. Thus, when a new character joins the party, check his or her talents. If you don't like the number or type of talents and have a recent save, you can keep reloading and re-recruiting the character until his or her talents suits your tastes.

Talents can also be discovered. To discover a hidden talent, have a character that doesn't have a wanted talent repeatedly use a specialty that

requires that talent. They may eventually discover the wanted talent (although it might take a lot of time and money). The one talent that can't be discovered is The Blessing of Manna, which all spellcasters begin with and no fighters can discover. Discovering a talent also has the added benefit of giving the character an immediate 100 Skill Points as a reward for all that hard practice.

TALENT LIST

This list can be used to gauge which specialties each character might want to develop (although they aren't necessary to start with, if you have enough money, patience, or certain Super Specialties). The format is as follows:

Name

Description (taken from game text)

Related Specialties (* denotes specialties that can be used to discover the talent)

Extra Comments (if any)

Originality

Description: The ability to modify things with one's own creativity.

Related Specialties: Customize, Metalwork*

Dexterity

Description: The gifted talent of being able to move one's fingertips exactly as one wishes.

Related Specialties: Metalwork*, Compounding, Pickpocket, Machinery*

Comments: The most used talent; cannot be learned by using Pickpocket, so don't bother wasting chances by trying if you don't have Dexterity.

Writing Ability

Description: The talent of being able to put one's thoughts into words.

Related Specialties: Authoring*

Pitch

Description: The ability to grasp musical tones well.

Related Specialties: Musical Talent*

Sixth Sense

Description: The primitive ability to sense things that cannot be expressed with words.

Related Specialties: Danger Sense*

Comments: Sixth Sense is one of the hardest talents to learn. I've been able to learn it by switching the Scout settings repeatedly, sometimes with the help of Orchestra.

Sense of Taste

Description: The gift of judging what tastes would please anyone

Related Specialties: Cooking*

Sense of Design

Description: The creative talent for the arts

Related Specialties: Art*, Machinery*

Sense of Rhythm

Description: The ability to grasp musical rhythm.

Related Specialties: Musical Talent*

Love of Animals

Description: Animal Lover. More than anything. More than anyone.

Related Specialties: Familiar*

The Blessing of Manna

Description: The innate magical power.

Related Specialties: Alchemy

Comments: The only talent that cannot be learned. Either you start with it or you don't.

---SPECIALTIES---

DESCRIPTION

Specialties are special abilities acquired by learning 1-3 related skills. Their level is determined by averaging the levels of the related skills, rounding down. Thus, it is easier to raise the level of the Scout specialty, which has only one related skill, than it is raising the Alchemy skill, which has three. All specialties have an upper level limit of 10. Specialties allow the characters to do such activities as cooking food, playing music, and other actions that can affect various aspects of the game. The level of the specialty determines the chances of success. Note, however, that without the needed talent, the specialty is virtually guaranteed to fail.

SPECIALTIES LIST

The format for this list is as follows:

--Name--

Description (taken from game text)

Accessed from (which menu)

Needed Skills

Needed Talents

Needed Items (needed but not consumed)

Consumed Items (consumed as specialty is being used)

Support Items (increases chances for success, sometimes enhances abilities)

Extra Comments (if any)

--Art--

Description: Make items by investing a soul into pictures and statues that you make.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Esthetic Sense, Sketching

Needed Talents: Sense of Design

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Magical Canvas, Magical Clay

Support Items: Graphics Software

Comments: An expensive item creation technique. Using a Magical Canvas creates various cards or paintings to be used in battle, or portraits of one of the characters in the game. Using Magical Clay creates various dolls, balls, cards, and other items that can be used. The usefulness of this skill depends on whether you prefer using items during battle. The powers of these works of art can range from reviving fallen comrades to doubling experience to random items.

--Oracle--

Description: Gives you helpful(?) messages from Tria, the Goddess of Creation.

Accessed from: Specialty menu

Needed Skills: Piety, Playfulness, Radar

Needed Talents: none

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: none

Comments: Basically a frill specialty, the Oracle will cycle through various messages that range from completely useless to quite useful. The number of messages increases as the level increases, but there is no actual need for this specialty at all.

--Musical Talent--

Description: Compose and play music.

Accessed from: Specialty menu

Needed Skills: Musical Notation, Musical Instrument

Needed Talents: Pitch, Sense of Rhythm

Needed Items: instruments (Piano, Harmonica, etc.)

Consumed Items: Feather Pen, Conductor's Baton

Support Items: Musical Software

Comments: A complicated but powerful specialty, Musical Talent is done in three stages: first, an instrument must be found or bought. Only one of each type is necessary. Then, a character uses the specialty to attempt to compose a song for that instrument, using up a Feather Pen at each attempt. Each instrument in the game has two songs associated with them, all of which have various effects in the game, such as increasing defense or calling monsters to fight. (Note that since there are only two songs, once both are composed for an instrument, any extra attempts are a waste.) After a song is composed, a character may use a Conductor's Baton to play a song written for a selected instrument. This song will temporarily replace the normal background music, and while it is playing the abilities of the song are used (unless the song sounds out of tune, in which case you character is missing a required talent). The effectiveness of the song is determined partly by the character's talent level. Also, each character has a preferred instrument that can enhance that instrument's effectiveness.

--Customize--

Description: Modify weapons into your own original type.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Functionality, Craft, Metal Casting

Needed Talents: Originality

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: weapon, ore, metal or gem

Support Items: Magical Rasp

Comments: One of the most interesting specialties and the hardest to catalog, customize allows you to combine a weapon and an ore/gem into something new. You lose both the weapon and the ore/gem, and, unfortunately, don't always get a more powerful weapon or even a weapon at all (I occasionally get food?!), so save your game before testing things on a treasured sword that you might want to keep after all. The number of weapons and available ores, along with the fact that you can continue to customize the resulting weapon, allow for multiple possibilities, so just keep trying it yourself. Note, however, that each character can only customize their own weapons, so to create weapons for each character requires that each has the Customize specialty. The weapon made is determined by the strength of the weapon along with the rarity of the ore or gem being used. In addition, certain weapons require a specific weapon and/or ore/gem be used to create them.

--Identify--

Description: Identify unknown items indicated by a question mark(?) at the start of their names.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Mineralogy, Herbal Medicine, Tool Knowledge

Needed Talents: none

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Spectacles

Support Items: Element Analyzer

Comments: One of the first specialties obtainable, the Identify specialty, while not being flashy, is a necessary specialty. There are invariably going to be unidentified items either made through item creation or found, and these items are unusable until they have been identified. Each try at identifying an item uses up a Spectacle, which is fortunately quite cheap.

--Metalwork--

Description: Make jewelry and equipment out of jewels and precious metals.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Mineralogy, Esthetic Sense, Craft

Needed Talents: Originality, Dexterity

Needed Items: none

Consumed items: ore, metal, or gem

Support Items: Soldering Iron

Comments: This item creation skill allows you to create your own accessories to equip. There are 7-8 possible items that can be created from each ore or gem. However, each character can only create around half of these items. Thus, to ensure that all possible items can be made for each ore or gem, multiple people should be proficient in this specialty.

--Authoring--

Description: Maintain a guidebook that gives you the details of your skills as they increase.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Writing

Needed Talents: Writing Ability

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Fountain Pen

Support Items: Text Software

Comments: The specialty allows you to create a guidebook on a skill that a character has a level of 5 or greater in, using a Fountain Pen in the attempt. Any character that reads this guidebook will automatically gain a level in the written skill without having to expend the SP normally necessary. However, you can only raise a skill to level 5 using a guidebook (thus, the writer cannot use it, for instance). Early mastery of this skill can be useful to beef up skills that normally require a large amount of SP to learn. However, only certain skills (around 20) can be authored. This specialty is especially recommended for Leon; his use of books as his weapons allows him to author special books for him to bash over opponents' heads.

--Practice--

Description: Increase your experience points by going through combat with lowered abilities.

Accessed from: Specialty menu

Needed Skills: Patience, Perseverance, Effort

Needed Talents: none

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: none

Comments: Turn on this specialty to go through battles weaker in exchange for more experience. I originally thought that only the practicing character would get the extra experience, but after repeated testing I've found that all the characters in the battle party get the extra experience. Furthermore, the more characters that practice, regardless of whether they are in the current battle party, the more experience the battle party gets for battles! I'll have to experiment with this more, and I'll be happy for someone to prove me wrong, as it seems like another huge bug in the US version of Star Ocean 2. Note, however, that, as the description states, practicing characters do have their stats lowered in battle (but if they're not in the battle party, it doesn't matter). This seems to reduce a little the intended idea for speeding up your lagging characters' leveling, though it does speed up the battle party's leveling. The penalty for practicing makes the specialty more useful for beating on weaker enemies rather than taking on new, more dangerous opponents.

--Scout--

Description: Allows the user to increase or decrease the probability of enemies appearing to a certain degree.

Accessed from: Specialty menu

Needed Skills: Danger Sense

Needed Talents: Sixth Sense

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: none

Comments: Great for leveling or traveling unhindered between places. Note, however, that only the current leader (first person listed) of the party affects scouting, so your party makeup should affect who should learn this specialty. Also note that Sixth Sense may be the hardest talent to acquire in the game, so don't bother Scouting if you don't have it.

--Compounding--

Description: Make medicines by mixing two types of herbs.

Accessed from: Item Creation Menu

Needed Skills: Herbal Medicine, Biology, Mental Science

Needed Talents: Dexterity

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: herbs (Rose Hips, Mandrake, etc.)

Support Items: Antiseptic Gloves

Comments: This specialty allows for creation of a variety of medicines and items through the mixing of two herbs. Each possible mixture (including mixing the same herb with itself) can create up to 4 different items. Note, however, that though some are extremely helpful, some have nasty side effects, and a few can be hazardous to your health, depending on the properties of the herbs being mixed. In general, however, this specialty is quite useful.

--Cooking--

Description: Make drinks and food with cooking ingredients.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Recipe, Good Eye, Kitchen Knife

Needed Talents: Sense of Taste

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: ingredients (Seafood, Grain, etc.)

Support Items: All-Purpose Knife

Comments: One of the more interesting skills, this specialty allows you to make a dish or drink out of a cooking ingredient. These items will restore HP and/or MP when eaten, and some of them sell for a good price, as well, making this a viable way to make some extra Fol if you're a good cook. There are also special ingredients you can find which make more exotic (some would say weird) foods. Also, each character (with the exception of Chisato) has a favorite dish that can be made with this specialty that, when ingested, restores their HP or MP to their maximum levels (think Popeye and spinach).

--Familiar--

Description: Send animals to shop for you when you're deep in a dungeon or other such place.

Accessed from: Specialty menu

Needed Skills: Whistling, Animal Training

Needed Talents: Love of Animals

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Pet Food

Support Items: none

Comments: This useful specialty allows you to shop for certain basic items at any time, anywhere - as long the carrier bird responds to your call. Carry around a lot of Pet Food. Also, this may be the only specialty that you may not want to increase to level 10 immediately. There are 4 different birds, each able to shop for a different set of items. As you advance in level, the bird changes. The problem is, you cannot go back and choose the previous bird! Thus, it is advisable to have a few members of your party with this specialty at varying levels to get different birds in case you like more than one bird's selection of purchasable goods. A higher level in this specialty does increase the chances of the bird arriving.

--Alchemy--

Description: Transmute iron into valuable materials such as metals and jewels.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Mineralogy, Fairyology, Scientific Ability

Needed Talents: Blessing of Manna

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Iron

Support Items: Erlenmeyer Flask, Lezard Flask

Comments: Why pay for that diamond when you can make one? This lucrative specialty can both produce extra Fol or more exotic minerals and gems to use in Customize or Metalwork. Note that because of the talent requirements, only spellcasters (Rena, Celine, Leon, Noel) can use this specialty. As the level of specialty increases, the alchemist can transmute more exotic materials. The highest levels of ores and gems are only available after Lezard's Flask has been obtained. This skill becomes increasingly more important as the game continues, and is a wonderful complement to Customize and Blacksmith to make the game's most powerful weapons and armor without having to search for the rare minerals needed.

--Survival--

Description: Find useful items when in the field. Consumes 4 MP.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Herbal Medicine, Patience

Needed Talents: none

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: Survival Kit

Comments: This specialty might more aptly be named "Scavenging" due to its random nature. The items you find while expending the 4 MP on this specialty range from the useless to the rare, and it's all random. The range of items differs depending on where the skill is used, whether in a building, a dungeon, the forest, whatever. Certainly not a necessary skill, but sort of amusing. You can use it to expend all of your MP before resting at inns.

--Pickpocket--

Description: Skill used in conjunction with special gloves to steal items from people.

Accessed from: special

Needed Skills: Courage, Poker Face

Needed Talents: Dexterity

Needed Items: Bandit's Glove

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: Magician's Hand

Comments: Walk down the path of crime and steal from townspeople, even your own party members. To pickpocket, you must have the Bandit's Glove or Magician's Hand equipped. Walk up to a person and press the Square button within speaking range and you'll receive an item if your pickpocketing was successful. Regardless of your success or failure, you can only attempt to pickpocket a person once. There are a couple of special notes for pickpocketing. One, since you only get one shot at stealing items, you should never attempt to pickpocket if you don't already have Dexterity as a talent. Two, each time you attempt to pickpocket with a character, any other character currently in the party will have their Emotional Levels reduced towards the stealing character. Thus, it is best to attempt this specialty during Private Actions, when the only character in your party is either Claude or Rena. If you plan to pickpocket, then, Claude or Rena should be the main characters to learn the skill, unless you don't care about a character's Emotional Levels. It is, however, a useful specialty to learn early due to the many opportunities to get powerful items that aren't normally available, as well as special items only gotten through pilfering. It's all for a good cause...

--Reproduction--

Description: Make an item identical to another.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Copying

Needed Talents: none

Needed Items: Magical Camera

Consumed Items: Magical Film

Support Items: Ririca

Comments: This specialty allows you to make a duplicate of items in your inventory. To do so, you first need to select the Magical Camera (or the Ririca, which is more powerful) to take a picture on a piece of Magical Film. The result will be either a copy of the item or a blurry picture. Also note that most rare or items can't be copied using this specialty, although most items bought in stores and many of the more useful

accessories and items can be copied, making this a great money saver/maker -- if you succeed.

--Machinery--

Description: Make machines that help with your adventure.

Accessed from: Item Creation menu

Needed Skills: Mech Knowledge, Mech Operation

Needed Talents: Dexterity, Sense of Design

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Material Kit

Support Items: none

Comments: This useful skill allows you to make a variety of items, including bombs for use in battle and the support items for many of the other specialties. This specialty is especially important for Precis and Opera, who can create their own unique weapons and Killer Moves through this specialty.

---SUPER SPECIALTIES---

DESCRIPTION

Super Specialties (I just refer to them as supers most of the time) represent the pooling of different party member's abilities to accomplish major tasks. All supers have two related specialties. One, which I'll call the major specialty, determines the level of the super. The other, minor specialty, puts the name of the super on the list of specialties when any character learns it. To learn a super specialty, two characters must have reached level 4 in the major specialty, and one character must have learned the minor specialty. The level of the super is then determined by the sum of the major specialty levels of all the members of the party divided by 3, rounded down.

For example, the super specialty Orchestra has a major specialty of Music and a minor specialty of Art. Thus, when a character first learns Art, the name of the super appears on the specialty list. If two characters were to reach level 4 in Music, the party would acquire Orchestra at level 2 -- $(4+4)/3$, round down. If one of the two raised their Music level to 5, or if a third character learned Music at level 1, Orchestra would rise to level 3. Since skills and specialties are easier to raise at lower levels, super levels rise faster when more characters learn the major specialty at low levels rather than a few characters raising the specialty to high levels. Super specialties have an upper level limit of 10.

SUPER SPECIALTIES LIST

All Super Specialties can be accessed from the Super Specialty Skills menu. The format for this list is as follows:

--Name--

Description (taken from game text)

Major Specialty (determines level)

Minor Specialty (shows on specialties list)

Needed Items (needed but not consumed)

Consumed Items (consumed as specialty is being used)

Support Items (increases chances for success, sometimes enhances abilities)

Extra Comments (if any)

--Master Chef--

Description: Make elegant dishes and drinks with everyone's powers.

Major Specialty: Cooking

Minor Specialty: Compounding

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: 2 ingredients (Seafood, Grain, etc.)

Support Items: All-Purpose Knife

Comments: Use two normal ingredients to make a special food. Only one food can be made with every combination of ingredients. These foods are special in that they are more powerful in HP/MP recovery and/or sell for a much higher price than food made through normal cooking.

--Orchestra--

Description: Make beautiful melodies and play them according to the time designated by a conductor.

Major Specialty: Musical Talent

Minor Specialty: Art

Needed Items: instruments, songs

Consumed Items: Conductor's Baton

Support Items: none

Comments: One of the most powerful supers and one of the hardest to acquire. To use Orchestra, there must be enough distinct instruments for party, and each of these instruments must have already had a song composed for them. Using Orchestra also consumes a Conductor's Baton, just like Musical Talent. The benefits, however, are substantial. While the song is playing, item creation and supers almost never fail, regardless of talent. Furthermore, talents have a much greater chance of being discovered while using a specialty (with the exceptions of Pitch and Sense of Rhythm, since using Musical Talent changes the music). Once learned, however, Orchestra makes Customizing, Alchemy, Blacksmithing, and any other item creation much more successful.

--Comprehension--

Description: Everyone tries to combine his or her power during combat for increased skill points.

Major Specialty: Practice

Minor Specialty: Survival

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: none

Comments: When comprehension is in use, characters may gain extra SP when they reach a new level, up to around 2% per level of Comprehension. Normal SP gains are around the level of the character, i.e. a 40th level character can expect to gain around 40 points when they gain a level. Note, however, that the chances depend on the level of the super, and a failure might mean less SP than normal for a character. Also note that, similar to its associated specialty, Practice, there is a downside to Comprehension in the form of reduced combat speed for everyone while this super is active, making Comprehension dangerous to use around powerful enemies.

--Come on Bunny--

Description: Everyone sincerely calls the name of a cute little rabbit to have it come to you.

Major Specialty: Familiar

Minor Specialty: Scout

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: none

Support Items: none

Comments: It may seem like a cute little thing, but in reality the bunny, whose name is apparently "Barney," is actually quite large and mean, since he is big enough to carry around your entire party without any enemy attacking you. Barney can travel through any terrain except water, and is slightly faster than walking. Best of all, nothing is used up in calling him, so you can have a relatively low level in this super and just keep calling until the bunny decides to come and take you somewhere. If you plan to get this super at all, however, get it early, as the latter stages of the game provide you with transportation that makes Barney obsolete.

--Publishing--

Description: Use everyone's abilities to write a book that is good enough to print.

Major Specialty: Writing

Minor Specialty: Machinery

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Fountain Pen

Support Items: Text Software

Comments: An interesting super, this allows each character to write one of two possible stories that they want to tell. These books can be sold for some extra Fol. If sold to a publisher, they will publish the book for public reading, and you can pick up some royalties from sales. The book also has the effect of changing the Emotional Levels of any character that reads the book towards the author. This can be good or bad, depending on how good the relationship was between the characters before, as reading a book resets the character's emotional levels towards the author to a set number (8). Each character can publish two books, one for friendship and a rarer one for romantic levels. An important skill to learn early for those that want to make sure they get the character endings they want...

--Identify All!--

Description: Use everyone's powers to identify and appraise the value of items correctly.

Major Specialty: Identify

Minor Specialty: Metalwork

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Spectacles

Support Items: none

Comments: This super is really more like bartering. Using Identify All!, you can affect the prices of items at store by Skill Level x 3% that lasts until the next time you buy or sell at a store. This affects ALL the prices, so if you decide to discount, you should only by items, and vice versa for raising the prices. Each use of this specialty uses up one spectacle. You can cancel the price adjustment, but you won't be refunded the spectacle you used. A highly useful skill, one that can also be used in conjunction with the Familiar specialty to lower the prices during remote shopping as well.

--Blacksmith--

Description: Use everyone's powers to make magnificent armor from ore.

Major Specialty: Customize

Minor Specialty: Alchemy

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: ore (Iron, Damascus, etc.)

Support Items: Magical Rasp

Comments: The counterpart to customizing weapons, this super creates powerful pieces of armor with the used ore. The supporting item (Magical Rasp) is unique in that it changes the Blacksmithing possibilities instead of giving you a better chance at succeeding, as different items are available from this super once the Rasp is in your inventory.

--Reverse Side--

Description: Use everyone's powers to make dangerous items. Is it ambition that fuels crimes?

Major Specialty: Pickpocket

Minor Specialty: Copying

Needed Items: none

Consumed Items: Vellum Paper

Support Items: none

Comments: The most dangerous of the supers, and also potentially the most rewarding. All the items made with this super are "illegal" but most are also quite powerful, allowing you to raid stores, stay at inns for free, cheat on you experience, and so on. However, there are a few risks. First of all, failure in this super results in creating and owning the worst item in the game. This item, the "Bounced Check," will not only continuously drain your money by the second, but COSTS money to get sell at a store (and the more you write, the faster your money drains...). The second risk is that the use of Reverse Side lowers the Emotional Levels for all the members of your party.

---SKILL GUILD OFFERINGS---

DESCRIPTION

While it's nice to know what all the skills are and how the specialties relate, it does no good if you can't get the skills you want. To help you plan ahead, here is the list of the skill sets followed by the cities that offer those sets. Sets with an asterisk aren't available until you reach Lacour.

Knowledge 1 (Mineralogy, Herbal Medicine, Recipe): Cross, Clik, Linga, Central City

Knowledge 2 (Musical Notation, Biology, Tool Knowledge): Herlie, Hilton, Linga, Central City

*Knowledge 3 (Mental Science, Piety, Fairyology): Linga, North City

Sensibility 1 (Courage, Patience, Esthetic Sense, Good Eye): Cross, Clik, Central City

Sensibility 2 (Playfulness, Danger Sense, Perseverance, Poker Face): Herlie, Hilton, North City

*Sensibility 3 (Functionality, Radar, Effort): Lacour, Armlock

Technique 1 (Whistling, Copying, Sketching, Kitchen Knife): Cross, Clik, Herlie, Central City

*Technique 2 (Mech Knowledge, Craft, Animal Training, Writing): Hilton, North City

*Technique 3 (Music Instrument, Metal Casting, Scientific Ability, Mech Operation): Linga, North City

Combat 1 (Spirit Force, Below the Belt, Strong Blow, Cancel): Clik, Herlie, Lacour, Armlock

*Combat 2 (Flip, Gale, Feint, Mental Training): Hilton, Lacour, Armlock

*Combat 3 (Counterattack, Parry, Body Control, Motormouth, Provocation):

---MISCELLANEOUS---

STATISTICS AND BATTLES

One of the side benefits of skills is the pumping of a character's statistics and battle power. Here's a quick primer of what you should do to make your character have a little more oomph:

- Raise your Perseverance level! Doing so allow you to pay minimal amounts of SP in a variety of skills to supplement the use of lots of SP to specialize in a few skills. Raising your Effort (after Perseverance) will allow you to advance faster so that you have more SP to spend. Also raise your Danger Sense early; after Perseverance, the first 8 levels will be quite cheap, and the extra STM will greatly help battle recovery.
- Each statistic relates to your abilities in battle:
 - STR (strength) increases ATK (attack)
 - CON (constitution) increases AC (defense)
 - DEX (dexterity) increases HIT (chance to damage enemy)
 - AGL (agility) increases AVD (chance to block attacks)
 - INT (intelligence) increases MAG (magical power)
- LUC (luck) affects HIT and AVD, as well as item creation and other "lucky" things.
- STM (stamina) determines your chances of recovering HP and MP after battles.
- GUTS will sometimes increase your attack/defense in battle, and might give you a chance to survive otherwise lethal attacks.
- Cater to the abilities of the characters. Spellcasters don't need lots of STR or DEX, and fighters don't need lots of INT. Everyone, however, can use more of the rest of the statistics. This is, of course, subject to how you play. If, for instance, you decide that you want your spellcasters to run out and kick some booty anyway, then go ahead and pump them up...
- Remember that there are two skills, Biology and Mental Science, that can raise your max HP and MP, respectively. These become less important as you rise in level and your HP and MP continue to increase (9999 HP and 999 MP is the maximum you can get in each statistic).
- Don't forget about combat skills, either. Combat skills can be quite useful, and (with Perseverance) can also be cheap. Most combat skills are geared towards fighters, although the defensive skills can be useful for spellcasters. Cancel is completely useless for spellcasters, as is Motormouth for fighters. Also, Cancel, Counterattack, and perhaps Provocation are only useful if you intend to spend a lot of time controlling that particular character in battle. Note, however, that the skills Strong Blow and Flip might actually be harmful for characters to use, depending on the situation. A successful Strong Blow may prevent a follow-up combination, while characters with longer range attacks may spend an inordinate amount of time running behind the opponent and getting to the required range when Flip succeeds. All other combat skills, however, don't have any negative aspects (but you can still turn them off if you want to inflict less damage or take more damage).
- Why spend precious SP when you can just use cash? Take note of which

skills can be Authored, and make sure someone with high levels in such skills also can write books so that future character don't have to spend their points learning the same skills.

---DISCLAIMER---

(c)1999,2000 Sherwin Tam

This is my personal handiwork, and I took a lot of effort to write it. Please do not use this commercially or alter it in any way. Also, please ask me if you plan to feature it on a web site or something of that nature, as I'd rather not come across it one day and go, "Hey, how did that get there?"

---CREDITS---

Thanks go to:

Ian Kelley, whose excellent FAQ on the Japanese version of Star Ocean 2 and willingness to answer questions greatly helped my understanding of the game. His web site is at <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~ikelley/SFC.html> and his FAQ can also be found at www.gamefaqs.com.

GameFAQs (www.gamefaqs.com), one of the greatest places to find information on any game out there. There are a whole bunch of FAQs on SO2 now, so anything you might ask is probably there.

Tri-Ace (www.tri-ace.co.jp) and Enix (www.enix.co.jp), for making a great game.

Elizabeth M. Hollinger and James M. Rantkos, writers of Prima's (www.primagames.com) strategy guide for Star Ocean 2. Their guide's visual walkthroughs were immensely helpful in getting me through the game quickly while gathering more information.

All you people on rec.games.video.sony, esp. Laura Parkinson, Sean Chang, Tetsuya, Robert Geiger, and the esteemed Ian Kelley for the SO2 discussion.

All of you who have sent in comments or corrections to my guide. There are too many people to really fit and keep the size down, but if you have sent me info, thank you!

This document is copyright Sherman Tam and hosted by VGM with permission.