

PvP Basics

WITH **WILDSUSANBOYLE**

A Beginners & Enthusiasts Guide to **Pokémon GO** Trainer Battles.

Contents

Introduction

Pokémon GO reinvents what it means to be a Trainer. Using a decades-old system, Niantic has blended a turn-based adventure game into the real world, allowing players to travel, catch, and battle together across the globe.

In our first moments, Pokémon GO has already introduced us to a new way of collecting Pokémon. Different resources, including Candy and Stardust, are put towards Gyms and Raid Battles, where hundreds of attacks are reimaged. And in December of 2018, Niantic unveiled Trainer Battles, where players could harness the full extent of their Pokémon GO knowledge, challenging others in a head-to-head battle.

For those familiar with Pokémon and its main series games, it is important to recognize the changes that have taken place during this translation. Although Pokémon GO Trainer Battles have simplified many aspects of the franchise, it also gives players a great deal of control.

The ideas here are presented in my voice alone but are the result of countless hours from an entire community. The purpose of this guide is to create a home for common concepts, PvP jargon, and theories. Each chapter is meant to establish an understanding of the game that will permeate through every level of play, bridging the gaps between all of Pokémon GO's Trainers.

Understanding Pokémon

Minor differences between Pokémon can have rippling effects on both its role and capabilities. In this chapter, we examine the qualities that constitute and differentiate Pokémon in Trainer Battles. Typing makes up the competitive ecosystem, introducing natural strengths and weaknesses for every species. A detailed look into Stat Product shows how misleading Combat Power can be. And only through a Pokémon's Moveset and attacks do battles truly come to life.

		DEFENDING																								
		○	🔥	💧	🌿	⚡	❄️	👊	👤	🏠	🕊️	🌀	🐛	🪨	👻	🐉	🌑	🛡️	🌸	● SUPER EFFECTIVE						
ATTACKING	NORMAL ○																			▼	×				▼	▼ NOT VERY EFFECTIVE
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	GRASS 🌿		▼	●	▼				▼	●	▼		▼	●		▼									▼	
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	FAIRY 🌸		▼					●	▼											●	●		▼			

Type

A property of Pokémon and their moves to establish strengths and weaknesses.



RESISTANCES



WEAKNESSES



TYPING

Type effectiveness guides Pokémon gameplay, ensuring no Pokémon or move is unstoppable. There are 18 element-like **types** that interact with a certain degree of effectiveness we call weaknesses and resistances. In the games, these interactions are displayed as “super effective” and “not very effective.”

Some types, such as Ghost and Normal are predominantly neutral, with no clear advantages versus the majority. On the other hand, the Steel typing and its 11 resistances may seem unfair, but it only empowers the other types that see its weakness as an opportunity. This way, every Pokémon has a role, no matter how small.

In addition, a Pokémon can have up to two types, making up a total of 171 single and dual-type combinations. Overlapping type effectiveness found in dual-type Pokémon can increase, decrease, or neutralize damage received. For example, Bastiodon is both Rock and Steel, resulting in twice the resistance against Normal-type moves but is also twice as vulnerable to Fighting and Ground. Secondary types

tend to improve a Pokémon's standing by customizing resistances and granting access to different moves.

Coaching Corner

Many type interactions follow logic: Fire is weak to Water, Grass is weak to Fire, and so on. However, abstract types like Dark and Poison will take time to familiarize. Various memory techniques involving stories, acronyms, and chunking of types can help expedite this process.

My personal method for remembering types is to group them into trios. Fire, Grass, and Water are where most Trainers start their journey. You can add to what you know or create new chunks like Electric, Flying, and Ground.

The more creative you are, the easier it is to remember. Think Psychic types, traditionally symbolized by an 'eye'.
"Frightened by bugs and ghosts, and blinded by the darkness, even psychics become traumatized, hide and shut their eyes."



GARCHOMP

RESISTANCES



WEAKNESSES



SWAMPERT

RESISTANCES



WEAKNESSES



Most type analyses center around a Pokémon's defensive capabilities, but type advantage comes in a second form. Every move possesses one of 18 types, distinct from the user itself. Though unlikely, this means a Fire-type Pokémon could theoretically use a Water-type move. More importantly, this introduces an offensive lane of type interactions found in the left column of the type chart. This distinction between damage dealt and received makes gameplay less predictable between two Pokémon, lessening the importance of innate typing.

In the main series games, specific types have no effect on others (e.g., Ground-type Pokémon are immune to Electric-type moves). In Pokémon GO, immunity is treated as a double resistance, which is normally reserved for specific dual-type combinations. For a Dragon and Ground-type such as Garchomp, (Electric) resistance plus immunity adds up to triple resistance. In the case of Ground and Water like Swampert, (Electric) immunity plus weakness will be subtracted into a single resistance.



Bulk

An umbrella term for Defense and Stamina, describing a Pokémon's survivability.



GENGAR

ATT 261
DEF 149
STA 155

Individual Values (IVs)

Randomized stat values assigned to create variation in Pokémon of the same species.

Combat Power (CP)

A simplified value used in Pokémon GO used to represent a Pokémon's combat capabilities.

TYPE EFFECTIVENESS	MULTIPLIER
DOUBLE SUPER EFFECTIVE	×2.56
SUPER EFFECTIVE	×1.6
NEUTRAL	×1
RESISTED	×0.625
DOUBLE RESISTED	×0.391
TRIPLE RESISTED	×0.244

STAT PRODUCT

Attack, Defense, and Stamina are the three stats assigned to every species in Pokémon GO. The Attack stat helps determine the damage output of a Pokémon, while Defense determines the damage reduced and received. Stamina, otherwise known as Hit Points (HP) or health, measures how much damage a Pokémon can take before fainting. Since Defense and Stamina are both properties that affect the survivability of a Pokémon, it is often described together as **bulk**.

Consistent across all Pokémon of the same species are its base stats and level progression. Base stats are fixed values for each Pokémon to ensure all Gengar for example, have high Attack in accordance with its level and growth. Any difference between two of the same Pokémon is the result of **Individual Values (IVs)**, a set of randomized stats that provide a boost in any direction.

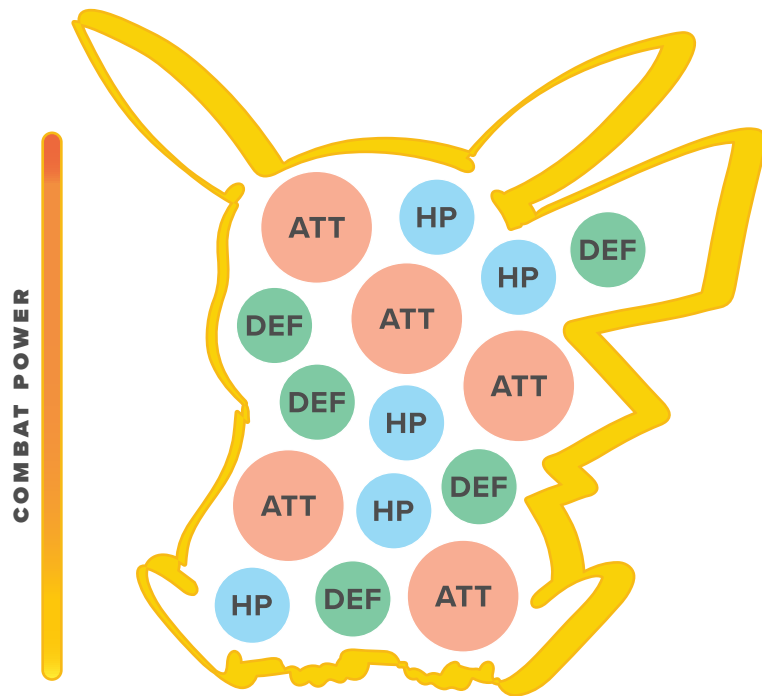
Traditionally, seeking out Pokémon with maximum IVs in each stat means maximizing its potential. Therefore, a Pokémon appraised at 15 Attack, 15 Defense, and 15 HP, is often called “perfect” or a “hundo”. Each individual stat increases damage or bulk, improving its Total Damage Output (TDO) even if by a little.

This is true in the main series games, raids, and even Master League Trainer Battles. However, both Great (< CP1500) and Ultra League (< CP2500) impose a **Combat Power (CP)** limit that requires stat optimization. To understand how Pokémon are affected by this restriction, we must understand how CP is calculated in Pokémon GO.

The analogy often used in the PvP community is to imagine a container filled with basketballs, baseballs, and tennis balls. The container's volumetric size is a metaphor for the CP limit. Every basketball represents an individual Attack stat, a baseball for every

Defense, and a tennis ball for every HP. A baseball and tennis ball are roughly the same size, occupying small amounts of the container. Though still one ball, a basketball takes up much more space, thus filling the container with fewer total balls.

The CP formula is calculated similarly, where Pokémon with high Attack stats often have the highest CP. Meaning, too much Attack quickly meets the CP limit for Pokémon in the Great and Ultra League. Therefore, stat optimization favors Pokémon with low Attack because it can be substituted by many more Defense or HP stats.



Stat Product (SP)

An indiscriminate total of a Pokémon's stats that correlates directly to its combat capabilities.

To compare the stats of different Pokémon, we finally look towards **Stat Product** by multiplying Attack, Defense, and Stamina together. Unlike CP, the result is a simple and unbiased average. This all-encompassing stat value is directly related to the endurance and TDO of a Pokémon, allowing all IV combinations to be ranked within or across species.

Stat Product, bulk, PvP IVs, and TDO are terms that describe the stats of a Pokémon in Trainer Battles. They are all linked to the idea that CP alone does not speak to a Pokémon's prowess. Instead, it is the sole reason PvP emphasizes bulk in IVs and in general.

Check it out

Trainer Battle Rank Checker

Although the players have no control over base stats, they can seek out Pokémon with IVs catered towards bulk. Stadium Gaming provides a comprehensive tool for analyzing the PvP IVs of a Pokémon. A quick search will show you the rank, distribution, CP, and cost to invest in all your Trainer Battle needs.

Moveset

The combination of Fast and Charge Attacks assigned to a Pokémon.

Fast Attack

The primary form of attacks in Pokémon GO, used to deal damage and generate energy.

Same Type Attack Bonus (STAB)

A 20% damage boost that is applied to moves used by a Pokémon of the same type.

Energy

A resource generated by Fast Attacks and consumed to cast Charge Attacks.

MOVESET

The type effectiveness and Attack stat of a Pokémon is merely an amplification for the damage dealt using moves, also known as attacks or techniques. Inspired by but distinct from the main series games, Fast and Charge Attacks exist only in Pokémon GO. They share the same names and type as the original, but their damage and energy are explicitly designed for PvP.

Fast Attacks

Fast Attacks are the default form of combat in Pokémon GO, possessing four attributes that make them as unique as Pokémon: Type, Damage, Energy, and Turn Duration.

Each move has a fixed type, independent of its user. It takes an offensive approach to type effectiveness, capable of overturning an unfavorable defense. Being able to interact outside the bounds of a Pokémon's innate typing encourages multilayered gameplay. Alternatively, using a move that matches the type of its user also has benefits, granting **Same Type Attack Bonus (STAB)** for a 20% damage increase.

Damage is self-explanatory, describing the harm inflicted by either Fast or Charge Attacks. Some moves will deal an overwhelming amount of damage while others are hardly noticeable. Damage dealt by each move may be predetermined, but it is adjusted by the user's Attack stat, the opponent's Defense, as well as typing from both sides.

In addition to dealing damage, Fast Attacks generate **energy**. Energy is the currency collected by Fast Attacks, for Charge Attacks. Unlike

Turn

A unit of time for the measurement of moves in Pokémon GO. Each turn is equivalent to a half-second.

damage, energy values are unaffected by other factors. Meaning the same Fast Attack will only ever generate the same amount of energy.

Each Fast Attack lasts a certain number of **turns**, describing the time it takes to apply damage, generate energy, and most importantly, for the next action to occur. A turn is equivalent to 0.5 seconds, and the longest Fast Attacks last 5 turns or 2.5 seconds. Turn duration affects other values by forcing Fast Attacks to deal damage and generate energy in chunks. But when analyzing moves on a per turn basis, you may find no differences beyond their animated duration.

Check it out

Pokémon GO PvP Moves

Moves in Pokémon GO have values that are unique to PvP. PvPoke provides an updated list of all the Fast and Charge Attacks found within the game. You can search or sort using any of the attributes discussed within the chapter and even explore moveset combinations.

Charge Attacks

A powerful attack that can only be cast using energy accumulated from Fast Attacks.

Charge Attacks

Charge Attacks utilize energy to deal bursts of damage. Typing and damage for Charge Attacks have the same interactions as its counterpart, but instead of generating energy, it is consumed. In addition, each Pokémon can have up to two Charge Attacks for a total of three distinct moves.

Certain Charge Attacks can defeat an entire Pokémon, while others are meant to chip away at the opponent. Energy consumption ranges between 35 and 80 energy, with damage scaling alongside expenditure. Note that exclusive, time-limited, and stat-changing moves are tuned to be much more powerful.

Unknown to many players, Charge Attacks have a turn duration of one. They can be interpreted as a highly compressed 1-turn move, no different than a Fast Attack. This means the previous actions of a Pokémon must be complete before casting a Charge Attack, but its implications are used primarily in high-level play.

Damage and energy are two sides of the same coin. Regardless of the move, the purpose is to inflict damage. Energy shifts the importance away from Fast Attacks, especially in cases where a Pokémon has a more effective Charge Attack. Choosing the best moveset is a mix between maximizing damage and offering type effectiveness for uphill battles.



FAST ATTACKS

- POWDER SNOW
- RAZOR LEAF

CHARGE ATTACKS

- WEATHER BALL
- OUTRAGE
- ENERGY BALL
- BLIZZARD



SEAKING

FAST ATTACKS

- PECK
- POISON JAB
- WATERFALL

CHARGE ATTACKS

- DRILL RUN
- ICY WIND
- ICE BEAM
- MEGAHORN
- WATER PULSE

Coaching Corner

Figuring out what Pokémon and move will deal the most damage against an opponent can be a complicated process. In addition to type effectiveness and Stat Product, we must now consider STAB and the base power for each move.

Remember, typing is the heart and soul of the Pokémon franchise. Dealing damage that is most effective should be a priority in almost every scenario. When in doubt, cast the Charge Attack that matches the user's typing. STAB will provide a small but needed bonus when all options seem alike. Lastly, the higher its cost, the more energy-efficient it will be.

For every Pokémon added to your arsenal, a little research can go a long way. Designating a go-to Charge Attack will be particularly useful for Pokémon with atypical movesets such as Abomasnow and Seaking.

CONCLUSION

Matching Types, Stat Product, and Moveset are not uncommon, but minor adjustments to any Pokémon can change the outcome of a battle and even the entirety of its role. The combination of these qualities is what allows so many different Pokémon to compete in Trainer Battles. Their ability to overcome one another can be examined and explained using its building blocks. Only when we understand Pokémon at face value, can we begin to build for synergy and strategy.



PvP Mechanics

Mechanics describe “how the game works” by design. Pokémon GO includes throwing, spinning, and performing “Excellent!” throws when catching Pokémon. Although they are central to the overall gameplay, they are not relevant to Trainer Battles.

On the battlefield, five mechanics act as the laws of nature. Everything that occurs within this context result from Fast Attacks, Charge Attacks, Protect Shields, Switches, and Effects. This is how the player interacts with the game. Each mechanic is simple to understand and execute, but a simple format can become intricate through the synergy of its components. This chapter emphasizes the control Trainers have over individual actions.

Mechanics

The primary functions of a game designed to govern and guide the player's actions.

Matchup

A battle pairing between two Pokémon, often used to describe an outcome.

Buff

A strengthening effect.

Debuff / Nerf

A weakening effect.

Fast and Charge Attacks contribute to the makeup of a Pokémon while also being active tools for combat. To evade damage or bad **matchups**, players have the option to shield or switch. Lastly, stat changing effects, more specifically described as **buffs** and **debuffs**, are tied directly to the use of certain moves. A deeper understanding of these mechanics will help guide decision-making for the fast-paced environment of PvP.

FAST ATTACK

Tapping on any empty screen space during battle will activate the Fast Attack assigned to your current Pokémon. When not performing any other actions, a player should default to using Fast Attacks.

Dealing damage and generating energy are the distinguishing features of a Fast Attack. There is often a balance between the two values, meaning an excess of damage will lessen the amount of energy produced. For example, *Razor Leaf* is one of the hardest-hitting Fast Attacks, offset by a lack of energy generation. *Bullet Seed* is also a Grass-type Fast Attack but instead caters towards energy. Most types offer an array of moves that provide players with a choice between damage, energy, or both.

Energy converted into Charge Attacks will inflict more damage. However, Fast Attacks are continuous, unavoidable, and difficult to overcome. The best way to mitigate damage from Fast attacks is through the typing and Stat Product of Pokémon themselves.

CHARGE ATTACK

Charge Attacks appear at the bottom of the screen. If an energy requirement is met, the corresponding move name and circle will be highlighted. Tapping it will trigger the move during the next available turn, transitioning into a type-based minigame where damage is determined by the number of icons cleared.

The energy collected from Fast Attacks is used as currency for Charge Attacks. Imagine each Pokémon having a personal bank account with a limit of 100 energy. Too little energy means the Pokémon will not afford a Charge Attack, and too much means the Pokémon is working unpaid overtime.

With enough energy, moves that cost 50 energy or less can be cast back-to-back. As you generate energy throughout a battle, your Pokémon's Charge Attack circles will gradually fill up proportionally to its cost. Once you have exceeded the necessary energy to cast

a move, the circle will again fill up from the bottom but remain highlighted to show that it is ready.

Casting a Charge Attack begins a minigame that requires tapping and swiping icons to maximize damage. All 18 types have a unique minigame pattern where 31-32 icons gradually appear on the screen. If a minimum of 31 icons is successfully cleared, an “EXCELLENT!” will be displayed on the screen, dealing 100% of its intended damage. Each icon less will reduce its damage by 2.5%, down to a minimum of 25%. Only once the minigame has been completed, will the move name and animation be shown to the opponent.

Coaching Corner

Charge Attack circles are the only indicators of energy in-game. Knowing the cost of your moves can give you an estimate of its damage, your energy limit, and the speed at which you generate energy. Paying attention to when your opponent uses a Charge Attack will also give you an idea of your comparative pacing.

Both Fast and Charge Attacks can be tailored towards damage or energy. The most notable descriptor for this relationship is whether a moveset is “spammy.” A high-energy Fast Attack paired with a low-cost Charge Attack is considered as such, casting Charge Attacks at a much higher rate than the average Pokémon. Conversely, a more damage-focused Fast attack often fails to fully utilize Charge Attacks, which provide additional damage and type effectiveness.

PROTECT SHIELD

The number of Protect Shields available to each player are displayed as purple hexagons above the Pokémon. When on the receiving end of a Charge Attack, players will be prompted to tap and use the damage-nullifying barrier. Taking no action or by pressing “NOT NOW”, the menu will close and set aside the remaining shields.

All players start with two protect shields that are used to reduce damage from Charge Attacks. While the opponent navigates through their Charge Attack minigame, the defending player will be allowed to deploy a shield. When deployed, the move will still cast, but all incoming damage is reduced to 1. Shields affect only the damage

Protect Shield

A protective barrier that nullifies damage dealt by a Charge Attack.

variable, meaning the energy cost will be consumed and any effects may still be applied.

Even though Charge Attacks can deal significant bursts of damage, a player must work their way through multiple shields. A simple solution would be to bypass shields altogether using only Fast Attacks. However, drawbacks of a single and slow source of damage will make uphill battles more challenging. Our remaining options are to draw out the opponent's shields as quickly as possible, leaving their Pokémon defenseless to Charge Attacks.

Shield Bait

Casting a lower-cost Charge Attack to mislead or intimidate opponents into shielding a more threatening move.

A spammy moveset may seem ideal for applying shield pressure, but low-cost Charge Attacks often lack the damage needed to threaten an opponent. Adding a more expensive Charge Attack to the equation makes it possible to intimidate others into using shields. A successful **shield bait** will allow Pokémon to conserve energy for their next Charge Attack. This comes at the risk of wasting energy if the opponent calls the bluff. Lastly, shield pressure can also be applied across an entire match using all three Pokémon. In some cases, if each Pokémon were to make it to only one Charge Attack, a final unshielded move can still turn the tide of battle.

Coaching Corner

With only two shields for three Pokémon and multiple Charge Attacks, it is impossible to defend all the Pokémon brought into battle. Even with prior knowledge of an opponent's team and moveset, the value for every potential shield is up for debate. The only constant is the amount of damage a move will deal to a particular Pokémon, thus being our measure for a shield's value.

Reflecting on the previous chapter, we know that type effectiveness is the greatest amplifier for damage, followed by STAB, Stat Product, and Charge Attack cost. Deploying shields against augmented moves and protecting your Pokémon from the most damage possible is the first step to mastering shield use. At higher levels of gameplay, a player may also prioritize shielding based on the value of Pokémon themselves.

Switch



To withdraw a Pokémon from active battle, immediately substituted by another.



EMPOLEON



FAST ATTACKS

-  METAL CLAW
-  WATERFALL

CHARGE ATTACKS

-  DRILL PECK
-  HYDRO CANNON
-  FLASH CANNON
-  BLIZZARD
-  HYDRO PUMP

Effect

A secondary outcome of Charge Attacks, altering the Attack and Defense stats of Pokémon.

SWITCH

The Pokémon available during a battle will be shown in squares on the right side of the screen. Once every 60 seconds, tapping on a square will cause them to switch places with the active Pokémon.

Switching is usually done to remove a Pokémon from an unfavorable situation, placing them into stasis and freezing their current health and energy. This puts the user's switch mechanic on a 60-second cooldown and greys out the Pokémon squares. Throughout Charge Attacks, Pokémon fainting, and even lag, the timer will continue to tick, being the only PvP mechanic that is consistent and impervious in Pokémon GO.

Although the intention for switching is to protect a Pokémon, it regularly causes a dilemma. Being the first to switch tends to place the next Pokémon into a worse scenario. This is because each player has an independent switch timer unaffected by one another. If the opponent follows up with a Pokémon that is more difficult to overcome, little to no progress has been made towards winning the match.

What defines a suitable switch is specific to every team. Having a versatile moveset that deals different types of damage is one way to widen the reach of Pokémon. For instance, Empoleon has an innate weakness to Fighting types but can easily threaten these opponents using super effective *Drill Peck*. At times, an expensive and powerful Charge Attack will have a similar effect, reducing the risks tied to switching.

There are also strategic uses for switching. A common tactic is the sacrificial swap – timing a switch to match an opponent's Charge Attack. The goal is to preserve the initial Pokémon in the same way you would with shields. You can swap into a Pokémon that resists the anticipated move, but in most cases, it is done with a low-health Pokémon acting as a figurative third shield. Due to the nature of switches and the precise timing required, sac-swaps can easily backfire and should always be used as a last resort.

EFFECTS

Effects are temporary stat modifiers tied to the use of certain Charge Attacks. They can be applied to the user or the opponent, affecting damage dealt and received.

Effects are inspired by stat modifiers and status effects from the main series games. In Pokémon GO, they are often used to balance and add variety to Charge Attacks. Certain moves have added effects as a bonus, while others can be understood as a drawback or recoil.

When examining moves like *Brave Bird* and *Superpower*, they deal much more damage than is expected from their energy cost. To offset the power of *Brave Bird*, it is tied to an effect that reduces the user's Defense stat. For *Superpower*, both Attack and Defense are slightly lowered, meaning the Pokémon will take additional damage and deal less damage from that point forward. The opposite can be found in underwhelming Charge Attacks like *Power-Up Punch*, which guarantees an Attack boost. Other moves may even apply weakening effects to the opponent based on a lesser activation chance.

Attack and Defense can be simultaneously raised and reduced by multiple stages. Up to four stages can be applied to each stat, causing moves to deal twice as much or less than normal. Then again, all it takes is a minor stat change to make familiar matchups unpredictable. Despite the chaos, effects are usually applied gradually and persist only while a Pokémon is in active battle.

Switching will cleanse all the effects tied to a Pokémon. Whether the debuffs are self-inflicted or caused by an opponent, their drawbacks can be immediately neutralized if a switch is available. On the other hand, players with buffed Pokémon will want to preserve its effects. Aggressively switching into a more effective Pokémon will leave the opponent no choice but to abandon its advantage.

CONCLUSION

Many aspects of Pokémon GO stay close to its roots in the franchise. But when it comes to PvP, Niantic was bold to reinterpret the competitive format using the same tools built for Gyms and Raid Battles. The result was simple, familiar, and fit for real-time mobile play.

Trainer Battles are designed to be fun and easy, while still providing enough room for ingenuity. Every action, pause, and misstep is projected onto the battlefield through the five PvP mechanics. The same applies to every risky shield bait and well-timed switch. They are all creative interpretations of these arbitrary rules, acting as the bridge between Pokémon and Trainer.

Meta

This chapter shifts the focus back onto Pokémon and the roles they play within a specific context. Unlike the mechanics of PvP, Pokémon can be added, movesets adjusted, and battle formats rotated. These changes tend to be pushed by the developers, but Trainers make the final decision on how they are represented in the competitive scene. Whether it is a Pokémon, team, or strategy, what is being used at a given time will be recognized as the meta.

Meta

In gaming, describes the most popular and effective strategy at a given time. In Pokémon GO, gauges the popularity of certain Pokémon within the context of a theme or format.



**DEFENSE
DEOXY'S**

FAST ATTACKS



COUNTER



ZEN HEADBUTT

CHARGE ATTACKS



PSYCHO BOOST



ROCK SLIDE



THUNDERBOLT

There is no consensus on the definition of **meta** because different games use it to describe their own unique environment. In Pokémon GO, the meta takes on the attributes of its Pokémon. Typing, Stat Product, Moveset, and most importantly, availability forms the power structure within each format. Since no element is invulnerable, neither is the meta. The pieces for a winning combination become a liability against Pokémon fitted with the right type or move. This cycle continues back and forth, creating hierarchies of Pokémon that share a purpose versus those who serve to defeat it.

ROLES

The role of a Pokémon is influenced by but distinct from typing. Simply because Deoxys (Defense forme) is a Psychic-type, it does not automatically determine its matchup against Dark or Steel-type opponents. To identify what a Pokémon is capable of, we must also consider its moveset and matchups; with access to *Counter* as a Fast attack, Deoxys more closely resembles a Fighting-type Pokémon.

Most Pokémon can serve a generic role based on typing alone, even if it is easily outperformed. For example, Ice and Rock can overcome Flying-type Pokémon but this is only a fraction of what most Steel-types can achieve. If the dynamics between Flying and Steel were to change, other types would be quick to take up the mantle. This is because Ice, Rock, and Steel inherently serve the same purpose.

The strengths, weaknesses, and similarities of Pokémon eventually boil down to a few major roles. They can be labelled by the type of damage source, the Pokémon they imitate, the target type, and more. Because one type is always superior to another, most metas devolve into three roles matching that of a Fighter, Flyer, and Tank (Steel). The names are unimportant but serve to provide a general idea of the attributes in each role:

FIGHTER

MACHAMP



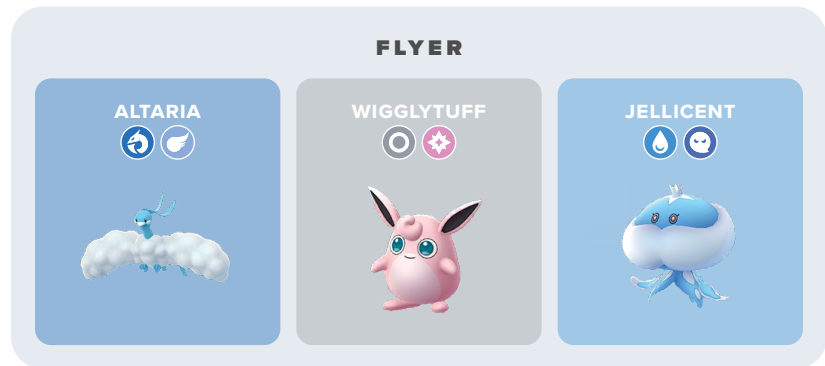
ESCAVALIER



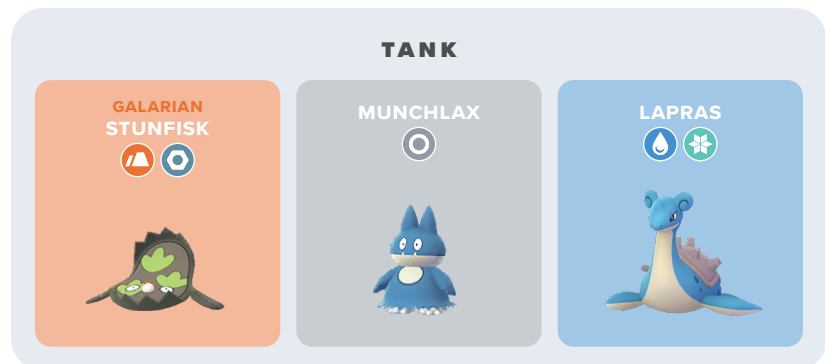
SWAMPERT



Fighters tend to be the most aggressive bunch in the meta. They are blatantly named after Fighting-type Pokémon, which have the most volatile movesets and matchups. The raw power of Fighting-type moves also makes it easy for others to take on the role against Dark and Steel-type opponents. Water-type attackers frequently share this endeavor through the convenience of dual-type overlap. The problem is, every strength has a weakness, and Fighters have no shortage of both.



Flyers, Fairies, Psychics, and Poisons all serve as anti-Fighters. It is a simple task for many Pokémon, considering how widely resisted Fighting types are. As a result, this tends to be the most inclusive role where Trainers can potentially mix and match attributes. However, it is no coincidence that these types are accompanied by a weakness to Steel.



Tank is a term borrowed from other gaming communities and is used to recognize the ability to withstand damage. Steel-type Pokémon are the epitome of Tanks, possessing 11 resistances and only 3 weaknesses. With such an oppressive defense, it is no wonder why Fighting types are so highly valued.

Resistances are not the only defensive tool. Dark and Normal-type Pokémon benefit from a lack of type interactions, allowing bulk and movesets to do the heavy lifting. Ice and Rock types are notable for their similarities to Steel, which can be useful when responding to different kinds of Flyers.

CONCLUSION

The meta is an ecosystem, whereas roles are the habitats. Pokémon are not confined to their roles, but they find the most success when it matches their strengths. Only the most powerful and unique Pokémon can move on to compete against the meta, fighting for the opportunity to be on a Trainer's team.

Any changes can have rippling effects, disturbing the balance of types and roles. This is evident in recurring GO Battle League formats, where the same metas have shifted unrecognizably after adjusting individual Pokémon. It does not take much to disturb an ecosystem, but the roles remain the same even if they are led by different Pokémon.

This chapter is designed to pique your interest by examining Pokémon outside of a vacuum. Understanding the capabilities, roles, and hierarchy of Pokémon is to interpret Typing, Stat Product, and Moveset in relation to the meta. Ultimately, using more liberal yet practical methods of categorization lessen the need to inspect and compare every aspect of our Pokémon.

Check it out

Pokémon GO Battle Simulator

Once again, we visit our friends at PvPoke because they provide much more than just lists of data. The battle simulator has been an invaluable tool for the community since the early days of PvP. It accurately depicts the outcome of any matchup, allowing trainers to choose the right Pokémon for the job. Simulations are not a replacement for practice, but the website also has a tool for that!

Line Building

Each player is required to select three Pokémon to enter in Trainer Battles. These teams of three are recognized as a **line**, comprised of a lead and two backline Pokémon. Although “team” can be used in its place, different formats use the terminology to differentiate battle-ready Pokémon from its candidates.

In essence, a team is just more Pokémon and should be examined under the same prospects of Typing, Stat Product, and Moveset. The same synergies that exist within individual Pokémon occur across an entire line. Together, they can lean on the abilities of one another to overcome any Pokémon, strategy, and situation.

Line

A team of three Pokémon used in Pokémon GO Trainer Battles.



VENUSAUR

RESISTANCES

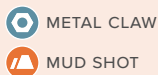


WEAKNESSES

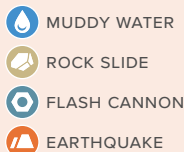


GALARIAN STUNFISK

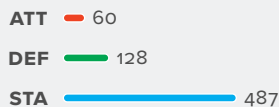
FAST ATTACKS



CHARGE ATTACKS



CHANSEY



TYPING

A Pokémon's type is its most reliable form of defense. Like dual-types that counteract their own weaknesses, different Pokémon can be paired together for protection. A Trainer must consider how their line will respond to every type of Pokémon, from the perspectives of both attacker and defender.

To better illustrate the line building process, let us start with a simple and popular Pokémon. Venusaur is a Grass and Poison-type and is limited to moves within its native typing. It does wonders against Fighting and Water but is weak to Fire, Flying, Ice, and Psychic.

To find a Pokémon that complements Venusaur, we should formulate a list of types that best combat its four weaknesses. A Steel-type Pokémon will resist Flying, Ice and Psychic, while Rock-type attacks are effective against Fire, Flying, and Ice. It becomes clear that Venusaur takes on the role of a Fighter-Flyer hybrid and can benefit from a Steel or Rock-type Tank such as Bastiodon, Empoleon, and Galarian Stunfisk.

Grass, Poison, Rock, and Steel have near-perfect synergy, making line building with Venusaur rather convenient. However, this level of type coverage is uncommon across the remainder of a meta, requiring many lines to utilize the strengths of three carefully selected Pokémon. Note that covering for one's weaknesses can also be done through the offensive capabilities of movesets, as seen in Galarian Stunfisk's non-native Rock-type Charge Attack.

Typing is the first line of defense and covers the most ground by dominating entire categories of Pokémon. There will be Pokémon that defy this relationship, but they are few and far between. By building a team with type effectiveness in mind, we are also taking the time to learn the limits of each Pokémon.


STAT PRODUCT

Stat Product, more specifically bulk, tells us how much a Pokémon can withstand. In extreme cases like Chansey, its defensive capabilities can surpass that of type effectiveness. The opposite rings true for Attack-weighted Pokémon like Roserade, which is vulnerable to all forms of damage. Although Stat Product provides leverage in battle, not all types and movesets are available in the form of a bulky Pokémon.



ROSERADE



ATT  243

DEF  185

STA  155

Shields provide limited amounts of artificial bulk. It is the solution to the Stat Product problem and allows Trainers to incorporate offensive Pokémon into teams. However, two shields cannot be expected to protect three Pokémon, meaning all lines should fall back on the natural defenses of bulk.

Even though there is strategy surrounding bulk, playstyle and preference dictate much of the selection process. A bulky line does not always have the upper hand, but the most aggressive Pokémon leave no room for error. Being able to withstand multiple Charge Attacks will prolong a matchup, granting more opportunities to bait, shield, swap, and think.

MOVESET

Balanced movesets and lines should be able to deal both small and large quantities of damage. Fast Attacks bypass shields and deal only the necessary amount to knock out a Pokémon. Energy delegates this responsibility to Charge Attacks, which should also synergize with itself using low and high-cost moves. You will find certain combinations more suited for specific matchups and shield scenarios, but a team must still adapt to every possibility.

The next chapter will go into detail about the importance of controlled damage and Energy Advantage. Although Charge Attacks are the key to recovering battles, they cannot be assumed to always provide the same impact due to the interference of shields. To a lesser degree, Fast Attacks enable Pokémon to perform regardless of shields and baits. Like all previous components, each restriction is remedied through its counterparts. In movesets, it is found in the assortment of damage and energy across a line of Pokémon.

Check it out

Livestreams

There is no shortage of talent in the Pokémon GO space. Over at Twitch, you can find international titleholders, tournament organizers, coaches, and entertainers striving to be the very best! This is the perfect opportunity to support and learn from fellow battlers willing to share their knowledge with the community.

CONCLUSION

Pokémon are carefully selected for their defensive Typing, high Stat Product, and powerful Moveset. Line building expands on the selection process to include two more Pokémon. This grants Trainers the opportunity to further minimize a weakness, improve offensive capabilities, and consider different sources of damage.

Unique combinations allow Pokémon to pressure shields, force switches, tank damage, and more. Every situation calls for a specific task, sometimes outside of a Pokémon's ability. Diversifying traits across an entire line will foster creative teambuilding and gameplay, while still providing the flexibility and consistency to perform.

The Advantages

The Advantages theory was designed to explore how much control a Trainer has over the outcome of a matchup. Between two Pokémon, shielding and baiting is effectively the only way to overcome an opponent. However, once we begin to examine outside the confines of an individual matchup, there are more ways to control shields, energy, and even the battles ahead.

Pokémon Advantage, Energy Advantage, and Shield Advantage alone are not enough to guarantee a winning position. A Pokémon must be flexible in ways that allow them to benefit from additional resources. For example, a Pokémon that would faint solely to Fast Attacks has no use for an extra shield. Instead, the Advantages are meant to reframe every moment as an opportunity for Trainers to utilize the full potential of their Pokémon.

POKÉMON ADVANTAGE

Pokémon Advantage means to have more health or Pokémon, which aligns with the final goal in Trainer Battles. It can be obtained gradually throughout a battle but is not a component of the game you can manipulate. Thus, Pokémon Advantage is split into more reasonably obtainable Matchup and Switch Advantage.

Matchup Advantage

Matchup Advantage embodies every aspect affecting the outcome of a matchup, including Typing, Stat Product, Moveset, current health, baiting, and shield scenario. It is an assessment of the tools and resources available to answer the question, “is this a matchup I can win?”

The difficulty of a matchup can be classified as positive, neutral, or poor. A positive matchup is predetermined in your favor and will require an excess of energy or shields to reverse. A poor matchup would be seen from the opposite and unfavorable perspective. Lastly, a neutral matchup is one that results in a close battle, usually won by a small difference in health or energy.

Recognizing matchups based on the expected outcome is critical for choosing when to switch and how to approach it. Unfortunately, Matchup Advantage is often a byproduct of other advantages and is heavily influenced by winning the lead.

Switch Advantage

The holder of Switch Advantage always decides what matchup is played out after a Pokémon leaves the battle. This can be gained if the opposing Pokémon is the first to faint or switch out. Gaining this advantage also implies Matchup Advantage, allowing players to align the subsequent matchups to their liking.

The obvious benefits can continue throughout a battle and is arguably the most significant advantage. This places an even larger emphasis on choosing a lead that provides, at minimum, many neutral matchups.

To ensure Switch Advantage, players can opt to use more shields than the opponent, trading one advantage for another.

ENERGY ADVANTAGE

An impactful Charge Attack is the reason for most wins and losses. With energy being the source of it all, it is important to consider how we generate and conserve this resource.

Energy is generated using Fast Attacks. Although the process cannot be sped up, energy can be emphasized by selecting specific moves. Some Pokémon like Cresselia have damage and energy-based alternatives. If not, seek out other Pokémon sharing similar roles for Fast Attacks that serve your needs.

Conservation is about wasting as little energy as possible. The classic method is by baiting, but another option is to refrain from casting a Charge Attack altogether. When the choice is between steady Fast Attacks versus an excessive Charge Attack, it may be better to whittle away at an opponent in anticipation of the next Pokémon.

Trainers can also create opportunities to generate energy.

Undercharging is an advanced strategy that manipulates the Charge Attack minigame to deal reduced damage. The remaining health of an opponent can then be converted into extra Fast Attacks and energy.

Losing Switch Advantage has this one benefit, using surviving Pokémon as an energy source for upcoming matchups. Before you decide to lose every lead, the ability to change an outcome varies between Pokémon and their movesets because energy is only as powerful as its Charge Attacks.

SHIELD ADVANTAGE

Shields can be cast to improve a matchup, reclaiming other advantages. On the other hand, prioritizing Shield Advantage itself is to invest in a future matchup. Countless possibilities are formed from a limited supply of shields, thus compelling Trainers to examine how Pokémon perform under varying conditions.

Shield Advantage can only be given up by a player, seeing as this resource cannot be replenished until the end of a battle. It requires one side to withhold shields while the opposition commits to defending their Pokémon. The difference in shield use will swing the resulting matchup unless negated by another advantage.



CRESSELIA



FAST ATTACKS



CONFUSION



PSYCHO CUT

CHARGE ATTACKS



GRASS KNOT



AURORA BEAM



MOONBLAST



FUTURE SIGHT

Undercharge

Weakening one's Charge Attack damage by withholding icons during the minigame.

Obtaining Shield Advantage is a risky endeavor, leaving one's Pokémon vulnerable to Charge Attacks. However, Pokémon thrive under different circumstances. Depending on the opponent's playstyle and team, it may be best to fully protect and rely on the virtues of a single Pokémon.

CONCLUSION

Take into each battle the idea of trading and sacrificing different advantages. Consider spending everything to gain Switch Advantage or a little health and time to stockpile energy. There is no right way to pursue an advantage, but there is always one to gain.

At most, Matchup Advantage is decided at the start of a game. At any point in time, Switch, Energy, and Shield Advantage can be reversed. They are formed in the crossover of matchups and found in every level of play. It is on the Trainer to recognize and pursue each advantage as an opportunity to create or maintain a lead.

Check it out

Niantic Support

Pokémon GO is always juggling exciting new updates, bugs, and events. There are many channels in which Trainers can stay up to date with the game, including their website, Twitter, and even other content creators. To learn more about preexisting features, look no further than Niantic's support page, which contains countless guides on both Pokémon and the Pokémon GO experience.

Chas “WildSusanBoyle” Ko

Chas is driven by the desire to learn as a streamer, gamer, and Pokémon GO PvP coach. His competitive nature and passion for the game had long anticipated the release of Trainer Battles. He saw it as a level playing field unaffected by experience points, raids, gym battles, medals, and dust; an aspect of the game dictated by effort and skill.

Since late 2018, Chas has spent thousands of hours on PvP. He fought against and alongside many first-generation battlers, trying to make sense of an entirely new feature and format. Experiencing the full height of each hurdle and being inspired by other content creators, Chas felt the responsibility to pave stones in his own wake.

In 2020, Chas began writing blog-like posts relating to all things PvP. It would feature teams, strategies, and a formulaic approach to Trainer Battles. Every piece was an opportunity to learn, teach, and learn again, never taking for granted what he knew. His methods of coaching became the foundation for this guide, arranged and named after an original series he titled “basics.”

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