

DIFFICULTY SETTINGS IN SACRED PHOENIX

Introduction

Sacred Phoenix offers the player the possibility to freely set the difficulty via the options menu. Eight presets are available, each offering a significantly different difficulty with uniformly adjusted parameters.

It will of course be possible to set each option individually, but it should be borne in mind that some parameters depend on the activation of another in order to be effective.

Table of difficulty presets (summary)

As a picture is worth a thousand words, here is a table that summarizes the proposed parameters with their associated presets.

Preset → Parameter ↓	Assist Mode	Pacifist	Easy	Normal	Difficult	Semi- Nuzlocke	Nuzlocke	Giratina's Hell
Trainers' level	Low			Normal	High	Normal		High
Mortality of your Pokémons	Traditional		Realistic			Nuzlocke		
Single catch per area (Area Clause)	No						Yes	
Shiny Clause (Area Clause required)	“Yes” by default, (Grayed out if Area Clause is not checked)						Yes	No
Dupes Clause (Area Clause required)	“Yes” by default, (Grayed out if Area Clause is not checked)						Yes	No
Kelt Honor Clause (Forfeiting a trainer battle forbidden)	No							Yes
Forbid items and spells in trainer battle	No							Yes
Black Out Clause (Game over if the whole team is dead)	“No” by default, (Grayed out if mortality is traditional)		No					Yes
Death of opposing Pokémons	No		Yes					
Old school poison	Nullified (Forced)	No (Gen 4 mode)		Yes (Gen 3 mode)				
Assist Mode	Enabled	Disabled						

List of options

Trainers' level

Changes the level and power of the Trainers' teams. Equivalent to the Assist or Challenge Mode from Black 2 and White 2.

Low:

The level of the trainer's Pokémon is 10% lower, rounded down (floor).

Their EVs are divided by 2.

Some trainers see their creatures being of a lower evolved form if the level drop causes such a Pokémon to become hacked. (For example, a level 35 Venusaur would drop to level 31 with this setting and thus regress to Ivysaur).

Normal:

No change, this is the vanilla mode of Sacred Phoenix.

High:

The level of the trainers' Pokémon is 10% higher, rounded up (ceiling).

Their EVs are up to 50% higher (within the limits of their legality).

Pokémon will have a higher evolved form if their level increase allows them to evolve. Some trainers will have an extra Pokémon, especially the first Augurs. There may also be new items equipped.

To note:

– Remember that [the soft level cap](#) amplifies the influence of this parameter. As the experience tiers are identical, getting to their level will be indirectly facilitated or slowed down depending on the option chosen.

– This setting has no impact on battles that enforce a level (such as those in the Battle Tower).

Mortality of your Pokémon

Determines if your Pokémon can't die like in a traditional game, die from a hit that is too powerful (Realistic), or if a faint means death (Nuzlocke).

Traditional:

The player's Pokémon literally become immortal: any excessive damage is cancelled, so that a KO will always stop at 0 HP. This is how official games work.

Since HP cannot be negative, the loss of friendship is always at the lowest level (-20 / 1023).

The Assist Mode divides the friendship penalty by 4 (-5 instead of -20).

Realistic:

Originality of Sacred Phoenix, the death of a Pokémon is determined by an overkill system and the presence of a negative HP bar.

– If the fatal blow lowers the HP between 0 and -75%, it is a classical faint.

– If the fatal blow lowers HP to between -75% and -99%, it is a faint on the verge of death. It is more difficult to revive a deeply knocked out Pokémon.

- If the fatal blow completely fills the negative bar (-100%), it is an overkill and the Pokémon dies.

The loss of friendship for the victim is proportional to the negative HP rate. It varies from -20 (slight fainting) to -120 if the Pokémon is almost died. A death reduces the friendship gauge by a quarter (-250).

Nuzlocke:

Any knockout of a player's Pokémon will be immediately converted to death. The creature will then be unusable and cannot be healed.

To note:

- The Assist Mode forces the setting to “Traditional”.
- Sacred Phoenix has a reincarnation mechanism: 3 days after their death, most magical creatures have a chance to be reborn as a Ghost Pokémon.
- There are also rare methods of resurrecting provided you act quickly enough after death. Some Legendaries have this power.
- Reincarnation and resurrection by these means are considered legitimate, even in Nuzlocke (this is a reality in Pokémon Lore), but the player is free to not use these features.

Area Clause

Only the first Pokémon in each area can be captured (Nuzlocke Challenge).

Enabled:

Prohibits the capture of more than one Pokémon per area. The zone is locked once the first encounter is over, regardless of whether it ended in escape, defeat, victory, or a catch.

Note that there are 3 exceptions:

- Shiny Pokémons if the Shiny Clause is activated.
- Pokémons that have already been captured if the Duplicate Clause is activated. Unless the battle results in its capture, its encounter will not lock the area.
- All Legendary Pokémons due to a Legendary Clause imposed by the scenario. However, the player will have no obligation to capture them in order to advance in the story.

At the moment, eggs and given Pokémons are not supported, but this could be in a future update or match to the “Strict” setting of this option.

Disabled:

No restrictions added, this is the vanilla mode.

Shiny Clause

Allows you to capture a shiny wild Pokémon without restriction if the Area Clause is enabled.

Enabled:

Allows you to capture a Shiny Pokémon without restriction, even if the area is already locked.

Disabled:

The exception is not applied.

To note:

- This setting has no effect if the Area Clause is not enabled.

Dupes Clause

If the Area Clause is enabled and the area encounter is an already captured Pokémon, you can defeat or flee the creature without losing the area.

Enabled:

Allows the Pokémon you encounter not to be counted as an “area’s Pokémon” if it is already registered in the Pokégrimoire. It can therefore be defeated, run away or defeat you without locking the zone, which will leave you the possibility to capture another one.

If the area is already locked, this clause does not allow the capture of such a Pokémon.

Disabled:

The exception is not applied. If the first encounter is a Pokémon already in the Pokégrimoire, it will remain the only catchable Pokémon in that area.

Strict (planned):

Prohibits the capture of a Pokémon that is already registered in the Pokégrimoire, but does not lock the zone if this is the case. The only area’s Pokémon will therefore be the first encounter that is not of a species already captured.

To note:

- This setting has no effect if the Area Clause is not enabled.
- Giratina’s Hell preset will allow you to shift freely between “Disabled” and “Strict” modes. (“Disabled” is the default setting in this preset.)

Kelt Honor Clause

Even though the law of Keltios allows you to forfeit to a friendly trainer, you have taken an oath to always fight to the end.

Enabled:

No trainer’s battle can be forfeited. This is the vanilla operation of the official games.

Disabled:

Most trainer’s battles can be declined via the “Forfeit” command. Only the honor and death matches will not allow forfeiting.

To note:

- Escape from wild Pokémon is not impacted. The reason is that it would bring more annoyance than challenge, especially in case of aggro by low-level creatures.
- Special battles (PvP and Battle Tower) are not impacted and will still allow forfeit.

Item Clause

Prohibits the use of the Bag and Battle O-Powers in Trainer Battles.

Enabled:

Access to the bag will be blocked during trainer's battles and the use of Battle O-Powers will be prohibited. There are no restrictions on wild battles.

Disabled:

No additional restrictions on the use of bag and spells in combat. However, only items that can be consumed automatically (i.e., battle herbs and Berries), the Spellbook and the Time Flute will be usable; because revives, crafted potions and medicinal herbs don't have time to take effect in the heat of the moment. This is the vanilla behavior of Sacred Phoenix.

Unbridled (not proposed, replaces the “Disabled” mode if there is the Assist Mode):

All healing items can be used in combat, even those that theoretically do not have time to take effect in the heat of battle.

To note:

- Battles that explicitly prohibit the use of spells and items have priority over this setting.

Black Out Clause

Causes a Game Over if your entire party is dead after a battle, even if there are still live Pokémon in reserve (mortality in Realistic or Nuzlocke required).

Enabled:

If, as a result of a defeat (or the effect of the poison in the map), the hero's entire party has the status “dead”, a Game Over followed by a return to the title screen will be the immediate consequence.

Note that an Egg is considered a dead Pokémon.

This option takes on its full meaning for those who consider that a defeat as a failure of the Nuzlocke, but a Game Over remains possible in realistic mode if the player saw his team being literally wiped out and no one has survived.

Disabled:

If the whole team is dead, the player will be able to continue his adventure if there are still survivors in his storage. Otherwise, it will remain a Game Over.

To note:

- This option will have no impact if mortality is set to “Traditional” because none of the player's Pokémon can die.
- The Game Over does not delete the save. This choice is left to the discretion of the player.

Death of opposing Pokémon

Opposing Pokémon succumb if they are overkilled. Activation recommended to keep the full potential of the gameplay.

Enabled:

Equivalent to “Realistic” mortality for opponents. A too powerful blow (Overkill) will therefore kill them and quadruple the experience gains, but at the cost of a friendship penalty (and a reputation penalty if it was the Pokémon of a friendly Trainer).

Activating this option also allows opponents to be “knocked out to the verge of death” and double experience gains without any malus.

Disabled:

Equivalent to “Traditional” mortality for opponents. There is no longer any risk of accidentally killing another Trainer’s Pokémon, but doing so deactivates any experience bonuses.

To note:

- The Assist Mode forces the setting to “Disabled”.
- Remember that a Pokémon that likes you will moderate excessive damage on its own. This will limit the number of accidental deaths.

Old-School poison

If a poisoned Pokémon drops to 0 HP out of combat, it will faint (or die if Nuzlocke) instead of being healed at 1 HP.

Enabled:

Poison works the same way as in the first three generations and causes the Pokémon to lose HP in the map. If the Pokémon has no HP left when the poison takes effect, it is knocked out (or dies if mortality is set to “Nuzlocke”).

Disabled:

Poison in map works like in fourth generation: if the Pokémon falls to 1 HP when the poison takes effect, it is cured of the poison and remains at 1 HP.

Nullified (not proposed, forced if there is the Assist Mode):

Poison does not cause you to lose any HP in the map as it has since the fifth generation.

To note:

- Bad Poison (TOX) removes 2 HP instead of 1 when the poison takes effect.
- HP loss occurs every 4 steps for the Walking Pokémon, but the frequency drops to every 32 steps if the Pokémon is in its Pokéball. Recalling it is a good way to limit its suffering.

Assist Mode

Disables many features and enables an Omni-Exp to make Sacred Phoenix as easy as the official games.

Enabled:

- HP can no longer be negative. As a result, no Pokémon can die.
- Runaway and Rebellion disobediences are disabled and will instead result in a nap or madness damage.

- Game Over is disabled. Losing to a trainer who is hostile to you will bring you back to a safe place instead of sending you back to the title screen.
- If one of your Pokémon is knocked out, the loss of friendship will be negligible like in the official games (-5 points on a scale of 1024).
- If the Battle style is set to “Switch”, the player will always be able to switch Pokémon after defeating an opponent’s Pokémon (except in battles that explicitly forbid it).
- The old-school poison is completely disabled. No more HP will be lost in the map.
- It will be possible to use all healing items in battle, including Revives. However, this will not override the blockage caused by a browbeaten or a sated Pokémon, nor the ban on items imposed during an official match.
- An Omni-Exp (modern Exp Share) is forcibly activated as is the case since the official games on Nintendo Switch. This amounts to multiplying experience gains by a factor of 4 with a full party.

Disabled:

No changes are applied, this is the vanilla mode of Sacred Phoenix.

Bonus - Battle style

During training fights or if the Assist Mode is enabled, you can choose whether to be asked about switching Pokémon when an opposing Pokémon faints.

Activated by default, this option is not part of the presets because its impact is negligible. Indeed, only 5% of the battles in Sacred Phoenix are influenced by this parameter. This corresponds to friendly training battles or battles against certain hordes of wild Pokémon.

Another small fraction forces this choice (Arena battle) and will therefore ignore the selected option.

Finally, there are the vast majority of battles which, for reasons of fairness, do not allow the hero this privilege.

Nevertheless, the Assist Mode allows to override the blocking in the last case. If the player has selected the “Switch” mode, the switch proposal will always be made, except if rules strictly forbid it (Battle Tower, PvP and some official matches).

To note:

- In case of multi battle, this question is never asked. (This is also the case in official games).

List of difficulty presets

Assist Mode

All difficulty settings at a minimum for a smooth progression like an official game. Disables all Game Over possibilities and enables a modern Omni-Exp.

Activating this mode drastically reduces the difficulty of the game. It becomes impossible to lose the game and any defeat will transport the hero to safety with almost no penalty. (There is no loss of money for Black out in Sacred Phoenix).

Use it wisely, because it means depriving yourself of a significant number of unique features. Nevertheless, such an option is ideal for those who want to speed-run the game or who find their pleasure in a serene and unobstructed progression. The modern Omni-Exp included in this mode will make any training unnecessary.

The Assist Mode can also be used to get out of a tricky situation (e.g., having saved in front of a hostile trainer that you can't beat while being unable to leave the area to change or upgrade your party).

Pacifist

In addition to the Easy mode features, battles are peaceful and no Pokémon can die. So, there is no risk of losing your creatures.

This is the peaceful mode of Sacred Phoenix: no blood will be shed. This allows you to progress serenely in the adventure without putting the lives of your magical creatures at risk.

Compared to the Assist Mode, this preset preserves some of Sacred Phoenix's unique features, such as light friendship management or the risk of a Game Over when facing a hostile opponent. This setting coincides with low level trainers for a smooth progression, but it is quite possible to customize the preset to raise their level.

Easy

Reduces the power and level of the trainer's Pokémons. Poison can no longer knock out in map (Gen 4 mode). This is the equivalent of the Assist Mode of Black 2 and White 2.

The difficulty is adjusted downwards by lowering the level of all trainers. This mode preserves almost all the original features of Sacred Phoenix, except for the old-school poison which goes from Gen 3 to Gen 4 mode (fainting is converted into a 1 HP survival with poison curing). Even though trainers are weakened, Realistic mortality brings its share of adrenaline: making a big tactical mistake can result in the loss of one of your creatures.

The soft level cap will help the player in gaining experience, as the underlevel and overlevel tiers remain the same for lower-level trainers.

Normal

The recommended game experience with all features of Sacred Phoenix enabled. The game has been balanced in this mode.

It is in this preset that Sacred Phoenix has been balanced. All the settings are the default ones. In this mode, the difficulty is intended to be in the average of the fangames.

It allows a subtle balance in the death of Pokémon thanks to the Realistic mode: the risk of a fatal outcome is real but remains rare thanks to the margin granted by the negative HP bar. It rewards investment in its Pokémons (friendship and EV gain) and will give a significant pride to the player who will have mastered these original mechanics.

Hard

Same as Normal, but Trainers have better teams and higher levels. This is the equivalent of the Challenge Mode in Black 2 and White 2.

For players who find Normal mode too easy, but don't want the peak difficulty a Nuzlocke brings. Keeping all the spice of realistic mortality (i.e., the risk of death, but with its "safety cushion"), the increased level of the opponents will require strategic play. Training will have to be more regular because the soft level cap will be slightly lower than the level of Augurs and other Bosses that will oppose you.

Semi-Nuzlocke

Trainers are normal level, but any fainting to your creatures results in their immediate death. Ideal for a Nuzlocke with special rules or a little less advanced.

First really hardcore option, any KO will result in the immediate loss of your Pokémon. However, the single capture per area rule is not imposed and allows you to reform a team. The biggest challenge will be to limit losses, as any death will be punitive and will most likely require the training of a new creature.

This preset is perfectly suited for special Nuzlockes such as Wedlockes or Monolockes that require special capture rules. (For example, only capturing a Pokémon of a certain gender or type, distinctions that the Sacred Phoenix Area Clause cannot make.)

Considering immediate death as a considerable increase in difficulty, trainers will be by default at normal level with this preset. (It is of course possible to customize it with a high-level trainer setting).

Nuzlocke

Applies the rules of the Nuzlocke Challenge: fainting results in death and only one capturable Pokémon per area. Trainers are of normal level to take into account the famous difficulty of this challenge.

This is the preset to activate for those who want to take on the famous Nuzlocke Challenge! Needless to say, this is a hardcore game mode. With a limit of one capturable Pokémon per area and immediate death if KO'd, this is an adventure that has a 50/50 chance of ending in an inexorable Game Over. (That's the average success rate of Nuzlockes.)

By default, the Shiny Clause and the Dupes Clause are enabled, as they are optional rules often applied by Nuzlockers.

Considering immediate death as a considerable increase in difficulty, trainers will be by default at normal level with this preset. (It is of course possible to customize it with a high-level trainer setting).

Giratina's Hell

Difficulty settings all pushed to the maximum for a truly hardcore gaming experience. Welcome to Distortion World!

This preset is designed to offer you a legendary difficulty worthy of a Dark Souls or a Pokémon Dark Rising. In addition to the constraints of the Nuzlocke Challenge, the opposing trainers will show you no mercy, any defeat will be immediately sanctioned by a Game Over (Black Out Clause) and items will be forbidden in trainer combat. Also, don't expect to find a shiny or use a Dupes Clause to scavenge additional area's Pokémon.

Another hidden effect of this setting is that the reincarnation mechanism and the resurrect methods will be disabled. (Switching to a lower preset will unlock these features).

For those who are looking to take on the most daunting of challenges (and I know there are such things).

Changing the difficulty during the game

The difficulty can be modified at any time as soon as a game is in progress and the options menu is accessible. These settings are linked to a save game and are therefore independent for each game.

As long as Chapter 1 has not been initiated, the difficulty settings will be temporarily ignored for story reasons. On the other hand, it will be possible to freely change the difficulty mode without penalty.

Once the Prologue is over, the game will save your lowest difficulty level. Activating the Nuzlocke after that point will cause it to no longer be considered valid, even though the new setting will immediately take effect on future gameplay.

The lowest level will be determined by the highest preset where none of your custom settings are lower than the preset. (For example, playing with the trainer level "Low" will cause the game to consider you in "Easy" mode, even if you have Nuzlocke mortality enabled).

If a change in settings results in a decrease to the lowest difficulty level in the history of your game, the game will ask you for confirmation.

Selection of a preset via the slider

The setting of the presets will be in the form of a slider with 15 notches.

- 8 main notches for each preset: only these notches can be selected via the slider.
- 7 "intermediate" notches if the player ever changes individual parameters. The notch will then be calculated on the first preset which will meet all the difficulty criteria (excluding Battle Mode and the grayed-out options which have no impact); and the term "(custom)" will be added to the name of the preset.

=> For example, the displayed mention will be "**Normal (custom)**" for settings that are all equal to or better than the Normal preset, but at least one of which does not meet the requirements of the higher preset.

- If the individual settings correspond exactly to those of a preset, the slider will be placed exactly on this preset and will not display the mention "(custom)".
- Going back to the preset slider and moving it will reset all settings to the preset in question.

Influence on the IU (planned)

Some indicators visible on the interface give a fairly accurate indication of the difficulty mode used.

Flag visible on the save load and in battle

- If you are playing **Assist Mode**, an **Ancient Ponyta horn** icon will appear on the save menu and on the battle screen. Deactivating this mode will remove the icon.
- If you are playing in **Giratina's Hell** preset and have never disabled it, a **Giratina head** icon will appear on the save menu as well as on the battle screen.
- If your lowest preset is **Nuzlocke mode** and you have never deactivated it, a **Yveltal head** icon will appear on the save menu as well as on the battle screen.

Indicator on the battle screen

Player side:

- In **Traditional mortality** mode, the names of your Pokémon will appear in **light bronze** on the battle screen.
- In **Realistic** mode, the name of your Pokémon will appear in **light silver** on the battle screen.
- In **Nuzlocke mortality** mode, the names of your Pokémon will appear in **light gold** on the battle screen.

Opposing side

- If the trainers' level is set to **low**, the names of their Pokémon will appear in **light bronze** on the battle screen.
- If the trainers' level is set to **normal**, the names of their Pokémon will appear in **light silver** on the battle screen.
- If the trainers' level is set to **high**, the names of their Pokémon will appear in **light gold** on the battle screen.