**Kung Lao Basics**

All universal buttons apply, down 2 is medium range as an outstretched hat is used rather than just a fist. Most of Kung Lao’s buttons are shorter range than other characters; however, his moveset allows for constant pressure and safe ways to close distance, as well as some strings designed to whiff punish. Kung Lao’s back throw will trigger a Krushing blow if your opponent failed to escape the previous throw

Down 1 is a 7 frame startup that is +11 on hit

**Variations**

Casual 1 (Leading Edge) - Z hat, Vortex

Casual 2 (First Cut) - Spiritual GUidance, Air teleport

Competitive 1 (Lotus Fist) - Orbiting Hat, Omega Hat

Competitive 2 (Hat Tricks) - Z hat, Air Teleport, Guided Hat

Competitive 3 (Order of Light) - Spiritual Guidance, Vortex

**Strings**

**1 2** - 8 frame start up high attack, second hit is -5 on block, can be special cancelled or extended with 2 or 1 (both hit mid). Note that ending with 1 will still stop at 1 2 on block, it has a built in option select to keep you safe; if you hit, this string ends with you swapping sides with your opponent.

Ending with 2 will knock your opponent back and down, but is -20 on block with no opportunity to special cancel.

**Forward 1** - 10 frame startup advancing mid, -5 on block, can be extended with 2 or 3 (both mid hits) or special cancelled. If extended with 2, it will knock down and back on hit and is -19 on block.

Extending with 3 allows for a further extension with up 2 or a special cancel, and is -19 on block.

The full string ending with up 2 ends with a final high hit, is +12 on hit and -6 on block with no potential for special cancel, and causes a knock down with significant knockback (further than round start distance).

**2 1** - 8 frame startup high, second hit is also high, -3 on block with the potential to special cancel or extend with a further 2 1 2 or a 4.

The 2 1 2 extension includes a series of mid hits, is +14 on hit with the potential to special cancel, and remains +1 on block.

This extended string can also be finished with a final 4, that is -7 on block and knocks down and back. Note that this string alone does 209.6 damage; jailing into it allows for a very strong pressure sequence that is low execution and does relatively high damage on hit.

The initial 2 1 string can also immediately be finished with 4, which is -2 on hit, cannot be special cancelled, and causes the same knock down/back as the extended version of the string ending in 4.

**Forward 2 1** - 15 frame startup mid, second hit is -13 on block and can be special cancelled or extended with a further 4.

Extending with 4 provides a knock down and back that is -13 on block. If the string is a punish or counter, the final hit will connect as a Krushing blow. This krushing blow involves the enemy suspended in mid air for a short period of time, floating on a spinning razor hat that is continuing to tear at their torso, and can be extended out of similar to a spin.

Note that this string is generally not a great pressure tool on its own (use forward 1 2 if you’re looking for a mid pressure string), but is your go-to whiff punish for high damage thanks to the krushing blow and the advancing nature of forward 2.

**3 4** - 12 frame startup high, second hit is a low that is -4 on block and causes a knockdown. No special cancel is possible.

**Back 3 2** - 16 frame startup low, second button is actually two separate hits, both mids, and is plus 6 on hit, - 7 on block, and can be special cancelled or extended with 1.

The extended string hits with a final low, is 4 on hit, -4 on block, and causes a short knockdown with no ability to special cancel.

**Special Attacks**

**Spin** - down forward 1. 12 frame startup that hits mid and causes a brief juggle state on hit, but is -21 on block. Can be amplified for an extended juggle state, but is -24 on block after amplification. Key tool for combo extension.

**Vortex** (Variation specific, replaces spin. Casual 1, competitive 3) - down forward 1. 23 frame startup mid projectile that is active for 10 frames, -21 on hit, and puts your opponent in a mid-air juggle state for combo extension. Longer startup than Spin, but has slightly longer range unamplified. Can be amplified so that the move travels forward slightly after activation and provides additional juggle frames. Holding amplification will delay the start up of the move until you release, and extend distance travelled.

**Orbiting Hat** (Variation specific, competitive 1) - down back 1. Costs one bar of each meter, causes a hat to orbit Kung Lao, dealing damage to any opponent who gets too close. Can be amplified in Competitive 1 thanks to Omega Hat, providing a second orbiting hat for a second hit. Lasts 5 seconds from the start per hat (each hat lasts 5 seconds, the second stays a tiny bit longer because it is summoned after the first). Can be used to force your opponent to block on wakeup by summoning the hat and standing nearby. Note that when your opponent is hit, you can combo out of the hat strike with standard Kung Lao close range strings; your opponent is left in a forced stand, with no juggle state present.

**Hat Toss** (If Guided hat is present, travel can be modified in the air. Specific to Competitive variation 2) - back forward 2. 18 frame startup high projectile. Plus 7 on hit, -14 on block. If you hold down with guided hat present, the projectile will hit as a mid rather than a high from midscreen (needs time to curve down). If you hold up with guided hat present, the projectile will curve up and antiair opponents jumping far away. Note that neither of these properties is present at point blank; they both require travel distance on the stage before the projectile is modified.

**Z hat** (variation specific. Casual 1, competitive 2) - down back 2. 38 frame startup projectile that hits your opponent three times in the shape of a Z. +33 on hit, -8 on block. Can be amplified to get out of the recovery animation sooner, allowing for combo extension from a juggled state in the corner. Double tapping down will cancel the move, allowing for effective mixup pressure at close range with a throw. This projectile is fantastic to use when your opponent is waking up to maintain pressure.

**Teleport** (ability to do this from the air is variation specific: Casual 2)- down up. 1 frame startup, can be amplified for a faster teleport or hold down amplify to delay reappearance. Always teleports next to the opponent. Follow up with 1 for a high hit after teleport that starts up in 10 frames, is +11 on hit, and + 2 on block, but will whiff on ducking opponents. Follow up with 2 for an overhead hit that knocks down and is -5 on block. Follow up with 3 for an airborne throw that hits blocking opponents. Follow up with 4 for a spinning mid projectile, where Kung Lao rotates his whole body and moves horizontally through the opponent, hands outstretched over his head in fists. This is -4 on block, causes a knockdown, and will cause a krushing blow for massive damage but no combo potential if the opponent was just hit with teleport followed by 3.

**Shaolin Drop** - Down 4 when in the air. An angled divekick that is +13 on hit, -32 on block, and hits mid. Useful as a cancel out of a normal hit in the air, and can be amplified for additional damage, and will trigger a krushing blow if your opponent was hit by Shaolin Drop (amplified or regular) immediately before being hit with the amplified version.

**Spiritual Guidance** (Variation specific, Casual 2, competitive 3) - down back 4. A stance with multiple followup attacks, start up is 1 frame. Follow with 1 for a high hitting series of energy bursts that travel across the screen, and are -8 on block. Triggers a krushing blow with massive damage if only the final hit connects. This will knock the opponent back toward you on the krushing blow, for additional combo potential. Follow with 2 for a high hit that knocks your opponent up into the air in a juggle state; very good for easy combo extension in the corner, also provides some followup potential midscreen but may require movement forward (naturally combos with back forward 2). Follow with 3 for a series of low hits that cause a knockdown, and is -18 on hit. Can be directed with directional buttons for close, far, and very far (use up) hits. Follow with 4 to cancel the stance for 1 defensive meter. Note that stance cancel can be used to make some strings that are normally unsafe on block safe, for instance back 2 1.

**Combo Examples**

Many of Kung Lao’s combo routes rely on Spin or Vortex (down forward 1) as juggle-inducing extensions from a special cancel. If Vortex is present, combos with down forward 1 may do slightly more damage than indicated. Spiritual guidance (down back 4), followed by 2 can also serve a similar purpose if included in the variation you’re using. Note that jump 3 cancel into down 4 is generally the highest damage ender after a vortex, but other routes will push your opponent further to the corner and provide more frame advantage to set up z hat or orbiting hat on knockdown.

Because of the high damage and pressure of Lao’s combos, he is intentionally designed not to have many overhead vs low mixups in his combos. Most of these hits are not special cancellable, leaving you to rely on a throw vs strike game to open up your opponent. Take advantage of hit confirmable strings like 2 1 2 1 2 and even forward 4 to mix up your offense between pressure, grabs, and confirm combos for easy damage.

1 2 cancelled into down forward 1, forward 4 cancelled into back forward 2. 212 damage, good basic punish for unsafe moves on block as it has an 8 frame starter.

2 1 2 1 2, cancelled into down forward 1, forward 2 1 cancelled into down forward 1. 257.81, low execution B&B. Note that the cancel window for 2 1 2 1 2 is easiest to hit if you listen for the string of punches after the two metallic sounds of the hat hit in the regular 2 1 string. The final down forward 1 can be amplified for further combo extension due to the extended juggle state. If your variation includes Vortex, the second down forward 1 cancel won’t connect, use back forward 2 instead.

2 1 2 1 2, cancelled into down forward 1, forward 2 1, cancelled into amplified down forward 1, 2 1 2 1 2 - 315.4 damage Example extension of the previous combo.

2 1 2 1 2, cancelled into down forward 1, jump forward 3 cancelled into down 4. 269 damage, works midscreen. Timing on the jump forward is a little tight, but more damage than the grounded meterless extension.

2 1 2 1 2, cancelled into down forward 1, forward 4 cancelled into down forward 1, forward 1 2. 305.85 damage, meterless. Very tight link on the second down forward 1 cancel into forward 1 2.

Forward 4 cancelled into down forward 1, forward 4 cancelled into back forward 2. 278 damage, safe advancing mid starter that can be confirmed on hit, no meter needed.

Forward 4 cancelled into down forward 1, forward 4 cancelled into into down forward 1 amplified, jump forward 3 down 4. 332 damage, works midscreen. Safe advancing mid starter that can be confirmed on hit, final hit can be amplified for additional damage.

Corner starter only:

Back 3 2 cancelled into down forward 1 starter works here, whiffs midscreen due to push back. Standard midscreen extensions can be used, make sure your opponent falls far when using down forward 1 amplified as you may side switch if it hits near the top of the hitbox. Note that this starter gives you a low strike mixup option in the corner.