Spotting

Spotting (padding in some English speaking countries) refers to physically assisting the performer during the execution of a skill. The assistance may be affected throughout the entire skill or at a critical time during the skill... Capable and confident body management by the gymnast must be the first priority.

(From Introductory Gymnastics, p 469.)

Spotting can be:

- hand spotting, where the coach has contact with the athlete to assist
Spotting is an important skill that is acquired and perfected over time and becomes an important skill for the Advanced Coach to have.

**Hand spotting**

List 3 reasons you undertake hand spotting:

1. Type your text here
2. Type your text here
3. Type your text here

Now [click here](#) to read the reasons for hand spotting.
Hand spotting can be used as:

- a teaching aid
- a performance aid
- athlete safety aid
- or for those ‘misses’ where the coach needs to ‘rescue spot’.

When to use spotting

It is an important tool for the Advanced Coach to develop, but it is not the only way to teach skills.

The coach should provide spotting to:

- allow the athlete to ‘feel’ the shape of position. This could be part or whole of the skill.
- teach the timing of a skill to an athlete
- allow the athlete to ‘feel’ the entire skill at correct speed
- allow the athlete to focus or isolate on a segment of a skill
- to provide confidence via minor assistance to the athlete.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Do's and don’ts of spotting

The Advanced Coach must ensure they adhere to the following dos and don’ts when spotting.

Do's of spotting

- Provide a clear mental and/or visual picture of the skill for the athlete.
- Ensure clear communication with athlete, making sure both coach and athlete understand the signals and actions.
- Set up the equipment to suit the athlete and their stage of learning, as well as the skill they are learning, e.g. additional overflow matting in the early stages of learning.
- Apply effective points of force application to the athlete depending on what the coach is trying to achieve (where to put hands).
- Apply correct timing of physical contact.
- Apply correct magnitude of the force to the athlete.
- Ensure you have a strong base of support and stability, as well as the ability to move with the athlete if needed.
- Follow through of force applied to the athlete.
- Maintain spotting for desired time and effect.
- Ensure physical preparation is adequate for the skill learning phase.
- Use lead-up activities to assist in preparation for spotting.

Don’ts of spotting

...
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Do's and don’ts of spotting

The Advanced Coach must ensure they adhere to the following dos and don’ts when spotting.

Do's of spotting

Don’ts of spotting

It is critical to ensure that the coach does NOT use spotting:

1. because athlete's physical preparation is inadequate
2. as a substitute for unsafe or unsuitable apparatus
3. to quicken the teaching process (i.e. take short cuts in the learning process)
4. to demonstrate coach prowess. It is not about you - it’s about the athlete!
5. to substitute for the proper sequence of skill progression.
Spotting mechanics

As an Advanced Coach you need to apply your understanding of stability and CoG to spotting mechanics. You will need to link this understanding to the reasons you are spotting or shaping to become effective and delivering this skill to your athletes in the gym.

As a coach you should stop and ask yourself some key questions:
- What is the key component of the skill?
- Is it height, rotation or both?
- Where will I spot? What will I stand on? How am I positioned in relation to the athlete?

For example, in a back hip circle, the hips need to be kept close to the bar during the rotation. The body must remain straight and rotate around the hip and hands placed on the bar.

There are 6 key mechanical principles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanical Principle 1</th>
<th>Understand the skill and specific spotting needs and apply the correct force appropriately. Know where and when to place your hands as well as how much force to exert.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Principle 2</td>
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<tr>
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Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 1

Understand the skill and specific spotting needs and apply the correct force appropriately. Know where and when to place your hands as well as how much force to exert.

Are you trying to correct the body shape or provide rotation to assist the athlete? What do you think the coach is trying to do in the following images? Click on the image to read more.

Compare the two images above and the hand placement.

Can you see the difference in where the left hand is placed? In figure 1 the coach’s hand is closer to the hips, therefore providing a force more upwards. In figure 2 the coach has the left hand further away from the CoG and therefore is able to apply a rotation force to the body.

Spotting must be effective...

1. You’re trying to resist gravity so most spotting is directed to a point underneath the athlete’s body.
2. For most skills, place your hands near the center of gravity (CoG) for greater control.
3. If the skill involves rotation then the coach must ensure the force to initiate rotation is applied away from the CoG to assist with rotation of the athlete.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

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1. Mechanical Principle 1
2. Mechanical Principle 2
3. Mechanical Principle 3
4. Mechanical Principle 4
5. Mechanical Principle 5
6. Mechanical Principle 6

Be in a position to provide spotting assistance appropriately. Stand close to the athlete to enable your point of contact to be effective.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 2

Be in a position to provide spotting assistance appropriately. Stand close to the athlete to enable your point of contact to be effective.

It is important that the coach is in a position to be able to provide assistance with a skill whilst they are in a position of stability themselves. Note the following points in this image of the coach spotting the front layout somersault:

Compare the image on the left with the image to the right. What do you notice about the arms of the coach in each of the images?

Be smart...

1. Spotting involves lifting - spread your feet apart, stabilise your spine and use your legs!
2. Learn to spot on both sides to avoid overuse injuries.
3. Move in close to the athlete to provide effective spotting.

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Have agility to move with the athlete if needed. The coach should stand close and be prepared to move with the athlete if needed.
Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 3

Now look at the sequence of images below of the coach spotting the back layout somersault.

Compare the images and the placement of the hands throughout the movement.

Compare image 4 and 5
- Question: What do you notice about the hand placement in image 5 compared to image 4? Click here
- Question: Why do you think the coach assists the athlete in image 5? Click here

Compare images 3 to 1
- Question: What do you notice about the hands and arms of the coach? Click here
- Question: Why do you think the coach still has a hand placement on the athlete in image 1? Click here

Now compare the two different sequences of skills.
- Question: What do you notice about the travelling required by the coach in each of the skills? What is different? Click here
Spotting mechanics

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Ensure you can control the athlete throughout the skill in the beginning stages of learning. Essentially the coach should spot the ending as well as the beginning of the skill.
Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 4

Now watch the video to see the coach spotting the skill.

Compare the placement of the hands throughout the movement.

Question: Why do you think the coach swaps the hands over from the starting position? Click here

YouTube video link: http://youtu.be/tzO-fAd-PP4
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 4

Let’s look at the hand placement more closely. The images below depict the changes in hand placement for the coach.

It is important that your hand movement is quick...
1. Have your hands in place as or before the athlete initiates the movement.
2. In spotting rotating skills be prepared to adjust your grasp to stop the rotation as well.

It is also important that you are adaptable...
1. Anticipate and readjust to unexpected movements or direction within a skill.

Compare the images and the placement of the hands throughout the movement.

Tip #4
Be adaptable
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Spotting mechanics

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Ensure that when spotting on raised surfaces you are stable and the placement allows for you to perform the spotting task required.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 5

The coach must ensure that when spotting on raised surfaces they are stable and the placement allows for the coach to perform the spotting task required. This is important not just for the safety of the athlete and the ability to spot effectively, but for the personal safety of the coach.

The coach must ensure if they are standing on boxes or platforms they are stable and placed appropriately according to the task of the coach. In the two images below the coaches are both standing on spotting boxes or a platform with the feet apart, close to the width of the surface. In both cases the boxes are stable or fixed and cannot tip over.

Correct placement and stability of the boxes is paramount. Note in image 3 below the coach has placed the box under the bars, he is knee height to the bar and standing inside the bars. If you then look at image 4 you can see why. He is spotting a skill where the athlete moves from one bar to the other. He has raised the box to allow his own centre of gravity to be above the low bar to allow greater control over the athlete.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 5

Compare the images and the placement of the hands throughout the movement.

Image 1

Image 2

Question: If you compare images 1 and 2, the coach is spotting the same skill in both. What do you notice is different? Click here

Why do you think the coach has done this? Click here

Answer:
The coach has moved the box and is standing inside the bar in image 1 and outside the bars in image 2.
Topic 6: Spotting and the Advanced Coach

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Your personal safety is paramount. Obviously if the coach is not in a position of safety then neither is the athlete. Further, the personal health of the coach must be considered at all times when spotting athletes.
Spotting mechanics: Mechanical principle 6

The personal safety of the coach is paramount. Obviously if the coach is not in a position of safety then neither is the athlete. Further, the personal health of the coach must be considered at all times when spotting athletes.

Performing repetitive routine actions when spotting athletes can cause repetitive strain injuries for coaches. Spotting is technically lifting, so the principles of safe lifting apply. Good posture and technique when lifting is important to reduce the risk of injury, but the key factor is effective environmental factors (e.g. the placement, stability and stance of the coach on platforms, boxes etc.).

Coaches may be at risk of musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries). In particular, coaches may be at risk of overuse injuries to the shoulder, back and elbows through the repetitive lifting and spotting of gymnasts.
Work safe for coaches

If an Advanced Coach is in a position of spotting a large number of gymnasts throughout the week they are at risk of repetitive stress related injuries.

Click here to read the following article on Ergonomics for coaches and then list five Worksafe strategies for coaches.

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4. Type your text here

5. Type your text here

Click here to see how you went. Here is an additional resource for you on Manual Handling practices.