

General Spotting Techniques

The following are helpful hints to maximize your effectiveness when spotting a child. They are designed as general spotting techniques to be used in most circumstances, but by no means do they apply in every situation. Properly applying these techniques will increase the safety and comfort of the child and prevent strain or injury to the spotter.

1. It is important to talk the child through the entire trick. Break down the trick in detail, and explain it step by step as the child progresses through the trick.
2. Try always to support or hold the child by his/her center of gravity - the hips.
3. For greater control, you want to keep the child as close to your body as possible. This will also eliminate stress on your back.
4. For many tricks, it is possible to support the weight of the child being spotted on your knee. Find the best angle to do so by placing your elbow on your knee while spotting. This technique will work well when spotting a child who is heavy.
5. When spotting a trick that covers a lot of ground, think ahead to determine where the child is going to need the most help, and position yourself accordingly.
6. Always be ready! When spotting faster moving tricks such as a dive roll or handspring, position yourself in a stance with your arms out and ready with your knees slightly bent to support the weight.
7. Never trust that the child will perform the trick correctly. Even after a detailed explanation or after the child has repeatedly performed the trick correctly, it takes only one slight error for the child to injure him/herself. Always be prepared.
8. Helping the child too much (over spotting) can hinder learning. Always spot just enough for the child to be safe but still get the feel and the motions of the trick. This will also demonstrate to the parent the progress the child has made.
9. When a trick is performed incorrectly, either because of improper spotting or the level of difficulty of the trick, be sure to spend the extra 20 seconds to have the child perform the trick again.
10. Large, heavy or overweight children should be handled very carefully and sensitively. In general, overweight children should be enrolled in the Ninja Training or Cardio Kids program, which does not have gymnastics. If this is not possible, follow these recommended guidelines.
 - i. If the child can't support his/her weight, it is in the best interests of the child, and you, not to "muscle through it" and make the child perform the skill. Instead, have the child perform an activity that is incorporated into the skill (ex: pull-up, push up, etc).
 - ii. If possible, 2 teachers may double spot the child.

In addition to practice, the best path to becoming a great spotter is to enroll in an adult gymnastics program, yourself. You will find a new appreciation for the sport and gain tons of confidence spotting and performing the tricks. You will also get a great workout. Programs are available through private gymnasiums and often through your local community colleges.