

The Importance of Spotting

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Some of the activities presented in this book require the participants to lift each other off the ground. This can be dangerous for both the lifter and the person being lifted. For this reason, you as the leader must be able to convey the importance of proper spotting.

Spotting is the art of protecting a team member's head and upper body from the impact of a fall. Spotting does not mean that you catch a person when he falls. It merely means that you create a cushion, effectively slowing down their fall.

Effective spotting requires that all participants pay close attention to what's going on. If the group or any member of the group is not ready to participate in an activity that requires spotting, choose another activity that doesn't require spotting.

Depending on your group, it may take months to work up to an activity that requires spotting. To be effective spotters, participants must have a high degree of trust. If participants have been into horseplay or are using language (or other forms of communication) that takes away from the feeling of trust, then you must reconsider any activity that involves spotting.

Spotting is a difficult task to teach as the potential spotter usually doesn't recognize his importance until he actually has to support a falling body.

Pointers for Teaching Spotting

- Explain the concept and meaning of spotting.
- Practice spotting with participants before they actually need to use the skill in an activity.
- Promote the attitude that teasing/joking about not catching someone has no place in your program.
- The activities in this book require a minimum number of 2 spotters and depending on the skill and ability level of your particular group, more spotters may be necessary.
- Supervise spotters closely.
- The leader must model spotting.
- A good spotter shares the responsibility of spotting equally. It is easier and safer to work as a team when spotting.
- Spotters should stand in a balanced position, holding hands up in a "ready position," or as some say "bumpers up". Spotters should focus on the participant.
- Spotters should cushion a fall, not catch and hold, and should move with the direction of force.

Spotting Safety Guidelines

- Make sure all participants understand the importance of proper spotting prior to starting any activity.
- The activity leader must have a clear understanding of the physical and emotional abilities and limitations of each member of the group prior to starting. This information should be used to determine the appropriateness of a particular activity.
- The leader must participate in spotting - paying close attention to the head, neck and upper back.
- When lifting one of the participants is essential to successfully solve a challenge, the leader must effectively teach participants how to safely lift so that injury is avoided. Remember: lift with your legs, not with your back.

Additional Spotting/Lifting Notes

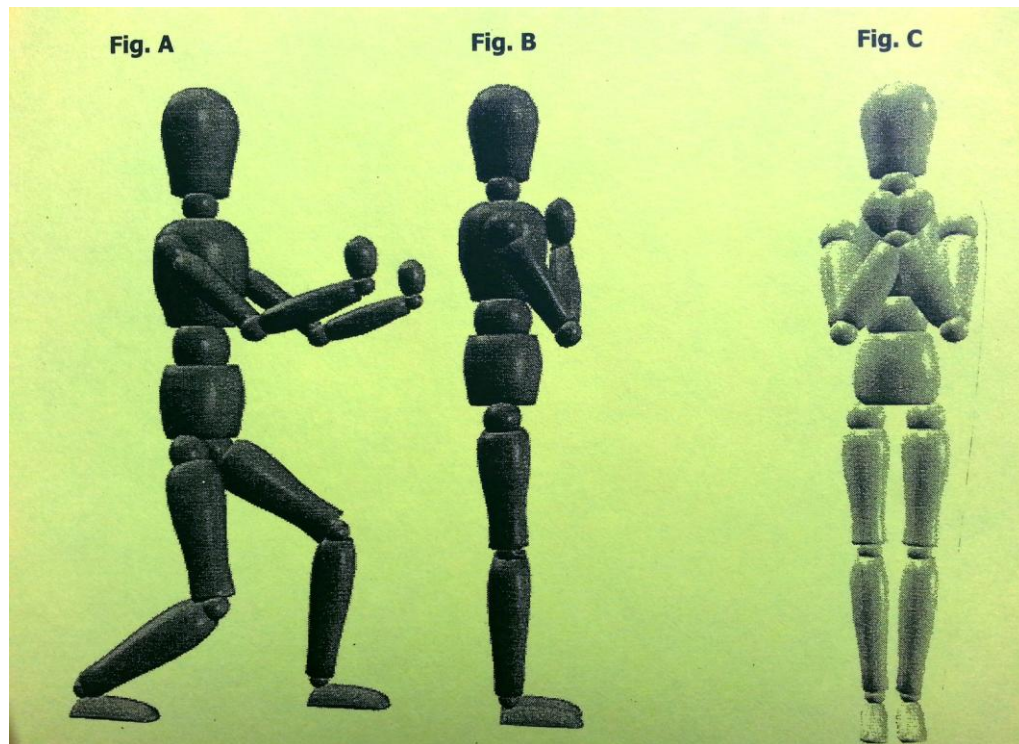
(by Jerry Stemkoski)

Figure A

This figure represents a person's body position when spotting. This position is called the ready position because they are now ready to catch or stabilize someone should they become off balanced. Notice that the feet are spread apart, usually just a little more than shoulder width. One foot is back and one foot is slightly forward. This stance is sometimes called "the athletic stance" because it is used in sports like wrestling and karate. This stance is very stable and allows the spotter to move back and forth and side to side and still maintain a fairly stable position. The upper body is aligned to the person being spotted and the arms are up, the hands are up and the elbows are flexed to absorb the weight of the person as they come onto their hands. The hands are held with the fingers together and the thumb along the index finger. The head is up and the eyes are on the person being spotted. **Key points: *Legs in the athletic stance *Hands up *Head up *Eyes on**

Figures B and C

When a participant is walking from one point to another point as part of a Teams Kit initiative and they are being spotted, they will be in whatever position they happen to be in. When they are doing an initiative like the Spider Web or Porthole, it is easiest and safest if they position themselves similar to the figure in B and C. This position allows the spotters and lifters to more readily catch, move or lift the person. To get in this position, a participant brings their feet together (or just close together if that is more comfortable), crosses their arms in front of their chest, tucks their elbows in and maintains a rigid position from head to foot. They can now be lifted or moved about as easily as they can be.



Different groups will need to be spotted differently depending on their ability to be safe and aware. The rule of thumb on spotting is to have as many people spotting as necessary. If the group has 14 participants and they are doing an activity like the Spider Web, it may only require the need for 5 or 6 of the participants to actually lift a person through one of the openings safely. While that is fine from a safety standpoint, there is still half the group just watching. On the other hand, if everyone is spotting while the others are lifting, everyone can be part of the activity.