



SKILLS AND DRILLS

SPOTTING DRILLS

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[Caution: Cheerleading gymnastics, including stunts, pyramids and tumbling, should only be performed under the supervision of a qualified adult.]

Spotting is one of the most important aspects of cheerleading. The primary function of spotting is to lower the chance of someone getting injured from a fall. Another purpose that spotting serves is to assist someone with the learning process. By trusting that they will be caught, climbers can concentrate on the techniques they need to use to complete the skill. This is the theory, but how do you put it into action when it seems that everyone backs away from someone falling from a stunt?

Spotting drills are the answer. As with any skill, spotting should be learned from the ground up. Someone falling from an extension shouldn't be the first time that a spotter has had the opportunity to practice safe catching techniques!!! **Here's how you do it, coach.**

ASSUME THE POSITION

Start on the ground. Have your squad divide into pairs of similar build. One person will be the spotter, and the other will be spotted (the flyer). As the illustration shows, the person being spotted starts with the arms overhead and the feet together.



The spotter will stand close, bend at the knees, and put her arm that is in front of the flyer around the flyer's mid-section. It is important that the spotters' shoulder is in contact with the body of the flyer. Next, the spotter's head should be behind the back of the flyer. This is to prevent the flyer's elbow from hitting the spotter in the head. Last, the back arm of the spotter wraps around the back of the thighs of the flyer. While there doesn't seem to be much leverage now, this arm will slow the descent when the flyer bends her legs on the landing.

LIFT AND CONTROL

The flyer should remain tight during the remainder of the exercise. The spotter will lift the flyer off of the ground. She does this by squeezing the flyer in to her body and lifting with her legs – not her back. The spotter should be careful not to pull the flyer's legs out from beneath her. That's it! Gently set the flyer down.

Switch roles (the spotter becomes the flyer and vice versa) and repeat!

STEP UP

Take the drill a little higher by using a low stationary object such as a bench, folded mat, or the bottom of the bleachers. Have the flyer start on the step with her arms up. The spotter stands on the ground and get into the lifting position that you just practiced (arm around front, head in back, arm around thighs). As the flyer steps to the ground, she should step quickly to land on the ground with her feet together. The spotter should squeeze the flyer in to her body and control the landing. Again, emphasis should be made on keeping the flyer's feet underneath her. Repeat until this is mastered and switch partners.

STEP UP AGAIN

Move up to a stationary object that is about waist height and practice the drill again. You may want to put a foldout mat on the floor starting at this height. The spotter may not be able to start in the position that she did earlier, but she should continue to stay close and maintain contact with the flyer.

STEP UP AGAIN!

Move to an object that is about shoulder height and repeat. At this height, the spotter will only be able to touch the flyer by placing her back hand on the calf of the flyer. This is one of the 'triggers' that helps create a 'catch' reaction rather than a 'run' reaction. The other triggers are to stay close and to reach up and across the flyer's body with the front arm. As the flyer steps off, the spotter catches in the 'bear hug' grip that you have already mastered.

Tips: Watch the flyers to make sure they are landing properly. Their arms should stay up. They should land on the ball of the foot and bend slightly to absorb the landing. The knee should not bend at more than a ninety degree angle, or they risk serious knee injury.



Practice, practice, practice!!!

*Special thanks to Westfield High School from Houston, Texas.
Go Mustangs!*