

LECTURE 3

Spotting

By Cathal Fanning

- **To be an effective spotter you should...**
- **Other things to consider as a spotter**
- **When should we spot and when shouldn't we?**
- **In summary**

Spotting

In several instances it will be necessary to spot your clients as they lift weights. Indeed, this may be something you do frequently while in one-to-one sessions, depending upon the types of exercises the clients are performing. Spotting involves giving the client hands-on assistance in order to help them avoid injury, progress in the weight they can lift, and remain safe while doing so. A spotter also provides motivation while assisting the client.

As a spotter you should...

- Communicate well with the lifter as they may need your help.
- Know when to help, and how much to help.
- Reinforce technique with 'guidance' of the weights. Make sure the client maintains control unless absolutely necessary.
- Help them get past their normal 'max' in a strength-training environment if safe.

To be an effective spotter you should...

Monitor

Keep an eye on technique throughout the lift so you will have an idea of when the lifter might need you to support them. You will be able to recognise this through signs of fatigue - for example, the speed of the weight slowing significantly. Your primary role is still to support so you will not be able to monitor fully - but it's important to be aware.

Strength

You should be sure that you have the required strength to actually assist the lifter should they require you to step in.

Communicate

You should stay in communication with the lifter throughout and be ready to step in should they need you to.

Technique

You should understand how to spot correctly before helping. Different lifts will require different techniques. For example, a bench press versus a dumbbell bench press.

Intention

It's important to understand before you start how many reps the lifter is aiming to complete. communication is also important here as well should the lifter need help sooner than expected or want to perform more reps than expected.

Other Things to Consider as a Spotter

Space

You could use the mirrors in the gym to assess angles that you may not be able to see. An example of this would be when spotting a squat. You will be behind the client when they need you most, but you could use a mirror to the side of the client, or one in front of them to assess their technique as you go, reaffirming any teaching points you need to.

Core Engagement

Core musculature, as you're aware, holds a primary responsibility when it comes to balance and stability. By ensuring the client is actively making use of their core muscles when lifting heavy weights, you can be more sure of their efforts to maintain a solid foundation from which to lift.

Safety

The safety of the client is always your primary focus. Spotting is far more of a requirement when the client is lifting heavier weights, and as such you should be very attentive to their needs. Keep communication at the centre of your activities, and advise your client on their continued efforts, or when to stop the set, based on your assessment.

Technique

Spotting can also be used when a client is performing an exercise with free weights for the first time. In this instance you are there to guide the movement and make sure the technique is performed correctly. It is not likely that in this instance you will overload the client, but they will need your assistance regardless.

When Should We Spot and When Shouldn't We?

We should for ...

- Bench press.
- Lying tricep extensions.
- Dumbbell shoulder press.
- Front quats.
- Chest flys.

These exercises all carry a risk of injury should failure occur, and all are spotted differently.

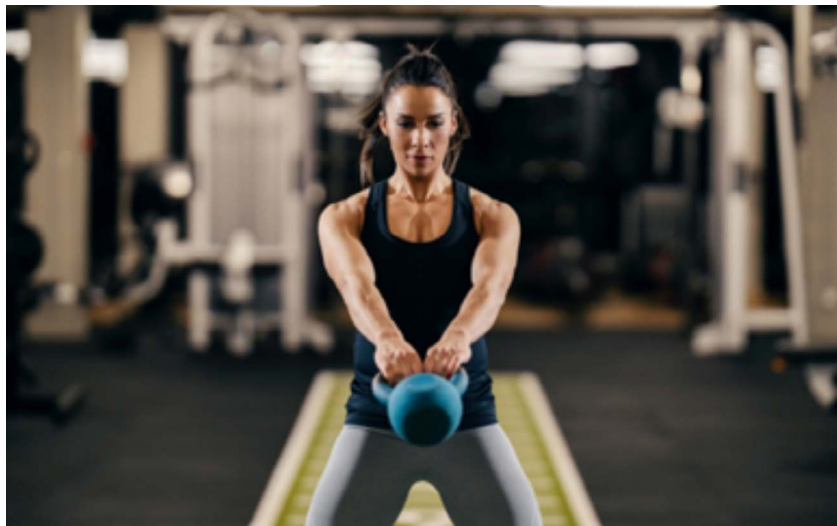


We shouldn't for...

We should avoid spotting power exercises such as:

- Cleans.
- Snatches.
- Jumping exercises.
- Kettlebell power exercises (swings etc).

These exercises are quick and powerful and carry a risk of injury for the trainer as well as the exerciser if they interfere.



In Summary

Specific techniques require your involvement in spotting the client far more than others. Consider forced reps, when the client is being taken beyond their normal concentric ability and the spotter will give more effort on every subsequent rep, or when the client is working on a deliberate, slow eccentric timing. In this instance you may also need to be more involved.

As a general rule, you shouldn't need to interfere much with either the weight or its travel path. You should limit your involvement to just enough so that the bar doesn't stop for too long, and doesn't travel back towards the client. But make sure the client is the one doing the work.

When spotting dumbbells, you should be aware of where you should spot from, and understand there is added complexity with the extra piece of equipment being used. For every exercise a general rule will be to not impede the hands or travel-path of the lifter. Communicate well with them and if you are unsure of anything at all, ask for help.

