

Spotting Tips For Bouldering

While bouldering rocks are relative small and your landings are softened by crash pads, it is usually safer and more fun if you go with other people. Friends can be more than just transport mules for that big pads. A stack of pads will prevent the shock of a hand impact, but a good spotter can optimize safety and promote confidence while you boulder.

Spotting Basics:

The goal of a good spot is not to catch your falling friend – it's to guide the fall and minimize the impact to the boulderer in a safe manner. The best landings are with the person in an upright position. When spotting, focus on the climber's centre of gravity around the hip area. As the falling climber comes into range, place your hands behind his/her hips to guide him/her toward the landing pad. Do not be afraid to grab the hips firmly.

On steeper roofs with high hell hooks, it is often better to catch the climber by the shoulders, causing the feet to swing back and rotate the climber to an upright position.

Now that we've covered the basics, let's go through some of the finer points of spotting.



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1. **Don't be shy.** The key to a good spot is to get involved and be engaged. Don't stand too far back so that your bouldering partner falls right past your outstretched arms. But, also be cautious that you don't become another crash pad. Watch and move with your climber maintaining a safe distance between you.
2. **Move those pads!** Boulder problems rarely go straight up. With the variety of boulders surfaces, direction and ground features, padding situations need to be adjusted often quickly to adapt to the changing fall line of the climber. Move the mats while always watching the climber above you. You don't want him/her falling while you're adjusting the pads.
3. **Know your partners.** Some climbers like verbal encouragement, some like running commentary or problem advice, some prefer silence, and some might like occasional hand on the back for reassurance. Like any relationship, boulderers benefit from serious, open communication. Encourage your partner to tell you what he/she want's to understand his/her expectations.
4. **Diligence.** Ankles can be broken in even the shortest of falls so if your partner is in a risky position, get behind him/her and be prepared. Even during warm-up practice, ask your partner if he/she needs a spot. It is always a good habit to ask.
5. **Look after yourself.** Safety is the top priority in bouldering so make sure you don't get hurt while spotting. Keep your knees and elbows bent to prevent hyber extending them or load shocking them too much. If you are in danger of being knocked over a ledge or down a hill, have someone spot you so that you can continue to spot worry-free. This allows you and your friends to enjoy bouldering in safety.
6. **Respect Mother Nature.** Try to be conscious of the placement of your mats on the natural surroundings to have the least amount of impact.

With these key bouldering tips in mind, it is time to send your problems! Grab your mats and hit those boulders and remember to watch out for your fellow boulderers to keep everyone safe!

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