



Post iCan Bike Spotting Tips

Practice is the most important component following our program. We recommend that you take your rider out the day after the program has ended and practice often, the more the better.

Reminders:

- Helmets are not optional - *always* wear a helmet! Parents are the role model for this rule. If you ride, please remember to wear a helmet
- Flat open parking lots or outdoor running tracks make the best practice areas
- Minimal obstacles and distractions reduce fear, anxiety and potential falls
- Practice 20 minutes or so, don't overdo it
- Make practice fun and celebrate the accomplishments
- Always end practice on a positive note
- Riding, braking and self starting do not need to be textbook, just effective

***When spotting please remember that the overall goal for the rider is independence. Provide only the support needed. Our instructions for spotting are designed to remove every small obstacle to reduce fear, anxiety and frustration for the rider. Breaking down each skill to a simple level while encouraging each success will motivate the rider to continue to give it their all while practicing. As the rider progresses, the spotter should be able to provide less and less assistance until spotting is no longer necessary.

Spotting With A Trainer Handle

Hold the training handle while your rider gets on and off the bike.

While holding the handle, have the rider put both feet on the pedals and look forward (we suggest you give them a target to look at). Use simple, easy instructions and don't ask questions, make statements instead.

Ex. "Feet on the pedals. Eyes forward. Look at the tree.", and while giving a push to start say, "Here we go!"

Before pushing off, make sure the bike is oriented straight up and down, perpendicular to the ground, not leaning to one side or the other. This allows the rider to be in an upright sitting posture and feel safe.

Place one hand lightly holding the end of one of the handle bars and with the other hand hold the back training handle. Holding the front handle bar initially allows the bike and rider to get a straight start instead of going into a spiraling motion.

With an open hand on the trainer handle, use your palm to give a strong push as you increase speed along with the bike and rider. As soon as the bike is moving in a straight direction, let go of the handlebar and then the training handle.

It is imperative to provide a fast enough push allowing the rider to gain momentum and balance on the bike. If the rider does not have enough speed, they will likely fall over to one side.

The most vital and courageous part of spotting, is letting go of the training handle. This allows the rider to wobble and self correct the wobble. Eventually the wobble straightens out and the rider is in complete control.

After you let go, continue to run beside the training handle, just out of the rider's line of vision, always within an arms reach. The goal is for the spotter to be close enough if needed, but not holding the training handle. Never run directly behind the bike while spotting in case your rider stops unexpectedly. We want you to be safe as well as your rider.

You may use your palm to assist or manipulate the handle to help prevent a fall or stop the bike. But remember not to hold on. If you hold on to the handle you are interrupting the rider's balance or you are doing the balancing for the rider.

If the rider begins to lose speed and begins to weave side to side, give an open hand push with the training handle. Your rider will gain speed and the wobble will become smaller, likely straightening out. Momentum is important when learning to ride a bicycle.

If a rider begins to fall, you may grab the handle and/or the rider to stop the bike and have your rider put both feet on the ground as they should do every time they stop. Remind the rider "Feet on the ground."

A fall or a near fall should be dealt with in a positive way, and immediately.

If a rider falls, give a quick check to make sure your rider is not seriously hurt, and get right back on the bike! If a rider walks away from a fall, even to take a quick break, fear and anxiety begins to build and within moments getting back on the bike seems impossible to the rider. Even if a rider has a scraped knee and is crying, just a quick lap before stopping to get a Band-Aid makes getting back on the bike later so much easier. This concept is critical to a rider's continued success while learning to ride.

Spotting Without a Trainer Handle

The same concepts of spotting with a trainer handle applies for spotting with out a trainer handle. If a rider needs assistance starting or stopping, push or pull back on their seat.

While riding, the rider's body can be manipulated to assist the rider. While running beside your rider, you may push or pull against their side to help them remain upright. If the rider needs more speed, you can push on the rider's back.

Braking

At iCan Bike programs we recommend a hand brake over a coaster brake. For most riders, it is easier to differentiate between the two motor skills of feet move forward to make you go and squeezing with the hand makes you stop. This does not mean that riders cannot successfully use a coaster brake.

Hand brakes

Help the rider move forward on the bike then squeeze the hand brake so they feel the bike stop. Explain that when they squeeze the brake the bike will stop and then they need to put both feet on the ground. So, first “squeeze” then “feet on the ground”. Have the rider practice this by pedaling and when you say “stop” or “squeeze”, they squeeze and put both feet on the ground, holding the bike and their body upright.

Coaster Brakes

If your rider’s bike does not have a handbrake, explain that in order to make the bike stop the rider needs to use the pedals. For this approach, finding the right wording to ensure the process makes sense to your rider is an important step for success. Some of the queues we use are “Pedal backwards”, “Kick back.”, and “Push back. Demonstrating what the skill “feels like” is very helpful as well. A physical queue of firmly pushing down on the area just above the knee works well for most individuals.

if the above approach is not working another option is to practice coaster braking by getting off the bike. Stand beside the rider and explain “When we want to go forward we walk forward. When we want to stop we step backward, with one foot hard and quickly. Say “forward” as you walk forward with the rider. Then step back quickly and firmly with one foot while you say “backward”. You can also try “go” while walking forward and “stop” as you step back with one foot. Repeat this a few times until the rider understands then return to the bike to practice. Let the rider get going on the bike as you run along beside them. After they are comfortably pedaling initiate the verbal queue that you have established. Repeat as necessary. If the rider begins to get frustrated, just let them ride for a bit. ***Always end every practice session on a positive note.***

Self-Starting

Self-starting can be a very frustrating skill for many riders to learn. It may take awhile for a rider to accomplish this skill. As with braking, if starting begins to cause frustration, and seems to be discouraging a rider from riding altogether, go back to giving them a push to get started and let them ride and practice stopping. Try self starting later. This will build their confidence back up motivating the rider to continue practicing. When practicing starting make sure you are on an even surface or a very slight decline. Do not try and teach this going uphill.

There are two main types of starting we teach. Both starts will likely be more successful if you are able to get on a bike and show the rider first. Be sure to wear a helmet! The Shine staff will explain to you or your family designee on Friday which method your rider has been practicing and where they are in learning the skill. Unless the rider already knows how to use the power start we typically teach the Frog Start during the iCan Bike program.

Frog Start

The Frog Start is easier for most riders because the position of the pedals does not matter, they have multiple chances to build up speed and their bike starts off straight up and down.

Have the rider sit on the bike with both feet on the ground. Tell them they are going to push off the ground 3 times really hard (like a frog, both feet at the same time) and then put both feet on the pedals and pedal.

It is helpful for you to count their 3 pushes with them and then say pedal. If 3 pushes are not giving the rider enough speed you may make the decision to say push 4 times or 5 times.

Power Start

This start does work better for some riders but for many it is difficult because the pedals have to be in the right position to begin.

Have the rider walk the bike forward until one pedal is pushed slightly beyond its highest point from the ground. A good way to explain this to your rider is to say "make one pedal tall and one pedal small". The rider will put their foot on the tall pedal and the other foot on the ground.

Two things must happen simultaneously. As the rider pushes down hard on the tall pedal they must push off the ground with the other foot and then quickly put that foot on the pedal and begin pedaling.

These starts may be unique to the individual. If your rider is doing a different start, or combining these two starts in some way, support them to help their unique method of self-starting become effective. The only requirement for each skill is that it be effective. The skill need not be perfect, only perfect for your rider. We are all different in our abilities and in our styles. Encourage and celebrate the difference!