

How to Backspot

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Last Updated: January 4, 2021

Backspotters are a crucial part of any cheer stunt! As a backspot, you help the bases lift and support the flyer for standing stunts, from preps to liberties. Backspotters are also the backbone of any stunt that involves a flyer going airborne, like a basket toss. You're there every step of the way to support, launch, and catch your team's flyer.

Method 1

Method 1 of 5: Position Basics



1 Keep your eyes on the flyer at all times. As a backspot, your main concern during every stunt is the safety of the flyer. Stay alert and focused on your flyer's every move and be ready for anything!^[1]

- The flyer needs to trust the backspot completely to pull off stunts without fear, so your role is really important.^[2]



2 Provide stability, lift, and backup support during stunts. Your other main responsibility as a backspot is to provide backup support for every stunt. For standing stunts, the backspot helps the bases lift the flyer and holds the flyer's ankles to keep them steady and balanced.^[3]

- For example, if your team is doing a straight-up extension, support the flyer's ankles firmly.
- Backspots sometimes help the bases throw the flyer for basket tosses.



3 Alert the team if something starts to go wrong during a stunt. Backspotters have the best view, so it's their job to monitor in-progress stunts. If something starts going wrong, alert the bases and get ready to protect your flyer's head and neck at all costs.^[4]

- For example, if the flyer is leaning too far to the left in a liberty, tell the bases so they can balance and steady the flyer.



4 Catch the flyer's head and shoulders if a stunt goes wrong. A backspot's primary responsibility is making sure their flyer's head, neck, and shoulders never hit the ground no matter what. If something goes wrong during a stunt, it's your job to catch the flyer's head and shoulders.^[5]

- Flyers rely on their backspot to keep them safe if they fall.

Method 2 of 5:
Prep

1 Stand behind the flyer and put your hands on their hips. The flyer stands between the bases and you stand right behind the flyer with your hands gently grasping their hips. This is the starting position for every stunt. Generally, you'll do cheer stunts to an 8-count, so start the 8-count once everyone is in place.^[6]

- In cheerleading, "prep" refers to a standing stunt where the 2 bases face each other and lift the flyer up to shoulder height.^[7]
- The 8-count helps everyone move at the same time since each number is associated with a different part of the stunt.^[8]
- It doesn't matter who counts as long as everyone can hear them. This is a very common way to maintain rhythm for stunts and dance routines.



- 2 Bend your knees slightly into a squat position.** This squat position is called the “dip.” Dip simultaneously with the bases at the count of 1. Remember to keep your hands on the flyer’s hips to offer stability if they need it!^[9]
- The flyer does not dip with the group.



- 3 Help the flyer jump into the bases’ hands.** The flyer controls most of their weight, but you can give them a little boost and guide them. Support their hips with your hands as the flyer jumps into the bases’ hands. At this point, the flyer supports themselves by placing their hands on the bases’ shoulders.^[10]
- This starts the load in. Do this at the count of 2.



- 4 Let go of the flyer's hips and grasp them firmly around the ankles.** Quickly move your hands down to grasp the flyer's ankles as they load in. Support the left ankle with your left hand and the right ankle with your right hand. Make sure you have a firm grip.[11]
- This completes the load in at the count of 3.



- 5 Support the flyer's ankles as the bases lift their feet to shoulder level.** Moving in unison with the bases, push up to help them lift the flyer. The bases move closer together as they lift and the flyer pops into a standing position with their legs together. Keep a firm grasp on the flyer's ankles as they pop up.[12]
- You're now in "prep" position at the count of 4.
 - Once your group masters this, move into the extension.

Method 3 of 5: Extension



1 Lift the flyer into prep position. Follow the steps to get into prep position with the bases holding the flyer at shoulder level. Eventually, the goal is to load in and pop all the way up into an extension without stopping at prep level, but practice the extension from prep position until everyone gets the hang of it.

- "Extension" means the bases lift the flyer above their heads.[13]
- Remember to do the 8-count to get the timing right. You should be on 4 when the flyer pops up into standing prep position.



- 2 Pull up on the flyer's ankles to help the bases lift the flyer above their heads.** Firmly pull up on the back of the flyer's ankles to help the bases lift them straight up above their heads. Lock your arms and do not let go of the ankles. Your stunt is now at extension level!^[14]
- The extension happens at the count of 5.^[15]



- 3 Support both ankles as the flyer comes down to load-in position.** The bases bend their knees and pop up briefly into a "bump" at the count of 6. The flyer returns to the starting load-in position and grabs the bases' shoulders for support at the count of 7.^[16]
- Let go of the flyer's ankles so they can dismount at the count of 8.



1 Stand behind the flyer to get into starting position. Position yourself between the bases and behind flyer to start the stunt. Once everyone is in place, begin the 8-count. The 8-count helps everyone move at the same time—it doesn't matter who counts as long as everyone can hear them.^[17]

- Make sure you know which leg the flyer plans to stand on for the liberty so you can push up on the correct side.



2 Place your hands on the flyer's hips as they step into the bases' hands. Hold the flyer gently around the waist. The flyer places their feet into the bases' hands and supports themselves by placing their hands on the bases' shoulders.^[18]

- Get into this position at the count of 1.



3 Bend your knees slightly into a squat position in unison with the bases. Once the flyer is mounted and in position, bend your knees slightly. The bases do the same so that you're all moving in unison. At this point, pause for a moment so everyone can get ready to push together.^[19]



4 Put 1 hand under the flyer's butt and grab their ankle with your free hand. If your flyer plans to stand on their right leg and lift their left leg for the liberty, slide your left hand under their left butt cheek so you can help push the flyer's leg up into position. Reach forward to grab their right ankle with your right hand to support the standing leg's ankle.^[20]

- This happens at the count of 2.^[21]
- If the flyer plans to stand on their left leg and lift their right leg up into the liberty, put your right hand under the right butt cheek and grasp the left ankle with your left hand.^[22]



5 Push straight up as hard as you can as the bases lift the flyer's feet. Moving in unison with the bases, push up under the flyer's butt cheek to add momentum and help the flyer lift that leg up into position. Grasp the other ankle tightly and push straight up at the same time.^[23]

- Perform the push off at the count of 3.
- Be sure to push straight up, not forward! You don't want to add any forward momentum to the flyer as they go up into the stunt.



6 Use both hands to support the ankle of the flyer's standing leg. The bases move together at the count of 4 as they push and support the locked standing leg ankle. The flyer lifts the other leg into the liberty at the count of 5 and holds the stunt at the count of 6.^[24]

- At this point, all of you are supporting the flyer's standing leg.^[25]
- The flyer shouldn't feel heavy. If they do, the timing of the push off may have been a little off.



7 Grab the flyer's other ankle as they put that leg back down. After the flyer hits the liberty position, the lifted leg comes down. Keep 1 hand on the standing leg ankle and shift the other hand to help catch and support the other ankle as the flyer redistributes their weight to the center and stands on both legs.^[26]

- Support the dismount at the count of 7.^[27]



8 Support both ankles as the flyer comes down to starting position. The bases bend their knees to return to the starting position and the flyer grabs their shoulders to support themselves, just like at the beginning of the stunt. Let go of the flyer's ankles as they dismount.^[28]

- Finish the stunt at the count of 8.^[29]

**Method 5 of 5:
Basket Toss**

1 Stand behind the flyer and place your hands on their hips. Get into starting position directly behind the flyer. The bases face each other, 1 on each side of the flyer. Grasp the flyer's hips gently as the flyer puts their hands on the bases' shoulders. Start the 8 count so everyone moves at the same time.[30]

- Keep your legs shoulder width apart.[31]
- Get into position at the count of 1.



2 Bend your knees into a squat position in unison with the bases. This is called the “dip.” Everyone bends their knees slightly to squat at the same time right before springing into action. Keep your hands on the flyer’s hips.

- Do the dip at the count of 2. [\[32\]](#)



3 Support the flyer’s waist as they jump into the basket. The flyer is supporting themselves by holding the bases’ shoulders. Spring up a little to move in unison with the flyer as they jump into the basket with both feet. [\[33\]](#)

- Load the basket happens at the count of 3.
- You don’t need to help the flyer load in. You’re just there for support, which helps them feel safe. [\[34\]](#)



4 Dip again on 4 as you slip both hands under the basket. Bend your knees to dip again with the bases. Move both of your hands underneath the bases' hands to help them with the toss.^[35]



5 Straighten your legs and push up with your arms to launch the flyer. Use all the strength you have to push the flyer straight up, not forward! Launch the flyer at the count of 5.^[36]



6 Keep your arms extended straight up for counts of 6 and 7. Once you launch the flyer up, the flyer ascends on 6 and hits their jump (usually a herkie or toe touch) at the count of 7. Don't take your eyes off the flyer during these crucial moments! Keep your arms extended straight up so you're ready to catch them.^[37]

- This is called "catching high" and it's the safest way to catch your flyer so that no one gets hurt, including you.^[38]
- If the flyer veers a bit to the left or right during a basket toss, shift position to get directly underneath them for the cradle catch.



7 Catch the flyer in a cradle with your forearms under their armpits. The backspot is responsible for catching the flyer's upper body and the bases handle the rest. Let the flyer to land on the middle of your forearms. The bases absorb most of the shock, so the flyer shouldn't land on you hard.^[39]

- The cradle catch happens at the count of 8.



Tips

- Build trust with your flyer and communicate clearly and often before doing advanced stunts. The flyer needs to be able to trust you completely.

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Co-authors: **6**

Updated: **January 4, 2021**

Views: **4,020**

Categories: **Team Sports**

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