

DEVELOPMENT IDEAS FOR COACHES



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BEGINNER

POSITION AND BALANCE

- BOUNCING ON LEVEL PEDALS WITH WEIGHT ON BOTH HANDS AND FEET.
- ROLL DOWNS ON CURBS
- CLIMBING SEATED AND STANDING (like 'red light, green light' 'stand up, sit down')
- 'CHICKEN WINGS' (bent elbows, ready position)
- 'NO FLAMINGOS' (one pedal up, the other down)
- 'COWBOYS' (knees out, not pinching frame or seat)
- CHIN OVER STEM WHEN CLIMBING SEATED
- FIGURE 8'S (use flat area, focus on body position for cornering)

OPERATION OF CONTROLS

- 1 OR 2 FINGERS COVERING BRAKES 'BUNNY EARS'
- USE BOTH BRAKES TO STOP
- STOP ON THE LINE, NO SKIDDING
- SLOW RACE (easy slope)
- SHIFTING GEARS, PRACTICE SHIFTING BEFORE AN UPHILL
- GEAR SELECTION, TRY HAVING RACES IN EASY AND HARD GEARS TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE (not too easy or too hard)
- USE DOWNHILLS TO CARRY SPEED INTO UPHILLS BY EASING OFF BRAKES.

TERRAIN AWARENESS

- ROCK DODGE (promotes smooth line choice)
- SCANNING AHEAD (applies to cornering, rock rolls, bridges)
- IDENTIFY DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAIL SURFACE AND CONDITIONS (wet vs dry, gravel, dirt, loose, wood)
- HAVE KIDS DESCRIBE TRAIL TO YOU AND THE GROUP

OTHER IDEAS

TIME TRIAL (e.g. disco boy loop)

USE SCORING SYSTEM /10 FOR WHERE KIDS STOP ON TRAIL

FOLLOW THE LEADER

DONKEY PUNCHER DH (use downhill switch backs for braking exercises and cornering practice)

TRAIL ETIQUETTE:

GIVE WAY TO UP HILL TRAFFIC

LEAVE SPACE BETWEEN ONE ANOTHER

NOVICE

POSITION AND BALANCE

- FRONT WHEEL LIFTS (over a low obstacle or up a curb/step, riders must push off hands before trying to pull up to be successful)
- STALKER/FOOT DOWN (use flat small area, players are eliminated by putting a foot down)
- EASY SKINNIES (encourage coasting along while scanning ahead)
- SWITCH FEET, RIDE WITH OTHER FOOT FORWARD
- RIDE REALLY TALL VS RIDE REALLY SMALL (NO BUMS ON SEATS)
- MOVING HIPS BEHIND SEAT, HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

OPERATION OF CONTROLS

- PRACTICE BRAKING BEFORE CORNER
- DRAGGING BRAKES, REAR ONLY DURING CORNERING
- SLOW RACE (try changing terrain, gravel or other looser surface)
- GEAR SELECTION FOR CLIMBING SEATED vs STANDING (easier for seated, one or two gears harder for standing)
- RATCHETING
- SKIDDING, WHY SKIDDING HAPPENS, HOW IT CAN AFFECT OUR BIKE/SPEED CONTROL ON CERTAIN FEATURES. (Kids will often skid on rock rolls to begin with because they favor the back brake)

TERRAIN AWARENESS

- RIDE SMOOTH MIDDLE LINE IN BERMS, AVOID GRAVEL ON THE INSIDE OF THE CORNER (encourage kids to carry some momentum in order to stay on the smooth line, it is difficult to stay high enough with no speed)
- LOOKING AHEAD, PREPARE FOR CHANGES IN TERRAIN AND GEAR SELECTION ETC.

DIRECTION CONTROL

- ‘FIGURE OF 8’, STANDING IN NEUTRAL POSITION, PRACTICE LOOKING AHEAD AND STEERING
- OBSTACLE COURSE, USE CONES, STOP IN A BOX, WHEEL LIFT
- CHALK LINE, USE CHALK TO DRAW LINE FOR FRONT WHEEL TO FOLLOW (useful on bridges)
- SKINNIES FOR LATERAL BALANCE AND MOVEMENT (by standing while tackling skinnies, riders begin to experiment with leaning the bike for balance, this skill can be transferred to leaning the bike in corners)

INTERMEDIATE/STRONG INTERMEDIATE

AT THIS LEVEL, WE ARE DEVELOPING MULTIPLE SKILLS THROUGH USE OF MANOUVERS AND DRILLS. MANY OF THESE EXERCISES CAN BE ADAPTED TO FOCUS ON ALMOST ANY SKILL.

POSITION AND BALANCE

- REAR WHEEL LIFT/PUDDLE SPLASH (no brakes, should be able to execute front wheel lift first. Preloading and scooping with the feet is needed to get the rear wheel off the ground)
- LEVEL LIFT (even pre-load with hands and feet will allow both wheels to leave the ground evenly)
- TRACK STANDS
- LOW BODY POSITION (to help maintain stability in steeper descents)
- WRIST POSITION, HORIZONTAL = BODY BEHIND CENTER, VERTICAL = BODY AHEAD OF CENTER. (Riders that experience tired hands are often 'hanging off the back' of the bike, therefore putting extra stress on the fingers)
- WIDE KNEES (to increase range of motion)

TRAIL AWARENESS

- LINE CHOICE IN CORNERS, HIGH ENTRY
- CORNER SPEED. IN SLOW, OUT FAST

DIRECTION CONTROL

LEANING

- FEEL SEAT MOVE INTO INSIDE LEG (can be done in a straight line to introduce new feeling)
- BENT ELBOWS ALLOWS ARMS TO LEAN BIKE (range of movement)

ROTATION

- BELLY BUTTON LASER (point belly button towards corner exit)
- 'LOOK AT ME' (stand at apex or end of corner and get students to look towards you as they enter corner, you can measure their success first hand)
- 'PAC MAN' (making a Pac Man mouth shape with your body, eating the dots around the corner)

STEERING

- CONES, SET SOME FLAT CORNERS USING CONES, TRY STEERING ONLY vs STEERING AND LEANING.

PRESSURE CONTROL

- PUMPING ROLLERS (great for timing, key skill for jumping)
- PUMPING IN TECH, USING ROOTS AND ROCKS TO GENERATE OR MAINTAIN SPEED.

PUMPING THROUGH CORNERS (this is an important skill to develop prior to introducing jumping, pressure control is an important component of jumping)

DROPS

- PRE-REQUISITES: FRONT WHEEL LIFT, LEVEL LIFT
- ROLL DOWN (requires active pressure control to maintain balance)
- STICK TEST (front wheel lift over stick, rear wheel must roll across stick before front wheel touches down)
- NEUTRAL, COMPRESS, EXPLODE (pre-load)
- LUNGE (compare with pre-load technique to clarify, many students find the pre-load to be an easier method of doing drops to begin with)
- RIDE AWAY! MAINTAIN CONTROL BY STAYING OFF THE BRAKES DURING THE RUN OUT.

JUMPS

- PRE-REQUISITES: DROPS USING FRONT WHEEL LIFT, LEVEL LIFT
- ROLL AND ABSORB LIP
- POINT OF COMMITMENT, PRESS AND ABSORB (take little air, not aiming to make backside)
- PROGRESS JUMPING BY USING MORE RANGE OF MOTION BEFORE ADDING SPEED IN ORDER TO MAKE THE BACKSIDE.

COMMON MISTAKES WHILE JUMPING/DROPPING

- ‘DEAD SAILORS’ (this is a forward rotation of the rider and bike, causing the rider to land very nose heavy, usually, a late ‘PRESS’ is the problem)
- PULLING UP (riders will often land rear wheel heavy because they are not preloading the whole bike, they may also be pulling up on the bars)
- INCORRECT SPEED (If a rider is not clearing jumps, first look at their technique, once technique is correct and efficient the speed may have to be increased)

SEE BACK COVER FOR PHAST KIDS RACING, AND AIRDOME COACHING IDEAS.

ADVANCED/EXPERT

AT THIS LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT, WE ARE NEVER SIMPLY WORKING ON ONE SKILL, A BLEND OF MANY SKILLS IS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED OUTCOME OF THESE TASKS.

MANEUVERS:

- REAR WHEEL PIVOT (useful in tight and awkward corners)
- MANUAL (through depressions in trail or rollers for example)
- WHEELIE (because they're cool)
- NOSE MANUAL (experiment with no brakes vs feathering front brake)

DROPS

- GENTLE PRE-LOAD (reduce pre-load as speed and skill increase)
- SQUASH (minimizing air time by approaching in a low position and leading/pushing the bike into the landing)
- PRE HOPPING

JUMPS

- TRANSFER (travel across width of jump, good progression for whips)
- SCRUB (similar to motion of a whip, press and absorb must be timed much earlier to keep bike low over jump)
- NO AIR GAME, USE CRANK IT UP OR EASY JUMP TRAIL, TRY TO EITHER MANUAL OR NOSE MANUAL EVERY JUMP

POSITION AND BALANCE

- BODY POSITION FOR CORNERING (aggressive position moves weight over front wheel, giving added grip at speed in corners)
- BODY POSITION FOR BRAKING ON STEEP TERRAIN (body must remain centered on bike to keep pressure on front wheel for traction, moving bum/hips back will cause front wheel to lose grip under heavy braking. Dropping heels to brace against bike will help)
- LOW CHEST, TALLER HIPS (aggressive position)

OPERATION OF CONTROLS

- FRONT BRAKE ONLY, WHISTLER DH ROCK ROLLS WORK WELL AT THIS LEVEL. EXPERTS CAN EXPERIMENT WITH NOSE MANUALS ON EASY ROCK FACES.

DIRECTION CONTROL

- FOCUS ON TOP HAND PULLING BIKE ACROSS BODY TO GIVE MORE GRIP AND STABILITY WHEN LEANING BIKE
- BODY MUST BE ROTATED IN ORDER TO INCREASE LEAN
- CONES (place cones to challenge line choice, not just looking for perfect line)
- CUTTIES/SQUARING Off CORNERS
- SCANDINAVIAN FLICK (skidding rear wheel in opposite direction to corner in order to 'high side' or 'dive' into a berm)
- ANGULATION FOR QUICK TURN LINKING (moving the bike independently is quicker than moving the rider and bike together between turns)

PRESSURE CONTROL

- PUMPING THROUGH BERMS
- RESISTING AGAINST TERRAIN VS ABSORBING EVERYTHING AND STAYING ON THE GROUND (sometimes it is necessary to ride 'stiff' in order to maintain speed over rough terrain and big compressions, fully absorbing every hit can affect our momentum. Experiment with trying to keep both wheels on the ground vs trying to take air off every small feature)

Coaching Note:

At this level, riders want to increase their speed terrain difficulty. This should be done by increasing their level of control. Simply riding faster and harder is often not a useful approach. Challenge their bike handling skills in varying terrain and teach them new maneuvers/tactics. If they have MORE CONTROL they will be safer taking MORE SPEED and tackling HARDER TRAILS. Just because a rider doesn't crash it doesn't mean that they are in control.

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RACING

ETIQUETTE

- TEACH KIDS TO GIVE WAY TO FASTER RIDERS DURING A RACE RUN (Practice this on trail, send riders 10-15 seconds apart and chase each other down, shout 'Rider!' to let slower rider know to pull over. Discuss why this is fair)

SAFETY AND COACHING

-KIDS MUST KNOW COURSE BY HEART AND BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR LINE CHOICES BEFORE THEIR RACE RUN. (Ride the course with your group, stopping at crucial parts where optional line choices occur. Always have a debrief of the previous section while stopped before moving on)

-MUST BE AWARE THAT THEY WILL RACE SECTIONS OF TRAIL THAT ARE NORMALLY USED AS STOPPING AREAS (discuss lines here specifically)

-MUST HAVE RIDDEN AT LEAST ONE FULL PRACTICE RACE RUN WITHOUT STOPPING.

-CRASHING IS NOT FAST, RIDE AT A SPEED THAT SUITS YOUR ABILITY.

AIRDOME

-KIDS ARE THERE TO RIDE THEIR BIKES (save jumping into the foam pit from the platform until the last 10-15 minutes)

-ESTABLISH A COUNTER CLOCKWISE DIRECTION OF TRAFFIC IF THE WOODEN RHYTHM SECTION IS BEING SESSIONED

-IF LARGE RHYTHM SECTION/RESI RAMP IS IN USE, RIDERS MUST RETURN TO THE START VIA THE LANES ADJACENT TO THE LINE IN USE. (no riding the opposite way through jumps)

-WARM UP ON FEATURES BY ROLLING THROUGH WITHOUT TAKING AIR.

-DEMO EACH FEATURE FOR KIDS THAT ARE TRYING FOR THE FIRST TIME.