



## Dodging the Weather and Honing Skills by Sabrina Carlson

On May 16, 2016 four members of the Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Biking Club met up after school to ride and practice skills. The clouds were building and rain was looming, so we decided that heading to a nearby park would be the best plan in case the weather came in.

In the parking lot, their coach Neil Ross put a stick on the ground and reviewed the skills they are working on. He demonstrated lifting the front wheel over the obstacle and then donkey kicking at the right moment to get the back wheel to clear it too. It is a tough skill that requires timing your movements from front to back. This takes a lot of practice, so everyone rode around trying to clear the stick for a while.

Once it looked like we had made some progress, we moved on to trying to clear the curb. The more experienced riders kept trying to hop the back wheel over, while the newer riders focused on getting the front wheel over the curb and pedaling the back wheel over. We kept practicing even as the rain began, hoping it would pass.



**Cole getting some one-on-one coaching.**

When it became clear that a downpour was upon us, we hustled back into the building. With the hallways clear and open during afterschool hours, we ran heats of a slow race, practiced our pedal push wheelies, and hopped a bit more over a chalkboard eraser. For the last few minutes of practice, the rain cleared away again and we were able to go back out to the schoolyard to hop off some bigger drops and ride some stairs.



It was an honor to be invited to help coach them and to get to watch each and every one of them get a little more skilled and a lot more confident. I can hardly wait until we can take it out on the trail.

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