

WELLNESS SERIES

THE KETTLEBALL FITNESS PLAN



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Introduction – What Is a Kettlebell? What Makes Them So Unique?

You may have recently heard a lot about kettlebells. They are the hot new fitness equipment and everyone is talking about them. But why? What makes the kettlebell unique? It's essentially a heavy ball with a handle, and that is exactly what makes them so awesome.

A Quick History Lesson

Sometimes it can be fun to know where a movement or exercise originated. With the case of the kettlebell, the history is a bit unclear. However according to kettlebellusa.com, *"the kettlebell originated approximately 350 years ago. The first appearance of the word in a Russian dictionary appeared in 1704. They were originally used as handled counterweights (bearing the Imperial Seal) to weigh out dry goods on market scales."*

So, as you're swinging or lifting a kettlebell, you can remember that they used to be used to weigh heavy items at the market.



About that Heavy Ball with a Handle

You might wonder what makes a kettlebell different from a dumbbell. The answer is the handle. The handle makes all the difference. Imagine trying to swing a dumbbell. Not a pretty picture, right? You don't have the same range of motion.

Kettlebells provide that range of motion because the handle can rotate in your hand. It also can challenge your stability, which makes you stronger, and it's more versatile. You can perform the same movements with a kettlebell that you can with a dumbbell, and many more that you cannot really perform well with a dumbbell.

Finally, that handle makes the exercises and movements more functional. Generally speaking, when you're lifting and carrying things, you have some swing and range of motion. You need to work your body in a way that resembles and supports proper function in real life.

For example, carrying a big bag of groceries is much more like carrying a heavy kettlebell than it is carrying a dumbbell. Kettlebell exercises are much more functional than those done with a traditional dumbbell.

How Are They Weighed?

In the states, we're accustomed to things being measured in pounds. From barbells and plates to dumbbells, they're usually measured in pounds. In the Olympic weightlifting world, and in the rest of the world outside the United States, things are generally measured in kilograms. For reference, one kilogram is equal to 2.2 pounds. So, if someone says they can lift 65 kg, they're lifting 143 pounds.

However, in Russia the kettlebell was originally measured in Pood. Yes, that's spelled correctly. Pood is a fun word to say, rhymes with "food." A kettlebell either weighed one pood, one and a half pood, or two pood. It's interesting to note that according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term pound was derived from Pood.

At any rate, one pood is approximately equal to 16 kg or 36 pounds. One and a half pood is 24 kg or 53 pounds, and 2 pood is 32 kg or 70 pounds. In the sporting goods store you'll find them usually in pounds, but it's good to know your kg to pound conversion so you purchase the correct sizes.

The Benefits of Kettlebells

We've already discussed the versatility of the kettlebell. You can do twice as many movements with this type of weight when compared to a dumbbell. However, the benefits don't stop there.

Kettlebells Help You Take Your Workout to The Next Level

Whether you've started your exercise and strength training program using body weights or you want to add more movements to your program, the kettlebell can help you achieve your fitness goals. The abundance of movements you can perform with this simple piece of equipment is phenomenal.

Kettlebells are Budget Friendly

Many pieces of gym equipment are expensive. For example, if you want to add a Smith Machine to your home gym, then you're looking at several thousand dollars. And even a set of dumbbells or barbells and plates can run you several hundred to a thousand dollars, depending on the equipment you're adding to your gym.

Kettlebells are budget friendly.

You can buy kettlebell sets from 5-10 pounds for less than \$100, and you can find adjustable kettlebells like the Power Block Adjustable Kettlebell – which goes from 10 to 16 pounds – for less than \$200.



Kettlebell Movements Are Fun

The variety of movements and the functional nature of many kettlebell movements are fun. They support you to keep your body moving in new and interesting ways. For example, a traditional pushup becomes an entirely different movement when you do pushups from your kettlebells. Or squat with a kettlebell and enjoy the added challenge. In the next section, we're going to take a look at 14 different movements you can perform with a kettlebell.

They're Compact and Portable

Many pieces of fitness equipment are bulky. They won't fit in the back of your car. While kettlebells are heavy, they aren't large and bulky. You can take them with you if you want to work out outside.

Kettle Bell Movements

Now we're going to get into the fun stuff. We're going to take a look at 14 different movements. They're divided up into experience ranging from beginner to advanced. Each movement will be described, and you'll find variations for the movement and tips on form and performance.

#1 The Kettlebell Deadlift – Beginner

The deadlift is a movement that strengthens your lifting muscles. One of the easiest, and most common, ways to injure your back is to pick something heavy up off the floor with bad form.

The deadlift not only teaches you good form; it strengthens those lifting muscles – and in the process, it can help you build beautiful glutes (your butt) and hamstrings (your thighs).

For the deadlift, you will need two kettlebells. Standing with your feet under your hips, place the kettlebells just outside of your feet. They may be a bit forward so the kettlebell is next to your baby toe.

Now bend your knees, keep your back flat, and place your hands on the handles of the kettlebell. Keep in mind that as you perform this movement, you're not lifting with your arms or back, you're lifting with your legs.



Pushing the ground away from you, stand up and bring the kettlebells up with you. Keep them close to your body as you stand.

Tips

- Maintain tension in your body. As you lift, you want your shoulders to be engaged and your core to be tight.
- Your hips are the hinge as you stand.
- Your gaze should be about two to three feet in front of you and you should be looking at the floor. This will help you keep your back straight and in proper position.
- Wear shoes. It's too easy to drop a kettlebell on your foot!

Variations

Sumo Deadlift – With this movement you only have one kettlebell. It's positioned between your legs and both hands are on the handle.

Single Leg Deadlifts – This movement also uses one kettlebell and it is exactly what it sounds like. Place the kettlebell just outside of the foot of the leg you're using. Place your other foot behind you, you can keep your toe on the ground to help you balance as you perform the movement. Perform the movement as described above.

Suitcase Deadlift – This is the same as the initial deadlift movement, but with one kettlebell. Both feet are on the floor, the kettlebell is just outside of one of your feet. You lift as if you're lifting two kettlebells. Return the kettlebell to the floor and switch sides so that you work both sides evenly and equally.

#2 Kettlebell Shoulder Press – Intermediate

Starting with kettlebells beside your shoulders and your wrist rotated so that your palms face inward, press the weights up until your arms are locked out overhead. Lower the kettlebells back to your shoulders and repeat.

Tips

- Keep your core locked.
- Keep your feet on the ground. Don't push up on your toes.
- Keep your weight in the center of your foot.
- Start with a light kettlebell and work your way up to a heavier weight once you're comfortable with your form.

Variations

One arm kettlebell shoulder press – This is the same movement, but with one kettlebell. Switch arms with each repetition.

Kettlebell push press – Bend your knees and dip, keeping your back straight. As you stand, use the momentum to get lift on the weights and press up until your arms are locked out. This can be performed with one kettlebell or two.

Kettlebell push jerk – Bend your knees and dip. Drive with your legs and push your body under the kettlebell, and catch it in a partial squat with your core tight. Stand up, keeping the bar overhead. This can be performed with one kettlebell or two.



#3 Kettlebell Lunge – Beginner

Standing upright, hold a kettlebell in each hand at the side of your body. Step forward with one leg and bend your knees so that the knee of the back leg barely touches the floor. Drive upwards using the leg that has stepped forward. Repeat movement with the opposite leg.

Tips

- Keep the chest up and straight ahead.
- Control the movement so that your back knee gently brushes the floor.
- Both front and back knee should bend to 90 degrees (not more)
- Keep weight on the front heel, NOT your toes. This is the leg that you're driving up on.
- Strive to keep your knee angled over your foot, don't let it cave in toward the center of your body.

Variations:

Single kettlebell lunge – Hold a single kettlebell in front of you, with both hands bracing the round portion of the weight. The handle can point up or down, it doesn't matter.

#4 Turkish Getups – Advanced

The Turkish getup is an advanced move because it requires several steps in the sequence and tremendous stability from your wrist to your ankle. Before you try this movement with a weight, try it just using your body weight.

Lie on your back on the floor. Hold the kettlebell in your right hand.

Bend your right leg so that your foot is on the floor.

Press the kettlebell straight above your head and lock your arm. (Your left arm will be palm down on the floor and at a 45-degree angle from your body so that you can push up in the next step.)

Keeping the kettlebell straight above you, look up at the kettlebell as you push up onto your left forearm. Continue pushing up until your left arm is straight. Note that your right leg is still bent and your left leg is straight and resting on the floor.

Now, push your hips up as you lift your left leg and pull it underneath you so that your left knee lands where you were previously sitting. Now your left knee is on the ground, your right foot is on the ground and your right arm is still holding that kettlebell overhead. Looking at the kettlebell may help you maintain stability and keep your arm straight.

Now stand up and bring your feet together. That's the top of the movement. It's not complete until you reverse the movement and finish back on the floor. So...

Bend your left leg and bring your body back to the floor. Keep the kettlebell overhead.

Lower onto your left hand, then your left forearm, as you straighten your left leg back out in front of you. Bottom on the floor, slowly lower your body back down. Once your back is on the floor, lower the kettlebell then switch arms and repeat the movement on the other side.

Tips:

- The knee that's bent always matches the arm that's in the air. So, if your left arm is in the air with the weight, then your left leg is bent.
- Keep your shoulder engaged and pushing up on the kettlebell throughout the movement.
- If you're unable to control the kettlebell overhead, it's too heavy. Lighter is better with this movement.
- Move slowly and deliberately. This is not something to do for time or speed.

#5 Swings – Intermediate

The kettlebell swing is the trademark movement. Kettlebell swings are fun, they're great for your legs and glutes as well as your shoulders, core, and upper back muscles. And, they're both a cardio and strength training movement.

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Your knees will be slightly bent and your toes may be pointed out just a touch. Hold a kettlebell with both hands. It will be hanging between your legs.

Keeping your knees bent, bend forward but keep your back flat; don't curl over. Your gaze should be ahead of you, not on the floor. The kettlebell will lower so that it is between and behind your legs. Squeeze your glutes. Using your hips to give you momentum, swing the kettlebell up to shoulder level.



Bring it back down, keeping your knees bent and your back straight. Ideally, the kettlebell will swing back and hit you in the butt. That means you're doing it right. Swing it back up to shoulder level.

Tips

- Start with a weight that feels comfortable.
- Maintain a loose, but not too loose, grip on the kettlebell.
- Control the weight down, don't let it pull you down.
- Keeping your eyes forward will help you maintain good back posture.
- You're hinging at the hips, not squatting.

Variations

You can, and should once you get comfortable with it, swing the kettlebell overhead. The movement is finished when the kettlebell is overhead and your arms are next to your ears.

#6 Pushups – Intermediate

This movement is simple in theory but in practice it is incredibly difficult. Do not perform this movement if you don't have the ability to do a pushup from your toes. Develop that strength first before you add a deficit.

Additionally, if you have tight shoulders or poor range of motion in your shoulders, take great care with this movement.

Place two kettlebells next to your shoulders as you lie face down on the floor. Placing your hands on the handles of the kettlebells, your palms should be facing your shoulders. Tighten your core, quads, and glutes and push up on the kettlebells. Note, you can also start this movement from a plank with your hands on the kettlebells.

Tips

- Don't waste energy when you lower. Lower as quickly as you can while keeping the movement controlled.
- Keep your core tight. It makes it easier
- Keep your elbows close to your body. As they wing out, you lose stability and can injure your shoulders.

#7 Kettlebell Row - Beginner

This is a movement that you may have performed with a dumbbell. It can also be performed with a kettlebell.

Place a kettlebell in front of your feet. Bend over and brace one hand on a table or a weight bench. Grab the kettlebell and pull it to your stomach, retracting your shoulder blade and flexing your elbow. Keep your back straight. Lower, switch sides, repeat.

Tips

- Keep your back and core muscles engaged during the movement.
- Keep the working arm close to your body.

#8 Kettlebell High Pull – Advanced

Stand with a kettlebell between your feet. Your feet will be a bit wider than a squat stance. Grab the kettlebell with two hands. With your knees bent, push your hips back. Your chest should be upright. You're essentially in a wide squat. The kettlebell is resting on the floor. This is the beginning of the movement.

The movement is one that uses momentum from your hips to get the kettlebell up to shoulder level. Extend your hips and knees. You can get the most out of this movement by squeezing them as you extend. When you reach the moment where your hips snap to full extension, use that momentum to shrug your shoulders, bend your elbows and bring the kettlebell up to your chest. Lower by first lowering the kettlebell to your waist and then to the floor. Repeat

Tips

- While this is a "high pull," the foundation of the movement is a good hip extension to gain momentum for the pull.
- Don't pull higher than your collarbone.

#9 Goblet Squat – Beginner

This movement simply takes your basic squat to the next level. With your feet in squat stance, slightly wide, push your butt back, bend your knees and squat. It should feel like you're trying to find a chair behind you to sit in.

The goblet part of this movement involves holding the kettlebell in both hands in front of you, sort of like you would hold a large goblet full wine. the handle can face up or down; you decide. Keep your back as straight as possible when you're performing the movement.

Tips

- Slow and controlled is the best way to begin this movement. Later, if you want to add intensity, you can do a goblet squat Tabata. That is 20 seconds of work (as many squats as possible) and 10 seconds of rest, repeat the cycle 8 times (or 4 minutes).
- Your rear end needs to be the initiator of this movement. Remember that the squat is all about your glutes.

#10 Oblique Twist – Beginner

Sit on the floor and hold the kettlebell with both hands on the round part of the weight. Hold it at chest level with your feet out and your knees slightly bent. You'll feel this in your abdominal muscles. Rotate your torso as far as you can to the left, return to center, and twist to the right. This movement should be slow and controlled.

Tips

- Keep your core engaged and your head/neck in neutral position.

#11 Thruster – Intermediate

The thruster is actually two movements in one. It's a squat and a press. With a light kettlebell in each hand, your arms are bent and the kettlebells are at your shoulders. Squat to the floor with them, stand up squeeze your glutes, when you hit that moment where your hips are fully extended then it's time to leverage that momentum and press the kettlebells overhead.

Your arms should end up locked out and in line with your ears. If you find that the weight is pulling your arm to the side or forward, try a lighter weight. Lower the kettlebells to your shoulders (beside your shoulders, not resting on them), and repeat.



Tips

- Keep your core locked and your back straight when you lower.

Variations

You can do this movement with one kettlebell. Switch sides to ensure both arms are worked equally.

#12 Clean & Jerk – Advanced

Standing with your feet under your hips, hold your kettlebell by the handle. The kettlebell is on the floor, and the weight should be just outside of the foot that corresponds to the hand you're using – so, right foot, right hand. You can also place the kettlebell between your feet. Your knees should be bent, your back straight, and your eyes should be forward.

Clean or move the kettlebell to your shoulder by extending through your legs and hips as you shrug your shoulders, bend your elbows and pull the kettlebell towards your shoulder.

Like many of the other movements we've discussed, your momentum helps you get the kettlebell up. With the clean portion, you're using your hips and the shrug of your shoulders to get the kettlebell to your shoulder. You're now halfway done. The next portion of this is the jerk.

Drive through your heels, drop under the weight so that your knees are bent as you straighten your arms overhead. Stand. The movement is finished when you're standing with your arms locked out overhead.

Tips

- The faster you can dip down below the weight, the less you'll have to use your shoulders to get it overhead. You may go into a quarter or half squat for the jerk and a full squat for the clean. The movement is from ground to overhead in two movements. Clean it from the floor, then jerk it overhead.

Variations

You can perform this movement with two kettlebells, one in each hand.

#13 Snatch – Advanced

The snatch is ground to overhead in one movement. Stand with one kettlebell between your feet and your hand on the handle. Your knees are bent, your back is straight, and your gaze is forward. Stand and extend your knees and hips.

As you're standing, you're shrugging your shoulder, bringing the kettlebell to your shoulder and then dipping down into a squat as you straighten your arm overhead. Stand with your arm locked out overhead. Bend your elbow and bring the kettlebell back to the ground between your feet. Switch hands and repeat.

Tips

- Keep it controlled here; don't let the weight pull you down. You want to keep your back straight.
- This is a complicated movement and it's recommended that you perform it without a weight a few times to get the rhythm and feel of it.



#14 Kettlebell Floor Press – Beginner

This movement is like a bench press but from the floor and with kettlebells instead of a barbell. Position yourself on your back on the floor, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Grab a kettlebell in each hand. Your arms will be bent with your upper arm on the floor and the kettlebell resting on the outside of your forearm.

Press the kettlebells up, keeping them in line with your chest. the movement is complete when your arms are locked. Bend your elbow, lower to the floor. repeat.

Tips

- Make sure you're using a weight that you can control. If your arm is wobbling, try a lighter weight.

Variations

You can do this movement with one kettlebell, simply switch arms between reps.

You now have 14 different movements to integrate into your day and your fitness program. Before we wrap it up, we've pulled together a few sample kettlebell workouts for you to try.

Sample Strength Training & Cardio Workouts

#1 Power Triplet

- Push Press 3 Sets of 15 reps (if using one kettlebell, alternate arms)
- Goble Squat Tabata
- Oblique Twists – max effort (do as many as you can until failure)

#2 Dynamic Duo

- Thrusters – 25
- Pushups – 15

Repeat this couplet 3 times

Sample Kettlebell Cardio Workouts

#1 As Fast as You Can

75 Thrusters for time

#2 Sprint, Sit-up, Snatch

- 20-meter sprint
- 25 Oblique sit-ups
- 20 Meter sprint
- 25 snatches

Repeat 3 times



Sample Kettlebell Strength Workouts

#1 Legwork

- 100 Lunges (50 each leg)
- 100 Deadlifts
- 100 Goblet squats

#2 Sculpted Shoulders

- 100 Rows (50 each arm)
- 75 Shoulder press
- 50 Kettlebell swings
- 25 Pushups

Moving Forward – Next Steps & Conclusion

Congratulations on your new kettlebell program. Have fun getting in the best shape of your life. Kettlebells are a fantastic piece of exercise equipment. They support you to enjoy varied, functional, and powerful cardio and strength training workouts.

Before you begin any new weighted movement, try the movement without the weight first. Familiarize yourself with the form and flow of each movement. This will help you perform the movement correctly once you add the weight.

If you're unsure what weight to use, try a light weight at first. If you feel incredibly sore the next day, then that was a good weight to start with. Starting heavier may have resulted in injury. Always use your brain before your ego when using weights.

As you start your new kettlebell program, keep in mind that sore muscles happen when you use them in a new and different way. It's called DOMS (or Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness) and it can happen anywhere from a few hours after your workout to 48 hours later.

Make sure you hydrate, eat protein after a workout, and get enough sleep. This will help you recover more quickly. DOMS is normal. What isn't normal is an inability to function after a workout. If that happens, you're doing too much. Cut it back, scale the movement with fewer reps or a lighter weight.

Kettlebells as a new exercise program or as part of an existing program, along with a healthy diet, can help you achieve the health and fitness you desire. To your success!

