

## Using Kettle Bells for Grip Strength Training

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Kettle bells are often used as a conditioning tool for fighters and other athletes as well as a training twist for the general population. One thing kettle bells are rarely used for, however, is grip strength training. Kettle bells are excellent for training grip strength due to the thickness of the horn and the variety of movements that can be performed with them.

First, some kettle bell anatomy and basic biomechanics will be discussed. The round part of the kettle bell is referred to as the bell and the handle is called the horn. When performing a standard kettle bell swing, you are not performing a squat to a frontal raise. Rather, you lock your shoulder in place, which is called keeping the shoulder packed, and hinge at the hips as if you were performing a Romanian deadlift. There is slight knee flexion, but the flexion remains the same throughout the entirety of the movement. The power behind the exercise comes from the glutes, which rapidly extend the hips and allow the bell to swing up into the air, rarely coming above shoulder height. There shouldn't be any rotation of the bell in the air or the horn in your hand, and that is where grip strength comes in.

Due to the fact that the bell is stationary relative to your hand throughout the motion, the participant ends up having to squeeze the horn tremendously hard in order to achieve such control over the kettle bell. This constant pressure on the horn is incredibly taxing on the forearms and muscles of the hands. This same grip strength demand can be found with almost any movement, traditional or other, when using kettle bells. Single arm kettle bell rows, kettle bell holds, and kettle bell catches are great ways to increase grip strength. Kettle bell holds are performed by holding on to the bell in one hand for time. Kettle bell catches are performed by playing catch with yourself with the kettle bell, tossing from one hand to the other or to the same hand and catching either the horn or the bell.

Other movements for grip strength include kettle bell curls, seated kettle bell twists, and farmer walks. The challenge of kettle bell curls and seated kettle bell twists is to hold the horn such that the bell is directly across from your knuckles the entire time. This creates the longest moment arm possible between the bell and your forearm muscles (the force arm), which serves for a very demanding exercise. Farmer walks are performed by holding a kettle bell in each hand, either by the horn or bell, and walking a predetermined distance or as far as you can before you lose control of the kettle bells.

If you have only been using kettle bells as a conditioning tool, consider substituting them for dumbbells to allow for a tremendous improvement in your grip strength.

Get big or die tryin'.

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