



**Level 2 Award in Instructing Kettlebells  
LEARNER MANUAL**



**RQF  
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# Unit 1: Planning a Kettlebell session

## Unit Aim:

Learners will gain an understanding of the use of Kettlebells. How to design an effective kettlebell programme for different training modalities and deliver safe and effective kettlebell training sessions.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit learners will:

- Have knowledge of the historical background of kettlebell training
- Comprehend the benefits of kettlebell training
- Be able to programme kettlebell exercises into a training plan
- Deliver a safe and effective Kettlebell session

# Section 1: The Kettlebell

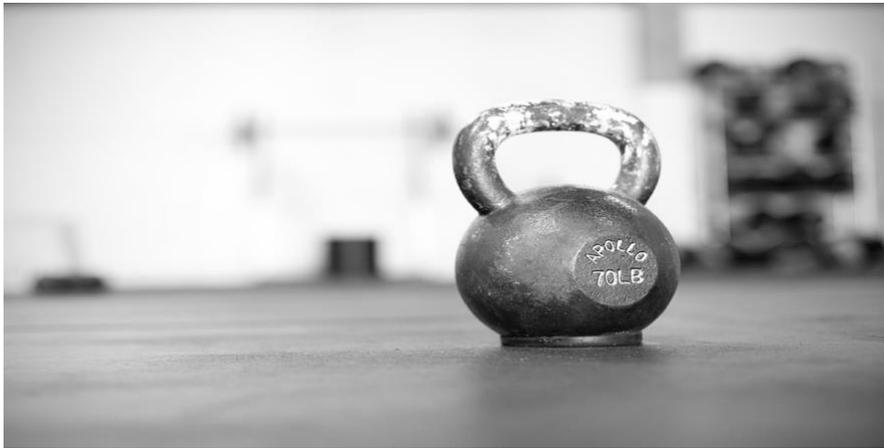
## History of the Kettlebell

The Kettlebell is steeped in history, first appearing in the Russian dictionary in 1700's it became a popular training tool in the 1900's and now features heavily in gyms around the world today.

Kettlebells are amongst one of the most versatile pieces of equipment in the fitness industry and used by a wide variety of clients with differing levels of skill and ability, from a fitness novice to experienced gym user, professional athlete, military training and personal trainers alike.

Kettlebell exercises are able to be modified which makes them effective for all goals, by including the development of strength and power, muscular endurance, flexibility and motor skills they are most commonly used in programmes designed for weight loss.

The Kettlebell is made up of three parts: 1) A Handle 2) Horns 3) A Bell



## Modern History of Kettlebells

1704 kettlebell appeared in Russian dictionary (Cherkikh, 1994).

1900s Russian circus events and performers such as Louis Cyr use weighted devices.

1913 Russian magazine Hercules reports 'Not a single sport develops our muscular strength and bodies as well as kettlebell athletics.'

1948 kettlebell lifting became Russia's national sport consisting of 3 events: the jerk, the clean and jerk and the snatch.

1960 Yuri Vlasov, a Russian and Olympic weightlifter known for using kettlebells, was proclaimed the best sportsmen of the 1960 Rome Olympics and the 'Strongest Man on the Planet'.

1962 the first kettlebell competition rules were developed.

1970s kettlebells used as part of United All State Sport Association of USSR.

1985 first kettlebell National Championship of USSR held in Lipetsk, Russia. In the same year the Committee of kettlebell Sport was organised with rules, regulations and weight categories.

## Appropriate Kettlebell Training Weights

The weights used whilst training with kettlebells will vary and be dependent on ability and experience of the user. It would be appropriate for beginners to start very light and to concentrate on form and technique prior to progressing to using heavier kettlebells.

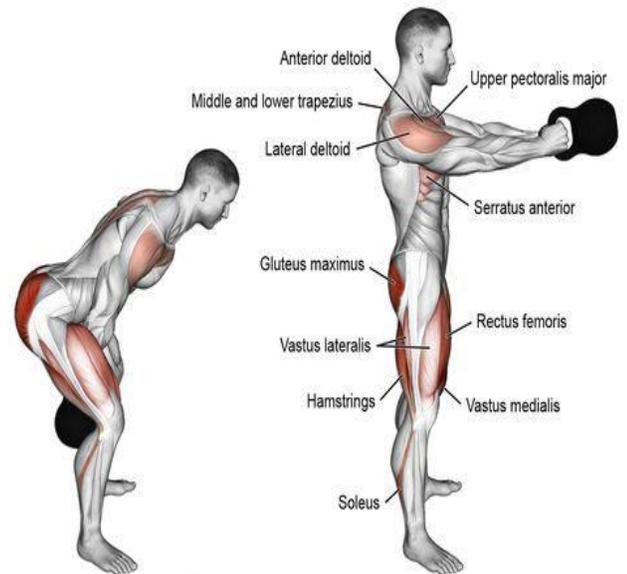
## Benefits of Kettlebell Training

Kettlebells are extremely versatile and very popular within the fitness industry as they can be used to achieve a large variety of goals and can have huge benefits on a participants levels of fitness by developing the following:

- Strength and power
- hypertrophy
- muscle endurance
- functional abilities
- core stability
- sports performance
- flexibility
- body composition
- cardiovascular fitness

## Developing Strength and Power

Kettlebell exercises promote nervous system adaptations that increase strength and mobility (Neupert, 2007), while developing motor skills such as co-ordination and balance. By manipulating the working weight, rep range, working sets and rest periods the goal of strength and power can be achieved.



## Posterior Kinetic Chain

The posterior chain plays a major part in most kettlebell exercises . The main muscles involved are :

- Erector Spinae
- Gluteus Maximus
- Hamstrings

These muscles are the biggest and strongest muscles involved and are responsible for the ‘hip snap’ in the most popular kettlebell exercises the swing clean and snatch. The posterior chain is important for sports performance and is fundamental to generating forward motion and acceleration. The posterior chain muscles contribute to jumping, pushing, pulling running and play a role in the majority of movement required in sport and exercise.

## Hypertrophy Training with Kettlebells

Hypertrophy is an increase in the size of skeletal muscle resulting from the increased size of individual muscle fibres (Robergs and Roberts, 1997). McArdle et al (2001) state that hypertrophy is produced through increased muscular tension. Resistance exercise and kettlebell exercises can easily be adapted to the requirements of this training goal if the correct rep range number of sets and rest periods are adhered to.

## Muscular Endurance Adaptations

Kettlebell exercises are often performed for a higher number of repetitions in order to promote improvements in muscular endurance utilising higher repetitions and lower rest periods which will also result in improved cardiovascular fitness.

## Functional Training Tool

Kettlebell training is viewed as one of the most effective forms of strength and conditioning and functional training tools, suitable for beginners, exercise enthusiasts and topflight athletes alike. Training with kettlebells allows trainers the opportunity to integrate groups of movements which work multiple muscle groups at the same time through different planes of motion, rather than just one at a time.

## Improving Core Function

Core function has been described by Elphinstone and Pook (1998) as,

‘...the ability of your trunk to support the effort and forces from your arms and legs, so that muscles and joints can perform in their safest, strongest and most effective position.’

Kettlebell exercises will improve the ability to create stability in the trunk. During kettlebell exercises the trunk is required to support the movements and provide protection to the spine. The majority of kettlebell exercises will require good core stability function and the ability to create stability through intra-abdominal pressure as the body moves through different positions, which at times are awkward and have a degree of difficulty which require practice.

## Improved Sports Performance

The control that is required to accelerate and decelerate a kettlebell at speed relates to many sports and helps to develop hip strength, stability and flexibility particularly in the ‘hip snap’.

Kettlebells are particularly good at strengthening and dynamically loading the hip muscles which is similar to the load and stressed placed on the body during a variety of sports. Their value in improving coordination and agility will also promote improved function transferable to attributes linked to sports performance (Luchkin, 1947; Luptain, 1973).

## Flexibility Improvements

Having a good static range of motion may be an indicator of flexibility (Cotton, 1997) however it does not necessarily transfer to the flexibility requirements during sports performance (Kremer and Gomez, 2001).

Many kettlebell exercises are completed through larger ranges of motion which place the body in unorthodox positioning which require more flexibility and strength to execute than those provided by other training methods. This will increase ranges of motion when practiced regularly which will transfer over into everyday life training and sports performance.

## Body Composition Improvements

Kettlebell sessions can be programmed with body composition in mind and can be a very good tool to use for personal trainers when working with clients. The demand placed on the body during a kettlebell session will increase a participants heart rate significantly and produce a notable calorie expenditure when programmed correctly.

Chek (2007), highlights the value of kettlebells in increasing metabolism and stimulating greater caloric expenditure.

## Cardiovascular Improvements

Regular physical activity has been shown to improve health, lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. Kettlebell exercises are energy demanding and can be used to provide an overload for the cardiovascular system. Workouts can be specifically designed to target any of the energy systems (creatine phosphate, lactate and aerobic).

## Kettlebell Health and Safety Considerations

Initial client screening is important and necessary prior to using kettlebells. A completed PAR-Q (Physical Activity Questionnaire) and health and lifestyle questionnaire will highlight any contraindications to exercise. It is essential that these are carried out.

There are many other health and safety recommendations to consider before using kettlebells:

- Surroundings – Look to perform all exercises on a flat, clean and stable surface with plenty of room. No uneven areas.
- Technique is of fundamental importance when exercising with kettlebells, so practice is key. Only progress on to more advanced exercises and weights when competent and only progress onto a heavier kettlebell when repetitions can be completed with ease and without technique being compromised. If it is a struggle to perform any kettlebell exercise, and it is safe to do so, drop the kettlebell and move out of the way.
- Use the correct weighted kettlebell to achieve perfect technique. Good programme design will ensure that the lifter starts at an intensity that is appropriate to the users capabilities.

Whilst strength and power training is suitable for the majority of people, there are some individuals with conditions that could prevent them from taking part in this kind of exercise session or particular exercises. These conditions would include:

- hypertension
- osteoarthritis/rheumatoid arthritis
- pregnancy
- severe osteoporosis

These are relative contraindications therefore adaptations to weight, rep range, exercise selection and execution of the technique should be considered with appropriate modifications made.

## Section 2: Kettlebell Programme Design

An effective programme design requires the creation and implementation of a series of logically progressive training phases, with each phase building on the foundation of the previous one.

When designing the programme consider the ability and level of fitness of the person it is for and programme the session accordingly, mastering the basics before moving onto more complex exercises. Programmes can be specifically created to meet the demands of each client and achieve their desired goals.

Kettlebell training can be manipulated to specifically place demands on the body and stress each of the energy systems creatine phosphate, lactate and aerobic by manipulating the variables in the programme.

### Set and Rep Guidelines

The guidelines for different training goals can easily be applied to kettlebell training. Some exercises within a kettlebell session are far more dynamic and explosive than others, so are more suited to particular training goals i.e. power and should be specific to the clients goals. The time under tension of muscles during particular exercises can also be used to determine the length of sets to conform to various training goals exercise selection is therefore an important factor to consider.

Kettlebells are usually programmed as full body sessions rather than training specific body parts however the guidelines adapted for resistance training are still applicable.

REPETITIONS per set	SETS per exercise	Rest Period	Training MODALITY
1 - 5 Reps	2 - 6	2 minutes or more dependent on level of intensity	Strength
5 - 8 Reps	2 - 6	1 - 2 minutes dependent on level of intensity	Strength w / some Hypertrophy
8 - 10 Reps	2 - 6	1 minute	Mainly Hypertrophy w / some strength gains
10 - 12 Reps	2 - 6	1 minute	Hypertrophy
12 - 15 Reps	2 - 3	30 - 45 secs	Muscular Endurance w / some hypertrophy
15 - 20 Reps and above	2 - 3	30 - 45 secs	Muscular Endurance

### Warm up and Cool down

A warmup appropriate for the client, environment and training session must be completed to prepare for the session to follow. Consideration must be given to muscles in the body that will be the dominant force during the session and ensure that they are sufficiently warmed up prior to the session.

It should consist of a pulse raiser, dynamic movements and exercises of a similar nature to those planned in the session. A cool down must be included to return the body to a resting state, consisting of a pulse lowering activity and appropriate stretches to maintain or develop flexibility.

### Warm up Drills

A variety of drills can be used for teaching correct technique as well as warming up. The drills will therefore introduce some specific kettlebell techniques and aim to activate muscles that will be needed during the performance of various exercises.

A series of small cardiovascular intervals mixed with specific dynamic movements to prepare the body for the kettlebell session should be used. An example warm up is listed below in table 1 and table 2.

## Main Conditioning Session

Basic guidelines when designing sessions still apply. Highly skilled movements and compound exercises should be planned at the start of the session, ensuring a balanced approach to the selection of muscles targeted in the session. Due to the nature of kettlebell training it may mean that all exercises planned are skilled complex and compound movements. It is then down to the skill set of the trainer to order these appropriately, according to the complexity of the exercise and the ability of the client.

Note: For beginners simply teaching the mechanics of the swing and incorporating other exercises with other training equipment may be the most suitable dependant on ability and fitness levels. The trainer should assess this on an individual basis. The tables below show examples of a strength based kettlebell session and a muscular endurance based kettlebell session respectively.

Warm up: A series of small CV intervals mixed with specific dynamic movements to prepare the body for the kettlebell session.				
Round 1 CV - Rowing machine 90 secs RPE 2-3. Walkouts, KB march, banded Y raise 10-12 reps of each				
Round 2 CV Rowing machine 90 secs RPE 3-4. good mornings, banded-dislocates, mountain climber & rotation 10-12 reps				
Round 3 Rowing machine 90 seconds RPE 5-6. banded glute bridges, press ups, shoulder taps 10-12 reps of each				
<b>Main Session:</b>				
Exercise	Method	Sets & Reps	Rest	Notes
KB Swing	Setting	3 x 6	3 min	Hinge at the hips Squeeze shoulder blades Weight in heels, chest up
Double KB Squat clean and press	Setting	3 x 6	1 min	
Snatch	Setting	3 x 6 e/s	1 min	
Turkish Get Up (TGU)	Setting	2 x 3 e/s	1 min	
Cool Down:				
Cardiovascular exercise with a gradual decrease from RPE 5 – 1 over a time period of 4 – 5 minutes				
Followed by a full body stretching routine with static maintenance and static developmental stretches.				

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<b>Main Session:</b>				
Exercise	Method	Sets & Reps	Rest	Notes
KB Swing KB Front Squats	Super Set	2 x 20	1 min	Hinge at the hips Squeeze shoulder blades Weight in heels, chest up
Double KB Clean	Setting	2 x 10 – 12	1 min	
KB SDHP Russian Twists Double over head press	Tri Set	2 x 12 – 15	1 min	
Turkish Get Up (TGU)	Setting	2 x 3 e/s	1 min	
Cool Down:				
Cardiovascular exercise with a gradual decrease from RPE 5 – 1 over a time period of 4 – 5 minutes				
Followed by a full body stretching routine with static maintenance and static developmental stretches.				

# Unit 2: How to Instruct a Kettlebell Session

## Unit Aim:

Learners will develop a range of the skills to be able to demonstrate and instruct effective and safe kettlebell training sessions in both groups and to an individual.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate and instruct a variety of different kettlebell exercises.
- Instruct a Kettlebell session to groups and individuals with competence
- Evaluate a kettlebell session and identify strengths and weaknesses

## The Kettlebell Lifts

Using kettlebells safely requires good technique. The majority of the kettlebell exercises are full body, integrated movements that are technically demanding. They are developed through practice and good postural awareness.

Postural awareness will protect the spine during kettlebell exercises. It is vitally important that participants engage their core muscles during the exercises and understand how to keep a neutral spine, which the trainer should teach prior to starting the session.

During the warm-up, specific preparation exercises can be used to work on technique and prepare the body for the session.

### Front Squat

**Primary Muscles:** Quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteal, calves, deltoids, core

**Overview:** the kettlebell front squat exercise has all the benefits of a barbell front squat and is a good introductory exercise to kettlebell usage.



#### Teaching Points

- Hold the kettlebell in a single or double handed 'racked' position
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Brace the abdominal muscles to create intra-abdominal pressure
- Initiate the squat by flexing at the hips and knees
- Lower slowly to hips parallel with knees
- From the bottom position push the ground away with your feet keeping the chest lifted throughout and maintain a neutral spine
- Drive knees in line with toes or wider
- Return to the standing position and concentrate on getting the hips forward and squeezing the glutes

#### Alternative Options

- Single arm racked position
- Double arm racked position
- Single or double kettlebell lunges

## Kettlebell Clean

**Primary Muscles:** Hamstrings, quadriceps, gluteal, upper back, deltoids, trapezius, biceps

**Overview:** advancement from the single hand swing incorporating the upper body to develop upper body strength and power. It is important that clients understand the top 'racked' position of the kettlebell and understand the thumb to sternum coaching cue



### Teaching Points

- Squat down to Kettlebell and take a reverse grip
- Drive your feet into the floor, extend the knees and clean the kettlebell upward as close to the body as possible
- Lead with the elbow to do this then dynamically whip the elbow underneath the kettlebell to gain a vertical forearm (keep the wrist strong). Allow the kettlebell to wrap around the forearm
- The kettlebell should be close to the body in the 'racked' position on the outside of the forearm (keep the body strong)
- In this position do not relax or let the kettlebell drop away to the side
- To reverse the action let the kettlebell drop in towards the midline of the body while simultaneously bringing the elbow out and high

### Alternative options

- Clean and Press

## Kettlebell Swing

**Primary Muscles:** Core, quadriceps, gluteal, erector spinae, hamstrings

**Overview:** Strengthening the posterior muscle chain within a dynamic exercise that includes both acceleration and deceleration phases. The swing has a massive carry over to general activity and sports due to the powerful snapping hip extension involved. It is also a great exercise for mastering techniques, positions and postures for other exercises involving hip extension. The swing must be completed with competence before progressing to exercises such as kettlebell cleans and snatch.



### Teaching Points

- Hold the kettlebell in a single or double handed 'racked' position
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Brace the abdominal muscles to create intra-abdominal pressure
- Initiate the squat by flexing at the hips and knees
- Lower slowly to hips parallel with knees
- From the bottom position push the ground away with your feet keeping the chest lifted throughout and maintain a neutral spine
- Drive knees in line with toes or wider
- Return to the standing position and concentrate on getting the hips forward and squeezing the glutes

### Alternative Options

- Single arm swing
- Single arm alternating swing
- Double kettlebell swing

## Shoulder press

**Primary Muscles:** Deltoids, triceps, upper trapezius, latissimus dorsi, core

**Overview:** A very effective upper body strengthening exercise that works the shoulder through a good range of motion and increases shoulder stability



### Teaching Points

- Start with the kettlebell in the 'racked' position with thumb to sternum and the feet well grounded
- Press the kettlebell up vertically, keeping the forearm vertical and the wrist fixed throughout
- Straighten the arm with the palm of the hand facing forwards
- Stabilise the shoulder and contract the triceps so the arm is straight
- Lower the kettlebell under control and pull it back into the 'racked' position

### Alternative Options

- Double kettlebell Shoulder press
- alternating kettlebell shoulder press
- Kettlebell Thruster

## Snatch

**Primary Muscles:** Quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteals, rhomboids, trapezius, latissimus dorsi, biceps deltoids, pectorals, triceps

**Overview:** A technically very demanding exercise and a continuation of the kettlebell swing. Often used as a test of kettlebell competence and strength and fantastic for conditioning to train and produce power.



### Teaching Points:

- Begin the snatch by performing a one-arm swing
- Utilise the "hip-snap" to get the arc of the bell high but at the top of the arc continue to move the kettlebell up to a vertical arm position
- Use a high pull action by bending the arm followed by a fast vertical punch upwards to fully straighten the arm
- Use a fast, smooth punching action to catch the bell at the top and prevent it from banging the forearm
- Pause, looking forwards with the arm straight next to the ear and the shoulder stable
- Lower the bell so it drops down between the legs

### Alternative Options:

- Alternating one arm snatch
- Double kettlebell snatch

## Sumo Deadlift High Pull

**Primary Muscles:** Core Hamstrings Quadriceps Gluteal Muscles Erector Spinae Upper back muscles

**Overview:** : The kettlebell sumo deadlift high pull is a dynamic kettlebell exercise that focuses on explosive power of the posterior chain throughout the body. This exercise can be utilised for all training modalities through manipulation of reps sets weights and rest periods.



### Teaching Points:

- Stand over the top of the kettlebell with feet hip width apart
- Squat down and grip the kettlebell with both hands
- Maintain a straight back and brace the abdominal muscles
- Drive your feet into the floor as hard as you can and move up through the squat pulling the kettlebell with you
- Maintain straight arms until you have fully extended the legs and knees and hips are locked out simultaneously pulling the kettlebell to chest height
- Drive the elbows up and keep the knuckles facing the floor through
- Return to start position keeping the kettlebell close to the body and repeat

### Alternative Options:

- Front Squat
- KB Thruster

## Turkish Get Up

**Primary Muscles:** Whole Body

**Overview:** This exercise focuses on the whole body and is technically very demanding.



### Teaching Points:

- Start in a supine lying position with the kettlebell pressed above the head and arm locked out
- Look at the kettlebell the whole time
- Flex the knee on the same side as the kettlebell with the foot planted
- Sit up keeping the kettlebell arm vertical until the empty arm is straight
- Lift the hips and move the straight leg underneath the body into a lunge position, keeping the kettlebell arm vertical and looking at the kettlebell
- When in a lunge position look forwards and push up to a standing position
- Reverse the actions under control to the start position

### Alternative Options

- Breakdown TGU into separate sections/exercises
- Kettlebell windmills

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