



Marathon-Crossfit

Ultimate Guide to Kettlebells

After Testing multiple variations myself this is
the ultimate free introduction to the topic

made with

Beacon

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Introduction

The ultimate guide to Kettlebells summarizes three years of experience with kettlebells as an accessory movement to a powerlifting schedule. You will find instructions on how to swing, how often to exercise and how to acquire kettlebells yourself.

Kettlebells are often overlooked by strength athletes and martial artists alike. Increasing your maximum strength is tempting, but it is not everything.

In addition to absolute strength you need to develop strength endurance, explosiveness and grip strength. The kettlebell helps you reach these goals without being too technical in its use.

Key Subjects

This eBook will show you how to get started and progress to pro level in kettlebells:

- You will learn how to swing better than most people
- You will learn to master the turkish get up
- You will learn when kettlebells are harmful and how to avoid these scenarios

I hope you enjoy the read. I have handpicked the kettlebell content from my blog which is most popular and based on the theories I learned from Pavel Tsatsoulin. After three years of training with kettlebells I am hope it gives you the jumpstart you are looking for.

Pascal

About The Author

I am your independent coach, mentor and lab rat who tests the fitness industry for you to save you time. My life cricles around my family, job and performing in the gym.

Marathon-Crossfit exists since 2014. After running three marathons in Vienna, Frankfurt and Dublin I set the goal to reach a550kg powerlifting total and run a 3.30 marathon in the same year.

A movement in the making

I have authored some of the most popular reviews on the internet for well known lifting programs like Stronglifts 5x5, Wendler 531 and German Volume Training.

When I wrote this eBook I just moved from Dublin to Berlin to follow my wifes passion. My two children study in Ireland und the United Kingdom.



The basics

The next five chapters online the basics of kettlebell training for men and women. They are largely based on the book simple and sinister from Pavel Tsatsoulin. I recommend reading the book to understand one of the best programs I have come across for kettlebells in depth.

Can I kettlebell train everyday?



Can I kettlebell train every day?

The short answer is no, as you will get sick and have other commitments. As the question in itself lacks context this article will provide the necessary scenarios, workouts, and rep schemes and look at the question under which

circumstances it could be a yes.

The question lacks context

As so very often on the internet when it comes to fitness the question "**Can I kettlebell train every day?**" **lacks context**. The most likely answer is no if you take the question literally as you will not train every day with a kettlebell from today onward until the day you die.

You will travel, get married, get sick and so further. While this is a "Too smart for the room answer" it is in itself correct. What you might be looking for raising this question is **whether you should make kettlebell training a part of your daily routine**.

I will walk you through the main points based on my own experience and what I have read so that you identify what might be best for you.

Personally, I swing a 32kg kettlebell with no problem whatsoever and do Turkish get-ups with it. I am generally healthy, have run three marathons, did a **300-pound bench press** and a **400-pound deadlift** aged 32.

What is your goal?

For more context, it is **important to know what your goals are and how you would like to achieve them**. "Can I kettlebell train every day" is a question which clients usually raise way too early in the process. In search of a quick solution to achieve a poorly formulated goal. I have been there myself and 9 out of 10 clients start with poor goals.

Your goal is poor when it sounds something like this:

"I want to lose weight and shape up while not having to put in too much effort in as I do not have a lot of time. To achieve this I want to do a bit of cardio, strength training, and team sports. I will do a little bit of everything and will train 6 times a week."

This mindset will not get results for one simple reason: there is no result defined. In addition, this way of thinking has not committed time and resources to achieve a goal and doing some research and testing which tool might be best suited to progress. You only have a limited amount of time in the day. To get results something's got to give. What is also overlooked in this scenario is the time and effort which has to be spent to arrange all of the different activities and learn the movement patterns. All in all, there will be a lot of time wasted and it is not unlikely that frustration will creep in for you very quickly.

A better goal set can be:

"I want to lose 5kg within the next two months. I will achieve this by going into a caloric deficit. For me, as a woman who is 35 years old, 175cm tall and weighs 70kg with a sedentary job this means eating less than 1800 calories a day. To support my weight loss and tightening my butt so that it looks nice in leggings I have chosen kettlebell swings as a supporting exercise as I can do them from home. Here I would like to lose 1 inch around the waist at least. I have carved out three hours a week in the mornings before I make breakfast for the kids to support this."

This goal set is better as **it is relevant to the specific person, focuses on one particular area and picked an exercise which attacks it specifically** and the trainee understands that getting up early to make the extra time, if other activities are not given up, is a necessary sacrifice to get results. In addition, the client has understood that **there are two battlefields, the kitchen, and the gym**, where the fitness results are being made or broken. It is also important to understand that your exercise regime does not exist in a vacuum. You have friends, a job, family and other commitments to take care of.

After discussing two explicit examples let me walk you through the most commonly found goal sets in the industry and whether kettlebells can help here.

A major area of fitness is the question of fat loss, weight loss and getting

into shape. Usually asked for more by women than by men. For this goal set light kettlebell training which gets the heart rate up and can be done from home seems to work very well. Similar results can, however, be achieved with just body weight exercises. Bikinibodymommy or Joe wicks Lean in 15 programs are good examples of this. The advantage of kettlebells is that you will get better strength and toning results than with just bodyweight. The spatial awareness and training to manipulate objects is something which bodyweight exercises do not provide. In addition, you will get the same results with fewer repetitions if you perform exercises against resistance. If you already have wear and tear injuries in the knee or shoulder 8 - 12 kettlebell swings might be a better option than 50 squats.

Strength gains are another major field of fitness for which kettlebells can be used. This goal set is usually more related to male fitness enthusiasts than female. Based on my own experience the kettlebell is a great tool for building strength in areas which are being undertrained if you only use barbell exercises. It will also help you to be more explosive and get more isometric work into your routine. Since I am making kettlebell swings and Turkish get-ups part of my warm up I feel that my body functions better as a unit through a more stable midsection and bulletproof joints. For absolute strength gains, the barbell is the more distributed and better-understood tool as heavy kettlebells are rarely available and only very few trainers can claim extensive experience with them.

Aesthetics is the third and for me most elusive goal set in fitness.

Aesthetics are highly subjective and defined by the standards of the community you want to present yourself in. The kettlebell cannot really help you with this. Here it is more about understanding what the requirements are, knowing how to act, talk to the right people and get your diet, supplements, and makeup right. This is also the area I am least experienced in do some additional research.

What is your status quo?

Based on how active you are already the next question becomes whether

you should (not can) kettlebell train every day. Here are some of the most common scenarios.

Coach potatoes who have not done anything for years in terms of physical have a higher likelihood of success if they start out with a less extreme approach. Good starter programs which I and clients have stuck to are programs which get you from zero to exercising three times a week. The importance here that you prioritize your exercising before other activities and make this a conscious decision. This is the most important part for couch potatoes to get going. Three times a week is a fine protocol for this.

Runner's usually looked into strength training to get more variety in their routine or because they have injured themselves and now want to strengthen the affected area. If you are looking into kettlebell training to become more resilient and less injury prone as a runner I think you are making a great choice. Personally, I have been an injury-free runner for three years with mileage between 50 to a 100 miles monthly when preparing for my marathons. I supported my running with the Stronglifts 5x5 program. Knowing what I know now I can confidently say that kettlebells would have done more with less effort when I was mainly focused on running.

For lifters, the kettlebell becomes interesting as accessory work to train the posterior chain and hamstrings. If you feel stuck on a certain lift and want to progress or if you have mobility issues in the hips and ankles, kettlebells are a great tool to help you in these areas. Since I have implemented kettlebell swings as a warm up to my lifting sessions my overhead presses and beltless lifts have gone through the roof and match my belted lifts. I also find it way more fun to work up a sweat with swings than on a concept 2 rowing machine. Compared to other accessory routines I have been doing I also need a lot less equipment and space using a kettlebell.

For the elderly and patients in rehab, I would advise caution when using any loaded exercises. Work with your professional on body weight exercises and stretches to enhance the range of motion first to get ready for compound movements like kettlebell exercises.

How much time can you spend?

Even if we take the question of "Can you kettlebell train every day" less literally I still tend to a no based on best practices on recovery and social commitments.

Three times a week is the usual go to for the average joe. You will not progress the fastest, but safely and steadily. This schedule also works with everyday life.

Four to five times a week is the schedule I am personally on. I try to keep the weekends free as this is the time of the week where I can spend time with my wife as we both have full-time jobs. In terms of recovery, I also have at least one 48 hour window to recover from the work I accumulated during the week. If you have children and a life beside the gym but want to be above average this your aim.

You can do **kettlebell training every day**, especially when it is the only form of exercising you do. The intensity at 10 repetitions or above per set is relatively low and recovery can happen overnight. This is different to intense barbell training where the muscles need to recover longer in intermediates. Additionally, most people who pose a question like "Can I kettlebell train every day" are beginners and need only 24 hours to recover in general. If you want to know more about this read "Practical Programming for Strength Training" by Mark Rippetoe.

Which type of kettlebell exercises?

You should keep it simple as simple usually gets results. The simple and sinister regime from Pavel Tsatsoulin recommends the **swing and Turkish get up only**. The circuit programs you will find on the internet are way too lenient with the use of complex movements like windmills and snatches. It takes considerable time and effort to master the swing and Turkish get up

and they built the foundation to put more complex movements on top of them.

The American swing which leads the kettlebell overhead is also highly debated. I personally feel like I get more activation of my abs and hamstrings out of the Russian swing than the American one with the lesser risk of injury. The American swing cannot be done as aggressively and goes overhead, which puts more stress on the shoulder and can lead to dropping the weight from higher up ? on yourself.

The Turkish get-up is preferable to the snatch as it is the simplest overhead movement to teach and also addresses isometric strength. The snatch is one of the most complex movements you can do, be it barbell or kettlebell, and is thrown into freely available programs on the internet way too lightly.

Look up the certifications from Strongfirst and read at least one of Pavel Tsatsoulin's books, like simple and sinister, to understand why it should be kept simple as proper strength execution is about focus and power, not about being fancy.

What do kettlebells work?

If done correctly **kettlebell swings work the posterior chain, the midsection of your body and cardiovascular system.** The correct execution is usually brushed over on the internet so here is some insight for you.

For the correct execution of the swing, the main point is that you **remain tension in your entire body and control the kettlebell.** The momentum in the swing is produced by your body, not the kettlebell itself.

To ensure this for the posterior chain **squeeze your glutes at the top of the swing and tighten your abs** as if you were about to be hit in the stomach. The top of the swing is a plank, not a spaghetti twist.

On the way down it is **you who accelerates the weight down** almost like a

medicine ball slam. You do not weight for the kettlebell to pull you down, you force it down. This is done through the arms and hip hinge, not by squatting.

If you keep maximum tension during each set the heart rate will go up by itself and you will start to sweat after the third set latest. If you don't you are doing it wrong. Take rest so that you can comfortably talk to another person again and hit the next set with full intensity.

How many swings?

You will find several programs out there and some of the most popular blog posts will recommend anything between 100 to 1000 swings a day. It depends on how you train and what you want to do.

100 swings are the program that I am currently on for 10x10 sets. As my training is strength focused I milk every single repetition to the maximum per the guidance taken from the Simple and Sinister book. If you do this hardstyle type of training 100 swings is more than enough and there is no need to go any further, After 100 swings and 10 Turkish get-ups you will still be ready to do some heavy work while sweating.

300 swings a day is a recommendation from a popular breaking muscle article. Based on the context of the article to distribute these 300 repetitions during an entire day this makes sense. However, you might lack focus when you just get ten to fifty repetitions in between brushing your teeth and going to bed. If you want to lose fat and mainly stay at home during the day this regime is good for you

1000 swings are based on a popular post on T nation which takes it to the extreme. It is doable and I have been on this program for three months. This is for hardcore lifters who want to take a break offseason from deadlifts especially when their lower backs are giving them trouble. For 90% of the population, this is not recommended even though it might be tempting.

Conclusion

Yes, you can kettlebell train every day and I think you should not. The main reason for me is to keep the weekend free for family and to get some head space. If you reformulate the question into "Can you kettlebell train every weekday" it is definite yes for me and something that lifters, runners and couch potatoes should strive towards. There are only little if no other tools in the fitness industry which provide so much intensity on so many levels in this little a space.

Further reading

- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)
- [How the simple kettlebell works for your well being](#)
- [How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong](#)
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- [Where do kettlebell swings target?](#)
- [Where to buy kettlebell sets?](#)
- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)
- [Which kettlebell weight should I buy?](#)
- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [How often a week can you do the kettlebell swing](#)
- [Kettlebells are best everyday](#)

- Can you do total body workouts with kettlebells every day?
- How many times a week can you do kettlebell exercises?
- 300 swings day for faster fat loss
- How often should you do a kettlebell workout?
- Why you should be doing kettlebell swings daily
- How often a week can you do the kettlebell swing
- Can you do kettlebell every day?

Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?



Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?

This article will discuss running and kettlebell swings as a means of weight loss for beginners which is the most common scenario. Generally the question "Can kettlebell swings replace cardio" has to be answered with no as there is a lack of context. In most scenarios which are relevant for beginners fitness goals, it can be answered with yes.

What is your goal

When posting a fitness question it is always important that you do not forget what the purpose is in the first place. Ask yourself the question if you want to kettlebell swing or do cardio as both of them are just a means to an end. The usual goals of people who pose this question are

1. Weight loss

1. Health reasons
2. General well-being reasons

Kettlebell swings are often discussed as an alternative to the ever so dreaded running or jogging. This question is, in my opinion, easier to answer than "Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts" as we have a different target group in front of us to which the question of running or kettlebell swinging applies.

So once we have established that you want to achieve one of those three things and why you want to achieve it like looking better, being able to play with your kids or to lower the risk of cardiac arrest the next thing is to ask yourself how extreme your goals are. The more extreme your goal is the more likely it will become that only one of these two tools is not enough to build your dream. The more specific and extreme you get the more tools you have to use to get to where you want to go. This does not only apply to fitness, but to business also.

So before posting the question between kettlebells and running just to avoid running, ask yourself first what your actual goals are. Quantify them, break them down over months and have a look at how much time you are willing and able to invest to reach these goals. This will make the choice a lot easier.

In my personal case, I went down the running route in 2013. After getting random nose bleeds from high blood pressure once to twice a week my wife said she would leave me if I did not do anything about my health and fat body. I signed up for the Dublin marathon with six months to go. I lost 15kg in the process and finished in 3:58. I never looked back since.

My experience with kettlebells is similar to that of many beginners. I wanted to stay strong while running and got two 14kg kettlebells from my wife for my birthday in October 2013. At first, I fell for circuit training with high repetitions to burn fat. I would not recommend that regime knowing what I know now. I and kettlebells parted ways from 2014 to 2017 when I picked them up again as a warm up to my Juggernaut method training.

The question "Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?" lacks context

As outlined before the question lacks context and is therefore in itself answered with no. The most common context for beginners is that they are searching for the best way to keep fit with the least amount of hassle, money and time invested.

Fit in this scenario is fit compared to being sedentary and sitting at a desk for 8 hours a day and finishing the day up on the couch. This leads to a bit of a belly and being out of breath when chasing the kids around the playground on the weekend. In addition, you might even want to look a bit more attractive for your spouse or potential partners you meet at social gatherings. Another context can be that you have been to the doctor and you have been told it is about time to get active. These are all scenarios in which the either/or question between the two tools is actually valid.

For people who want to stay generally fit with a dislike of running and being outdoors, I personally think based on experience and feedback from others that kettlebells are the better tool than running. Kettlebells leave less room for excuses based on weather, not having the right gear or having to go to the gym. There are also more people expressing a dislike for running than for kettlebell workouts. They will get you in shape and probably even faster for the aforementioned goals if performed correctly. To ensure good form and execution [read Simple and Sinister from Pavel Tsatsoulin](#) and get yourself assessed by a Strongfirst certified professional.

On the other hand, if you are an outdoor person and like to socialize the better route for you to travel is to join a local running club. Take a friend with you who is on the same level as you and who is not your spouse. Based on my experience bringing someone who is not on your level, is your spouse or worse, both, will lead to unnecessary tension at home. Do it under your own steam and tell your friends about how you are doing and what you are struggling with. Once fitness levels at home are on par, do something

together. That is a better use of everyone's time.

There is a subset of people who set themselves the goal of a "couch to 5k" plan. If you are among this group running is the preferred option as your goal is specifically tied to running. [The programs of Hal Higdon are good and easy to follow.](#) I used them myself when I [prepared for my three marathons.](#)

If you want to run a distance that is longer than 5k you also will have to run to some capacity to improve your VO2 max and lower your resting heart rate. These are the two main indicators to perform well in long distance running events.

Others might want to cut some minutes and seconds of their established long distance times. While running will stay the core of your weekly routine kettlebell swings have been recorded to improve running times when incorporated on top of the mileage that is already being done. The research is not conclusive on this one though. In my personal case I found that strength training decreased my risk of injury when I ran.

Running

Running itself is the one exercise which led me to lose the most weight on my way to a fitter self. With beginners, I see the following challenges why they do not get the results they want

1. They overdo it the first time when they run
2. If they stick with it they lack intensity
3. When they have intensity there is no overarching goal
4. Diet

Let's start with the most obvious one which is diet. If you eat 5 mars bars a day, drink one bottle of coca cola and smoke a packet of cigarettes and then go out for a walk around the block and pat yourself on the back you

are misguided. Of course, getting out at all is better than doing nothing but with this kind of intake you have to work ten times harder to get results as someone who does not shoot himself/herself in the foot on a daily basis. For this scenario work on your diet week over week cutting back from 5 bars to 3, one bottle of coca cola to half and half a packet of cigarettes. After a month of half the intake cut out one of the three (I recommend the cigarettes, my mother died of lung cancer aged 52. She was slim.). After another month cut out the next thing (I recommend replacing coca cola with water).

Once you have these diet changes down start running. I cut out all of my alcohol intakes in 2013 in preparation for the marathon after living in a bachelor pad where Guinness was always readily available from the fridge.

Another phenomenon I see especially in men is that they overdo it when they go out for a run for the first time. If your lungs burn when you come home you have done it wrong. No surprise, that this experience is not pleasant and you say "F*** this, can I do kettlebell swings instead or glue some electrodes to my body while I watch the Superbowl". For your first month running apply the talk test. You should run at an intensity which lets you comfortably talk to someone else who is right beside you.

Once you overcome the first month with the talk test you have formed a new habit of running. Congratulations you have built a basis. The next thing to implement is intensity. The simplest way of getting intensity in are [Fartlek runs](#). Pick a stone, tree, lantern, street corner or whatever you can think of on your run. Sprint towards it as hard as you can. Once reached continue running at a slower pace which lets you recover and repeat the process. The goal is to get more and longer Fartlek sprints into your routine. Another way of implementing intensity are interval runs, but [for this, you need a runner's watch](#) as the setups with smartphones for intervals are usually cumbersome.

By this time you are 2 - 6 months into the process and should have lost at least 5kg (i am being very conservative here). Now it is time to pick an overarching goal like running a 10k or improve your time on shorter

distances.

Kettlebell swings

Kettlebell swings are another method to lose unwanted pounds and stay fit. For the purpose of losing fat, I recommend to keep it simple and read the Simple and sinister book by Pavel Tsatsoulin.

You will perform two exercises, the swing, and the Turkish Get-up. You will do 100 kettlebell swings in 10x10 sets and 10 Turkish get-ups, five each side alternating, each day. Start with a weight you can dominate and move on from there. Most important things to consider on kettlebell training:

- Stand ramrod straight at the top of the swing. Avoid hyperextending your back
- Brace your abs. The top of the swing is a plank
- The swing is a hip hinge, not a squat
- The swing is ballistic, not a pendulum
- Pack your shoulders on the Turkish get-up
- The Turkish get-up is a flowing motion, no jerking
- The Turkish get-up has to be performed in a way that you would feel a 100% secure even if you were performing it with 100kg
- The foot remains planted during the entire Turkish get up

Get professional instruction from a Strongfirst coach on the kettlebell before going full on.

Cost

The challenge with running is that you need new shoes about every six months if you take it seriously. [A good pair comes in at 100€/€ depending on where you are, what is on sale and what you personally prefer.](#) With

kettlebells, you do not need any shoes whatsoever and can constantly build your home gym. Long term this makes 1000 invested in kettlebells look a lot different than in running shoes. With kettlebells, you will have a fully functioning gym which the entire family can use and even sell if you grow tired of them. With running shoes, you will have a pile of smelly, muddy dog toys which are riddled with holes.

Kettlebell swings vs. running

As long as you do not want to build your resume as a marathon runner or triathlon competitor kettlebells can replace running and might even be the better overall exercise for weight loss for beginners with limited time. The risk of injury is lower and for most people, it is also more fun to do. You save space and time and can do it independently from the weather. If you now object and point to treadmills... [I think treadmills are as useless an invention as wireless cables](#) (which have actually been sold on eBay...) or alcohol-free beer.

The first twenty minutes and some theory

If you want to dig deeper into why I think that for the target group who usually poses the question "Can kettlebell swings replace cardio" it does not really matter which of the two is picked [read the book the first twenty minutes](#). It provides good insight on why it matters that you do something for twenty minutes in terms of exercise (but not what) and that the return on investment quickly diminishes outside this window for average Joes/Janes.

The technical debate among professionals mainly circles around two studies which have been conducted in 2010 and 2013 lead by exercise scientist [John Porcari of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse](#). Here kettlebell swings were used with inexperienced subjects who gained in strength as well as cardiovascular capabilities which were unexpected.

Most online articles will reference one or both of these studies to support the cardiovascular benefits of kettlebell swings when compared to running.

Conclusion

The general question "Can kettlebell swings replace cardio" has to be answered with no as it is too broad. If we just slightly amend it to "Can kettlebell swings replace cardio in most fitness scenarios" if we take the fitness goals of the general public as a measuring stick the answer is yes.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
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- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)
- [Which kettlebell weight should I buy?](#)
- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [Strong First Forum discussion](#)
- [LimitlesslyFit: Can a kettlebell Workout replace Cardio exercise?](#)
- [Breaking Muscle: Kettlebells as a cardio tool: Yay or Nay?](#)
- [Mark's daily apple forum discussion](#)
- [Livestrong: Kettlebell vs. running](#)
- [Bodybuilding.com: Saved by the kettlebell: Torch Fat, Build strength, and improve cardio fitness with one move](#)
- [Paige Kumpf: Why kettlebell exercises aren't a good exercise for cardio](#)
- [Chron: Is the kettlebell Swing good for cardio?](#)
- [Jake Dermer: Kettlebell swings are better than running](#)
- [Paleo hacks: Running and/or kettlebells?](#)
- [Early to rise: Kettlebells vs. Sprints](#)
- [Early to rise: Circuits vs. Cardio](#)

How many sets for the kettlebell?



How many sets for the kettlebell?

You will usually perform somewhere between five to ten sets of kettlebell swings depending on what you want to achieve. Strength calls for less at higher load, while cardio is biased towards more repetitions in less time with a lower load.

The question lacks context

As so often in fitness the question lacks context as I do not know you personally and what you are trying to do. How many sets you use for the kettlebell highly depends on your goals, who you are and how much time you can spend on exercising. Regular readers of my blog will already know this, still, it never harms to repeat this, as this is often forgotten by athletes and trainers alike.

For context, you need to consider your

Height

Weight

Age

Fitness level

Experience with the kettlebell

as you are most likely putting this question out to the internet hoping for a proper answer it is very likely you are a beginner on the topic. More experienced strength enthusiasts usually have already some grasp on what works and what does not. To keep it simple the bigger, fitter, younger and more experienced you are, the more swings per set and the more sets you will generally do. For you, the exact opposite is most likely true. In the next few paragraphs, you will find rep and set schemes which have stood the test of time and a comment on them to help you make up your mind about what to do.

What is your goal

Based on what your goals in fitness are it will influence how you train and what repetition and set schemes you will pick. There three main areas in the industry that everyone pursues:

Looks

Performance

Health

If you are mainly about looks and want to build muscle your repetitions and sets will be biased towards a higher number of sets and repetitions at a lower intensity. If you want to lose weight, but not build a lot of muscle, you will go for even lighter weights for as many repetitions for time or interval training. Individuals who are interested in strength performance will usually go for a lower number of repetitions and sets at a higher load for a stimulus biased towards making the muscles stronger with moderate growth.

5x5

Five sets of five repetitions are the backbone of any advanced lifting program which is worth the paper that it is written on. In these scenarios, you will operate with comparative heavyweights with relatively low number of repetitions. This is a template which is more suited for experienced powerlifters when it comes to kettlebell training. IN most cases, you will not find kettlebells which are heavy enough in average gyms to performing this template with proper gains, while still staying true to the ballistic nature of the swing.

10x10

Ten by ten is the template prescribed by Kettlebell legend Pavel Tsatsoulin in his book simple and sinister. This is the number of sets and repetitions which will build muscle and cardiovascular strength while still maintaining perfect execution on each repetition. If you go higher than ten repetitions I usually find a break down of form easier in aggression or form depending on the client.

On the minute

In this template, you do 20 swings every minute on the minute. If you are done quicker than in a minute you got to rest until it starts again. Sounds simple enough, but try it. If you make fifteen minutes increase weight for next time and pat yourself on the back.

High-intensity interval training

This is little different from on the minute training as you go all balls out for 20 to 45 seconds with the same amount of rest between sets. It is similar but produces a different kind of stress. This type of training is often recommended to beginners, which it should not as the pressure of clock leads to poor execution at a beginners level.

Conclusion

It depends on your goals. If you want to lose weight go with the interval or on the minute training. If you want strength a 5x5 template is a good go to. The golden middle is the 10x10 template with super focus on perfect execution as described in simple and sinister, the book of Pavel Tsatsoulin.

Further reading

- [Extensive Stronglifts 5x5 review](#)
- [Detailed Smolov review](#)
- [Detailed Wendler 531 review](#)
- [German Volume training review](#)
- [Whey protein comparison](#)

How many kettlebell swings?



How many kettlebell swings?

In this article, you will find the factors which will influence how many swings you should do, guidance on how to form fitness goals and finally some templates with advice on what to pick. Based on your level you will do somewhere between 100 - 500 swings with a very high probability of coming in at the low end of 10x10 sets which is plenty.

The question lacks context

The question of how many kettlebell swings you should do lacks context as it depends on who you are and where you want to go in your fitness journey. Based on this you can decide on the number of swings to make you grow and reach your goals. You will mainly find three big fields of interest in fitness.

1. Weight loss
2. Performance
3. Health

The category you are in determines how far you will take the number of swings for a given workout.

If your main goal is weight loss the regime will be most tied to high-intensity interval training or just simply interval training. In this setup, the swings will be as many as possible for a time. The time frame is set somewhere between 10 to 30 seconds and alternates with the same amount of time for rest. The Same approach is taken for circuit training. While these approaches work, keep in mind that you get the most out of kettlebells when you make haste, not speed. You want to be like a precise marksman, not a terrified rabbit running from a fox when you do the kettlebell swing.

If you are majorly interested in performance, specifically strength performance, the swing is a good tool to improve your hip hinge to address the deadlift lockout or develop more explosiveness on the second pull for the Olympic lifts.

If absolute strength in the midsection is your main challenge you might be better off with good mornings or hip thrusts using a barbell. You can go heavy with kettlebells too, however, most gyms do not have the equipment to do so as 24kg or 28kg is the heaviest you will find. Keep in mind that the weight behaves a lot different for kettlebells than for barbells and just try if you do not believe me. Take two 16kg kettlebells and try to do a front squat. Load a barbell with 32.5 kg (barbell + 2 5kg and 1.25kg plates) and do the same. You will see that the kettlebell front squat is easier on your wrists but a lot harder on the legs.

For strength athletes, limit yourself to ten repetitions a set or less depending on the load you pick as you do not have the cardiovascular need to push for as many reps as possible in a limited amount of time. For those, keep high focus and aggressiveness throughout each repetition. Educate yourself on the hardstyle method and keep that in mind.

In terms of health, it is good advice to stick close with what your physiotherapist says on exercise and how much load you can take. Keep in mind that doctors are always very cautious to avoid further injury. Take your time if you are doing rehab from injury. If you are a bit advanced in age and want to do kettlebells to stay fit apply common sense that you might have to get used to the new movements longer than 30 years ago. For health purposes, same applies in terms of a number of swings for strength or fat loss purposes while half overall count to address longer adaptation. That is me being cautious.

Who are you

Apart from fitness goals, it is also important to think of the factors which make you... well... you. These are

- Age
- Weight
- Health
- Fitness

Your age determines unfortunately how fast you recover from any type of stress. Generally, the younger you are the quicker you grow, adapt and recover from and to different types of stress. When picking your amount of swings keep this in mind in correlation with all other factors to stay injury free and have fun with kettlebells.

Weight will also determine what size of kettlebell you will pick and how many swings you will do. The bigger you are the bigger the kettlebell will be you start with given that your mass is muscle and not fat. If you are

overweight pick a kettlebell which is not too light compared to your size. If you weigh 100kg and more and decide to do kettlebells, although I think walking regularly would be a better start until you have lost some weight, flinging a 4kg kettlebell around will not do a lot for you based on your mass (Newton's laws... anyway back to topic). For your weight and swings, same thinking applies as already outlined. Being fat (yes I said it sorry, I was too) means you are a bit more conservative and being a beast allows you to a bit more aggressive when picking a number of swings.

General health is obvious and also should be stated. If you are chronically ill, especially when it comes to matters of the heart and lung, be mindful about the all-out sets for time. This can backfire badly if you get an attack of some kind because you overdid it. If you have problems with your knees the kettlebell swing can be an excellent alternative to the squat as you do not go below parallel. Shoulders and arms should be ok if the swing is performed correctly and not loaded too heavy. If you have shoulder issues stay away from the American swing which brings the weight overhead.

Fitness is another important part of the picture. Even if two people have the same age, height, weight and medical record it does not necessarily mean that they have the same fitness level. Some people are apt at picking up movement patterns while others are better at grinding through lifting a heavy load. Individuals who trained during their teenage years are fitter than the ones who have not. If your diet was always on spot and you avoided alcohol most of your life it is easier to condition your body than one which has been treated like a trash can. Here also, use some common sense when deciding on your number of swings which can work in both directions.

What is your goal

Your goal will determine what kind of exercises will be most beneficial for you to reach it. For this, the three areas outlined for you in this post of performance, health and weight loss are usually too broad.

You are more likely to achieve your goal by making it SMART, which means specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. So a better goal

for performance using kettlebells for weight loss would be:

I want to lose 10kg in 2 months to look my best for my wedding. This means I have to lose a little more than 2kg a week until then. This is important to me as I will look at these pictures my entire life and I want to show my old friends from school that I made something out of myself. To achieve this I will half my calorie intake, split my macros in 40 40 20 and track intake via MyFitnessPal. To further support this goal I will exercise three times a week to build muscle mass doing 100 swings and ten Turkish get-ups with 16kg. For this, I have freed up time on my calendar and prioritized my fitness activities.

As you can see this is not just one line, but a more comprehensive approach to your fitness. It is good advice to break down all of the things which matter to you to this level of detail/

What is your plan

Once you have a goal defined it is also important to decide which tools you will use to achieve it. The kettlebell is one tool you can use and include in your plan while there are other options like dumbbells, barbells, runs and rowing machines which can get you where you want to be. For planning, it is important to

- Know your strengths, weaknesses, and preferences
- Have a grasp on how aggressive your goal is
- Break the goal down into milestones
- Break the milestones down to daily activities

To reach a goal you have to be aware of your status quo and what your strength and weaknesses are. The process of planning includes looking at these and find the optimum way for you personally to reach the goal. If you live in an apartment for rent which is 200 miles away from any gym and you do not have the resources to build your own the plan has to be

adjusted to someone who lives in central New York who has access to five facilities just walking around two blocks.

In addition, it is also good to know and be critical about how aggressive your goal is. The more aggressive the goal is the more detailed the plan has to be to be successful as your margin for error shrinks. So if you want to lose 10kg in a week you better plan all of the meals, calorie intake and gym sessions in advance to have the slightest chance of getting there. If however, you want to lose the same amount of weight in half a year, the plan does not need to be as airtight and you can focus more on monthly or quarterly milestones than daily activities.

A goal should be broken down into digestible milestones to work towards and see whether you are on track. Milestones for kettlebell training can be when you want to move up to the next kettlebell or a certain test of x amount of swings per minute. The standards for the Strongfirst certification are great milestones to aspire to.

Once you have your milestones break them down into daily, repeatable tasks which can be scaled in different directions. This helps you to cope with life and still push on with your training as you do not have to think every time about what you want to do and why. Discipline is the pathway to freedom.

100 swings a day

This the regime personally use. I do 100 swings and 10 Turkish get-ups a day to support my goals of a 200kg back squat and 230kg deadlift. While this is a strength warm-up for me it can be enough for most people to stay fit and healthy their entire life. This workout is done in about 15 minutes including the warm-up and can be done in auto repeat mode. When you start out you might want to increase weight on a monthly basis until progress slows down to quarterly and half yearly.

300 swings a day

300 swings a day is the prescription for serious strength athletes who do not want to use the barbell or athletes who only want to use the kettlebell as a strength supplement in their training. If you are in martial arts and very fit, this can be all you need to do for your strength injection. Be aware that this is an approach which should only be done by individuals who are already a lot fitter than the average population, while the 100 swing routine can be done by anyone who does not have any major health issues to consider.

500 swings a day

[Dan John posted a challenging routine on T Nation](#) which has you do 500 swings a day. Much fun and also grueling. Read the post to form your own opinion. This is only for the hardcore guys and ladies out there.

Which kettlebell weight to pick

Women usually should pick somewhere between 8kg to 16kg while men will start with 12kg to 24kg depending on fitness level, age, weight, and goals. Women tend to underestimate themselves when picking their first kettlebell, well men have a tendency to overestimate what they can use.

Conclusion

The number of swings is highly depending on what you want to do and who you are. Keep these factors in mind when you pick your template to follow. The good thing about swings is that if they are performed correctly, you can do quite a few. Learn about hardstyle swings and start with 100 a day when you are new to strength. If you are already a beast and squat 200kg+ for repetitions, be my guest and pick the heaviest load you can find and do 500 a day.

Further reading

- Can I kettlebell train every day?
- Can kettlebells build muscle?
- Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?
- Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?
- Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?
- Can kettlebell swings replace squats?
- How many kettlebell swings?
- How many sets for the kettlebell?
- How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results
- How the simple kettlebell works for your well being
- How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong
- When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance
- When to use kettlebells?
- Where do kettlebell swings target?
- Where to buy kettlebell sets?
- Which kettlebell should a woman start with?
- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebells get you ripped?
- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Resources

- 300 Swings a day for faster fat loss
- How many kettlebell swings: 50 a day?
- The 30 day kettlebell challenge
- The king of exercises: The kettlebell swing

Which kettlebell should a woman start with



Which kettlebell should a woman start with

This is a valid question which I also asked myself when starting out in the gym again in my late twenties after doing nothing for eight years and getting a belly. For women, the starting weights range from 8kg to 16kg depending on several factors which will be discussed in this article.

Kettlebell training is fun, makes you strong and rounds your butt. All good things if you ask me.

The question lacks context

If you follow my blog on a regular basis you will see that I often open up with this paragraph. I found that when you browse the different platforms and blogs on the internet there are a lot of assumptions in the mix as the ones who post questions do not provide a lot of context. This is also why you have to fill out such long forms when you apply for your taxes. The authorities need your context. Fortunately for fitness, it is a bit easier.

The question "Which kettlebell weight should a woman start with" is already better than "Which kettlebell set should I buy". At least I can conveniently assume that you are a woman or intending to advise a woman on their exercise regimen and/or purchase of kettlebells.

Whenever it comes to weight training the following points should be considered

- Age
- Weight
- Fitness level
- Goal set for training

as this is an Article focusing on women you will be walked through the details of these questions in regards to female requirements for the kettlebell.

Who are you

Based on who you are your context changes for using kettlebells. Generally, the older, less fit and lighter you the lighter the kettlebell should be that you start with. In some cases, especially when you have not exercised for a long time or have chronic exercises, you might not do kettlebell training

at all for a certain period of time. Always consult with your doctor or therapist who knows your record for recommendations

Age influences how our body functions and what we can take. Up until 30, recovery times are relatively quick when it comes to injuries and exercise. This slows for most people in their thirties to then significantly drop after forty. Regular workouts can help to counteract this trend, but not stop it. The longer you have lived an unhealthy lifestyle with bad habits like smoking, unbalanced diet and no exercising and the older you are the more likely it becomes that you should opt for lighter kettlebells to start with. The younger and more well fed and active you are the more likely it becomes that you will start with a heavier weight. Apart from the size of the kettlebell your own mass also plays a role.

The bigger you are the more leverage you have to move a kettlebell. This is based on physics. If you weigh 100kg an 8kg kettlebell does not do a lot for you. Your mass is too much to get the benefit of the exercising tool. If you are a woman weighing 100kg it is safe to say that you are obese by medical standards. In this look into more moderate ways of exercising to get started and work on your diet. Once you have formed new habits of regular exercising and better food choices enter into a mode of learning basic movement patterns like the air squat, push-ups on your knees, knee ups and other exercises. Bikinibodymommy should work, just take it slow as you might get knee problems if you start too fast too much as the emphasis is on speed. As we are talking about fitness programs next on the list is your fitness level.

Weight and age play into your fitness level, however, if you have been active all your life and an athlete in your teenage years you have an advantage. With years of weight training under your belt, you might start with a higher weight. Be aware that especially with years of strength training you might overestimate what you can move on the kettlebell swing. Generally, though, women underestimate their strength and can go one kettlebell up from what they can handle. So if you think you will use an 8kg, maybe move to 12kg instead. With men, this trend is reversed.

Another factor to consider is what type of training you want to do. Is your focus on strength or fat loss. For fat loss, you usually want to do more repetitions than for strength. Your choice of starting weight should reflect this. For strength, you work between 3 to 10 repetitions whereas for fat loss you work with 8 - 20 repetitions per set.

The available time to train is also something to consider. If you train more, you are likely to progress quicker. If you can only buy one kettlebell err on the side of the heavier kettlebell in this case as otherwise, you might have to buy another in 90 days time as you have outgrown the first one. This type of thinking is more suited to fitter women than unfit women. For the latter, it is all about building confidence and better habits. Go for something which makes you feel good every day.

What is your budget

Based on your budget you will decide which kettlebells to get. Kettlebells range from anywhere from 20 to 500 a pop based on what size you get. For beginners, the price per iron will be more likely be under 100. Where it gets more interesting is regarding the decision to buy a set or a single kettlebell.

Double kettlebells of the same weight are not really needed. If someone introduces you to kettlebell training with two kettlebells as a starter, run. They have no clue what they are doing. The swing is complex enough to teach with just one kettlebell, never mind the fancy schmancy stuff I see in some beginner workouts. Horrifying!

With ten bucks extra get yourself "Simple and Sinister" which helps you to understand the movements better. Getting some instructions with a certified RKC or Strongfirst coach come highly recommended to lay the right foundation.

I am a fitness enthusiast so I am biased as I get easily excited about anything around gym gear. Still, if you have the spare change, I would

encourage you to get a set rather than just one kettlebell. Sets have the advantage to be the best value for money as most vendors waive the shipment cost of them and price per kettlebell goes down. Seeing all of the kettlebells of the set in front of you is also a good motivator to make you progress faster. I have applied this thinking to not be cheap to all of my gear and never lived to regret it. Get the good stuff or buy twice. Before you hit the button, make sure you try first.

Have you ever tried

The best way of finding out what is right for you is to try and get proper instructions while doing so. Look up the next Strongfirst coach near you and pay him/her a visit. As a woman maybe even look for a female one as this might be easier to help you with any reservations around strength training you generally (hint they are all unfounded, except the fact that women are usually of smaller built and produce less testosterone which puts them generally at a slight disadvantage for all sports in absolute output). Try one or two sessions and read up on the topic before investing 100 to 200 to be sure kettlebells are for you. In my opinion, they are one of the best general strength tools out there.

Which kettlebell weight should a woman start with

As you now have the context to make your decision the usual recommendation is to start with 8kg, 12kg or 16kg based on the factors discussed in this article. The more the scale tips towards young, strong and proficient in strength training the more it tilts towards a heavier starting weight, the smaller, older and unfit you are the more moderate the first choice becomes. If you were to buy a set of these three weights you will be set for a long time as you can progress with them in many directions.

Vendors

The three vendors I always like to recommend are

KettlebellUSA

Kettlebell Kings

Rogue Fitness

KettlebellUSA is the gold standard when it comes to kettlebells. They are the most positively reviewed amongst kettlebell pros and are worth the money. This is the choice if you want to take your training very seriously and only get the best for yourself. Some people find them too pricey, but hey, you only live once.

Kettlebell Kings are slightly less expensive and have the advantage for women that you can buy them in smaller weight increments. Most kettlebell trainers agree that this is not really necessary, still, you are the one who is buying so if you want kettlebells in pound increments you shall have them from Kettlebell Kings.

Rogue Fitness might not have the best kettlebells among the premium standards as they often get worse reviews than Kettlebell Kings and KettlebellUSA. Still, the standard is far beyond anything you get from Amazon or eBay. Stay away from this cheap kettlejunk and opt for Rogue if you do not need the most high end and also want to shop for some apparel and accessories in the same go.

Conclusion

It is great that you are researching to get started with kettlebell training. I never regretted it and got good results from it. My goals were to be more generally healthy as a heavy lifter as I struggled with lower back pain and being sluggish. The simple and sinister program was the solution for this

which I started with a 24kg kettlebell. Remember, I was the best bench presser in a rugby gym at this time, so I would have ticked the high end on the fitness scale for strength related exercises (do not get me started on sprints though... atrocious).

Women should start with 8kg, 12kg or 16kg. The ladies in my local gym, be it weekend warrior or Xena the warrior princess, all worked with one of these three weights.

Further reading

- Can I kettlebell train every day?
- Can kettlebells build muscle?
- Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?
- Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?
- Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?
- Can kettlebell swings replace squats?
- How many kettlebell swings?
- How many sets for the kettlebell?
- How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results
- How the simple kettlebell works for your well being
- How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong
- When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance
- When to use kettlebells?
- Where do kettlebell swings target?
- Where to buy kettlebell sets?
- Which kettlebell should a woman start with?
- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebells get you ripped?
- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Resources

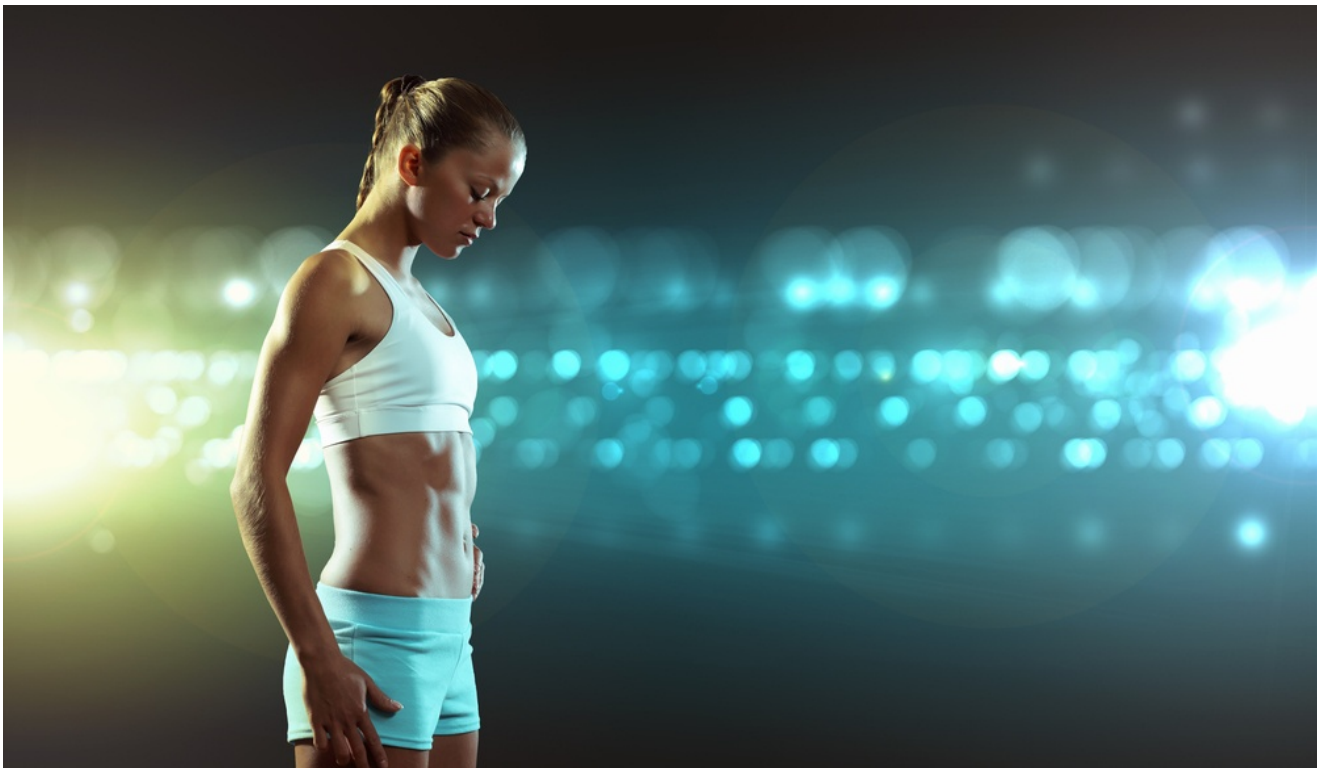
- What size kettlebell should I buy

- [What is the best kettlebell weight to start with?](#)
- [What size kettlebell is right for me?](#)
- [What weight kettlebell should I get?](#)
- [What is the best kettlebell weight?](#)
- [Getting started with kettlebells: How to buy, learn and train](#)
- [Shopping for a kettlebell](#)
- [What size kettlebell should a petite woman start with](#)
- [What kettlebell should i start with](#)
- [What size kettlebell](#)

The Science

The next eight chapters will outline to you how kettlebell swings work your muscles. You will gain a better understanding what kettlebells are well suited for and which other exercises you might still need to incorporate in your training for better performance.

Where do kettlebell swings target?



Where do kettlebell swings target?

The short answer to this question is "almost everywhere". As this is not really a scientific or very instructional answer I have worked on a more comprehensive breakdown with some anatomical explanations for you. The kettlebell swing is worth the time invested which many seasoned lifters can attest. Andy Bolton uses it and women also seem to like this type of exercise more than working with a barbell

Which muscle groups are being worked

Overall the kettlebell swing works for about 600 muscle groups as it is a compound movement just like the deadlift, bench press or squat which activate multiple muscle groups at once.

While this number might seem excessively high think about your feet and hands and back muscles around the spine which are involved in the swing. A basic anatomy class will give you an idea on how many different little muscles are located in these areas which are activated during the swing.

A longer, but not complete list of the muscle groups and muscles addressed by the swing

- Posterior chain
- External obliques
- Internal obliques
- Transversus abdominis
- Diaphragm
- Rotator cuff
- Rhomboids
- Latissimus dorsi
- Quadriceps

You will find many coaches refer to **the posterior chain** and that it is often being not trained enough in conventional programs. Some of the main muscles in the posterior chain are the **biceps femoris, gluteus maximus, the erector spinae muscle group, trapezius, and posterior deltoids.**

The biceps femoris is located in the thigh and is part of the hamstrings muscle group. The biceps femoris helps you to perform knee flexion and hip extension.

The **Gluteus maximus** is often lumped together with the **gluteus medius** and **minimus** as the "glutes" in fitness articles and among bodybuilders and

powerlifters. The gluteus maximus is what mainly forms your buttocks. SO if your aim is to have a nice ass, the kettlebell swing helps. One of its main functions is to help you stand and take the weight of your body. It also helps when you need to get your body upright after falling down.

The erector spinae muscle group is made up of three muscles called the iliocostalis, longissimus and spinalis and runs along the back of your spine. This muscle group helps to keep the spine in place and be more upright.

The trapezius is located at the back around your shoulder blade. It helps with three main functions which are supporting the weight of the arm, retracting the shoulder blade and rotating it.

The deltoids, also referred to as "deltoids" are the muscles situated at the top of your arm where it attaches to the trunk. It might also be referred to as the common shoulder muscle. Most often it is being anatomically divided three ways into the anterior, lateral and posterior part. Its original name was coined through the similarity in form and shape to the Greek letter delta. Its function is to move the arm up.

The external obliques is what most commonly being referred to as the "six-pack". Technically it is an eight-pack which forms the outermost part of the three big muscle of the abdomen, the external obliques, internal obliques and transversus abdominis. The main function of the external obliques is to pull the chest downwards to compress the abdominal cavity. Strictly speaking, it keeps you from popping open and spill your guts.

The internal obliques are between the external obliques and the transversus abdominis. Its main function is to work together with the diaphragm to make you breathe. The back and forth between these two antagonistic muscles creates the resistance and room for air to fill the lungs and be exhaled.

The transversus abdominis is a deep muscle which many fitness instructors believe to be a significant component of the core. It is the innermost of the flat muscle of the abdomen sitting beneath the internal oblique muscle. In

women, it helps to deliver a child. For powerlifters, it is essential to building tension and stability in the midsection of the body for very heavy lifts. So deadlifting and giving birth has something in common in the need, abdominal pressure.

The diaphragm is the skeletal muscle which sits below the heart and lungs and separates them from your lower abdomen where your intestines sit. When it contracts, the space for your lungs increases and therefore air is drawn into the lungs.

The rotator cuff is also a simplified version of calling a specific group of muscles by one name rather than their individual ones just like with the glutes. The muscles in the rotator cuff are the Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Teres minor and Subscapularis. If you find to learn them by heart you can remember "Which muscle sits in the rotator cuff?" As a group, the rotator cuff is responsible for moving and rotating the upper arm.

The Rhomboids are two muscles the rhomboid major and minor. Their main function is to retract the shoulder blade.

The latissimus dorsi is a large flat muscle on the back which is partly covered by the trapezius. This is the muscle you train when you want to have "Bat Wings". In gym language, they are also commonly referred to as lats. Latissimus dorsi comes from the Latin word latissimus which means broadest which reflects its appearance on the back. Its main function is the movement of the shoulder joint in various directions.

The quadriceps femoris, also referred to as "quads" among bros, is a large muscle group at the front of the legs consisting of four muscles. Their names are rectus femoris, vastus lateralis, vastus medialis and vastus intermedius. All of these muscles are extensors of the knee joint playing a major role in walking, running, jumping and squatting.

As you can see the kettlebell swing trains a lot of muscles which will make you one strong or sexy person, depending on your training goals.

Different swings and their effect

When you talk about swings there are different types of swings to consider. The main variations are

Standard Swing

One arm swing

Double kettlebell swing

The standard swing will put more emphasis on the glutes and the obliques if performed correctly. When executed correctly you will have a big force pulling on you in both directions on the upward and downward movement of the swing. This will be compensated by flexing your glutes and obliques at the top of the swing.

The one arm swing will not create as much force as the standard swing but a bigger pull to the left or right. To stabilize this your internal obliques and transversus abdominis will have to work harder and you will get more core activation at the expense of the glutes and quads.

Finally, **the double kettlebell swing** will put the glutes and abs comparatively on the back bench and put more focus on the quads. This is mainly due to the fact that your stance has to be a lot wider to get two kettlebells between your legs and control them. Therefore you can get less momentum out of squeezing your glutes and the power comes more out of the quads.

All of these changes as small, but there. All of the different exercises address the areas aforementioned just with slight differences. Same principle as with the closed bench press to make the bench press more triceps than pectoral heavy (moving focus from the chest to the arms).

Conclusion

The list of targeted muscles in the kettlebell swing is long. If you wanted a gym was all the machines in it that address the same groups you will spend thousands of Euros or Dollars. A kettlebell comes in at 100 to 200 depending on the size and with these prices, I am talking big kettlebells which you do not find at your local gym.

Further reading

- Can I kettlebell train every day?
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- Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?
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- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebells get you ripped?
- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Resources

- Which muscles does the kettlebell swing work
- What muscles do I use for a kettlebell swing

- What does the kettlebell swing do
- Top 9 Kettlebell swing benefits

Why is kettlebell training so effective?



Why is kettlebell training so effective?

There is a craze about kettlebells and they have taken the fitness world by

storm. You can now find them in any major fitness outlet in different forms and shapes. But why is kettlebell training so effective? It all **depends on what your goals are** and it just so happens to be that kettlebells have a pretty good alignment with what most people in the market want.

Effective for what?

When it comes to fitness you have to ask yourself what effectiveness even means. Effectiveness is depending on your goals and whether a certain exercise helps you to meet these. The most common aspirations clients have cover three different territories

- Looks
- Performance
- Health

So first it is important what your desire is and whether kettlebell training fits to be effective. Looks are deceiving and achieved most often by a tight dieting regime. Performance is achieved by pushing yourself beyond your capabilities to grow. Health is maintained by a balanced and calculated approach.

Cleaning up your diet and being disciplined is harder than exercising based on established habits. If it is the looks you are after doing half of the calories you consume now for a limited time usually gets the **desired result of a six-pack**. Based on how many calories and weight you have to lose this time period is longer or shorter. Always consult a doctor when you make major changes to your diet, especially with **the goal of weight loss**. The kettlebell can be a tool to shape up and burn calories in addition and is not the main driver for better looks.

Performance is different and usually tied to a sport. There are several parameters and as long as **your goal is strength related** the kettlebell will be an effective tool to make you stronger. Especially when you want to be

explosive and **work on how fast your existing power unfolds** the kettlebell will be an instructive, exciting and effective tool. For increases in absolute strength, however, many athletes and coaches find the **barbell to be more effective**. A healthy mix of both is a recipe for success for anyone serious about strength.

Training for health purposes is usually related to cardiovascular challenges or **rehabilitation from injury**. If you want to work on your heart rate and blood circulation a kettlebell is an effective tool and good alternative to other forms of exercise which you personally enjoy less. Be aware that the kettlebell swing is a complex movement and already requires a slightly better than average fitness level to be performed correctly and securely. It is not necessarily a proper tool for absolute starters **in the gym** who are better off to start with **bodyweight exercises**. For rehabilitation from injury, it depends on the injury whether the kettlebell is effective or not. Generally, exercises with added resistance without supervision are not a good idea for rehab. If used start slow and build up rather than jumping in the deep end.

Is it the kettlebell or the way you train?

When you ask "why is kettlebell training so effective" more often than not you are thinking about the context of fat loss. Kettlebell training is effective for fat loss but not necessarily because of the kettlebell but the structure of most kettlebell training programs.

When it comes to fat loss there are these things to consider

- Diet
- Workload
- Type of stress
- Adaptation to the stress

We already talked about diet and how you will lose fat when you go into a caloric deficit. The equation behind the fact that you gain or lose weight is simple

Calories eaten - calories burned = surplus or deficit

While diet manipulates the intake part of this for this equation, exercise attacks the subtractor. For weight loss, **intense bursts of high-intensity work** or **long sustained aerobic exercise** are very helpful. Basically, anything which makes you sweat hard. The advantage of kettlebell training is that it is well suited to be used for high-speed intensity training and sustained aerobic exercise. Where **barbell training** is not ideal to have you continuously make you move over time kettlebells can.

The major point about the perception of kettlebells being effective tools for training is that most people want to look better by losing weight and that kettlebells can be easily used to create high-intensity workouts with a high rate of calories burned per minute. In addition, they also provide a more fun and challenging alternative to individuals who like to push themselves in the gym **compared to treadmills** and free weights.

However it is not the kettlebell that drives its effectiveness for losing fat, but the way it is being used. You can achieve similar results by planning interval training using running, free weight training or machines. If you do not like the kettlebell, the way you use the tools trumps for effectiveness for weight loss over what tool you use.

Components of athleticism

If you want to be an athlete and you mainly care about performance rather than looks or health there are components of athleticism you will care about. It is very likely that these factors are important to you

- Strength
- Explosiveness
- Endurance
- Reaction
- Intelligence

And many more factors which are directly related to your sport like control of a ball or the ability to feel the field. While you can not train all of these 5 parameters with kettlebells three out of five is not a bad deal. Based on the nature of the kettlebell swing, which is usually used synonymous with kettlebell training, you have a compound exercise that makes you more explosive, strengthens your body and trains endurance at the same time.

In terms of strength, it is hard to put your finger on what kind of strength kettlebells build, as this is hard to measure. For me, in my training and based on many anecdotal references it **helps to build grip strength, a balanced power pattern in the midsection and muscle in the lower back area**. I feel like the kettlebell helps me to build a more athletic and nimble body when I was already very strong in terms of absolute strength. The downside for strength development with the swing is that compared to the big three, **the bench press, squat and deadlift** and the Olympic lifts, it does not attack the big muscles like the glutes and pecs to the same extent. To be fair, if you have heavier kettlebells and put together more complex routines this can also be done. If you aim to do a 200kg back squat get some barbell training in. Kettlebells only will not do the trick.

Explosiveness is the one thing in which the kettlebell excels. If you want to train to contract your midsection quick and efficiently to develop maximum strength in this area in milliseconds this is the exercise for you. To make this work it is important that you know how to execute the swing correctly. I recommend the **books by Pavel Tsatsoulin** and a course with a **Certified Strongfirst coach for you**. It is worth the investment to swing like a pro.

Endurance is the last of the kettlebell triumvirate. The nature of the swing allows for longer sprints in interval training or circuits than the barbell. It also helps that the setup is easier as the kettlebell does not **need a rack or safety pins**. The kettlebell helps to extend the time under tension compared to other free weight exercise and helps to build strength endurance. If you want to improve your VO2 max, which is important for long distance endurance athletes, there is no way around long distance runs and swims. For Mere Mortals, the kettlebell will help you to get up the stairs without huffing and puffing, though.

The study everyone harps about

When you do some research on kettlebell training you will often read that swinging away burns more calories per minute than running. While kettlebells are an excellent well-rounded tool which is cost effective to improve overall fitness this number has to be looked at with a bit of skepticism.

The study which is often referred to states that kettlebell training burns up to 20 calories per minute. When compared to running that is an excellent number. However, the study was conducted with experienced kettlebell athletes performing one of the most demanding exercises, the kettlebell snatch. Compared to most running studies which are conducted with relatively unfit individuals this is like comparing the calories which Micheal Phelps burns in the pool when training to your husband's calorie consumption when he has a jog around the block. I am exaggerating purposefully here but you get the point. If you opt for kettlebell training do so because it is the right tool to work hard and regularly on your goals because it suits you rather than because you get more bang for the buck. That is the more sustainable decision as consistency of work trumps anything else in fitness, especially if your only goal is weight loss.

Which program to pick

There is a multitude of programs out there which use the kettlebells. **The newer you are to the tool, the simpler the routine should be.**

Programs which let you change positions often and use two kettlebells at the same time or many kettlebells of different sizes unnecessarily bring complexity to the table which you do not need as a beginner.

This is a concept you will find in many sports and also a folly which trainers and athletes fall into. It is not about how many different things you can do

shitty. It is about mastering one building block first and then build the next on top of it. As Bruce Lee said

"I do not fear the man who practiced a million different kicks once but one kick a million times."

Your daily friend would, therefore, be the simple and sinister routine by Pavel Tsatsoulin which prescribes 100 swings and 10 Turkish get-ups. This might not sound a lot and believe me it will lick you into shape. Please read this book to fully comprehend the details and how to perform the routine for the most impact for your fitness goals.

Conclusion

The kettlebell is a very effective tool to build overall strength and endurance that can be applied to many real-world scenarios because of its simplicity. Especially for women, it is a great entry point to strength training and for men a good tool to teach better body awareness and stability. Its effectiveness on the internet might be a little overstated based to reference and comparison flaws but his should discourage you to give kettlebells a spin, especially if you do not like free weights and treadmills and want something in between.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many sets for the kettlebell?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)

- How the simple kettlebell works for your well being
- How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong
- When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance
- When to use kettlebells?
- Where do kettlebell swings target?
- Where to buy kettlebell sets?
- Which kettlebell should a woman start with?
- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebells get you ripped?

- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Resources

- What is so special about kettlebells anyway
- Why are kettlebells so effective?
- Is kettlebell training for you?
- Why kettlebell workouts burn so many calories
- 5 reasons kettlebell training is so effective for fat loss
- Why kettlebell workouts are so effective
- 7 reasons you need to try kettlebells
- 4 reasons kettlebells are so effective
- How effective are kettlebells
- Why a kettlebell is the best home workout for moms

Will kettlebell swings burn fat?



Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

The kettlebell swing will burn fat by changing your body composition in favor of muscle mass compared to fat. The exercise itself is unlikely yo

create a response in your body which will lead to high amounts of fat being burned. The reasons for this are outlined in the article.

What is your goal?

The good thing about the question "Will kettlebell swings burn fat?" is that it already inherently states what your main goal is, burning fat. With this, you are already ahead of the curve because most people **in the gym** do not prioritize what they actually want to achieve. So if fat loss is the main goal I always like to dig a bit deeper with my clients.

- Why do you want to lose fat?
- How much fat do you want to lose by when?
- What do you think is the difference between fat loss and weight loss?

These questions are important to make your goal set more meaningful and therefore more likely to be achieved. In terms of why people want to lose fat, it is mainly for two reasons. The first is health, the second is looks. Both are valid, however, I always like to say that looks are deceiving.

If you want to lose fat for health reasons it is very likely that you have been diagnosed with obesity. Please stick to the recommendations of your expert. If you want to take it up a notch by implementing kettlebell training, consult with your doctor first to see if you are ready. From my personal experience, you will get better results if you focus on your diet first and implement a more active lifestyle. Once that is done move on to exercise. You will probably have gotten a weight goal to strive towards. Let this be your guide for further planning. If you are puzzled about how much you should weigh **check out the tables from the Metropolitan Life Insurance from 1983** (always good that life insurances take such good care of calculating the likelihood of you dying soon...) or the **US military**.

When the main driver for losing fat is the elusive six-pack be also advised that abs are made in the kitchen, not in the gym. Spent the time you will most likely waste on researching some exercise program better by getting a

good cooking and shopping routine together. That will have more impact to achieve your goal than exercising. Read up on the **principle of macronutrients** and **caloric deficit** and be prepared to starve yourself for a certain amount of time artificially to get to your goal. Abs usually show when you manage to go below 10% body fat.

Once you have decided what your goal is the next question is by when you want to reach it. The faster you want to reach it, the more aggressive and risky your approach gets. If I want to lose 100kg in a month you can get the fat surgically removed. The potential risk is that you do not survive the procedure (the most extreme example) or have some kind of scarring across your belly (from a keyhole scar to a very big one, depending on how the operation goes). If you want to lose 100kg in a year depending on your starting weight you might be able to do this in two years with a less aggressive approach involving diet changes, exercising and some optical repairs in a less aggressive surgery to remove skin at the end of the process.

No difference on losing fat for aesthetic purposes. You can eat tablets like Smarties which get all of the water out of your system to make your muscles show better within a month or even a week. The thing is that this will probably expose you to risk of dehydration, which can lead to brain damage and cardiac arrest. Never mind that you also can get addicted to certain supplements. If you, however, take three months to six months time to prepare for your competition and keep the extreme appearance limited to that time window, you might get away with less harmful and therefore less risky approaches. So how much you want to burn by when does matter.

The last point is the difference between fat loss and weight loss. You can stay at the same weight while still losing fat. Losing fat and losing weight is often used as the same in language, even though they are two different things. If you are of average weight and just feel uncomfortable and unfit I am a fan of keeping the weight in the same region (5kg window) and lose fat in favor of muscle. Here the kettlebell can help.

How does the body burn fat?

The fitness industry wants to put a big emphasis on the importance of exercising to lose fat because that is how the money is made. Before asking the question of "Will kettlebell swings burn fat" it is important to understand how the body burns fat and how your metabolism works. At least at the surface, as biochemistry is a mountain to conquer which we can not cover fully in this article.

The preferred energy source of your body is not fat. It is sugar. Your cells will first turn to **Adenosine triphosphate** (ATP) as they have direct access to this easy source of energy. Once this is used up your body will turn to breaking carbohydrates down to forms of energy. This takes longer than with ATP but is still the preferred chemical process over breaking down fat.

In addition, when you look at energy expenditure **there are three types of processes in your body which need energy**. The first is your **basal metabolism**, the second is your **digestive metabolism** and the third is the movement metabolism. Kettlebell training only attacks the third one directly.

Depending on the individual the basal metabolism takes the lion's share of the energy household with 60 to 70 percent. It covers functions like your lungs, heart pumping, and brain functioning. YOU can only influence this process indirectly through your exercises by increasing your entire level of fitness.

The second system is simply for digesting foods. Breaking down proteins to sugar and protein into amino acids usually, burns 10 - 15% of your daily calories. Protein takes the top spot using 25 calories to be burnt for every 100 calories consumed. Carbohydrates and fat usually burn 10 to 15 calories to be digested for every 100 consumed.

This only leaves 15 to 30 percent for the movement metabolism. As you can see anything you can do to have an impact on the first two systems, like

making conscious choices about your diet, will have a bigger impact with less perceived strain than exercising. Do not fret though, there is one major benefit in which kettlebells help to burn fat. Regular exercising changes your body composition in favor of muscle tissue over fat tissue. Muscles are hungrier for energy than fat. The more muscle you have the faster you will burn through all other energy sources to than burn fat in the end.

One dietary approach which has gained popularity lately and I have used successfully is the **ketogenic diet**. Simply put, you mainly eat fat as a source of energy to force your body to change to a chemistry plant driven by fat rather than carbohydrates.

Now we have spent the time to understand your metabolism a bit better to avoid that you fall victim to deceit. I might even help you at dinner parties and when talking to friends. Usually the raunchy gossip wins over discussions about diet though.

Which rep scheme is best for fat loss?

There is a big controversy about which rep and set scheme is best for certain results. Generally, you can say some exercise is better than no exercise to achieve a goal, but not necessarily optimal. Optimal is linked to your goal. What you are mainly interested in for fat loss is bringing up your heart rate (remember the basal thing).

When you look at fat loss/weight loss goals a good performance indicator to look for is calories burned over time. The more calories you burn in lesser time the more beneficial the exercise becomes for fat loss and weight loss. For strength development, you would also consider indicators like bar speed and force produced in certain directions, but these are not as relevant to the question "Will kettlebell swings burn fat". The good news about kettlebells is that they also help with these strength indicators which other exercises with higher calories burned per time frame like rowing and running do not do to the same extent.

One study which helped to kick off the kettlebell craze was **conducted by**

the American Council of Exercise in 2010. Here are some excerpts:

"Following a basic warm-up, subjects did 15 seconds of one-armed snatches, first with their dominant hand, then after a 15-second rest period, they performed another 15 seconds of snatches with the other hand.

The workout continued like that, with intervals of 15 seconds of work and 15 seconds of rest, for 20 minutes, followed by a five-minute cool-down."

"So they were burning at least 20.2 calories per minute, which is off the charts. That's equivalent to running a 6-minute mile pace. The only other thing I could find that burns that many calories is cross-country skiing uphill at a fast pace,"

What you can take away from this is that kettlebells are a good alternative to running in terms of calories burned per minute. So if you are asking "Will kettlebell swings burn fat" based on the motivation to avoid running you are in luck. As this study is referenced often without providing the full context a word of caution regarding the results and how it was conducted.

The sample was small (10 volunteers) and experienced in kettlebell training. The fact that snatches were performed, usually referred to as the "King of all kettlebell exercises" also leads to the conclusion that the group was very proficient in getting the maximum out of each repetition. Take this into consideration as mastering running to burn calories takes less time than the kettlebell snatch. The kettlebell swing might result in less impressive results than the snatch.

If you are considering kettlebells for fat loss, pick a rep and set scheme which is biased towards producing a high cardiac response. This can be circuit training, **on the minute workouts** or all out sets until failure. Out of these options, I like the on the minute workouts best. Circuit training usually

needs more floor space, equipment and has higher injury risk as you have to refocus on different movement patterns often. Sets to failure are something which I avoid entirely to stay away from ingraining faulty movement patterns.

How do you use a kettlebell?

The kettlebell swing is a complex movement, even though it looks very easy when you observe it from the sidelines. The great advantage of compound exercises which involve multiple muscle groups like the deadlift, bench press, kettlebell swing and barbell squat is that you get a lot done in a relatively short time window. The disadvantage compared to isolated exercises which you perform on machines is that you can do a lot wrong with them, as there is no guidance and stabilization during the movement. (Pretty simple example: You can drop kettlebells and barbells on your foot, which is unpleasant at best. Hard to do with a pulley system)

Always get proper instruction. It is your body and you only have one. Replacement parts are hard to come by once they are broken, even though our bodies have an ingenious way of repairing themselves. The body is a very complex machine, be mindful of that. **Good kettlebell instructors can be found via the Strongfirst website near you.** Another option is to **read one of Pavel Tsatsoulin's books on kettlebells.**

Most important points:

- The top of the swing is a plank. You stand straight cracking a walnut with your butt cheeks and ready to receive a punch to the stomach
- The swing is a hinge, not a squat. Momentum comes from the hips, not from the knees and arms
- The arms/hands only hold the kettlebell. There is no pull from the arms or shoulders.
- You are the master of the kettlebell during the entire movement, not its slave.

The videos from Strongfirst are very instructive and I have added one below.

Conclusion

The kettlebell swing can burn fat by building muscle mass which changes your metabolism and its preferences. In itself, the impact on burning fat is smaller than you might expect because you usually only do 20 minutes of exercising with kettlebells. In this time frame, you usually do not expend enough energy for your metabolism to make a substantial shift from carbohydrates to fats as a source of energy.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)
- [How the simple kettlebell works for your well being](#)
- [How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong](#)
- [When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance](#)
- [Where do kettlebell swings target?](#)
- [Where to buy kettlebell sets?](#)
- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)
- [Which kettlebell weight should I buy?](#)
- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)

Resources

- [300 Swings a day for faster fat loss](#)
- [Swing for the fences: Kettlebell training Burn fat and build muscle](#)
- [The kettlebell swing for rapid fat loss](#)
- [Ten Thousand swings to fat loss](#)
- [Lose belly fat with just two exercises](#)
- [**Pavel said I might be crazy... A kettlebell swing odyssey that helped me lose 100+ pounds of fat, but no strength.**](#)
- [Get ripped with these 6 must do kettlebell exercises](#)
- [This fat burning Kettlebell workout only has 2 exercises](#)
- [The 20 minute fat burning kettlebell complex](#)

Will kettlebells get you
ripped?



Will kettlebells get you ripped?

The notion in the fitness industry that you just follow one simple program for 30 days and then have the dream beach body is a fallacy to lead people astray to spend their hard-earned bucks on crap. Do not fall into this trap and be deliberate about your goals and, above all, realistic. Abs are made in the kitchen and kettlebells can help along the way, but will not be the main lever to your dream physique.

Basics of dieting

First things first before talking about kettlebells and whether they can get you ripped. Abs are made in the kitchen, not in the gym. This is a common misconception people. You will get ripped automatically if you starve yourself out. This is what bodybuilders do too. Before they go on a competition they will cut out the fat and water from their bodies to get as lean as possible. The only difference between you and them is that they trained for a long time and they have bigger abdominal muscles than you. Still, being ripped comes from a low bodyfat percentage not from exercising.

The good thing is compared to other articles I have written that you already know what you are all about, aesthetics. If you want to get ripped and do not care about anything else, this makes planning for success easier as the aim is clear. If you had a goal like this:

I want to get strong and ripped at the same time, but also do not want to look too bulky. The routine should be relatively simple and yet challenge me while I do not want to cook and like pizza and alcohol which I do not want to step away from.

If you have goals like this you might as well go out the front door and wait for the wind to carry you wherever it goes. But good that you are not one of these people, aren't you?

The main thing about dieting is your daily calories. If you want to get ripped in a slightly healthier way, as being ripped all year around is not, get used to the idea of calorie counting. To get your bodyweight down look up one

of the calorie calculators on the internet and see what it spits out. Deduct 10 - 30% from that and go with this number until you have the wanted result. The important thing is to stick to the calories and otherwise have a balanced diet. The more you scale back your calorie intake, the quicker you will achieve your goal, Always consult a doctor before going on a diet. They probably also will tell you that it is a stupid idea to go into a caloric deficit just for the sake of getting a six pack.

In terms of the split of calories on fat, carbohydrates, and protein there are many different opinions on how they should be balanced. Charles Poliquin advises next to no carbohydrates to get a six pack, other get the results with a more balanced approach. I can't tell you for sure, but I got good results from a split of 40% Protein, 40% Fat, and 20% carbohydrates. What I can also tell you is the more protein you take in the more and stinkier you will fart.

Good sources of protein are filet, steaks, fish and any other high-quality meat you can get. The better the quality of the meat, the better it is usually for you. If you are on a budget get beef mince and chicken breasts. Rotate some fish in and out to take care of your omega 3 intake. Some plastic also might do you good, but we will not go into more detail about pollution of the food chain in this post.

Eggs and bacon are your friends for quick snacks when the hunger pains come. Cheese on top usually helps to create a nice meal. Iceberg lettuce, broccoli, and tomatoes are staples which lay beside the happy meat to be eaten as decoration and to get more vitamins in.

If you want good recipes which are low in carbohydrates go to the website of Dr. Diet. My wife used to make these for the family and me and they have been a hit.

Effects of kettlebell training

Kettlebell training addresses the midsection of your body and makes it

stronger when you perform the exercise correctly. The two most important things to achieve this are that you squeeze your glutes and abdominal muscle at the top of the swing. The top of the swing is a plank, not a cooked spaghetti about to get plunged on a plate.

If you stick to this simple principle the kettlebell will help you to get a more defined body and ripped, if your diet is right.

How often you should train

A simple and effective program is to do 100 swings and 10 Turkish get-ups on a daily basis. This program is taken from Pavel Tsatsoulins program Simple and sinister. I recommend the book.

Conclusion

All in all kettlebells will not get you ripped just like any other lifting program or sit up routine will not. To get ripped takes at least a year of dedication in the kitchen and for all kinds of lifestyle choices. This is why not everybody runs around with one.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)
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- How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong
- When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance
- Where do kettlebell swings target?
- Where to buy kettlebell sets?
- Which kettlebell should a woman start with?
- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Can kettlebells build muscle?



Can kettlebells build muscle

Kettlebells can be used to build mass. There are many other levers which are more important which influence **whether your body builds muscle** or not. Using kettlebells, barbells or kettlebells to create the stimulus is an afterthought to most other factors in the equation like food, sleep, execution of the movements and intensity. Now that the obvious question is out of the way I hope you enjoy the details which lead to this statement.

Why do you train

When it comes to exercise I always like to pose this question and dig a bit deeper than the first answer. If you put the question "Can kettlebells build mass" to me I like to know "Why do you want to build muscle. Normally this can be brought back to one of these motivators:

- Perform better in their sport
- Rehabilitation
- Look better

There more than these categories and reasons, but this is what I usually find.

To perform better in your sports you sometimes have to put on mass. **The NFL has certain expectations how much a linebacker or any other given position on the field should weigh. Size also matters in rugby** as your team gets crushed in a scrum if you only have puny halfings playing for your team. Most martial arts divide their fighters into weight categories and if you are one of the athletes in the lower weight bracket of a category, it puts you at a disadvantage. For example, le I fought for a long time in the -73kg weight class in Judo and then went up to -81kg when it became apparent that even with sauna and all other kinds of bodyweight manipulation i was not able anymore to hit the weight and still perform. That was when I was put on a mass building program lifting weights and getting creatine. It worked.

Another reason to put on muscle can be for rehabilitation purposes. If you had cancer like my mother, you might have been lying in bed for several months and lost a lot of muscle mass. This inhibits you from living a healthy life so you have to get back your strength to feel whole again.

Another reason for you to put on mass could be to look better, even though I am personally not a fan of this kind of motivator as looks are **very** subjective and highly influenced by mass marketing. Just look at how much controversy there is every year over beauty contest and Mr. Olympia.

Whatever the reason is for you to put on muscle, take a step back and ask yourself why you want to put it on.

- How much more do you need to make your target?
- How much time and effort are you willing to put in?
- Which areas of the body do you mainly want to target?

- What kind of equipment do you have access to?
- Can this mass just be the ballast or is it somehow performance related?

It happened to me and it might even happen to you that I got bogged down in the details of which tools to use in the gym whilst missing the big picture. A question like "Can kettlebells build muscle" might just be derived from that situation.

Basic training principles

Before choosing your tool for building mass in the gym take a look at the big picture and whether you have ticked all of these boxes first.

- How much do you eat?
- What do you eat?
- How much do you sleep?
- How often do you go to the gym?
- How intense is your training?
- Is your training balanced?
- What rep and set scheme do you follow?
- What tool do you use for your training?

I have stacked the questions from the most important to the least important based on my experience and what I have read, seen and heard from several experts like [Charles Poliquin](#), [Eric Cressey](#), [Layne Norton](#), [Pavel Tsatsoulin](#), [Chris Duffin](#), [Ed Coan](#), [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) and [Louie Simmons](#).

So before you waste your time on choosing your tool check all of the other cornerstones of your regime. The first being how much do you eat. If you want to build mass you **have to be in caloric surplus**. This means that you eat more than you burn in a day. There are different approaches to this and one of the easiest is to make sure that you **eat 25% more calories based on**

what the recommendation for your age, height, and weight is. For athletes, it can get more complex as they burn more calories through the day.

Generally speaking, the principle **eat big, get big** holds true for better or worse, depending on what you eat and how much exercise you do.

The next question is about what you eat. Contrary to common belief you can stuff yourself with crappy food to build muscle and even to look like a bodybuilder or get strong as hell. Yes, you read this right. Some Reddit discussions even openly discuss the abuse of cocaine, cannabis and other substances to make your muscles grow and train like a beast. If you want to be the best this kind of obsession might even be necessary. What you have to keep in mind is that you got to pay the price for what you do.

C.T. Fletcher, one of the more illustrious powerlifters on YouTube with his hardcore style of personal training, took pride in his best days as a powerlifting world champion to have camera crews follow him around and **record how many McDonald's meals he can eat a day**. This and other factors lead to him being forced to have **bypass surgery**, which was the low point of his life. **Garbage in, Garbage out**. I still hugely respect Mr. Fletcher for the dedication, work, obsession and drive it took to come back from that and build his own gym, with his own rules and his own brand. A good role model in my opinion. He learned from his mistakes and got better and now helps others to get better.

After the food is covered you have to take care of your sleep. Your body **does most of the significant reparations and changes to your body when you sleep**. The longer you sleep the more maintenance can be done. Think of this like your laptop. You don't repair your computer or upgrade the graphics card while you are giving a presentation to the board. This is done when you are back in the hotel and the computer is not needed. Same applies to muscle growth for reasons which scientists still try to figure out in detail. Good amount of sleep is between 7 - 8 hours. If you need any more convincing look at babies. **All they do is eat and sleep and they grow like mad**.

Once you have these components down **think about how often you will**

train. If you want to build mass and only exercise once a week for half an hour that is still better than nothing. However, do not expect to look like **Sylvester Stallone** or **Jean Claude Van Damme** with this regime. Depending on who you ask the range of sessions a week will be between three to twelve to get results.

One of the best gyms I have trained in is lead by **John Lark**, a former rugby player on the national team for England, who said: "You can not expect to train like a choir boy and get the results of a lion". When you **hit the gym** train hard. Know your limits and test them a little to push the boundaries. If you go out of the gym and there was no sweat, not a bit of excitement or fear in the session you might as well have stayed home. The intensity part is important as it is often not taught by gyms as they are afraid of liability cases when you get hurt. The intensity in strength training according to **Mark Rippetoe's Practical Programming for Strength training** is defined as a percentage of your **one repetition maximum**. The higher percentage and the more repetitions you perform at a higher percentage the more intense is your workout. Good programs work with 50% to 95% of your one repetition maximum and apply the principle of linear progression to make you stronger and build mass.

The next point is the question of how balanced your training is. Any program you follow for building mass should follow a **balanced approach between upper and lower body and push and pull movements**. This has to be covered to ensure long-term health to make your body grow in a balanced way. **An unbalanced body is more prone to injury and breakdown under heavy load or straining work as force always looks for the easiest way out**. If your legs can press 200kg but your core can only support 150kg and you foolishly think your leg press directly **transfers to your squat you might be in for a hernia**. If you can **bench press** 180kg and only pull 100kg do not be surprised that your **shoulders always hurt and you might need surgery soon**.

Before we come to the tool the last thing to consider is what kind of rep scheme you follow. Across the industry, it seems that the wisdom is to have a range of 8 - 12 repetitions per set for 6 - 8 sets to get the best

hypertrophy results to build mass. It depends on who you ask in which part of the year and whether the full moon is shining or not, but that is the general consensus.

As you can see there are many factors to be considered which are more important to building mass than using a kettlebell. Check these factors first and you might see that there is no need to change from your current routine in the gym as you are doing something stupid outside the gym which hinders progression. If you have the basics down and other reasons to look into kettlebells like health issues, you are female and do not like barbells (which is a common stigma...) or you are just fed up with everything you have done before let us see whether the kettlebell can build muscle.

Can kettlebells build mass

The short answer is yes, they can. Literally, it is a no, because your body owns the mechanisms to build mass. Technically the kettlebell is a tool to trigger the body to build mass, but of the many levers you can pull, it is one of the smallest ones.

If you follow all of the outlined basic principles for building mass, you will get bigger using kettlebells. The only caveat is here that kettlebells might be a better tool for advanced lifters to build mass rather than for beginners. If you try certain exercises like cleans, overhead presses and **deadlifts** you will generally find that it is a lot easier to do the same weight **with a barbell** than with a kettlebell.

My favorite to demonstrate this phenomenon is the front squat. Most people do not do front squats **so there is no movement pattern advantage**. If you load a barbell front squat with 2.5kg on each side client's usually perform if they have the mobility to execute the movement. If you then proceed to give them two 12kg kettlebells, which is technically less weight and ask them to repeat they will struggle to get it done.

Most exercises which are recommended to build mass with kettlebells are for advanced practitioners. If you do not believe me check out the Strongfirst certification structure. The snatch, double kettlebell movements and the fanciest stuff which you will find in kettlebell programs to build mass on the internet is part of the **SFG2** and not the **SFG1**, less advanced certification.

Exercises

If you scan the internet for templates that use kettlebells to build mass you will find the following mentioned often

- Double Front Squat.
- Double Swing.
- Double Snatch.
- Double Windmill.
- Turkish Get-Up.
- Double Military Press.
- Double Bent-Over Row.
- Kettlebell Pull-Up.
- Floor Press
- Bent press
- See Saw press
- Single leg deadlift

- Renegade Rows
- Back Lunges
- Weighted pull-ups

What all of these movements have in common is that you shouldn't do them as a beginner. When you are building mass and strength **the stability that a barbell provides for you is your friend, not your enemy.** If you are not strong enough to handle a 20kg barbell you have no business in entertaining any double kettlebell work. In my personal opinion, use

thirty-day bodyweight challenges to progress to a place where you can handle a 12 to 16kg kettlebell. [Do simple and sinister for three months](#) which consists of the swing and Turkish get up once the pull-up, push-up and body weight squat are mastered. After these three months, you should have progressed at least one kettlebell size up. Do another [three-month Stronglifts 5x5 cycle with the barbell](#). After these 9 - 12 months of training make a decision which tool you prefer and stick with that for another year.

5x5 template

The golden middle in training between building mass and strength is five sets of five repetitions at 70 - 85% of your one repetition maximum. This is commonly accepted canon and has the results to show to back it up. You can read my [extensive review of the Stronglifts 5x5 template](#) on this blog. There are also variations on the 5x5 template for more advanced lifters like [madcow 5x5](#) or the [Texas method](#). The basic idea is to do an exercise at challenging, but not crazy intensity, for five repetitions and five sets [with 3 - 5 minutes rest between sets](#). Apply all the basic principles I have outlined and exercises which fit your [level of fitness](#) and off you go.

German Volume Training template

The German Volume training template has you do 10x10 so ten sets of ten repetitions of a certain exercise at 60% of your one repetition maximum. [GVT is praised among bodybuilders for its capability to build muscle](#). There have been studies and observations across the board which report that while you gain mass on GVT you might decline in strength. I personally think that GVT is to be recommended to fit individuals who have training experience under their belt and not to beginners. My reasoning for that is outlined in my [German volume training review for crossfitters](#). The main point is fatigue management and knowing when to quit before getting injured which makes this a no go for beginners. In addition form usually

breaks down in sets of ten. A habit which you should strive to eliminate as a beginner especially rather than magnify the effect actively.

Kettlebell example template

This is a template I liked for hypertrophy with kettlebells.

I can not overstate master the swing and get up first at least, maybe even a 100kg barbell squat for good measure, before attempting this.

A1: Double Kettlebell Snatch – 6 rounds x 3 reps*

B1: Double Kettlebell Clean & Press and Front Squat Ladder – 3 rounds x 1-6 ladders**

C1: Bent Press Practice – 5 rounds x 3 reps (each arm)

D1: Kettlebell Seesaw Row – 3 rounds x 8-15 reps

D2: Kettlebell Seesaw Floor Press – 3 rounds x 8-15 reps

You can progress to the next kettlebell when you do negative splits (meaning you need less time to recover than doing the exercises). Getting instruction from a certified Strongfirst is recommended.

Kettlebells vs barbell training

Barbells and kettlebells have their place and both are fun. Barbells have the advantage of added stability which lets you move bigger weights than kettlebells. Also once you progress you will have it easier with barbell training as heavyweights are more readily available than heavy kettlebells. Most gyms only stock up to 28kg kettlebells. As a male, you will have to look far and wide to find a place that has 32kg and upwards.

Whether kettlebells or barbells are the better option for mass building I would be hesitant to say myself and is a different question from the one we started out with. I lack the experience of mass building training templates as my main focus is strength. My "Why" in training is to stay in control of

my life and keep moving forward. I find strength training to be the ultimate tool for that as it is very objective, demands discipline, grit and consistency. it is only me and the barbell and only I am to blame if something does not work.

The general strength community will not hesitate to point to the barbell as the superior tool for building mass. This is understandable as the golden times of bodybuilding heavily relied on barbell training and there are more bodybuilders around who got results from barbell training as it is more widespread and easier to learn than using kettlebells. An additional locker room undercurrent of kettlebells being "pussy" does not help. On this, I think there is not enough empirical evidence out there with heavy kettlebells and there is also not a lot of structured studies to be expected in the future due to the perceived higher risk of injury and availability of the tools and knowledge to conduct proper mass building with kettlebells.

Conclusion

Kettlebells can build mass in the sense of the question posed by a layman if the basic principles of mass building are being stuck to in the first place. There are fewer examples of success for this to work as for training with barbells as the base of use cases to pick from is smaller. To find good instructions and equipment if you travel down this path will be harder as it is less readily available as for barbell training. This does not mean that it will be less rewarding. I am convinced quite the contrary. If you can state that you build your 120kg herculean statue only with the help of kettlebells' it will turn more heads than achieving the same goal utilizing barbells and dumbbells. Since I have been using kettlebells my body feels more balanced, agile and resilient in all walks of life than when I did barbell training only

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)

- Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?
- Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?
- Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?

- Can kettlebell swings replace squats?
- How many kettlebell swings?
- How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results
- How the simple kettlebell works for your well being
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- Where do kettlebell swings target?
- Where to buy kettlebell sets?
- Which kettlebell should a woman start with?
- Which kettlebell weight should I buy?
- Why is kettlebell training so effective?
- Will kettlebells get you ripped?
- Will kettlebell swings burn fat?

Resources

- [Bodybuilding.com: Building Size and Strength with Kettlebells](#)
- [Kettlebellworkouts: 5 secrets to muscle building with kettlebells](#)
- [RKC: How to build mass with kettlebells](#)
- [T Nation: Kettlebells for size and strength](#)
- [Men's Health: How you can bulk up fast with kettlebells](#)
- [Breaking Muscle: Adding Muscle with Kettlebells: How I build up my grapplers](#)

- [PTonthenet: Building muscle with kettlebells](#)
- [Rdella Training: 4 Proven wats to pack on muscle with kettlebells](#)
- [Muscle&Fitness: Get ripped with these four must do kettlebell exercises](#)
- [Breaking Muscle: Try These Kettlebell workout Splits for major muscle gains](#)
- [Top 6 kettlebell exercises for building mass](#)

Can kettlebell swings replace squats?



Can kettlebells swings replace squats

The kettlebell swing and the squat are both highly functional. Some people are afraid and intimidated by the barbell back squat and it seems like that many women are among them. The kettlebell cannot replace the squat if you want to get really strong. If your goals are fat loss and toning however you can skip the squat. Your calves and your butt will just not be as defined as for others who do squat or cheat with plastic surgery and camera angles.

Why do you train

This my favorite question for new clients. Why do you do? Why do you want to replace kettlebell swings with the squat? What is the plan? What are your challenges? By when do you want to achieve your goals? THose are the interesting questions in fitness and in life. Often people, including, start with the what and with the Why and how. There is an excellent TED talk by Simon Sinek out there which explains the importance of starting with why.

I personally train, because it gives me security and control in life. Once I control my body and mind, i can control my surroundings. Once I control my surroundings I can make my wife's dreams come true which ultimately makes me happy. The first stepping stone on that journey is to get out there and be healthy. When I train I win the day before it even started. Whatever the reason why you train, I hope I can help you to get there and to take some of this thinking with you. It made and still makes me fulfilled.

The most common reasons for people to train are based on what I read, hear and talk to my clients are:

- Increasing sports performance
- Looks
- Rehabilitation

I am not a great believer in looks. They are subjective, object to change and we will all wither and die. If you want to train for looks find a good bodybuilding coach or even better nutritionist. It takes a lot of passion and obsession to make it to the cover of Men's health. I am not your guy to get you there for looks. If you are looking for performance, grit, and determination, you have found your guy.

For rehabilitation, I personally think the two movements are too complex to bring someone back from being immobile to getting full mobility again. This is a lengthy and complex process which mainly involves body-weight and exercise with a lot of support and no load. Kettlebell swings can be effective for treating lower back pain as are back squats, However, it depends on how well they are being performed and both movements are complex to teach correctly.

If you want to increase your strength for sports performance I am your guy. With minimum effort, you can manage to lose 15kg and run a marathon with six months of preparation time. In three years you can push your one repetition maximum for the back squat from 20kg to a 170kg in your thirties. Not the ideal time to develop strength. Why? If I can do it, you can do it too.

When train and ask "Can kettlebell swings replace the squat" always ask yourself what the specific goal is you want to achieve.

The question "Can kettlebell swings replace the squat" lacks context

As it is addressed, the question has to be answered with no. It is too general and you do not know which goal is being pursued. If you provide some context it becomes easier to answer the question while still providing value to you.

Can kettlebell swings replace the squat for absolute strength development?

The answer to that question is also no. If you want to develop absolute strength and get stronger the squat can be loaded heavier & easier to progress to get bigger and stronger.

Can kettlebell swings replace the squat for getting a six pack? In this case, both will help more or less equally good to get ripped as the tool you use to exercise is not the main factor for achieving a chiseled physique. The two main components for getting a strong and nice looking midsection are bracing and diet. Diet will determine how high your body fat percentage is. The lower the body fat, the more likely your abs will show. Bracing has helped me a lot more to develop good abs than exercises. You will get more out of any exercise you do if you learn how to create tension effectively.

Can kettlebell swings replace the squat for quad development? Here also the answer is not as the swing does not go below parallel. If you want your full legs to be activated you have to learn how to squat deep or find other exercises to address you do not cover because you can not or do not want to do the squat.

Can kettlebell swings replace the squat for building higher power output? Yes for building better explosiveness the kettlebell is superior to the back squat as it develops more forward force which you need to tackle someone effectively or sprint.

Even though the kettlebell is a partial squat when performed correctly, it does not address as many muscle groups as the full squat does. So for full body strength development, the squat is preferred. If you, however, lack the potential to unfold your might aggressively and explosively the kettlebell swing is just the right tool for you.

If you want all of this backed by a study read [Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research: Mechanical Demands of the Kettlebell Swing](#). Keep in mind, that the sample is small and the loads are not very heavy, which is a common challenge with studies being conducted for strength training.

The squat

To perform the squat correctly do first look into your overall mobility. Spent up to three months opening up your hips and getting your ankles ready to get comfortable into a deep squat without your heels coming off the ground. If you are able to do this right away skip this and start with Stronglifts 5x5 to build your squat to a 100 to 120kg. Read my article on how to improve your squat to get an idea of the things to watch out for a better squat.

The kettlebell swing

The kettlebell swing is not as easy as it looks. I recommend reading Pavel Tsatsoulin's book simple and sinister before starting a kettlebell program. The main things to get right are:

- The top of the movement is ramrod straight. Avoid leaning backward
- The kettlebell swing is a hinge, not a squat. Downwards movement should be kept minimal
- The arms function as a hook, not as a pulley for the weight
- You give the kettlebell momentum and dominate it in the movement, not the other way around
- Your glutes and abs should be maximally flexed at the top of the swing

All of these points are explained in more detail in Pavel's material. I highly recommend the read.

Squat vs kettlebell swing

For me, it is not a question of either or and it should not be for you if you

are able to bend your knees properly to go below parallel for the squat. The kettlebell will help you to become more ballistic and therefore help you to increase all of your lifts to push through the sticking point. It also provides more balance to your overall physique.

The squat is iconic and the tool to get your legs bigger and stronger. Anyone who avoids it in the gym makes their lives unnecessarily harder to reach their goals if they are related to sports performance.

Conclusion

The kettlebell swing can only replace the squat if the main aim of training is fat loss and increased power. It can not replace the squat when the main goal is the absolute strength. A fully rounded strength athlete will be wise and keep all of his/her options open to progress as quickly as possible and discard neither of these tools (if you want to get rid of something desperately, throw out the swiss balls).

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)
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- [Where do kettlebell swings target?](#)
- [Where to buy kettlebell sets?](#)
- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)
- [Which kettlebell weight should I buy?](#)

- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [Crossfit Impulse: Kettlebell Swings vs Back Squat, Fight!](#)
- [Cavemantraining: Kettlebell sport swing is a squat!? Squat vs Hip Hinge](#)
- [Stack Exchange: Exercises that can replace squat](#)
- [Chron: Kettlebell Swings vs Hindu Squats](#)

- [Men's Health: Kettlebells vs. Free Weights: The Smackdown](#)
- [Ace Fitness: 6 Lower Body exercises to do instead of squats](#)
- [Rdella Training: What a new study says About kettlebells vs Barbells](#)
- [Kettlebell workouts: Got bad knees? Here's how to exercise](#)

Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?



Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?

The short answer to this question is no as the context is lacking. This article will outline the main principles and sources to help you answer this question in your own context by discussing goal sets, the movements themselves and real-life examples. In the end, you will find links to further resources to cross-reference with other experts.

What is your goal?

Whenever a question around gym equipment and training protocols is being posed you have to remind yourself why you are entering the strength game or any type of exercise for that matter. Depending on what you want to achieve it is important to choose your exercise regime accordingly. For me, the goal is to become a marathon runner who can perform a sub 3-hour marathon and pull a deadlift of 500 pounds afterward. So, for me, the type of strategies are different from what you might pick to achieve your goals.

Especially if you are beginning in training, ask yourself why you want to improve your body:

1. To improve your aesthetics? (let us call a spade a spade, to get laid or work as a model)
2. To improve your performance in the ring / on the mat / on the field?
3. To be more healthy?

The younger you are the less likely it becomes that you are doing it for health reasons. If you are not in a team or doing a sport already it narrows it down to point one. If it is point one, fair enough, I was young and insecure once, too. As a piece of advice from a man who has two stepchildren, is married and feels like he was always the master of his fate rather than a victim, let me tell you, looks will always wither away whether you like it or not. Consistent business success is also built on trust and consistency. People get paid for looks once. For skill and consistency they get paid for a lifetime so maybe adjust your goal set to something less superficial.

For the older crowd out there sorry for the rant. If you are here to get your back into a healthier state with a kettlebell or because you have some cardiovascular problem let me know in the comments or write an email. I am no doctor, but I have been there and gotten through it myself.

If you want to increase your strength to beat your opponents or make it on the team I have been in Judo 12 years at a national level and know some of the things to look out for. On team sports, I can not comment as I have never played one.

The question "Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts" is flawed as it lacks context

The question "Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts" is flawed as it lacks the context I provided in the first paragraph. To answer the question like it is stated it would be a no as it lacks specificity. Of course, this is the smart

man's sleight of hand to not answer your question to avoid looking stupid. Consultants and salesmen all over the world are trained into answering with "It depends" to a closed question like this to obtain more information.

You can distinguish the well-meaning trainer from the predator by paying attention to whether they keep their minds open to all options rather than just one particular one when they explore your goals and thought process. They are there to guide you, not to tell you what is right from wrong. What you want to do in the end is your choice and you have to bear the consequences and benefits of your decisions.

Generally speaking, both exercises will help you to get stronger and more explosive compared to doing nothing. Kettlebell swings will help you with back pain and explosiveness more than deadlifts if executed correctly. Deadlifts are the ultimate tool for absolute strength in the gym. Kettlebells have the added benefit of being easily obtained as part of a home gym and working your endurance.

Deadlift

The deadlift is one of the big three lifts in powerlifting apart from the bench press and the squat. It has recently gained popularity as one of the main tools to build strength in athletes and also regular gym rats. To me, the deadlift is still my absolute favorite lift. I was never especially explosive, nimble or fast. What I have tons of is grit and strength. So no surprise I like the deadlift.

For you, the deadlift can be helpful if you are interested in powerlifting or when all of your opponents stomp you to the ground with ease by overpowering you. If you have enough absolute power to perform your sport (for example you have a bigger powerlifting total than all your teammates, but some of them still beat you at tackles and when in a mosh pit you get sent to the mud by aggressive Peter Dinklage's) then look into explosiveness rather than absolute strength. For this, the kettlebell swing and the Olympic lifts are considered more beneficial among strength

coaches in general.

For aesthetic purposes, the deadlift can be helpful to pack on mass to your back when you are a bodybuilder. Layne Norton makes quite a compelling case for bodybuilders to utilize the deadlift. For the broader public aesthetics usually, means having big arms and a six-pack. To achieve this, the deadlift is not necessary. Abs are made in the kitchen and not in the weight room. Big arms are made with cable work and curls. At least in my experience and you will not have a hard time to find a hand full of people with chiseled abs and big arms to agree with me.

The biggest risk with the deadlift is the high potential for lower back injuries if performed incorrectly. In addition, if you train women or you are a woman yourself, there seems to be a negative bias in the female population towards barbell work. This is becoming less pronounced in recent years, but if your client is female and in dire need of lower back strength sell her on the Kettlebell deadlift as you will have a hard time with the barbell.

Kettlebell

The kettlebell swing is the older of the two exercises as the barbell is a relatively new tool for strength development compared to the ancient Russian strength equipment. It has been made popular in the west through the books and work of Pavel Tsatsoulin with publications like Simple and Sinister, Power to the people or Deadlift Dynamite.

I love the kettlebell personally as one of the simplest tools for my strength warm-ups to work the midsection of the body front to back. Where i used to run a warm-up cycle utilizing a glute ham raise bench, a medicine ball, a sandbag and box jumps I now only do the simple and sinister routine with better results and less fuss. This provides me with improved balance and functionality compared to not using the kettlebell. If you do some research you will find similar reports from other enthusiasts with an interest in strength.

For aesthetic purposes, the kettlebell is better suited to achieve your goals of getting a six pack as the exercise is more aerobic in nature. You can run a circuit or TABATA like exercise regime to support your diet choices to get quicker into an area of low body fat percentage. I can back that up with my own experience and research suggests likewise, even though not conclusively.

When it comes to absolute strength the deadlift beats the kettlebell as the main linchpin of a program. If you want proof, have a closer look at the routines of powerlifters and strongmen. These guys make a living with absolute strength and you will usually find the swing as an assistance movement and not main exercise.

For health purposes, the kettlebell swing also beats the deadlift as individuals usually are more tolerant to the swing than to the deadlift based on their injury history, fitness level, and mobility. That is why you see more grannies and women swing than deadlift apart from the unfounded gender bias I outlined earlier.

The challenge with the kettlebell is that it is a seemingly easy movement to perform and it is hard to determine where your control over the weight ends and the weight starts controlling you. The eagerness to progress in weight which you especially find in newbies leads to poor form and potentially harmful movement patterns for the lower back. A kettlebell swing should be ballistic in nature and not a pendulum. I recommend to read Simple and Sinister and watching the Strongfirst material before starting kettlebell exercising. Even better, get some instruction with one of their certified members in.

Kettlebell vs Deadlift

The kettlebell and the deadlift are not mutually exclusive. Often strength coaches observe synergies between the two lifts and use them to make more advanced trainees progress quicker with minimizing the risk of injury. This is usually done by tinkering with volume in favor of heavy kettlebell

swings versus deadlifts. The kettlebell swing especially helps with two crucial parts of the deadlift:

- The hip hinge
- The lockout

Vice versa progression on the deadlift increases absolute strength which makes it easier for you to handle bigger kettlebells. The speed with which the kettlebell moves is important as it increases the force you are exposed to. Experienced kettlebell users can turn a 24kg kettlebell into a 500-pound challenge by accelerating it tremendously in the downwards part of the range of motion of the swing.

Heavy ass kettlebell lifts vs Deadlifts

The main argument between the kettlebell swing and the deadlift goes like this

1. A kettlebell is a great tool for teaching proper hip movement and for conditioning glutes and hamstrings
1. But athletes need heavier loads to induce adaptations which they can only get from the deadlift

Unfortunately, there are not enough studies and heavy kettlebells out there because of the cost and small popularity of the kettlebell among men which can conclusively provide an answer to whether swings with 40kg plus weight can actually replace the deadlift.

For the older generation

If you are one of the older folks and want to get into swings I would say go with them first before going into deadlifts. If your goal is to stay mobile, agile and strengthen your lower back I think the kettlebell is a better tool

for you than the barbell. Of course, always check with your professional of choice before following any exercise regimen.

Conclusion

Depending on what you want to achieve the kettlebell can replace the deadlift. In my opinion if you are after general well-being combined with cardio the kettlebell is an excellent tool to get strength in the mix. If you like to see your abs and be chiseled like a Roman god work on your game in the kitchen first. After that, you might want to use dumbbells and cables like most bodybuilders do. If you are into absolute strength or sports performance you will use the kettlebell as well as the deadlift depending on your strength and weaknesses to maximize performance.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)

- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
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- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [Forum discussion on Strongfirst: Do kettlebell swings build strength?](#)
- [Article on T Nation: Are heavy kettlebell swings better than deadlifts?](#)
- [Article on Tony Gentilcore: How the kettlebell can improve your deadlift](#)
- [Forum discussion on ExRx.net: Swings vs Dynamic Deadlifts](#)
- [Article on breaking muscle: The what the hell effect, how the swing improves everything](#)
- [Deadlifts vs kettlebell swings](#)
- [The fallacy of the heavy kettlebell swing](#)
- [Livestrong: Deadlifts vs kettlebell](#)
- [Forum discussion Dragon Door: Deadlift replacement with kettlebell](#)
- [Reddit discussion: Can swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Reddit discussion: Are heavy kettlebell swings better than deadlifts?](#)

Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?



Can kettlebell swings hurt my back

The short answer is yes they can. In this article, I will walk you through why you should not be afraid of getting hurt a little, how to avoid getting hurt and in case it does happen, how to help yourself to get better and when to see the doctor. I have tried a lot in the gym and I have yet to find a better tool for general strength and endurance which is as much fun as the kettlebell.

The short answer is yes, kettlebell swings can hurt your back

Let's get straight to the point, yes kettlebell swings can hurt your back. Now that that is out of the way is it really that much of a big deal? You can die when you walk out of your house. Does this mean you should stay at home all day? Your children can get hurt when they start to learn how to

cycle or potentially drown when they learn how to swim. Does that mean they should not learn these essential skills? The world is a terrifying place and you will get hurt exploring it. How bad or if you get hurt usually goes back to these three things:

- How well you are prepared for what is coming
- How much respect you pay to the situation and stay calm
- How well you listen to your gut when you get to a tight spot

This is true for all things in life I have faced so far. Whenever I did not prepare, did not respect the situation and failed to listen to my gut I got hurt. Kettlebell's swings are no different but that is no reason to not do them. In addition, if you are not a fan of thirty-something-year-old men dishing out life wisdom there are also some statistics from 2011 on back pain which will put your mind to rest:

- One in five Americans will experience back pain
- The injuries reach from muscle strains to disc herniation
- Half of back pain is resolved in two weeks
- 90 percent of back pain resolves in three months

In addition, you have to distinguish between [delayed onset muscle soreness \(DOMS\)](#) and whether you really have something a bit more substantial than that. This is especially true when you are just starting with an exercise that you are not used to. DOMS sets in about 24 to 48 hours after exercise and is a direct reaction to the stimulus of exercising. This effect is more pronounced for movement patterns you are not used to or known movement patterns which are being done under a heavier load than usual. DOMS is the reason why your legs hurt so bad two days after squat day. Same applies to the areas the kettlebell swing addresses.

So even if you were to get back pain from kettlebell swings, guess what, it is most likely to go away, unless you are blatantly stupid. Let us go through how you can avoid to put yourself in harm's way when doing kettlebell swings and it ain't that complex.

Too much too soon

There are three things which put you in high danger.

- Using things which you are not able to use
- Using things for a purpose they are not designed for
- Using things which you just acquired like an expert

Remember the point about respect? All of what I mentioned now is showing disrespect to the situation. This is what you have to keep in mind when you start with the kettlebell swing and [other complex movements which are being loaded](#). If you use a gun without knowing what you are doing you might shoot yourself in the foot or hurt the people close to you. If you use a microwave to dry your cat, do not be surprised that your little darling might die because the microwave has been designed to heat up food, not for drying cats. Last, but not least, when you just passed your driver's license it is probably wise to not [enter the Indy 500](#) or formula 1. Technically you can drive, fortunately, because of lack of skill, you will be deselected in the process before you can hurt yourself entering professional racing.

Again, same principles apply to kettlebell training. You should first learn how to use the kettlebell properly by getting instructions from a [Strongfirst certified coach](#) or [go through the RKC program under supervision](#). Once you know how to use the kettlebell you start with a weight which you have full control over and not the other way around. Finally, you will master the double-handed kettlebell swing before you move on to more complex movements like the snatch, jerk or one arm kettlebell swing.

Your Body's range of motion

When you are just starting out with exercises you might have mobility

issues you are not even aware of. Even if you have progressed very far there still can be things which need to be fixed because of bad habits which have crept in over time. Here are the most common areas for which people make mistakes and hurt themselves in the process on the kettlebell swing.

A lack of shoulder mobility will make it hard for you to swing the kettlebell freely and with ease. Depending on what causes the limited range of motion in your shoulder there are different fixes. First, you have to analyze whether the mobility issues are caused by a muscle imbalance or shortened tendons. Depending on what the cause is you either strengthen other areas to balance the entire system out or stretch accordingly to get more range of motion. These are some examples of things you can do:

Stretching:

- [Threat the needle Yoga stretch](#)
- [Holding onto a rack and stretch the arm out](#)
- Arm circles
- Kettlebell halos

Strengthening

- Pull-aparts with bands
- Pull-ups
- Kettlebell rows

- Cable Pulls

If your hip is tight you can not develop the full explosiveness and power from the hip to shoot the kettlebell up and avoid using other parts of your body to transfer energy. Again you can either have imbalances in your hip in terms of strength or flexibility which cause you to perform sub par. To loosen up the hips there is a multitude of drills which you can perform. Here are my favorites:

Stretches

- Face the wall squats
- 90/90 Stretch
- Paused Goblet squat with light kettlebell

Strength

- Cossack squats
- Overhead squats
- Front squats

What often happens is that experienced athletes or gym rats only use the back squat to progress in their strength. If there is little variation and ingrained weaknesses these get magnified over time especially if you only do one form of the squat for a long time. Some variation every quarter to half a year can help to build a more balanced physique. Hip mobility can also suffer from poor hamstring and/or ankle mobility as everything is connected.

Ankle mobility itself is the one I personally struggle the most with. I have shortened Achilles heels from birth which does not help the area. Ankle mobility can be worked on with the stretches and movements I already mentioned for the hips. In addition, you will also find stretches like pulling your toes up helpful. A 15 to 20-minute yoga routine can work wonders in these areas.

To minimize mobility issues and maximize your output it helps to warm up slowly and stretch before you start your kettlebell routine. I personally make use of the one outlined in the book *simple and sinister* and added the face the wall squat which I [learned from the book *Deadlift Dynamite*](#). So my warm-up routine is:

3 rounds of

5 kettlebell halos in each direction

5 paused goblet squats

5 hardstyle glute bridges

5 face the wall squats with bands

which takes me about 10 to fifteen minutes to complete and loosens me up very good. If you have more time or are even tighter than me here is another alternative I found

A1: Foam roll hip, T-spine extensions

B1: Partner mobility rolls with the Big Stick-upper traps, lats x50-70

C1: T-spine mobility push/pulls and rib cage openers x 3-5 L/R

D1: Wall Squats x 10|

E1: Scorpion x 10

F1: Goblet Squats (with 2 sec pause) x 10 x 1-3 sets

G1: Arm Bar x 1-5 reps L/R, hold for 5-20 belly breath

H1: Halos x 10 L/R

Although I would consider this more of a light workout in itself rather than just a warm-up. The choice is yours.

The kettlebell's range of motion

It is important to consider that the kettlebell also has a certain path on which it is supposed to travel. When you teach yourself the kettlebell swing from videos on YouTube or others in the gym it is very likely that you learn it the wrong way. It happened to me too and I still have some brave people walking up to me correcting my form. Brave because they care and speak up. Every time someone gives a damn you should be thankful.

One of the best sources for kettlebell instructions is StrongFirst. This is based on the reason that the program is run by Pavel Tsatsoulin, one man who probably has invested more time in the kettlebell than you have spent sleeping in your life. I have read a couple of his books and also will take his certificates soon. The most common mistakes are

- Hyperextension of the back at the top of the swing

- Squatting the swing
- Muscling the swing with your arms
- Performing an American swing instead of the Russian swing
- Chasing the bell
- Lack of tension

The Hyperextension at the back is often seen as people do not swing from the hips in a hinge motion but do all kinds of other things to move the metal ball. Your spine is supposed to be in line with your feet and head at the top of the swing. You should stand ramrod straight when the kettlebell reaches the apex of the swing and not lean backward. Leaning backward puts unnecessary pressure on the spine and can lead to injury long term.

Squatting is like Hyperextending at the bottom of the lift. As you are not supposed to go to the extreme and look at the ceiling at the top you should also not look through your legs or get your ass down to the ground at the bottom of the swing. The kettlebell is a hinge, not a squat, just like the deadlift. The hip should only move and keep the butt almost on the same level. Squatting the swing is a sign of poor technique or weakness as the tool becomes the master of the user.

Another common mistake is to muscle the swing with your arms. The kettlebell swing uses the arms merely as hooks to hang the weight from. Imagine the wrecking ball in the Miley Cyrus video of the song with the same name. Your kettlebell should "come in like a wrecking ball" not like an elevator. There is no pulling motion of the arms involved in swinging.

The American swing is the version of the kettlebell swing which goes overhead. Often beginners do this as they think it is cooler and gets more work done in less time. This movement is only for advanced athletes and also does not really add a lot of value. Keep it simple and stick to the Russian swing to focus on building ballistic power. If you can smash in a wall with the kettlebell you are powerful. If you can balance it on your head you look like a clown.

The American swing makes the next phenomenon a lot more likely to

happen which is chasing the bell. If your kettlebell is too heavy for you the kettlebell will not follow your body, but your body will follow the kettlebell. This leads to more jerk movements, tension on your skeleton and muscles and finally, injury. You have to be the one in charge, not the equipment.

Lack of tension is a general problem among layman who does not look into the theory of things. You can pick up kettlebells without even paying attention to how to get your body as hard as a brick. This topic is often not debated and deserves its own chapter as more fitness enthusiasts need to know this concept in detail.

Your body is a rock

This concept is one that you have to get used to and which I overlooked in the beginning. This makes it likely that you did too as it is not taught in the booklets and handouts you usually find. A crucial component of strength training is to acquire the skill of building tension in your body. When your body is as hard as a rock it is a lot less likely for you to get injured. When you are like spaghetti the weights will dominate your movements and not vice versa as it should be. [Pavel Tsatsoulin describes the concept of tension as "hardstyle" if you want to read more about it.](#) The best professional weightlifters and powerlifters have perfected the art of building tension to minimize power leaks and gain maximum performance. Applied to the kettlebell here are the areas to watch out for

- Flex your butt
- Plank at the top
- Neutral spine
- Grip

The first area to pay attention to is to flex your butt as if you want to crack a walnut. Glute bridges are an excellent tool to train how to flex your butt in a way that it supports lifting. You really want to squeeze the cheeks together at the top of the lift and get from the lowest point of the swing to the highest through the hip hinge to the squeeze. I have left many

horsepowers behind by not doing it. Try it and you see how much more control you will get over the movement once mastered.

The top of the swing is a plank. You apply the principle of the butt also to your abs. You get as tight as you can as if someone is about to throw a punch to your stomach when the kettlebell floats in front of you. You stand ramrod straight and your arms, butt, and abs lock-in. If you perform the kettlebell swing like this you will not be able to perform sets of twenty anymore.

It is also important to keep a neutral spine. To achieve this practice the hike pass and locking your elbows in when you pick the kettlebell off the ground. Your trainer or gym buddy should be able to place a broomstick on your back and your spine should keep in line with it and not round. This is achieved by locking the elbows in, pulling your shoulder blades towards each other and initiating the first swing. If you do not pay detailed attention to the opening swing, you usually find that the spine is all over the place during the set.

Last but not least the grip. You want a firm grip on the kettlebell, but not a hardstyle one. Compared to the bench press where you squeeze the barbell as hard as you can to derive some extra power in the swing you focus more on "bending the handle like a horseshoe" rather than squeezing it. This ensures that the kettlebell is locked in while not pulling from the arms or upper back which is likely to happen if you apply too stiff a grip.

Recovery from back pain

Inevitably there will be back pain if you train hard and with the purpose to progress to get stronger and healthier. The longer you train the better you will get at judging whether the pain is DOMS, growth pains, a pulled muscle or something sinister. When I hurt my back in 2016 on [Wendler 531](#) I immediately knew when I pulled the weight up that there was something bad going on. Took me six months to recover. In the beginning, err on the side of caution and stop in time and get checked more often by a

chiropractor, general practitioner or physician. If you are a hypochondriac and afraid of everything that might hurt you, free weights might not be for you. Go with Yoga instead to strengthen your back and be healthy. (I love yoga). If you experience something nagging you here are some strategies to help yourself:

- Foam rolling
- Ice
- Heating pads
- Ibuprofen
- Voltaren

Foam rolling has gained a lot of popularity lately. [A great book on the topic and mobility, in general, is Supple Leopard](#). Get some proper instructions for foam rolling as it can also be counterproductive if done wrong. If you want to get to the deeper tissue you might want to use something with [a bit more bang like a boomstick](#) or a lacrosse ball. For most mere mortals foam rolling for ten to twenty minutes at home to reduce pain usually works.

Ice packs are good to numb immediate pain and recover faster. Especially if you are very prone to experience pain because your skin and body makeup just seems to bruise easier than most people ice is a good go to. Be careful to use ice only to suppress and relieve immediate pain. If it goes chronic go to the doctor rather than stacking your freezer with 24/7 ice pack supplies. Frozen vodka bottles also do the trick and usually end in disaster later in the evening.

Heating pads do the same as ice packs for me. I personally like them as an overnight recovery for severe cases after I have applied ice. A tip from granny here: hot water bottles do the same thing as heating pads and are reusable. You can also put them in funny costumes and look silly so that your wife/partner/husband loves you even more for being such a fool chastising yourself in the gym.

Ibuprofen and Voltaren are over the counter substances which help to relieve pain. If it gets really bad you can apply this to the affected area to get better when everything else did not work. In my Judo times, we used

Voltaren a lot for all kinds of muscle aches all over the body. Very effective in my opinion. However, if you know your pain patterns well and you have to go to the last resort a visit to your doctor is due. If I have to apply any type of cream or take disprin/aspirin to relieve pain that stems from exercising my next hand movement is hitting the buttons on my smartphone to make an appointment.

Conclusion

Kettlebell swings can hurt your back if you do not take them seriously and educate yourself. This goes without saying and still in the fitness industry there is a lot of "Oh this looks easy let's do it" mentality. Read up about how to do it in the books I mentioned, get one or two sessions with a Strongfirst instructor near you in, be humble with your progression and your kettlebell swings will make you more healthy and not worse. In addition, you can feel badass swinging a cannonball with a handle around like a boss.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)

- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
- [How many kettlebell swings?](#)
- [How many times will you kettlebell to see remarkable results](#)
- [How the simple kettlebell works for your well being](#)
- [How to kettlebell swing to get amazingly strong](#)
- [When the killer kettlebell gets results and high performance](#)
- [Where do kettlebell swings target?](#)
- [Where to buy kettlebell sets?](#)
- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)

- [Which kettlebell weight should I buy?](#)
- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [3 reasons for kettlebell back pain](#)
- [Why do kettlebell swings hurt my back](#)
- [How to fix kettlebell low back pain](#)
- [Does your kettlebell swing suck?](#)
- [Lower back pain after Kettlebell workout](#)
- [When Kettlebell Swings hurt your back](#)
- [Sore back muscles from kettlebell](#)
- [Top 10 dangerous kettlebell mistakes](#)
- [What you need to know about kettlebells and your back](#)
- [Kettlebell Swings and lower back pain: Part 1](#)
- [Kettlebells have your back: A neurosurgeons Personal and professional perspective](#)
- [Sore back muscles from kettlebell swings](#)
- [Kettlebell Therapy: Swinging away back pain](#)
- [Kettlebell Swings and low back pain](#)

The Purchase

We close to with giving you the right insight to buy your very own kettlebell set and avoid the mistakes I made. Kettlebells are probably the least expensive full body gym you can acquire.

Which kettlebell weight should I buy?



Which kettlebell weight should I buy?

Kettlebells have been gaining in popularity for the last decade. Pavel Tsatsoulin was the main driver of a movement that started from "What you use cowbells to train" to mainstream level with DVD sets delivering

kettlebells for free with their program (hint, as this kettlebell comes for free, you guessed it, its crap). This article takes my experience with kettlebells and walks you through the major principles. As I do not own many different kettlebells myself, because I am simple and did my research on my first time purchase, refer to the links at the end of the article if you want to know details about specific models and learn from others.



The question lacks context

The question "which kettlebell set should I buy" lacks context as I do not know you personally. This is often the case with questions regarding health, fitness and dietary habits. In this article, I will outline the most common scenarios for you to help you to make a better-informed decision, provide the resources I used on which the article is based and share my own experiences. Always consult a doctor for a new exercise regimen before you take it up, especially if you have not been active for a long time, you are older than 50 or have been already diagnosed with chronic disease. If you have any questions, recommendations or tips please leave a comment at the end of this article or look up my email address in the about section of this webpage.

Who are you?

So that you understand which type of kettlebell you should choose it is important to have an understanding how your gender, fitness, age, and weight affect your choice of a kettlebell. All of which I outline here also applies to exercise equipment in a more general sense. Everyone is different and generalizations are flawed but help beginners with guidance. **Take this as such, guidance, not gospel.**

Males have a tendency to overestimate themselves when it comes to kettlebell training and also strength training more generally. There is a bigger need to show off and to be perceived as one of the strong guys. This leads to the challenge in picking a properly sized kettlebell yourself. Generally, kettlebells will be bigger for males than for females in size and weight, but not as big as the individual might think. Just because you can perform multiple repetitions of a 225-pound bench press that does not mean that a 10kg something kettlebell is child's play. Pavel Tsatsoulin, one of the most respected kettlebell instructors to date, recommends a 16kg kettlebell for men who bench press below 200lbs for reps and 20kg for males who easily bench more than that for repetitions. In my case, I picked up a 24kg kettlebell with a 300-pound bench press under my belt when I started serious kettlebell training.

Women come in at the other end of the spectrum. They seem to think that kettlebells are too heavy for them when they pick them up from the ground and therefore go to low in weight. Remember that when you pick a kettlebell and do a curl or row you are not performing the main exercise which you will do with this piece of equipment. The main exercise is the kettlebell swing in which you can make use of more muscle groups than in the row and curl. Where Adam should usually go a size down from what he thinks he is capable of Eve should go one nudge up. This rule might not just apply to kettlebells as I also see quite a bit of writing about this phenomenon in books regarding career advise, [Lean in](#) and [Nudge](#) being two of them. Generally, you will find that women, given that all other factors compared to a man are equal, will use half the weight in the

kettlebell swing.

Apart from gender, your fitness level is also to be considered when choosing the right kettlebell to start. The fitter you are and the more used you are used to heavy lifting, the more likely it becomes that you can pick a bigger kettlebell. The more injuries you had and the more overweight you are the smaller the kettlebell weight should be. In some cases, you might even avoid using the kettlebell altogether as you should not load a movement if your body is not capable of doing so. If you have joint pains, arthritis or other chronic diseases which kept you from heavy exercising in the past kettlebells might be a solution but consult your doctor first.

Another component is age. Without being ageist it is a fact that you produce lesser growth hormones the older you get. There seems to be a very significant drop in fitness over 40, especially in untrained individuals. Factor this in when deciding to pick up exercising again after one or two decades of sitting behind a desk. The older you are the more likely it is that you should start with a smaller kettlebell than is generally recommended.

The last component to consider is weight. The laws of physics dictate that the heavier a body is the more it is at an advantage of moving another object. So for all of you who are a lot smaller and lighter than average also consider going down a kettlebell size to get the best results. The good news is that you probably have better leverages for lifting than the average joe.

Recommended kettlebell size

The **most commonly recommended sizes for kettlebells for men are 16kg and women should start with 8kg**. The starting recommendations lie within a range of 12kg to 24kg for men and 8kg to 16kg for women. The younger, fitter and stronger you are the more likely you are at the upper end of the scale. The older, weaker and less fit you are the more likely it is that you are at the lower end of the scale. Men should usually go one down from what they think they can move. In my example, I felt like I could have started with a 32kg kettlebell as the strongest bench presser in my gym and opted for

24kg to start with. If you think 16kg is laughable for an exercise you have never done before, it is very likely the right weight for you to start. Women might think that 8kg or 12kg is too much for them and based on the psychological background discussed this is what they should start with.

Another thing to consider is whether you will be mainly doing grinder or ballistic movements with your kettlebell. Grinder movements are exercises performed with long time under tension and which are not meant to be explosive. Examples are the renegade row & Turkish get-up. For grinds, pick a kettlebell which you can easily press ten times overhead. For ballistic movements like the swing and snatch, you can pick slightly heavier weights. I personally do Turkish get-ups with 28kg and swing with 32kg at the moment. Apply similar thinking to your case.

Overall be honest with yourself or, even better, get a professional to evaluate you and make a recommendation. Be humble when you think you are hulk, be wise according to your age and be brave if you are a pink wearing weekend warrior when picking your first kettlebell.

How do you want to train?

How big and what type of kettlebell you will buy is also depending on the style of training you are intending to pursue. Is your goal to mainly build strength or lose weight? Is the kettlebell your main tool of strength regime or considered accessory work? The more you gravitate towards strength and sideshow, the heavier the kettlebell will be for a first buy. The more you gravitate towards the main tool of exercise and cardio the lighter your first kettlebell will be.

If your focus is on strength, you will not perform more than ten kettlebell swings per set. Therefore the choice of kettlebell can be a bit heavier. Some people even consider 5x5 templates using kettlebells, especially if they do not like barbells. I am currently experimenting with 2x16kg front squats to build strength for my back squat.

If your focus is on cardio you will swing in the 12 - 20 repetition area and therefore you might even go down a size from the recommendation. Just do not go too light. The kettlebell should not be too light as you can not execute the swing properly then and also not too heavy because this leads to the weight dominating you rather than you controlling the movement. You and the kettlebell should be on eye level. A professional instructor can help you with finding this balance.

The Hardstyle way of kettlebell training is usually done with cast iron kettlebells. This is the raw version of training which is focused on strength and in which you try to brutalize yourself and the weight in the most intense way without exposing yourself to unnecessary risk. You will find this type of training described in the book Simple and Sinister in more detail.

The Girevoy sports style is more focused on skill and endurance as it is not allowed to put the kettlebell down during such a routine. This style is usually followed by people who are more interested in full body control and acrobatics than raw strength. For this purpose, competition kettlebells have been designed which tend to this need. Here are two videos to better understand the differences between the two ways of training.

As a beginner, do not sweat these different training methods too much and stick with the simple considerations around bodyweight, age, and fitness. If you are an advanced athlete think hard before you buy a set of heavy kettlebells. The heavier they get the more it will hurt your purse when you do not think through how kettlebells will fit into your already full workout schedule or that of your athletes.

Types of kettlebells

When people buy on their own budget they usually try to save money. That so happened with my wife when she gave me two 14kg kettlebells for my

birthday which I was delighted about. Both of them were plastic and uneven and the experience wore off after a couple of uses. When it comes to equipment like barbells and kettlebells good quality will last you for a lifetime and keep you safe. In the iron game, quality means craftsmanship and high-end material which cannot be gotten for small change.

Vinyl and plastic are the types of kettlebells to stay away from. Their fillings are usually of low quality and either fall apart or have to be constantly refilled. They are bigger than cast iron or competitive kettlebells of the same weight and are more prone to poor finish or design which will literally hurt you in the long run. For me, there are only a few reasons to get vinyl or plastic kettlebells. One might be health reasons as some people are allergic to steel and/or iron. If that is the case make sure that you find a kettlebell which has similar dimensions to what the pros use. Another reason is if you can not store the kettlebells out of reach for children. Plastic and vinyl are a lot more forgiving to your children when it gets dirty or they do other things with the cannonballs with a handle on them. They are also less destructive when dropped as their grown-up cousins, the cast iron kettlebell. If, however, your reason for buying kettlejunk is budget, I personally think might as well not get them. Do yoga instead or body weight exercises, that is even cheaper.

Adjustable kettlebells are great in theory as you get ten for the price of one. The challenge with them is that the mechanics of changing the weight are either cumbersome if it is a sturdy design, or downright terrifying during the swing if you can adjust quickly. Based on the extra mechanics these kettlebells are also bigger than their actual weight would demand which makes them often unbalanced and hard to handle during the swing which takes away the focus from what matters, your body.

Cast Iron kettlebells have been around the longest and are a great entry point as a compromise between your wallet and getting the real deal of Russian exercise bliss. This is the tool of choice for all the hardstyle swingers out there who want to go very heavy. The size of the kettlebell increases when the weight goes up in this category. Rogue fitness even sells monster kettlebells which go up to 92kg.

Competition kettlebells are the Mercedes among kettlebells. They come in at the highest prices as the most craftsmanship goes into the production. Based on how they are produced they have the same dimensions in the weight ranges from 8 to 48kg. You usually will not find monster kettlebells in the competition segment as there are not many people walking this face of the earth who can juggle 92kg for ten minutes.

For most trainees, a good cast iron kettlebell will do to start. Only if you are serious about lifting, like to try different things or just always want to have the best thing you should look into competitive kettlebells. You also do not get the highest tech speedo swim suite if you only go for a splash on the weekend with the kids. Nice swimming trunks will work as you also do not want to look cheap when you are out (aka plastic kettlebells).

Kettlebell standards

There are some standards in the kettlebell world which are either confusing to beginners or not pointed out for lack of knowledge or attention to detail with instructors. To avoid this here are the main points to consider:

Poods are measurements which come from good old Russia. Back in the day kettlebells were used as weights on markets to determine the worth of certain goods brought there, such as sacks of grain. When the locals started to get bored and do tricks with these weights the kettlebell sport was born. 1 Pood is a unit used back then and equals 16kg. Today you find this terminology often in Crossfit boxes. Most often you get kettlebells in increments of 1 pood (16kg) or half a pood (8kg). An exception from this rule is kettlebell kings which offer kettlebells in 0.5-pound increments. There are different opinions about strength training in the market. While Pavel Tsatsoulin has advocated big jumps to shock systems to make them adapt Mark Rippetoe outlines the principle of incremental increases workout for workout in his book Practical Programming for Strength training. As of late, the kettlebell master seems to be a bit less extreme in what kind of increments he advocates. This might be due to the wisdom he gained in older days or seeing a chance to sell more kettlebells. In the end, whatever

makes you stronger is useful.

The standards for competition kettlebell handles are 55mm from the kettlebell to the top of the handle, 35mm thick for men, 33mm for women and 186mm from one end of the handle to the other. Make sure that the kettlebell you choose can be comfortably placed into a double hand grip. Especially light kettlebells from low price vendors can have a tendency to be too small dimensioned to get a proper grip.

The most common weights you will find in the range of 4kg to 28kg. These are placed in many gyms around the country and I encourage you to test these weights before buying one for yourself. If you do not have a gym membership, make use of one of the free trials to try some kettlebells out and get instruction. Be careful though. The situation is improving, but if your personal trainer does not use kettlebells himself/herself and is not RKC or Strongfirst certified the instructions might even do more harm than good.

What to avoid when you buy

There are many points to avoid when buying a kettlebell. If you go with one of the well-established brands at the end of this post you will have not to worry about these. If you opt for low-quality range products check them for these points. Poor kettlebells are a result of cost savings in manufacturing to offer them to you at a lower price or to make them look more "cool" or "girly" as a marketing strategy to make it more likely that you buy them.

Painted kettlebells of all sorts have a higher risk of chipping and therefore losing their structural integrity and balance. The more the color "pops" the more aggressive the chemicals used for achieving this effect. If you go for color watch out for the ones that match the feel and structure of the kettlebell itself. These are usually the more durable and better materials for coloring iron or steel. Unless you want to dip them in gold of course.

Seams are the result of the manufacturer skipping the filing of the handle

in the production process. Simply run your finger at the lower part of the handle and if you feel one long rough line from one end to the other put the kettlebell down and step away. If you buy this you will get bloody hands, especially if it is a cast iron kettlebell.

Ridges are usually a result of a poor finish of the body of the kettlebell. If the manufacturer wants to make as many kettlebells as possible out of one cast and lowers the quality standards or produces too fast it can lead to micro-tears in the cast. The longer the cast is not replaced the worse this effect gets. The results are bumps and ridges in your kettlebell. This is not as bad as seams as it does not affect all movements. But for all grind movements, this will be counterproductive and downright dangerous. There are also some high-quality kettlebell manufacturers who decided to protrude their logo from the overall design of the kettlebell. This has, unfortunately, the same effect as a ridge, even though fully intended.

Rough spots are areas on the kettlebell which have a different feel than the rest of the kettlebell even though the material is the same. These can occur when the metal cools down at different rates in the cast which also leads back to poor manufacturing. If you see rough spots on the kettlebell it is a sign of poor production and the durability of the entire kettlebell has to be questioned.

Skinny handles can also be a problem with low-value kettlebells. A handle should be somewhere between 30 - 38mm depending on the size of the kettlebell. If it is less than that it will not properly fit into your palm. If you are not buying for children, stay away from anything skinnier than 30mm.

There are kettlebells which are not cast iron in one piece but welded together. Here, again to save production cost, handles and bodies are being produced separately to be put together at a later stage in the production. Please do not buy these kettlebells under any circumstances as they can become a serious health hazard. Imagine swinging away at full power and 22.5kg (you can keep the handle) go flying towards a fellow gym member or even worse, your children. That is similar to shooting a cannonball at them. Best case scenario is some severe property damage or a piece of modern art which you can sell. Worst case scenario is a dead

body which you have to explain to the police or you impaling yourself. I hope it is clear now why these are bad.

Gimmicky kettlebells like ape heads, iron man masks and other demons and beasts are fun to look at. They are even fun to use, for a time. I confess when I saw them first at the Crossfit games I also wanted one. However, if you are not a collector or have surplus money to spend go for a balanced, professionally designed kettlebell. You want to get strong and fit. This is all about discipline and not about being flashy.

What to look out for when you buy

After talking about what to avoid here is what you should look out for when getting your first kettlebell.

Make sure that it has a smooth finish and is even in all parts of the kettlebell. Good craftsmanship shows in symmetry and evenness. This is what you want for your kettlebell.

What goes for the body of the kettlebell goes for the handle as well. It should be smooth to the touch, not need a lot of chalk so that you can keep your grip and slightly curved to be easy on the wrists. Some kettlebells will hold more chalk than others, but this is of no real concern for the beginner.

Free shipping is another attribute to look for when buying kettlebells. The excitement of getting your new toy can be severely dampened when the transport is almost as expensive as the tool.

Kettlebell prices

Kettlebell prices range from 50 - 300 for one kettlebell. You can start with only one which fits your need. No need to buy two of the same weight. If in doubt about kettlebells it is good to err on the side of the slightly heavier

kettlebell as you can work up to it. Sales, bundles, and prices for material influence the prices for kettlebells considerably so I won't go into more details as I hope you are now equipped with enough information to make your own choice. For a [quick overview from 2013 which has been definitely designed as a sales tool for perform better kettlebell's refer to this Guide.](#)

Vendors

I will go into the three vendors which are mentioned most often in a positive way in the reviews and guides I've read. This does not mean that you can not get good quality somewhere else if you do some research, but these three are safe havens where you will not be swindled out of your money and get good quality for what you put in.

- [Rogue Fitness](#)

Rogue Fitness is one of the main sponsors of the Crossfit games and all of the products I have gotten from them are of good quality and shipped in time. Their kettlebells themselves have a design flaw as the Rogue emblem creates ridges by design. The upshot is that they have very heavy kettlebells on request.

- [Kettlebell Kings](#)

Kettlebell Kings are the disruptors on the kettlebell market bringing new ideas to the game like challenging the pood system. If you want a very good kettlebell under the top prices of the market this is your place to go. The design is well thought through and they get high praise from most reviewers.

- [KettlebellsUsa](#)

KettlebellsUSA is the gold standard of kettlebells in my opinion based on

how they present themselves, their pricing and the reviews they get online. If you are serious about becoming a well-versed kettlebell athlete who does not just bang away on swings, this is the place to go to get something which will last a lifetime. They have my business for putting something like this on their website:

Kettlebells USA® never has, and does not, manufacture or sell plastic kettlebells, kettlebells with monkey and demon faces on them, adjustable kettlebells and all manner of kettlebell-dumbbell hybrids that are on the market today. Why? Well, we could certainly do it, like so many of our competitors, and make lots of money doing it too, however, there is a very good reason that we do not. These really aren't kettlebells, they look somewhat like kettlebells but unfortunately, the manufacturers don't understand the science behind kettlebell design. Real kettlebells are designed to be balanced in a certain way and they are actually precise tools.

Kettlebells USA® is a professional kettlebell company and we are serious about providing the best tools to enable athletes, coaches and regular people the finest kettlebells possible for the goals they have. If a kettlebell can be improved by new materials or a new engineering insight or manufacturing process so that real users will benefit then we will do so, however, we are not interested in gimmicks that are solely designed to misinform consumers and take their hard earned money from them. We have been in the kettlebell business for some years now and we will not compromise our principles just to make money off innocent, uninformed consumers. After all, we use kettlebells too, we don't just sell them. Our kettlebells are made for real-world use.

Imagine Wall Street put out something like this. All hell would break loose. I like these guys. Something real for a change.

Conclusion

First, you do not need to buy a set. One kettlebell which is the right size for

you is enough to start. If you get hooked you will soon regret that you did not buy a set in the first place. If you have the spare cash buy a 16kg, 24kg, 32kg set as an average guy and you will have fun for life. For all of you women out there who want to shape up go for 8kg, 12kg, and 16kg. If you do not have the spare cash to buy a set of proper kettlebells please buy just one good one instead of a heap of junk.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace deadlifts?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace squats?](#)
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- [Where do kettlebell swings target?](#)
- [Where to buy kettlebell sets?](#)
- [Which kettlebell should a woman start with?](#)
- [Why is kettlebell training so effective?](#)
- [Will kettlebells get you ripped?](#)
- [Will kettlebell swings burn fat?](#)

Resources

- [What size kettlebell should I buy](#)
- [How to choose and buy your first kettlebell](#)
- [Kettlebell review and shopping guide](#)
- [A guide to buying kettlebells](#)
- [The definitive guide for buying kettlebells](#)
- [Getting started with kettlebells, How to buy, learn and train](#)

- [What is the best kettlebell weight to start with](#)
- [The complete Kettlebells buyers guide](#)
- [Don't buy a kettlebell until you read this](#)
- [Kettlebell's buyer guide](#)

Where to buy kettlebell sets?



Where to buy kettlebell sets?

For the impatient, skip to the end of this post to find links to places where you can buy kettlebells. For everyone who came here to learn and shorten their research process from two days to one read of a post, get the details. I personally swing a 32kg kettlebell with no problem and have been following the simple and sinister program by Pavel Tsatsoulin religiously for

a year.

Why do you want to buy a kettlebell?

Before you go into the question of where to buy your kettlebell to shape up and change your body composition let us stop for a second and ask ourselves why you are considering to buy a kettlebell. There are different types of buyers and use cases for kettlebell's and depending on that your preferred choice of vendor might differ. For me personally, there are these types of buyer's of kettlebells:

Young Adults who can not afford a full Garage Gym and still want to kick butt

Stay at home mothers who want to tighten their glutes and lose some weight

Gym owners who have to equip an entire gym

Kettlebell athletes

Powerlifters who need a heavy kettlebell as an upgrade from what is available at their gym

Young adults are most likely to be strapped for cash and still want something that feels sporty. If you place your kettlebells in your gym you can go for the lower price versions with a bad coating, just be aware that your kettlebells are more likely to chip and get rough on the handles. It is also more likely with a lower quality product to get imbalances in the kettlebell itself due to poor production and less weight than you actually ordered. All minor things which still should be considered. A good kettlebell will last you for life were a bad one might only last you for five years. In five years time, however, it is very likely that you are able to replace your kettlebell as by then you are likely to have a job. For young adults who are cash-strapped or got a budget of 100 to spent from their parents, try to get a 12kg, 24kg, and 32kg for this, You do not need more than this. This can be sourced through eBay or Amazon. Amazon has the advantage that it is pretty sure that you will get what is in the picture. With eBay, you might be disappointed to get a less fancy cast iron kettlebell than advertised.

For stay at home mothers who have kids, the cast iron options might not be ideal. I am not a fan of plastic kettlebells and think they are generally crappy compared to iron ones, but in safety scenarios with children around I would opt for plastic. In case your children fall on the kettlebells, chew them, lick them or get some poop on them plastic is more forgiving to the child and easier to clean. Plastic kettlebells are also usually prettier than cast iron. I personally like the "tough man" image with raw iron, scars, and grunting, but I can see how that does not necessarily appeal to the other sex in all cases. Based on this you can go for a set of 8kg, 12kg, and 16kg which should cover you for most scenarios. Again, Amazon or eBay can be the routes to source the kettlebells in these scenarios. If you take your exercising really serious get one of the more professional versions which come in at a higher cost.

Motivations of gym owners who have to equip an entire gym have a few more things to think about.

- Who is your clientele?
- What kind of impression do you want to make on them?
- How much will the kettlebells be used in your gym?
- How many clients will use them at the same time?(= How many do you ACTUALLY Need)
- Which brands do my clients already like?
- How good is the customer serving?
- Will I have to pay to ship?
- Are the kettlebells a standalone purchase or part of the entire purchase for the gym?

Depending on these questions you look into what kind of kettlebells you will order from whom. If you are a gym which is mainly focused on the elderly and women you might not want to go for kettlebells which have skulls and monkey faces on them. If you have a powerlifting den full of hell's angel biker this might just be for them. Another consideration is whether you want to buy all of your equipment from one vendor and might get a couple of kettlebells including a rack thrown in for free. Generally, go for a professional shop which specializes in kettlebells or where a package deal

could be possible. Options can be Rogue Fitness, Gym80, Atlantis, Kettlebell Kings or KettlebellUSA. Also if you order 500kg of kettlebells, check whether shipping is included or prepare to scratch one lat pulley system off your shopping list. Same goes for being smart about getting used plates by the way.

If you are a kettlebell athlete who goes to competitions the gold standard seems to be Paradigm Pro from KettlebellUSA. Most reviews I have looked up by people who tested have them in the top three, more often than not as the winner of their review. I am personally not a kettlebell athlete myself, so if you feel I have misrepresented the market please leave a comment.

If you are a powerlifter who wants to use kettlebells to take the stress off your lower back from heavy deadlifting, but you still need to move a considerable amount of weight, the kettlebells which are available in most gyms will not cut it. You might be lucky and have a good strength focused gym in your area, but this is often not the case even in bigger stores. What will be available nearby is a home depot store. [Follow these instructions to build your own kettlebell for heavy swings](#) which can be loaded with plates. I would only recommend this approach for seasoned lifters as the T handle is cumbersome to maneuver and has not the same experience as a real kettlebell. As a powerlifter, however, you are most likely concerned with a lot of weight without having to invest a lot of money as you do not compete in kettlebell competitions and have no babies running around the place. Therefore, the T handle is your friend.

What to watch out for in a kettlebell?

There are some things to be considered when you look for kettlebells. The most important are

- Handle
- Casting
- Design
- Balance

Coating

For the handle, you want to look for one which is slightly bent like a steering wheel and round. The more the kettlebell handle deviates from this design the more painful it will be for you. If it has any sharp corners or funny dangly bits at the side, stay away from it. You want to swing it to achieve your fitness goals, not smash some heads in at carnival in Rio.

If affordable go with kettlebells which are made from the same cast, even though their weight differs. This will make it easier for you to progress and is doable in the lower weight categories. Once kettlebells get to a certain weight they will get fairly expensive if you do not want them to get bigger as more expensive materials have to be used to weigh them down. If you go for the absolute low budget option you will get kettlebells of various sizes. Not the end of the world, but can get annoying for a week or two when you progress. Also be careful when you look at pictures that plastic kettlebells which weigh more than 20kg are bigger than you might expect.

The design is also important but not from an aesthetic point of view. Make sure that the bottom of the kettlebell is flat and has enough of a radius so that it can support you. Avoid any kind of renegade rows or L sits with kettlebells that weigh less than 20kg. They have a tendency to move under you and a broken wrist will put you out of training for at least half a year. Make also sure that the design is smooth all around and has no protruding logos. If something sticks out from your kettlebell it will get in the way for Turkish get-ups and snatches.

Balance is another point to consider. I have myself never touched a kettlebell which was unbalanced, but if it is it becomes unusable. So if you find something on the internet which is way too good to be true for the price chances are that this is a stolen product or batch of failed produce which did not live up to the quality standards of the manufacturer. A bargain is always nice, but be alert and make triply sure that you actually get what you pay for. A defect kettlebell is flushing money down the drain.

The coating is important if you want your kettlebells to look nice for a long time and avoid that they oxidate. Most high range products already have a

good coating. Some of the less pricey cast iron options have coating of lower quality. Still, its iron, it won't fall apart that easily.

Where to buy kettlebell sets

Apart from eBay and Amazon, there are three stores which come highly recommended to buy kettlebells from.

Dicks Sporting Goods

Is the option for you if you want a big selection of colors and shapes. Not necessarily the preferred choice if you are a powerlifter or professional kettlebell master, but for young adults and stay at home mom's it is a better option than eBay or Amazon in my opinion as the service will be more tailored towards fitness equipment. At eBay and Amazon, you can only send your stuff back.

Kettlebell Kings

The choice for everyone who is a bit more serious has the money and likes the nicer things in life. A specialized shop which has everything you need as a competitor and powerlifter.

Kettlebellusa

The gold standard of kettlebells seems to be owned by Kettlebellusa. You can get similar models for competition purposes from Kettlebell Kings and other vendors, but they stood out the most in the material I researched for this article. This might be just a bias amongst athletes like with rogue fitness in the CrossFit community as they seem to sponsor a lot of events.

RogueFitness

Rogue itself, unfortunately, does not live up to their high standards when it comes to kettlebells. At least that is the impression which I got from several

reviews I watched and read. Still, if you are considering a bigger purchase for an entire gym or your own home gym this might work to your advantage in the negotiations to throw the kettlebells into the entire order for free / lower price as you would otherwise source from Kettlebell Kings or KettlebellUSA. All equipment which I have gotten from Rogue so far was top class.

Conclusion

Buying kettlebells is no rocket science and the costs are relatively low for private use. There is not a lot you can do wrong with them especially if you do not directly buy a set. Keep it simple and do not go fancy. IT is a tool for exercising and does not need to look pretty. The more a kettlebell tries to be pretty the less usable it is in my opinion. For bigger kettlebells or entire gym outfits, do your research as the invest gets quite considerable when you buy in bulk or kettlebells which are heavier than 28kg.

Further reading

- [Can I kettlebell train every day?](#)
- [Can kettlebells build muscle?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings hurt my back?](#)
- [Can kettlebell swings replace cardio?](#)
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