

THE SANDBAG TRAINING REPORT



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This special report has been compiled by Brute Force Sandbags and Sandbag Fitness to provide you with a detailed breakdown of the benefits and practical applications of sandbag training.

Brute Force Sandbags are the worlds best sandbags for strength and conditioning, as used by the Military, Strongmen (and women), CrossFit, MMA Athletes and Fitness Enthusiasts.

[Learn more about Brute Force Sandbags](#)

The Sandbag Fitness Blog, run by professional strength and conditioning coach Matt Palfrey, is a hub of sandbag training information. There you'll find weekly workouts, video, advice and tips on sandbag strength and conditioning.

[Take a look at the Sandbag Fitness Blog](#)

You can also purchase a copy of The Complete Guide To Sandbag Training in the **[Brute Force Sandbags Store](#)** or for the **[Kindle](#)**

THE SANDBAG METHOD

By Matt Palfrey

Originally Published in [My Mad Methods Magazine](#)

In strength and conditioning, we can all be found guilty of over complicating our programming from time to time. With the vast array of options available to us it's hard not to get overwhelmed with what is right for us and our goals. The sandbag is proudly low-tech but high on results. And when you see what it can do for you it may just become your new favorite training method...

SANDBAG TRAINING HISTORY

Sandbag training has undoubtedly been around for a long time, but it's perhaps only in the past century when it has been recognised as a legitimate form of strength and conditioning. There are certainly numerous records of the sandbag being used for structured training as far back as the 1890's, most notably by Indian Wrestlers. They continue to be used by combat athletes today but more and more people, irrespective of any sport specific benefits, are recognizing the sandbag as a serious strength and conditioning tool.

I have only been training with sandbags for 3 years or so and they have transformed the way that I approach my programming.

I train exclusively with the Brute Force Sandbag but it's entirely possible to develop your sandbag training program with a homemade bag. The important message here is that you needn't let your budget dictate your potential results. As a strength coach, this is one of the reasons that I am so passionate about sandbag training - anyone can start right now with the very minimum of investment. I started with an old duffel bag and 100lbs of sand that cost me less than \$5.

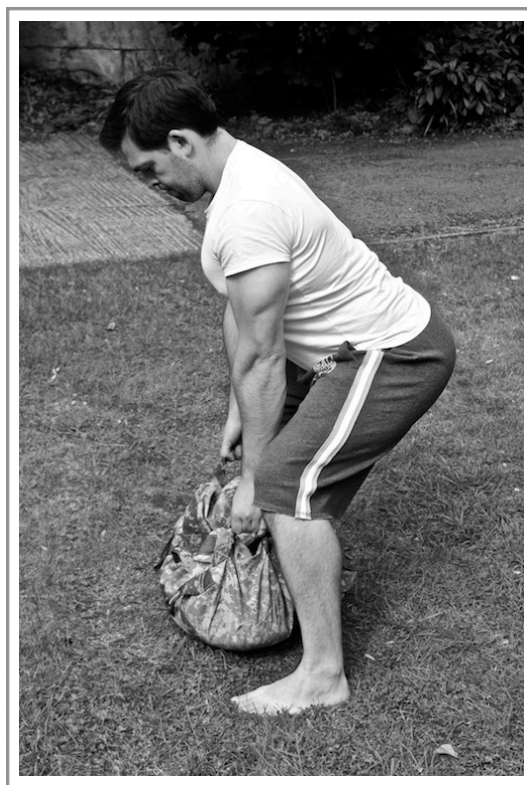
No matter what type of sandbag you use, the basic qualities remain the same:

- Sandbags are tough to work with. While you can certainly develop a more efficient lifting style with practice, the sandbag will always punish poor technique. It's awkward and has a constantly shifting load - this adds up to a serious challenge, even for advanced lifters.
- The sandbag is a real life object. It can be used as a representation of another person - this is perfect for anyone involved in contact sports and those in the armed forces, police, firefighters and many more occupations.
- You cannot lift a sandbag without working your grip. In fact, this is what many new trainees notice first. Any sandbag workout is also a grip workout. This further adds to the functional nature of the sandbag as a training tool.
- Training with sandbags develops mental conditioning as well as physical strength. There are few tools that can break an athlete as quickly as a sandbag. In fact, just getting the sandbag into position or transitioning between exercises is a challenge in itself. This builds serious mental toughness.
- It's important to develop strength and competency throughout all three movement planes (sagittal, frontal and transverse). This is an important facet of training for sports and daily life but also as a means to prevent injury and maintain general structural health. Besides movement in these planes of motion, it's also important to consider the practice of "stressing" these planes. The sandbag and its permanently off-centre load automatically stresses the body in a true multi-planar fashion.

THE SANDBAG TRAINED ATHLETE

While body type, diet and a range of other factors will dictate what an individual looks like, there are a number of key competencies that athletes who train with sandbags exhibit.

- An Iron Grip. Holding onto a sandbag develops an amazing grip, especially if you utilize an “handleless” bag. And grip isn’t just reserved for the hands, wrists and forearms - bear hug, shoulder and zercher grips develop a whole range of “gripping” muscles. If your sport or daily life requires a strong grip then you need to train with sandbags.
- Brute Strength. Strong legs, shoulders and backs are an unavoidable result of sandbag lifting. It is possible to develop an efficient sandbag lifting style but it will never be an olympic or power lift. The sandbag just won’t allow you to apply the same biomechanical principles. When things start getting tough you’re going to need to dig in and work hard.
- Serious Stabilizers. Lifting a constantly moving object like the sandbag requires and develops your stabilizing muscles like few other things. You simply cannot underestimate the balance and control required to lift a heavy sandbag overhead. Regular sandbag lifting builds a strong, stable musculoskeletal system.



THE SANDBAG LOWDOWN

Like most training tools, you can use the sandbag as a substitute weight for traditional resistance options like barbells, dumbbells or kettlebells. You can follow standard strength programs like Starting Strength or Wendler 5-3-1 with a sandbag. The sandbag works perfectly well for Deadlifts, Squats, Cleans and Presses. But if this is all you ever do with your sandbag then you are missing out on some of the key benefits to this method.

The sandbag is an unstable, awkward load with “built in” instability. The further away from your center of gravity that load is, the harder you will have to work to stabilise it. So exercises like the sandbag deadlift don't have that inherent instability factor. My advice is to focus more heavily on a range of “unique” sandbag exercises - things that just aren't as effective with traditional resistance tools. For me, that means lots of overhead work and utilizing a range of different grip positions.

The key exercises that you need to follow in any sandbag training program are:

- Sandbag Shouldering.
- Sandbag Clean and Press.
- Sandbag Bear Hug Load Carry.
- Sandbag Overhead Press.

These fundamental movements will give you a strong foundation of strength and conditioning. Furthermore, they all combine some of the best that the sandbag has to offer.

For more experienced sandbag trainees, the following advanced exercises will further develop your skill with the bag. And regular practice will build brute strength, agility and an iron grip.

Some advanced sandbag exercises to try:

- Sandbag Overhead Walking Lunge.
- Sandbag Windmill.
- Sandbag Get Up.
- Sandbag Bear Hug Squat.

You can learn technique tips for many of the key sandbag exercises here:

<http://sandbagfitness.blogspot.co.uk/p/workouts>

Beginner Sandbag Workouts - taken from The Complete Guide To Sandbag Training

BEGINNERS WORKOUT 1: SANDBAG BASICS

800m run
30 Sandbag Clean and Press
800m run

Complete as fast as possible. Men aim for a 60lb sandbag; women aim for 35lbs.

BEGINNERS WORKOUT 2: JUMP, PULL, PRESS

25 Box Jumps
25 Sandbag High Pulls
25 Sandbag Push Press
25 Sandbag Shouldering (alternate shoulders)

Complete 3 rounds as fast as possible. Men should aim for a 60lb sandbag; women aim for 35lbs.

BEGINNERS WORKOUT 3: THE SANDBAG MILO PROTOCOL

This training protocol is inspired by and named after Milo of Croton. A greek wrestler from the 6th century BC, Milo was famed for lifting a calf daily until it reached maturity. This

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was perhaps the first recorded instance of a linear progressive resistance training program.

Take a handles sandbag and fill it with between 25-50% of your bodyweight in sand. Perform a single ground to overhead lift. This is probably best achieved as a clean and press.

Repeat this daily, adding 1-2lbs of sand before each lift.

Advanced Sandbag Workouts - taken from The Complete Guide To Sandbag Training

ADVANCED WORKOUT 1: LEGS ON FIRE

100m Sandbag Bear Hug Load Carry

10 Burpees

10 Box Jumps

Complete 10 rounds as fast as possible. Men should aim for a 100lb sandbag; women aim for 60lb.

ADVANCED WORKOUT 2: BOULDER SHOULDERS

100 Sandbag Overhead Presses. Take a 100 Skip penalty for every rest that you need to take.

Complete as fast as possible. Men should aim for a 80lb sandbag; women aim for 45lb.

ADVANCED WORKOUT 3: THE CENTURION

100 Sandbag Push Presses

100 Sandbag Zercher Squats

100 Sandbag Get Ups.

Complete as fast as possible. Men aim for a 80lb sandbag; women aim for 45lb.

SUMMARY

The sandbag is an exceptional strength and conditioning tool that, when used effectively, will help you to develop great strength and conditioning. Take a structured approach to its use and include a wide variety of standard lifts (like Deadlifts and Squats) alongside a range of other “unique” lifts like Bear Hug Squats and Shouldering.



A BEGINNER'S SANDBAG WORKOUT

By Matt Palfrey

Originally Published on [Fitstream](#)

The sandbag is an often overlooked tool that can be used for developing high level strength and conditioning. The cumbersome nature of the sandbag and the fact that the load is constantly shifting makes it difficult to master but the results are well worth the effort. It is a particularly effective training tool for martial artists, rugby players and anyone involved in contact sports.

This beginner sandbag workout is designed to introduce you to training with sandbags and allow you to develop technique before progressing onto a heavier bag and more advanced exercises. As a general rule, you will probably find that you will not be able to lift as much weight in a sandbag as you can with other traditional free weights.

Workout difficulty	Beginner
Equipment required	Sandbags
Physical Skills	Strength, Power, Speed
Time	20-30 minutes
No. of exercises	5 sandbag exercises

WHO IS THE BEGINNER SANDBAG WORKOUT FOR?

This is a sandbag workout targeted at people new to sandbag training or with novice level fitness skills.

This workout is useful for those who want to:

1. Learn the fundamentals of sandbag training
2. Enhance their weight training by introducing sandbag movements
3. Build strength and muscular definition
4. Develop lean muscle mass
5. Burn fat / lose weight
6. Develop sports specific strength and conditioning

Advised prerequisites:

1. Professional sandbag instruction
2. Entry level fitness skills

BEGINNER SANDBAG WORKOUT INSTRUCTIONS

Workout notes:

1. Warm-up thoroughly before starting with some light cardiovascular activity such as jogging or skipping.
2. Use a sandbag weight that you can handle comfortably with good form.

The exercises in this workout have been selected to help develop overall strength and conditioning using compound movements. These compound movements utilise multiple joints and muscles and will build functional strength - perfect for everyday life, sports and avoiding injury.

1. Sandbag Clean
2. Sandbag Overhead Press
3. Sandbag Back Squat
4. Sandbag Lunge
5. Sandbag High Pull

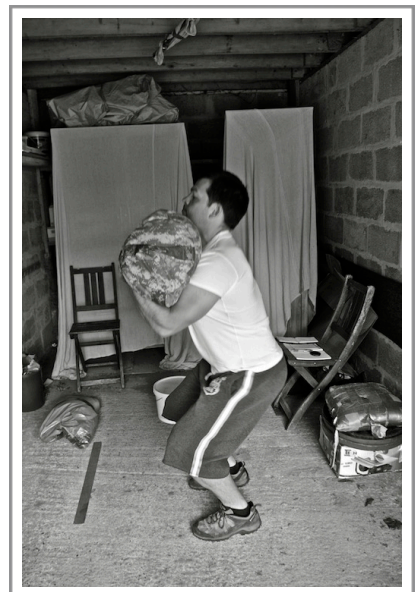
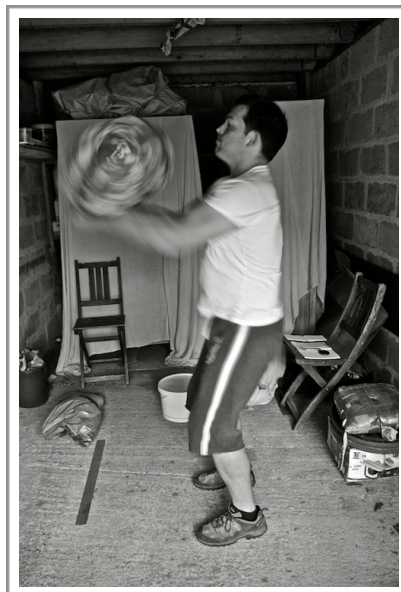
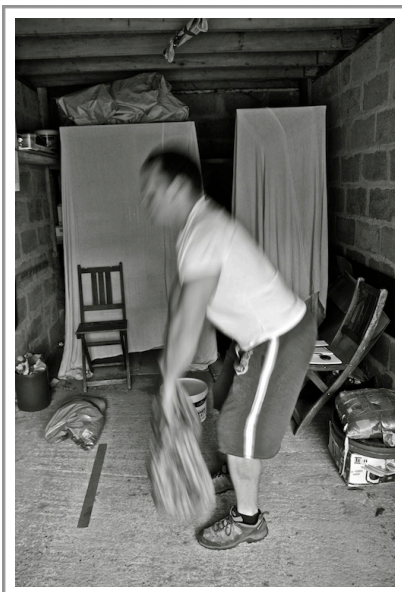
Perform the exercises in sequence, completing 5 repetitions of each. Repeat for a total of 3 sets.

Rest: 30 - 45 seconds between sets.

1. SANDBAG CLEAN

Start with the sandbag on the ground.

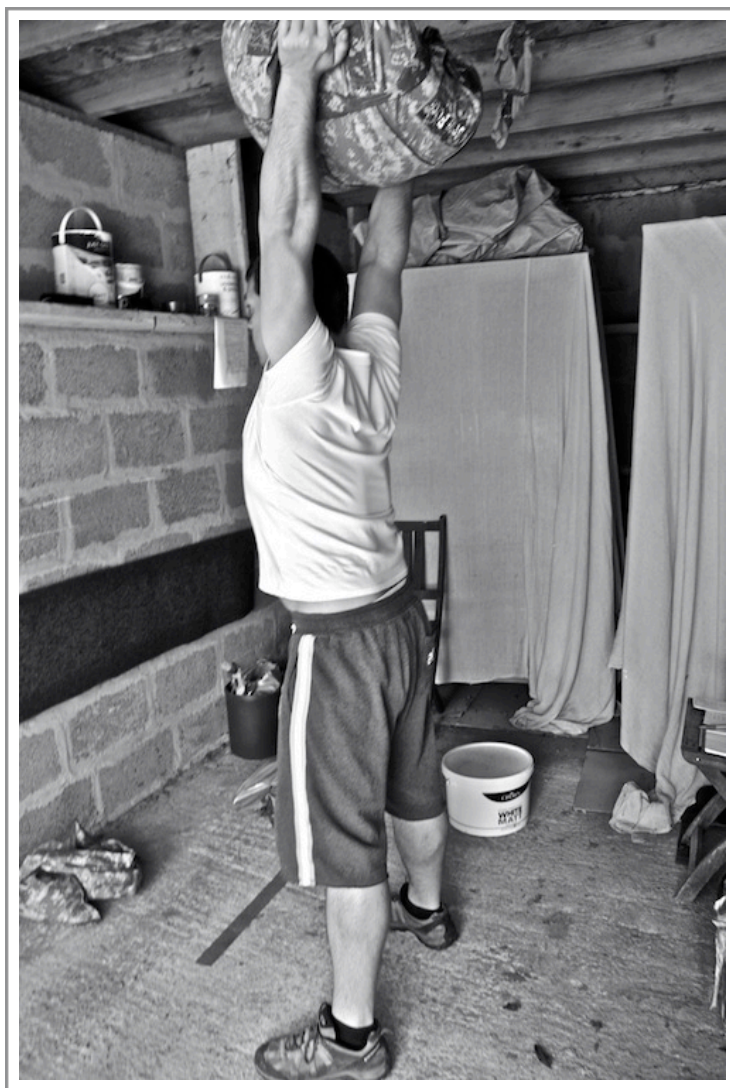
Take a firm grip and lift the sandbag up towards chest height. This should be achieved through a powerful extension through the hip. Catch the sandbag, return to the start position and repeat.



2. SANDBAG OVERHEAD PRESS

Start with the sandbag at chest height.

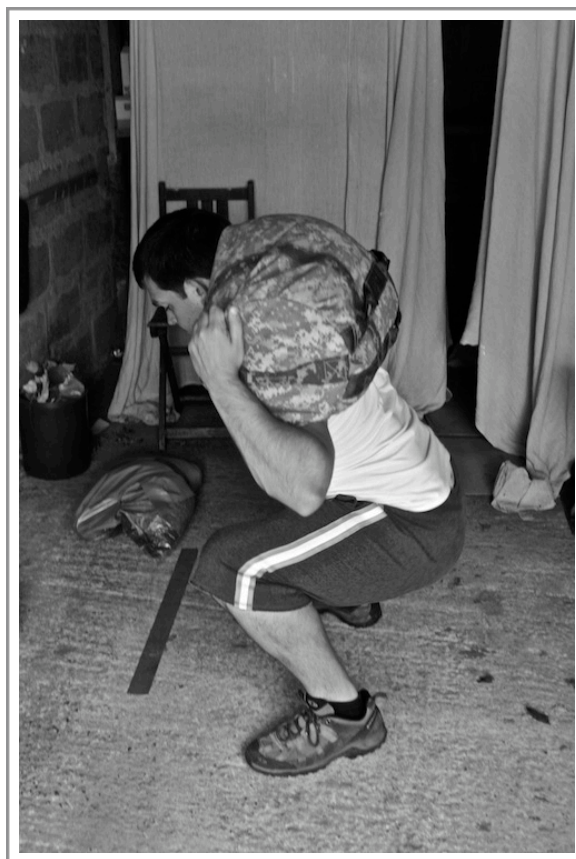
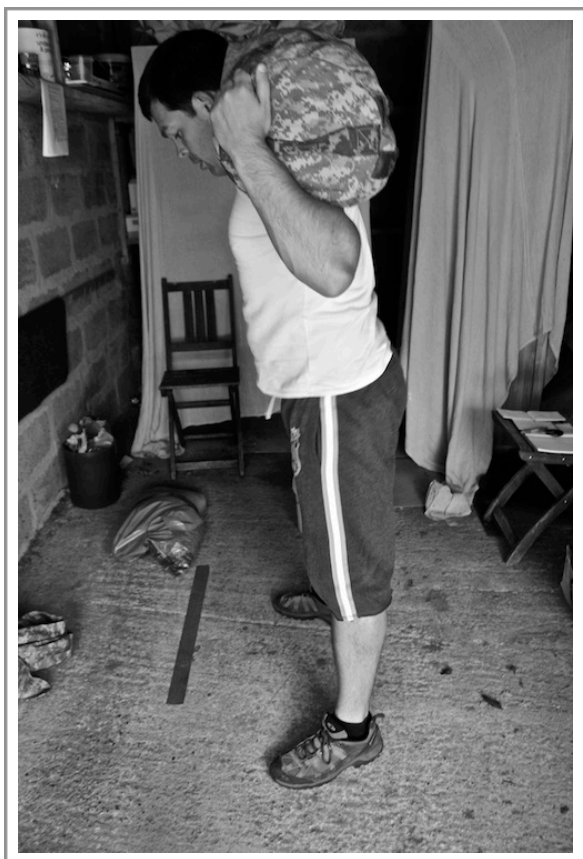
Without any assistance from the legs, press the bag above your head. Your back should stay relatively straight during this movement and you should brace your abdominal muscles. Aim to reach full extension through the shoulder and elbow so that the sandbag is completely above the head at the end of the movement. Return the sandbag to chest height and repeat.



3. SANDBAG BACK SQUAT

Start with the sandbag across your shoulders.

Sit back into the squat, keeping your chest high. Weight should stay predominantly in the heels and the feet should remain flat. Return to the starting position by pushing back upwards with your hips.



4. SANDBAG LUNGE

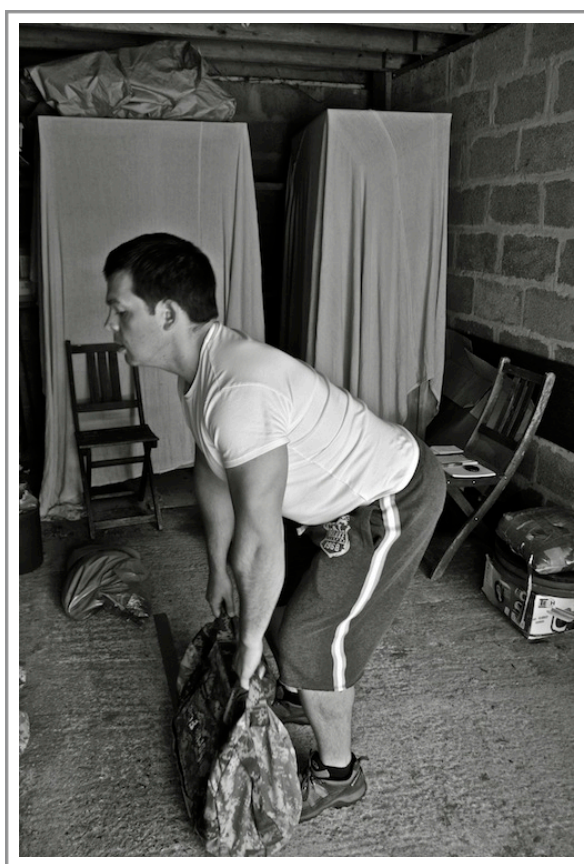
Start with the sandbag across your shoulders or (for added challenge) held overhead in straight arms.

Take a big step forwards and drop your body downwards by bending both knees. Your torso should remain upright throughout the movement. Step backwards and come to a fully standing position before repeating on the opposite leg.



5. SANDBAG HIGH PULL

Start with the sandbag on the ground. Take a firm grip and then lift the sandbag powerfully upwards to chest height. The elbows should be high throughout this movement, with most of the power coming from the hips. Return the bag to the ground and repeat.



PROGRESSING FROM THE BEGINNER SANDBAG WORKOUT

As you become competent with the basic sandbag movements you can look to integrate them into an overall training regime, perhaps by effectively combining sandbag exercises with barbell or bodyweight exercises.

ODD OBJECT LIFTING FOR MASSIVE STRENGTH GAINS

By Matt Palfrey

Originally Published in the Fitness Levels Magazine

Milo of Croton was a wrestler who lived in the 6th century BC. He was perhaps most famous for an amazing feat of strength in which he lifted a calf, everyday, from birth. As the calf grew bigger and eventually into a fully grown bull, he continued to lift it. This is a story of both a linear strength progression and of perhaps one of the most inventive odd object lifts of all time.

In today's sanitized gym environments you'll rarely find a weight that isn't designed to be easy to lift. Perfectly balanced dumbbells, barbells and kettlebells are commonplace and resistance machines are, by and large, pretty comfortable to use. While this is great for gym businesses, is it really the best thing for the results of the people using them?

In the "real world", things are difficult to lift. If you've ever moved house then you'll know what I mean. And this isn't limited to the occasional event like moving - sports, hunting and even carrying the shopping back from the store (modern day hunting) requires that you lift and/or move an uneven, odd object. So why don't we prepare for this in the gym?

WHAT IS ODD OBJECT LIFTING?

For this article I'll define an odd object as:

"an object not designed specifically to be used for the purposes of exercise and/or an object that has not been designed to make exercising with it easier"

This can, in theory, cover a whole range of things that you can use in place of traditional free weights. In reality though, it will probably include the following things:

- Sandbags
- Stones
- Kegs
- Tyres
- Logs
- Cars
- Ropes

The nature of odd object lifting is in fact very similar to traditional free weight training, with many of the same (albeit sometimes modified) versions of the standard lifts - including deadlifts, squats, cleans, presses and pulls. The major difference with these odd objects is that they are un-balanced, odd shaped and very challenging to lift. It is precisely this challenge that can yield great results.



THE BENEFITS OF ODD OBJECT LIFTING

Lifting something that is un-balanced will do wonders for your strength and also your ability to lift things in daily life. When was the last time you lifted something like a dumbbell or barbell outside of the gym? Training with odd objects will also have a strong transfer into sporting performance, especially in contact sports.

It's also a great way to get strong on a budget - I regularly speak to people who say that they can't afford a gym membership or that exercise equipment is too expensive. Odd objects are generally either very cheap or free - I've managed to get well over 500kg of odd objects for my garage gym for absolutely nothing. Most people will be glad to give you old tyres and the like - the reality is that you'll probably be saving them the money to get rid of them. The same weight in traditional free weights would have cost me at least £1000.

The reason most people don't even try odd object lifting is that it is both harder than conventional free weight training and that they generally believe that it won't give them good results.

CAN LIFTING ODD OBJECTS REALLY GET YOU STRONG?

People have been lifting odd objects for strength for thousands of years. And, in the 2011 Worlds Strongest Man competition, the final consisted of the following events:

- Steel frame carry
- Truck pull
- Giant tyre carry
- Max deadlift
- Overhead log lift
- Atlas stones

Apart from the deadlift (which was performed with a standard olympic bar), every event was an odd object lift. If the strongest men in the world are tested this way then there should be no doubt that odd object lifting has a legitimate place in every strength training programme.

INTEGRATING ODD OBJECT LIFTING INTO YOUR STRENGTH TRAINING PROGRAMME

This is not an article about replacing everything that you're currently doing with an odd object lift. My recommendation is that you combine some traditional barbell and dumbbell lifts with some odd object lifts - see it as a bit of 'serious fun' to put into each session. It will supplement your traditional training very well and I guarantee that you'll see improvements in your other lifts.

Aim for large compound movements that utilise multiple muscles and joints. This is good advice for strength training generally and not just odd object lifting.

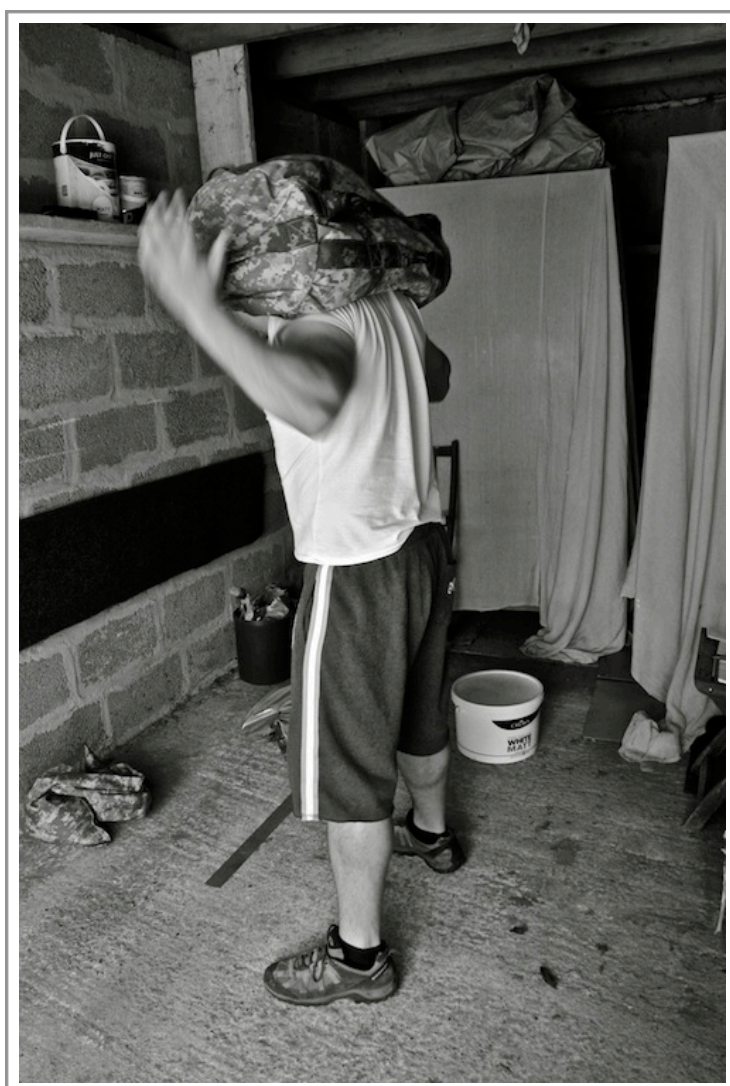
Exercises to try:

- Sandbag Shouldering - lift a heavy sandbag from the ground and up onto your shoulder. Aim for max weight and/or reps.
- Tyre Flip - flip a large tyre over. Aim for max weight or fastest time over a set distance.
- Keg Toss - hold a weighted beer keg (use sand) and powerfully throw it backwards over your head. Aim for max weight/height/distance.
- Stone Press - lift a stone from the ground to overhead. Aim for max weight and/or reps.
- Log Load Carry - carry a large log across your shoulders for a set distance.
- Car Push - push a car over a set distance in as fast a time as possible.

But, most of all, don't be limited by anything. Use your imagination and apply sound training principles to your odd object lifting and you'll achieve great results.

SUMMARY

Odd object lifting is a legitimate practice for improving your strength. Get yourself some stones, a sandbag or tyre and add in a little odd object work each week - try some lifts, throws, carries and drags.



SANDBAGS FOR STRENGTH

By Matt Palfrey

Originally Published On [T-Nation](#)

Is the sandbag the key to elite strength and conditioning? Probably not. But, properly used, can it help to develop the strength and conditioning unattainable through regular resistance training? Most definitely.

In this article I'd like to present some of the rationale for using sandbag training as both an additional and stand-alone tool for building strength, conditioning and power.

But, before we go forward, I'd like to make it clear that the sandbag is not a miracle tool. It requires just as much hard work and dedication as any other free weight. There is no substitute for consistent, hard work in the compound lifts, irrespective of the type of weight used.

As every serious athlete knows, the tools that you utilise are only ever as good as the way that you utilise them (kettlebell Gunslinger anyone?). In this respect, I think the sandbag is often seen as a "poor man's choice" for strength and conditioning. There is a distinct split between those that utilise sandbags (and other 'odd shaped' lifting) and those that train with traditional resistance, principally barbells. You will rarely find people that consistently work at both ends of this spectrum. Why?

1. It is difficult to "grease the groove" with sandbag training. Although your technique will undoubtedly improve over time you'll still find yourself fighting for most lifts. And people don't like this.
2. Sandbag training, being unstable and constantly-shifting, will invariably prevent you from lifting as much weight as you can on, say, a barbell. This means that most people who are training for absolute strength write it off.
3. Sandbags aren't always used for their unique properties. They're used for sandbag variations of regular barbell exercises and, for the most part, this just means that seri-

ous trainees end up lifting less weight than normal. The comparable results between sandbag training and barbell training then don't look so good.

So, if you're considering adding sandbag lifting into your existing training then it's important to qualify what it will, and won't do for you.

The ever-so-slightly annoying "buzz" for functional training has come full circle. People are now wise to the fact that the modality used (barbell, dumbbell, kettlebell, sandbag etc.) and exercise selected doesn't necessarily make it functional. What makes these things functional (and indeed anything) is how they relate to YOU and YOUR individual needs. So, we're starting to see a return to programs that are (9 times out of 10) more functional for most people. Programs based around good, compound lifts are now common and this is a great thing.

But, does this mean that we should avoid those other "real-life" lifts altogether? I don't think so. But we have to realise why we are including them in our strength and conditioning.

Most people avoid "odd-object" lifting because it's tough and they find themselves struggling to make many of the lifts - even at moderate loads. This inevitably causes people to question it - mainly because they find themselves unable to lift as much weight. For individuals aiming to increase absolute strength this can then become an issue. But, what I'm proposing, is that you don't simply substitute sandbag training for barbell training. You instead use it as an additional tool. Why?

WHAT MAKES THE SANDBAG A UNIQUE STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING TOOL

- The sandbag is awkward to lift - this requires that you fight hard to perform exercises with it, just like working with a "real-life" object or person

- Sandbags require great levels of grip strength to lift and you'll find that you naturally 'grip' them in positions like the Bear Hug, Zercher or Shoulder
- The sandbag is malleable - it will adjust to your body and the way that you are using it. This means it is particularly effective in moulding itself to your body and it is perfect for carrying, dragging and throwing
- The sandbag is itself unstable and will develop great 'core' strength. This is the polar-opposite of most 'core' training where the surface you are standing/sitting on will be unstable. Working with an unstable object is more akin to the demands of real life
- Plus, there is the other benefit of sandbags being inexpensive - perfect for anyone on a budget

The point is that sandbag training should compliment your regular lifting. Get used to lifting a 200 lb. bag of sand above your head and, guess what, you'll be stronger when you go back to the relatively "stable" barbell. I like to see it as a way to help push plateaus and also as a means to access some of the unique benefits of sandbag training.

INTEGRATING SANDBAG TRAINING

The simplest way to incorporate sandbag lifting is to use the bag as an alternative to your standard free-weight option for deadlifts, squats, presses and pulls. This, in my opinion, is not the most effective use of the sandbag but it will give you a taste of the benefits therein.

How you integrate sandbag training into your strength and conditioning will be highly specific to your own individual needs. But the following 3 options will provide you with some starting points:

1. Substitute an existing session of lifting for sandbag variations. Replace the lifts you would normally do with a traditional free weight with the sandbag. Do this 1-2 times per month.

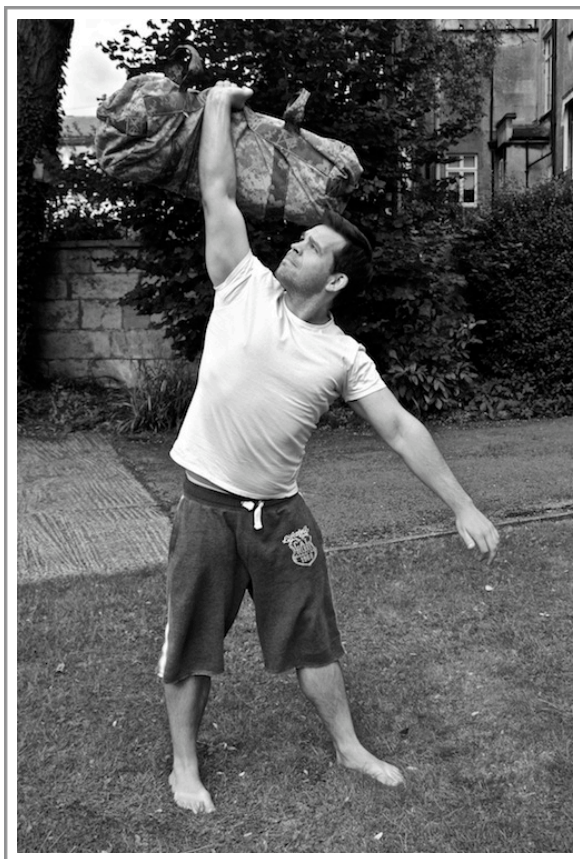
2. Add in a unique sandbag lifting session. Using some of the unique sandbag exercises described below, perform a session that is either strength based (high weight, low rep, high rest periods) or conditioning based (light-moderate weight, moderate-high rep, minimal rest periods).
3. Utilise sandbags for a sport-specific session. Push it, pull it, drag it, throw it - treat it like an opponent and be creative.

SANDBAG EXERCISES FOR YOU TO TRY

The following exercises will give you the best of what the sandbag has to offer. They're exercises that you probably won't normally do, and that's a good thing.

SANDBAG WINDMILL

If you've ever tried a Windmill with a Kettlebell or Dumbbell you'll appreciate it can be a tough exercise. It requires great flexibility, core and shoulder strength. Do it with a sandbag and it goes to a whole new level. The constantly shifting load of the sandbag will challenge your shoulder stability like nothing else.



SANDBAG BEAR-HUG LOAD CARRY

This is the kind of exercise that the sandbag was designed for. The Bear Hug will develop the kind of strength that is difficult to get from regular lifting. Couple this with a load carry (or sprint for supreme conditioning) for a great strength and conditioning exercise. You could move the bag between platforms (or chairs) or perhaps set out a course to cover.



SANDBAG FLOOR PRESS WITH BRIDGE

The Floor Press is a great exercise for developing pushing strength - and the sandbag version encourages greater development of grip strength and shoulder stability. Plus, you can be creative with it - MMA athletes can try escapes and transitions with the sandbag.



SANDBAG TRAINING FOR MMA

By Matt Palfrey

Originally Published On [Sherdog](#)

I'm a firm believer in the fact that nothing will make you a better fighter than actually fighting and drilling the skills that will make a real difference. But, when you need a strength and conditioning program that will support this training you'll be better off using a tool that will directly transfer to your sport. And, when 2 fighters are evenly matched in skill, superior strength and conditioning can be the deciding factor between victory and defeat.

The sandbag is an ideal, although much under utilized, tool for MMA. What makes it so good?

- The sandbag is awkward to lift - this requires that you fight hard to perform exercises with it, just like working with an opponent
- Sandbags require great levels of grip strength to lift and you'll find that you naturally 'grip' them in MMA-specific positions like the Bear Hug, Zercher or Shoulder
- The sandbag is malleable - it will adjust to your body and the way that you are using it. This means it is particularly effective in moulding itself to your body and it is perfect for carrying, dragging and throwing
- The sandbag is itself unstable and will develop great 'core' strength. This is the polar-opposite of most 'core' training where the surface you are standing/sitting on will be unstable. Working with an unstable object is more akin to the demands of MMA competition.

INTEGRATING SANDBAG TRAINING

The simplest way to incorporate sandbag lifting is to use the bag as an alternative to your standard free-weight option for deadlifts, squats, presses and pulls. You might want to substitute one of your existing free-weight sessions for a sandbag lifting session. You'll soon notice the benefits of this unique method of training.

If you have never trained with the sandbag then you can start with my Top 5 Sandbag Exercises For MMA.

TOP 5 SANDBAG EXERCISES FOR MMA

SANDBAG BEAR HUG SQUAT & CARRY

Grip the sandbag in a Bear Hug and perform 5 squats. Be sure to grip the sandbag tightly in towards your chest and keep your squat technique solid. Sprint as fast as you can for 20 yards. Repeat for 5-10 rounds. This exercise will develop strength, conditioning and agility - especially for grappling and the clinch.



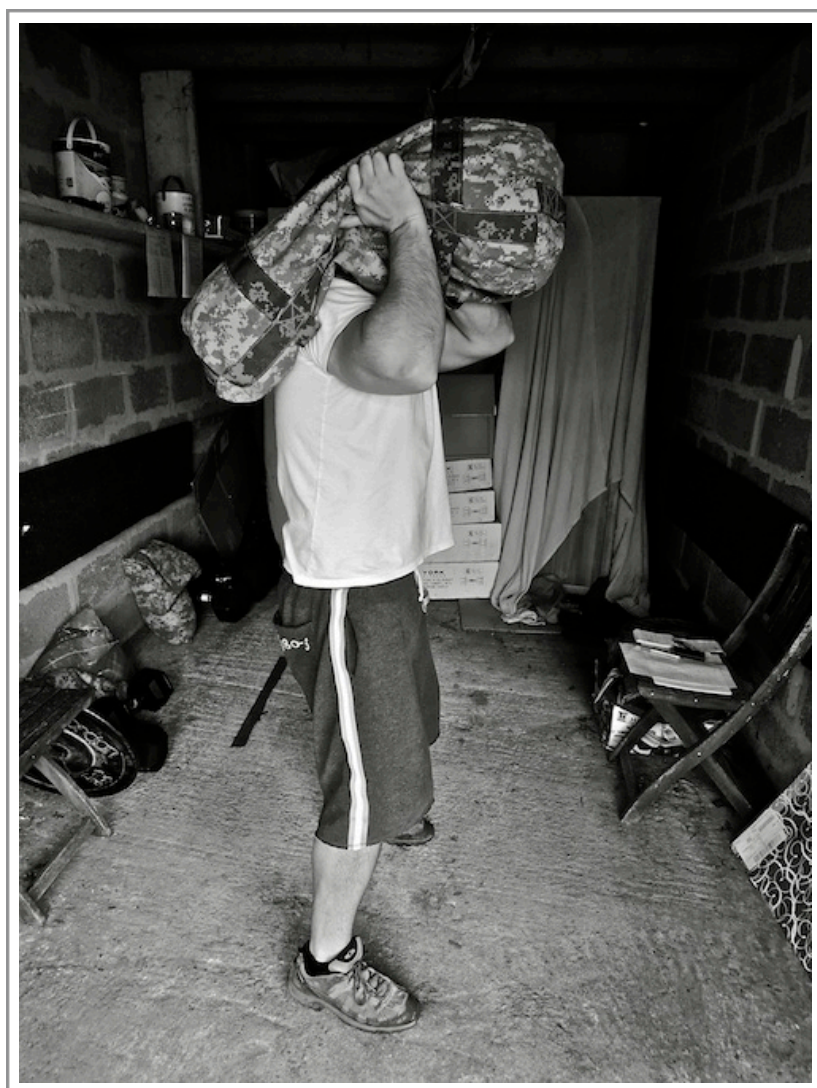
SANDBAG FLOOR PRESS

Lie flat on the floor with the sandbag at chest height. Push the sandbag up forcefully, keeping the elbows in tight. The Sandbag Floor Press can be combined with a hip bridge and a variety of escapes to make it closer to the demands of MMA competition. Whichever option you choose, the sandbag floor press will develop great upper body pushing strength.



SANDBAG SHOULDERING

Start with the sandbag on the floor and stand astride it. Grip the sandbag underneath and powerfully lift the bag upwards - as if you were performing a Clean. Bring the bag all the way up onto the shoulder before returning to the floor and repeating on the opposite side. Be sure to lift with the hips and keep the chest high throughout the movement. This exercise can be combined with sprints/hill sprints to produce a powerful combination of strength and conditioning.



SANDBAG ZERCHER SQUAT

The Zercher Squat demands great strength in exactly the same position as you will frequently need it when clinching with an opponent. Lift the sandbag up to chest height and hold the bag in an underhand grip. Squat as normal but be prepared to have to work even harder than normal to remain upright.

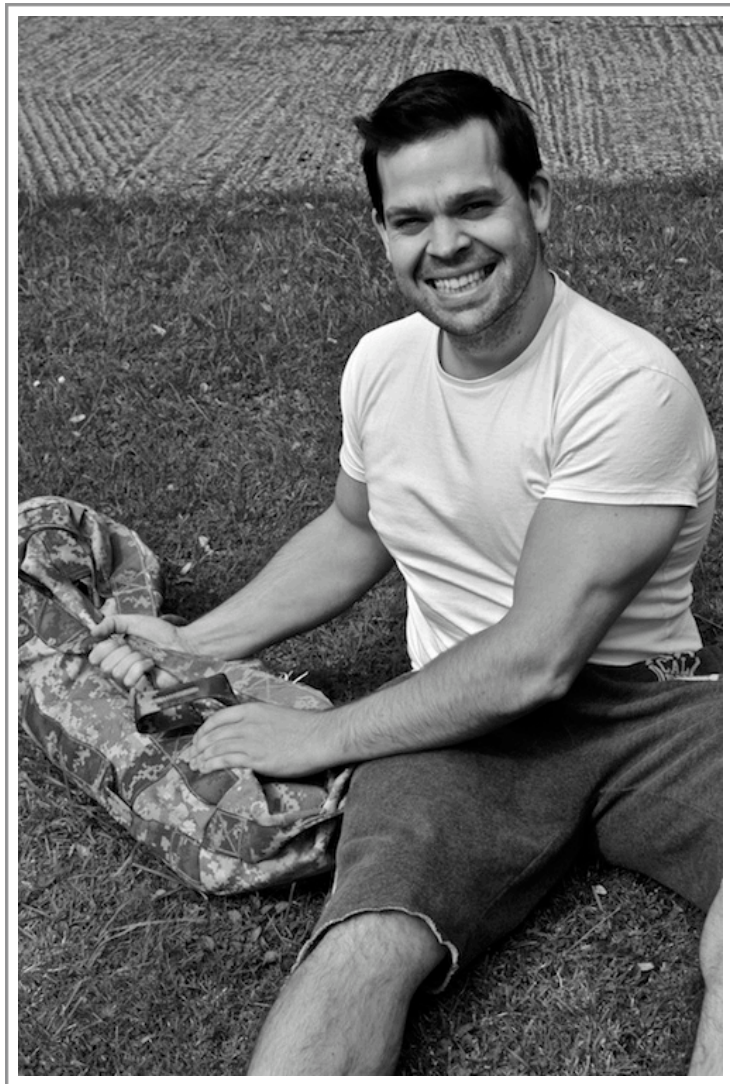


SANDBAG CLEAN AND PRESS

The Clean and Press is a great exercise with any type of weight and the sandbag variation makes it even more effective. Grip the sandbag in a strong Clean position and lift the bag powerfully upwards, utilizing the strength and power from your hips. With the sandbag at chest height, drive it upwards by fully straightening your arms. This can be done in a strict fashion or with an assisted knee drive. Be sure to press the bag fully overhead before returning it back to the floor. The Clean and Press is a perfect blend of pulling and pushing strength and power.



All of the exercises presented here can be followed in a strength training fashion, as part of a circuit/metabolic conditioning session or any combination of the two. For strength and power perform with lower repetitions, higher weights and longer rest periods. For conditioning put them together in a circuit - try performing 10 repetitions of each at a moderate weight, rest for 30 seconds and repeat for 3-5 rounds. More importantly, you should use the sandbag to create the type of workout that will enable you to work on your weaknesses in strength and conditioning. And, most of all, enjoy it.



UNCONVENTIONAL STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING FOR MMA

By Matt Palfrey

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Strength and conditioning for Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is a complicated affair. We have a number of MMA athletes who swear blind that sparring, rolling and general calisthenics is the only thing that's needed. Others follow more advanced programs that develop the athletic components of strength, speed and power. But who's right?

This is where things get complicated. Before you can really work out how to structure your strength and conditioning program you need to have a very good understanding of your existing skills and abilities. You'll also need to know exactly how you fight and how you want to be able to fight - this is a very important point.

MMA is such a diverse sport but perhaps not as diverse as the early days. The Vale Tudo and original UFC competitions had style versus style - in fact that was the UFC slogan for a while. It didn't take too long for people to realise that the strong and powerful athletes who could control opponents did very well, especially after they learned a little bit about Jiu-Jitsu!

UNCONVENTIONAL STRENGTH & CONDITIONING FOR MMA

MMA is one of those sporting anomalies where strength and conditioning really does make a huge difference. It is possible for poorly conditioned athletes to rely on their superior skill but it's also possible for an unskilled but strong and powerful athlete to dominate a weaker opponent. I've seen a number of fights where a super powerful athlete has literally picked up their opponent and slammed them to a knockout. This is not to say that skill

isn't a pre-requisite for elite performance, but that high level strength and conditioning should be a goal for all MMA athletes.

UTILISING ODD OBJECTS

When you step into that cage or ring, you're stepping into the unknown. As much as you can prepare for MMA competition, we all know that anything can happen when that bell sounds. So your strength and conditioning program should reflect this. It should prepare you for the physical demands of the sport as a whole but also the unknown nature of competition. We can aim to do this by utilising training protocols, methodologies and implements that closely match MMA.

I'm a fan of using odd objects for MMA strength and conditioning - especially sandbags. Your opponent is the ultimate odd object - hard to control, constantly shifting and generally un-cooperative! Match the training tools to this and you'll be a long way to developing some strength and conditioning you can really use.

SANDBAG TRAINING FOR MMA

Just like any regular strength and conditioning program, you need to base your exercises on big, multiple body-part compound movements. And with a big emphasis on powerful movements. Why? Because that's what you'll be required to do in competition.

The sandbag is a great option for developing MMA specific strength, power and conditioning for a number of reasons:

1. It's very hard to hold of and it really makes you work for each lift. The constantly-shifting center of mass makes most standard exercises infinitely more challenging. It's the next best thing to trying to hold onto an opponent who doesn't want to be held onto!

2. The sandbag allows you to experiment with a variety of different grips that have parallels in MMA. A bear hug grip is like holding an opponent in a clinch; the zercher position is like having double-under hooks on an opponent; and gripping onto the material of your sandbag will help with gi-control.
3. The sandbag is about as close as a free-weight will get to replicating an opponent - it's size, shape and center of mass can all be made very similar. Try using your sandbag for technique drills rather than just traditional exercises. Practice some side escapes from under a heavy sandbag, some powerful hip-bridges to develop the strength to escape from a mount or some bear hug load carries to build standing control strength.

It's also important that you include exercises that are multi-planar; defined as an exercise that has you moving in multiple directions. We would normally see plenty of Sagittal Plane (forwards and backwards) exercises in the gym - like sit-ups and bench presses. But be sure not to neglect exercises that have you working in the Frontal Plane (side to side) and Transverse (where your body rotates). The sandbag will naturally stress you in these planes of motion as you try to work with it.

MMA-INSPIRED SANDBAG WORKOUTS

WORKOUT 1: FIGHT SPECIFIC SANDBAG WORKOUT

Sandbag Thrusters - 1 minute
Sandbag Shouldering - 1 minute
Sandbag Floor Press - 1 Minute
Sandbag Walking Lunges - 1 minute
Sandbag Zercher Squat - 1 minute

Total all of your repetitions, rest for 1 minute and then repeat for a total of 3 rounds. Aim to maintain repetitions totals across all 3 rounds.

WORKOUT 2: SANDBAG AND BODYWEIGHT WAR

10 Sandbag Bear Hug Squats
20 Burpees
10 Sandbag High Pulls
20 Squats
10 Sandbag Push Press

As many rounds as possible in 15 minutes.

WORKOUT 3: SANDBAG BRUTE FORCE

Use the biggest sandbag you can handle for this workout.

5 Sandbag Cleans
5 Sandbag Push Jerks
5 Sandbag Back Squats

Repeat for 3-5 rounds.

SUMMARY

When training for any competitive environment (even if it's recreational), your training should be focussed on the demands of that sport. Sandbag training is a close match for the demands of MMA so it's a natural fit.

DOES SANDBAG TRAINING MAKE YOU MORE MANLY?

By Matt Palfrey

The last time I stepped foot in a commercial gym facility was in 2009 - it was some awful place called 'Celebrity Fitness' (or something like that) and it was the kind of venue that you just wouldn't ever see any celebrities in. I was training hard and they told me off for lifting too much weight. Seriously. I was flabbergasted. To make things worse I was told by someone who would have looked more at home in a toothpaste commercial - he was basically white teeth and a ridiculous 'fashion haircut' all dressed up in a tracksuit.

It's my opinion that there are 2 things that a man should never be interrupted during:

1. Sex.
2. Hard physical exercise (see also '1. Sex')

I left the place feeling like a lion whose hunt has just been put on hold by an antelope who was complaining that the run was making him sweat and it was ruining his fur.

It made me think just how far the commercial gym market had slipped. They had become horrible, overly sterile environments where the key focus was to wear the best clothes, strut around the place and generally act a little metro-sexual. Wasn't that the reason to go to nightclubs?

At that point I pretty much decided that I was done with the commercial gym. At the time I was short on funds - I had just funded a 9 month adventure around the globe. I needed to get fit and, as my exercise of choice is weight training, I needed to find some inexpensive 'weight' to lift. As it turns out, sand is about as inexpensive as you can get. And, in many instances, you can also get it for free. So I headed down to the hardware store and purchased 250 lbs of sand for \$10. I started off with a simple set up - a big canvas bag stuffed full of smaller sandbags.

I'd follow similar workouts to those that I always had done - the only real difference being that I was lifting sand instead of traditional barbells or dumbbells. At first it wasn't easy. Handling a sandbag is considerably harder than I expected but I persevered and started making improvements. After a few workouts I realised that it was seriously hard work and not just some poor excuse for a real workout.

I started to wonder how many other men were out there in a similar position to me - unable or unwilling to get to the gymnasium, or just simply time/financially poor individuals. A little more research and I found out that people had been training with sandbags for quite a long time.

I started a blog [Sandbag Fitness](#) to share my experiences with others. I just write about the workouts that I've done in my garage and people seem to enjoy following them - we now get a few thousand hits per week so there's obviously plenty of guys out there who are tired of the traditional gym environment.

HOW WILL LIFTING SANDBAGS HELP WITH MANLINESS?

1. You're lifting something real - not some modern machine designed to optimize your exercise experience. That big bag of sand could just as easily be an elk you've just killed or a loved one that you're rescuing from a burning building. It's this reason that lots of athletes are now using sandbags as part of their training.
2. You can follow your sandbag training program anywhere. I use mine in the garage but you could just as easily train with yours: in a field/up a mountain/on a beach.
3. The sandbag is built for manly use. You can throw it, slam it and even start punching it in a fit of rage - it will generally stand up to the abuse. Try doing that with anything at your average gym and they'll probably ask you to leave, and maybe even call the cops.
4. Sandbag training is tough and is used by the military, strongmen and elite athletes the world over to develop great strength and conditioning. It gets results quickly and with

the minimum of investment - meaning that you can focus on the other important things in life. You don't need to turn into that guy who is at the gym for 2-3 hours per day.

I'M READY TO START!

- Get yourself a sandbag - either construct one at home using a holdall, duffel bag or something similar ([good guide here](#)) or get a custom made sandbag like the [Brute Force Sandbag](#)
- Follow the workouts posted at [Sandbag Fitness](#)
- Prepare yourself for new found levels of strength, conditioning and general bad-ass status
- Astound friends, colleagues and family members by displaying your ability to throw around everyday objects with ease

HOW TO SUCCEED WITH A SANDBAG STRENGTH & CONDITIONING PROGRAM

Just because you've traded your traditional dumbbells and barbell for a bag of sand it doesn't mean that you should ignore the basics. Your training should focus on big, full body compound lifts like Deadlifts, Squats, Presses and Pulls. I also like to throw plenty of bodyweight conditioning in there for good measure.

The intensity of your program will generally yield better results than the volume. Focus your efforts on working hard with a sandbag weight that challenges you.

THANKS FOR READING

We hope you've enjoyed reading this special Sandbag Training Report by Brute Force Sandbags and Sandbag Fitness.

[For more information on Brute Force Sandbags click here](#)

[For more information on Sandbag Fitness click here](#)

DISCLAIMER

The Sandbag Training Report is for educational purposes only.

You should always consult your doctor/physician prior to beginning any physical exercise program.