



# **Portable Kettlebell™ (PKB): Expanded Quick-Start Training Guide**

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## **STOP**

**CONSULT YOUR MEDICAL PROVIDER PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN ANY NEW ATHLETIC OR FITNESS ACTIVITY OR USING NEW TRAINING EQUIPMENT.**

**Remember: Safety first. If you don't understand how to do an exercise, seek out more information to avoid injury.**

## **BASIC EXERCISES**

The following are fundamental movements, and one should develop proficient form and technique before moving on. Your focus shouldn't be moving heavy weight or completing a high number of repetitions. Instead, focus on developing and maintaining proper form.

As your form improves, your capacity to move heavier weight and increase repetitions will come naturally. **It's also a good idea to always warm up prior to any exercise routine.**

**The following 7 rules apply whenever using the Portable Kettlebell Sandbag™ (PKB).**

- 1. Always keep feet flat on the floor. Do NOT let your heels come off the floor.**
- 2. Knees should be slightly bent and in line with, but not over, your feet and toes.**
- 3. When in the down position, your back should be flat, with your buttocks out behind you in a slightly seated position.**
- 4. Arms should be locked-out. Think of them as attachments between your body and the kettlebell, and your hands are hooks that attach them.**
- 5. When lifting, drive your hips forward by contracting your buttocks.**
- 6. ALL THE LIFTING IS DONE WITH THE LEGS AND HIP DRIVE.**
- 7. Always keep your head and eyes in a neutral position, in line with your spine. Never looking up or down.**

Even if you are already in great shape, do not underestimate the PKB / kettlebell. Focus on proper technique and form first before building up to 1-2 sets of 10-12 repetitions.

**REMEMBER YOU ARE BUILDING A BASE FOR MORE ADVANCED EXERCISES IN THE FUTURE. DEVELOP CORRECT FORM AND TECHNIQUE FIRST.**

It is my opinion that two of the most important kettlebell exercises for the beginner to master are the **Dead Lift** and the **Squat**. These exercises are the foundation upon which all other kettlebell exercises are built.

### **THE DEAD LIFT**

The Dead Lift exercise is extremely important for the beginner to properly develop, as all subsequent exercises are based on this basic movement.

If your fitness level is at a beginner level, I recommend 2-3 sets of 2-3 good lifts at a time. This will gradually improve your form while minimizing risk of injury.

As your technique improves, increase the number of repetitions to 10-12.

- **Stand with your feet approximately shoulder width apart, toes slightly turned out. The PKB centered between your feet.**
- **Your knees should be slightly bent and in line with, but not over, your feet and toes.**
- **Sit back, bending slightly at the hips.**
- **Your back should be flat, with your buttocks out behind you, in a slightly seated position.**
- **Your head and eyes in a neutral position, in line with your spine. Never looking up or down.**
- **Grip the PKB with an overhand grip (palms facing towards your body). Your arms should be hanging straight down, elbows locked.**
- **Lift the KB straight up, using only your legs and driving your hips forward.**
- **Your arms should remain straight. All the lifting comes from the legs and hip drive.**
- **Always keep a neutral head position in line with your spine and heels flat on the floor.**
- **Once upright, return the PKB to the floor, reversing the above sequence by sitting back and maintaining proper postures as described above.**

Once you feel comfortable with the dead lift, you can try it with one hand at a time.

### **THE SQUAT**

Performing the Squat should come easily if you have been doing the dead lift correctly. To do a proper squat use the same postures as the dead lift, except you will be holding the PKB in front of your chest either by the handle or supporting it from the bottom with both hands (experiment to see what works best for you).

How deep you can squat will depend on your personal level of fitness, flexibility and factors such as joint mobility and biomechanics.

- **Begin the squat from the upright position, feet shoulder width apart, heels firmly planted on the floor and toes slightly turned out.**
- **Holding the PKB in the goblet position (supporting the PKB from the bottom, resting against the chest), squat in a controlled fashion as far as flexibility will allow, keeping your weight on the heels.**
- **Once at the bottom of the squat, use your legs and hip drive to return to the starting position as you did with the dead lift.**
- **Keep the heels down, think of pushing them into the floor while driving up with the legs, buttocks and hip.**
- **Make sure your knees stay in line with your feet or slightly outward but not going over them.**
- **If your knees hurt or they are going over your toes, your heels are most likely coming off the floor.**

**Once again, start with a few reps to develop good form (check the list above). The most common error with the squat is the heels coming off the floor.**

Try practicing the squat without the kettlebell (holding your hands in front of your chest area) to check your form. Once you feel comfortable with your form, try it with the kettlebell/PKB.

### **THE SWING**

Once you feel comfortable doing 10-12 repetitions at a time of the dead lift and squat exercises, you should be ready to move-on to the Swing.

Even though I have classified the swing as a basic exercise, it is a very powerful and effective movement for the entire body. Doing several sets and repetitions of kettlebell swings with proper form can leave even the strongest athlete begging for mercy.

- **Dead lift the PKB to standing position.**
- **Swing the PKB back and between your legs, as if hike passing a football.**
- **Remember to stay on your heels and keep your head in a neutral position (in line with your spine) and arms straight.**
- **Your wrists will make light contact with your upper thighs.**
- **With a powerful hip extension, your hips will drive forward, causing the PKB to swing forward to chest level or just above. Try to maintain tension along the PKB webbing straps and avoiding slack, as your skill with this exercise improves.**

- **Your legs and hips do most of the work. Think of your hands and arms as merely attachments between your body and the PKB.**
- **Once the PKB reaches the top of the arc, allow gravity to take control, using flexion of the hips to control the downward arc and not your back or arms.**
- **The downward swing should follow the same path as the upward swing, reaching the start position between your legs before initiating the next rep.**

For the beginner, any height between the waist and chest level should be fine. **Remember that the sandbag represents a shifting load that limits vertical manipulation of that load by way of the handle. If you are doing Russian-style swings (eye-level) to just above that, the tension on the webbing straps may slacken, causing the PKB to slightly bump against your fists before resuming its downward arc.**

The swing should be an explosive, controlled and fluid motion. If you remember to use all the basic postures and movements we've covered so far, the swing should feel natural. If your swing is not explosive or fluid, go back to your basic postures and movements used in the dead lift and squat before trying again. **(Review the 7 rules under BASIC EXERCISES heading page 1)**

### **OVERHEAD SWING**

The Overhead Swing has become very popular and is often referred to as the American Swing. It involves swinging the kettlebell over the head, with the upper arms at or just behind ear level.

If you wish to train the overhead swing using the PKB, you can do so by gripping the PKB by the webbing straps directly:

**1. Rather than gripping the PKB by the handle, grip the webbing straps below the handle with your knuckles resting firmly against the top of the PKB.**

**2. While gripping the webbing straps tightly, execute the swing to an overhead position. Remember: Always maintain contact between your knuckles and the top of the PKB.**

**Keep in mind that direct manipulation of the sandbag by the webbing straps may not prove as comfortable as using the handle (depending on the weight of the bag and number of repetitions).**

Other variations of the swing you can try are the Single-hand Swing and the Alternating Swing.

### **SINGLE-HAND SWINGS**

- Performed the same as double-handed swings, gripping the PKB with only one hand at a time.
- Remember to do an equal number of swings for each side.

### **ALTERNATING SWINGS**

- Performed the same as the double-handed swings and single-hand swings, except you will be alternating hands as the PKB reaches the apex of the swing at chest height or just above.
- Switch hands quickly as the PKB is weightless at the apex of the swing.

### **REMEMBER:**

- HEELS FLAT ON FLOOR
- KNEE AND FOOT ALIGNMENT
- SIT BACK AT THE HIPS WITH A FLAT BACK
- HEAD IN NEUTRAL POSITION, ALIGNED WITH SPINE
- STRAIGHT ARMS!
- HIP DRIVE!

### **CHOOSING THE RIGHT WEIGHT**

Start with a weight you can manage for a maximum of 10 repetitions without sacrificing the integrity of movement. When 10 repetitions becomes too easy, increasing weight in five pound increments.

## **INTERMEDIATE EXERCISES**

Now that you have mastered the basic moves and postures, try applying them to the following three intermediate moves.

### **THE SWING CLEAN**

The Swing Clean is a one-handed swing to Rack Position, resting the PKB against the lower and upper arm in one smooth motion.

- **As your swing reaches chest height, flex your elbow towards the navel, bringing your forearm to rest firmly against the side of your upper torso. Maintain your wrist and forearm as one unit.**
- **Allow the PKB to rotate to the outside of your wrist and gently come to rest against your forearm and upper arm. Avoid slamming the PKB against your forearm.**

You will now be in the Rack position as described below:

- **Your upper arm should be held directly against the side of your upper torso/rib cage.**
- **Your elbow will be completely flexed with your elbow pointed down to your foot.**
- **The PKB will be resting on the back of your forearm and bicep, supported by your chest.**
- **Your wrist and forearm should stay fixed as one unit.**

To perform repetitions you must be able to lower the PKB from the rack position efficiently. To do so:

**Maintain your grip while relaxing your forearm and allowing the PKB to drop down and pass between your legs as in the swing. Your hips should control the swing on the downward arc.**

Remember to always maintain proper technique. Your forearm position should be straight up and down. If you are pounding your forearm, the PKB is most likely going over the top of your wrist. Continued pounding will only result in pain and injury.

### **THE CLEAN TO THE PRESS**

Now that you have learned the clean, try introducing the Press.

- **Perform a clean to the rack position.**
- **From the rack position, push your shoulder down as you press the PKB up.**
- **Maintain a vertical forearm with a locked wrist.**
- **Your thumb should be pointing towards your body**

- **As you press the PKB up, your shoulder will naturally rotate in its socket. As your shoulder rotates your thumb will remain pointing towards your body.**
- **At the top position, your elbow should be locked out and arm straight. Your locked arm should be close to or in line with your head, or slightly behind your ear.**
- **To lower the PKB, unlock the elbow joint and bring your elbow straight down in front of the shoulder keeping the forearm vertical, and return to the rack position.**

Note: remember to keep your eyes and head looking forward in a neutral position all times. Do not bend your head to the side, forward or back. Your entire body should be tight and the PKB should be supported through your arm and shoulder down to your hips and feet which should be firmly grounded on the floor. **No dipping at the knees.**

The clean to the press can be done as one repetition, or you can break it up into two movements: (1) the clean to rack position and (2) the press.

To perfect your use of the kettlebell sandbag, I suggest you first perform sets of cleans to perfect cleans and sets of presses to perfect presses. Then move-on to sets and repetitions of the full clean to the press. Once again, your ability to increase load and repetitions will ultimately depend on your form, technique and fitness level.

### **THE SNATCH**

To perform the Snatch you must be able to execute one-arm swings as well as hold the kettlebell in the overhead position. The starting position for the snatch is the same as the one-arm swing.

- **Swing the PKB between and behind your legs as in the swing.**
- **With a powerful hip extension, drive the PKB out and upward. Use the power generated by your hips to pull your elbow up and slightly back forcefully, as if you are trying to hit something with your elbow.**
- **The PKB should NOT swing out in front of your body as in the swing, but remain as close to the body as possible when pulling up.**
- **When your elbow is as high as it can be pulled, you will feel a moment of weightlessness.**
- **At this point quickly rotate your elbow below the PKB and “punch through it,” catching it in the overhead position as you lock-out your arm as quickly as possibly (make sure you lock your elbow softly. Do not slam the joint).**
- **As you punch upward the PKB should not slam against your forearm but circle around the outside of your wrist.**



- **At the top position, your elbow and shoulder should be locked-out and upper arm resting next to your head and slightly behind the ear.**
- **There are two options for lowering the PKB:**
  - a. **Lower it to your shoulder then to the rack position, or**
  - b. **With a slight bend at the elbow, allow the PKB to drop all the way down passing it back between the legs as in the swing. Repeat.**

The key to doing the snatch is practicing the high elbow pull and punching the arm upward without slamming the kettlebell against your wrist and forearm. Also, remember to lock the elbow softly. Never slam a joint closed as this can cause injury.

Keep your head in a neutral position and in line with your spine. Do not bend your head to the side, forwards or back (no looking up). Your entire body should be tight and the kettlebell supported through your arm and shoulder, down to your hips and feet, which should be firmly grounded on the floor.

## **ADVANCED EXERCISES**

**The following advanced exercises include only a brief description.** At this point you should have a solid skills foundation of the Clean, Dead Lift, Swing and Snatch and be able to evaluate your form and technique.

- **Use good posture.**
- **Keep your core tight.**
- **Firmly ground your feet.**
- **Slight bend at the hips with buttocks pushed back.**
- **Slight bend in the knees.**
- **Keep the lower back flat and protected.**
- **Make sure all your joints are in line, or in their natural position.**
- **Align your head with your spine, do not look up or down.**
- **Use your hips to develop power.**
- **Knees always in line with the toes.**
- **Don't pound or forcefully lock the joints.**
- **Never sacrifice form and technique for more weight or repetitions.**

### **SNATCH TO A LUNGE**

This can be a difficult exercise due to the fact you are combining two complex movements. You must be proficient at the snatch and maintaining the overhead position, as well as performing lunges before attempting this exercise.

**Perform a snatch:**

- **While maintaining the PKB in the proper overhead position (arm straight, shoulder locked), perform a lunge with the leg not supporting the kettlebell.**
- **The lunge can either be a lunge forward or a lunge backward depending on what movement pattern you want to use. Lunging with the leg supporting the PKB can also be done.**

You can do this exercises several ways.

You can perform a snatch followed by a set of lunges on one leg, then recover, snatch with the other arm and repeat the same number of lunges on the opposite leg.

Other variations include completing a snatch and lunge for one repetition, as well as the alternating snatch to a lunge as described below.

### **ALTERNATING SNATCH TO A LUNGE**

The alternating snatch to the lunge is a butt kicker. This exercise is performed by doing a snatch to a lunge per side (left and right), for one repetition.

### **DOUBLE PKB SQUATS**

This exercise is performed by cleaning two PKBs simultaneously, one with each arm, to the rack position followed by a squat. Remember the key points for the squat and you will be fine.

### **DOUBLE PKB THRUSTERS**

This exercise is similar to the double PKB squat. Once you execute the squat, **utilizing an explosive hip drive thrust both PKB'S to the over head position.**

I suggest starting with lighter weight for this than the double bell squat, as it can be a very difficult and strenuous exercise.

## **ABDOMINAL EXERCISES**

You should already be familiar with the following variety of abdominal exercises. The only difference being you will use the PKB for added resistance, just as you would a medicine ball, dumbbell or typical sandbag.

### **SIT-UPS**

The starting position will begin with lying on your back, knees bent and feet flat against the floor.

**Three variations:**

- 1. Place the PKB on your chest and perform a normal sit-up.**
- 2. Hold the PKB behind your head, resting on the ground. Raise it to overhead and down to chest as you perform a normal sit-up.**
- 3. Hold the PKB with outstretched arms over your head and sit-up while maintaining the PKB overhead.**

### **PARTNER SIT UPS**

- Partner sit-ups are performed by having both partners get into the sit-up position, feet facing each other.**
- Both partners sit-up while one holds the PKB as described in the above sit-up variations.**
- At the top of the sit-up, one partner hands the PKB to the other, before returning to the starting position.**
- This is repeated for the desired number of repetitions and sets for time.**

### **RUSSIAN TWISTS**

- Sit on the ground with knees bent and torso leaning backwards slightly.**
- Grip the PKB in front of you like a ball, firmly with both hands. Keep your elbows bent in a comfortable position.**
- Rotate your TORSO from side to side, as far as you can (ideally touching the PKB to the ground). As you improve you will be able to do this with your heels 2-3 inches off the floor.**

Remember to focus primarily on your obliques when doing this exercise. Most people try to do this way too fast. It is better to go slow and focus on the muscles you are working.

### **V-UPS**

- **V-ups are performed from the supine (on your back) position with arms straight and behind your head, tightly gripping the PKB as you would a medicine ball.**
- **Bend at the waist and lift your legs (knees locked or slightly bent) and torso simultaneously, touching the PKB to your toes.**

### **COMBINATION TRAINING WITH THE PKB SANDBAG**

The PKB Sandbag™ can be used just about anywhere and with many different types of training. It can be used as a kettlebell, small sandbag or medicine ball and is ideal with a suspension trainer, jump rope or other portable devices.

Pack your PKB Sandbag™ to the beach or park, fill it with sand, dirt, rocks, etc., then use it in a circuit with a suspension trainer, jump rope, pull-ups, tire flips, sprints... Your imagination is the only limit.

### **OTHER SOURCES**

This guide is not intended to be a complete resource for all things kettlebell. It is simply a very basic guide to get you started using the PKB with some key exercises. There exist many good resources on the market for kettlebell instruction and you are encouraged to read and watch as many books and videos as possible to become more educated on kettlebells and fitness development in general.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



Ron Coscuna, D.C., C.S.C.S. has over 36 years of experience in the health and fitness industry. He is currently a HITT (High Intensity Tactical Training) trainer and instructor for the U. S. Marines Corp at Camp Pendleton, where he operates a training center and provides coursework on athletic performance, nutrition and injury prevention. Ron is also a Doctor of Chiropractic and focuses on sports related injuries and proper nutrition.

Among his certifications, Ron is a NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS), USA Weightlifting performance coach, NSCA Certified

Personal Trainer and a certified trainer for the TRX system. He is also certified by the AFAA and Schwinn to teach indoor cycling.

In the past he served as a Weaponless Defense Instructor for Reno Police Department and Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of physical training for the Air National Guard. He has been a competitive bodybuilder and has completed numerous triathlons including Sprint, Olympic and Half-Ironman distances. Even after 36 years in the industry, Ron continues to educate himself and live a fitness lifestyle. He enjoys motivating others to accomplish things they otherwise thought were impossible.

