

BOILING POINT

Get ready to revolutionise the way you work out with the help of a cannonball with a handle attached. No, really.

Hailing from Russia and a firm favourite amongst personal trainers, kettlebells are gaining popularity daily – from sweaty boxing gyms to sleeky wellness centres.

A kettlebell is essentially a cast-iron cannonball with a handle on top. They come in a variety of weights, unlike a dumbbell, you hold a handle, therefore the centre of mass is extended beyond your hand. This allows for an array of ballistic, swinging exercises. Doing kettlebell functional movement usually involves big multi-joint functional movements, swinging exercises, done powerfully with lots of reps. The growing popularity of kettlebells stems away from their novelty value. The truth is they are incredibly effective and safe. More important, beyond their novelty value, the exercises can increase your energy and concentration and lots of them this, unlike many other exercises, require less than 10 minutes a day.

Recommended – all require concentration and lots of practice to truly master.

A good kettlebell programme can help in both pro-habilitation (not getting injured) and in running performance. A unique benefit is the way your core and glutes, hips and hamstrings work at the same time. This reminds your body to 'fire' all key muscles and legs will also improve.

I recommend starting with kettlebells two to three days per week on the days you are not doing long runs. For those of you who like a bit of punishment, do a kettlebell workout before you do interval training – one fatiguing muscle before you do interval is a good way to burn up the intensity of your programme. Those of you who prefer more-up the weight should start at 12kg and try and move-up the weight every couple of weeks. When possible always seek out a certified kettlebell instructor, or check out the plethora of videos on YouTube.

THE BIG 5 KETTLEBELL EXERCISES FOR RUNNERS

Start by doing each exercise once as described. As your stamina and endurance improve, repeat the circuit two to three times

1 TWO-HANDED SWING

Two sets of (intermediate) 30 reps, or (advanced) 60 reps

Technique: Gets glutes, lower back and hamstrings working together and powerfully. Builds strength and endurance in your 'posterior chain' (muscles to the back of your body). Drive heels into the floor as you accelerate and swing the kettlebell forward through hips.

Sound Advice: Keep your pelvis tilted back (click your backside out) this keeps good form on your back.



2 DEEP SQUAT

Three sets of 15 reps

Technique: Strengthens hip flexors, quads and glutes. Just like a normal squat with feet pointed wide the butt goes down lower than the hips.

Sound Advice: Do the whole movement slowly unless you are already used to this movement.



3 KETTLEBELL PISTOL SQUAT

Three sets of as many as you can on each leg

Technique: A one-legged squat. A truly advanced exercise – the kettlebell helps you balance, but the extra weight makes it tough on your quads and hip flexors and hamstrings.

Sound Advice: Practice with a very light weight to begin with! This is tough so be patient.



4 WINDMILL

Two sets of 8 reps each side

Technique: This is a wonderful exercise for your obliques and also trains balance, core and coordination. Lift the weight up above your head then lean over reaching your free hand to the floor. Always point your feet out 45°, tilt your backside out away from you and keep your legs straight through the entire movement.

Sound Advice: For safety and performance keep looking at the kettlebell. Make sure you keep your eyes on it at all times.



5 TURKISH GET-UP

Do as many as you can in three minutes

Technique: If you can do this well then you'll impress everyone at the gym. This is the daddy of kettlebell exercises. It requires total body coordination, control and strength.

Start by lying on the floor, lift one arm up with the kettlebell above you. Your goal

is to stand up while maintaining your arm as high as you can. There are several variations of this. Practise different ways of doing it. Try this way: if holding weight in the left hand, lift up your right knee and lower off the floor using your right forearm. Slide your right leg backwards behind

your backside and lunge upwards. Now go back down. (Slowly).

Sound Advice: Practise with balancing a tennis ball in your palm before moving on to a kettlebell.



EDITOR'S CHOICE