



KETTLEBELL 101: SIMPLE & SINISTER

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WORKSHOP NOTES

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Always Loaded: Kettlebell Safety

1. Get medical clearance.
2. Always be aware of your surroundings.
3. Train barefoot or wear shoes with flat, thin soles and room for the toes to spread.
4. Never contest for space with a kettlebell.
5. Practice all safety measures at all times.
6. Focus on quality, not quantity.

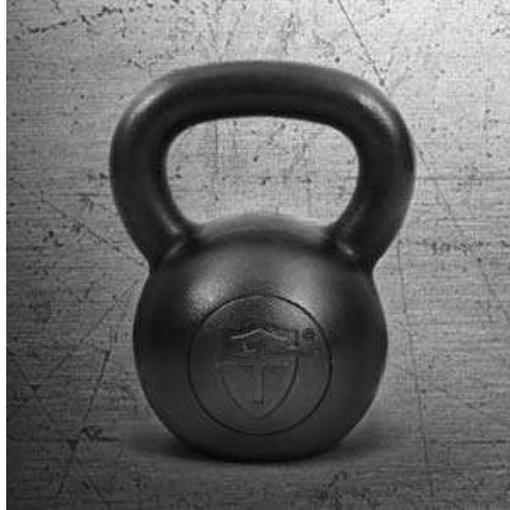
Mind the StrongFirst “Stop Signs”!

Stop a set at the first sign of any of following—and preferably before:

- ✓ Rep speed slows down
- ✓ Tempo drops (pauses between reps—if applicable—increase)
- ✓ Technique changes in any way
- ✓ Rate of perceived exertion (RPE) exceeds 8 on the 1-10 scale
- ✓ Gasping for air

Adjust your reps and rest periods to make sure that none of the above happens, even on heavy days.

7. Keep moving when your heart rate is high.
8. Do not put your spine into flexion during or after training.
9. Build up the training load gradually using common sense and listen to your body.
10. Instruction cannot cover all contingencies and there is no substitute for good judgment.



StrongFirst® Kettlebell

The Russian kettlebell is a complete, no-compromise, extreme hand-held gym. Ours is as tough as the people who train with it. Designed and manufactured to the exacting standards you would expect from tools specced out for elite athletic and military use.

- ✓ Gravity cast
- ✓ E-Coated
- ✓ A finish that is chip and rust resistant
- ✓ A handle that strikes the “just right” balance between grip and glide
- ✓ Built for your most punishing demands

Declare your training independence from circumstances. With [StrongFirst® kettlebells](#) and methods, get the best training results anywhere, anytime.

Hand Care

- Get [quality kettlebells](#) with smooth handles.
- Gradually build up your swings, cleans, and snatches’ training volume.
- Do not abuse chalk.
- Do not overgrip the kettlebell in swings.
- Moisturize your mitts before going to bed, hopefully with something manly like Cornhuskers Lotion.
- Do not let calluses get thick. At night, soak them in hot water and scrape them with pumice stone (not too thin). Then do that “moisturizing” thing.
- If it feels like a callus or blister is about to go, stop to swing another day.
- If you do get a blister, look up how to properly take care of it.

S&S “WARM-UP”

Hip Bridge

- ✓ Brace abs
- ✓ Cramp glutes
- ✓ Crush shoes
- ✓ Lift high, then relax

Halo

- ✓ Tense glutes
- ✓ Brace abs
- ✓ Shoulders down
- ✓ Progressively bigger circles

Goblet Squat

- ✓ Stay tall
- ✓ Heels down
- ✓ Elbows inside knees
- ✓ “Pry” hips loose
- ✓ Grunt to stand up

DEADLIFT

Always

- ✓ Neutral spine
- ✓ Head up
- ✓ Heels down
- ✓ Shoulders down
- ✓ Long arms

Start

- ✓ Short-stop stance
- ✓ Handle between heels
- ✓ Anti-shrug
- ✓ Hinge to grasp handle
- ✓ Sniff and brace

Up

- ✓ Push feet down
- ✓ Stand up to plank
- ✓ Exhale forcefully near lockout

Down

- ✓ Inhale into brace
- ✓ Hips first: sit back
- ✓ Set bell between heels
- ✓ Release and reset

TOWEL SWING

Always

- ✓ Same as two-arm swing

Plus

- ✓ Grasp towel close to handle
- ✓ Quick hips, slow arms

Focus

- ✓ Patience!
- ✓ Find rhythm
- ✓ Straight line: bell—towel—arms

TWO-ARM SWING

Always

- ✓ Neutral spine
- ✓ Head up
- ✓ Heels down
- ✓ Shoulders down
- ✓ Arms = ropes

Start

- ✓ Your foot length behind kettlebell
- ✓ Deadlift stance
- ✓ Lats on
- ✓ Sniff in
- ✓ Hike pass
- ✓ Triceps on ribs

Up

- ✓ Stand up to plank
- ✓ Cramp glutes
- ✓ Don't lift but launch
- ✓ *Kiai!*
- ✓ Float

Down

- ✓ Hold the plank
- ✓ Sniff in
- ✓ Play chicken with kettlebell
- ✓ Hike and repeat
- ✓ Pendulum to park

ONE-ARM SWING

Always

- ✓ Same as two-arm swing

Plus

- ✓ Pack shoulder
- ✓ Stand strong and square

Free Hand

- ✓ Tap handle with free hand
- ✓ Free arm mimics loaded arm

GET-UP

Always

- ✓ Stay tight
- ✓ Breathe behind shield
- ✓ Smooth
- ✓ Respect the weight

Shoulders

- ✓ Anti-shrug
bottom
shoulder
- ✓ Pack top
shoulder

Elbows

- ✓ Top elbow
always locked
- ✓ Bottom elbow
locked when
palm loaded

Grip

- ✓ Grip handle
deep
- ✓ Wrist straight—
like for punch

Eyes

- ✓ On kettlebell
until lunge, then
straight ahead

Steps

- **To elbow**
- **To hand**
- **Sweep leg**
- **Half-kneel**
- **Lunge up**
- **Reverse**

“Alt-S&S” Plan

This plan is Pavel’s alternative [Kettlebell Simple & Sinister](#) swing and get-up progression aimed at gireviks who are competent in one-arm swings but have not yet achieved the [“Simple”](#) level.

Swing Progression Overview

One-arm swings build many qualities but only two of them will typically be bottlenecks within the S&S progression: “conditioning” and grip. The former manifests itself as shortness of breath (even though your muscles’ limited ability to use the incoming oxygen is more at fault than your “cardio”).

Based on that, two types of progression are used simultaneously:

1. Organically compressing the rest periods between sets—while maintaining the same rate of perceived exertion and without compromising power
2. Transitioning from combined sets of left and right totaling 10 reps to sets 10 with one arm:

6+4 ⇒ 8+2 ⇒ 10

Once you have reached 10/10 OTM (on the minute) while still being able to pass the talk test before each set using the above tactics, sharply reduce the rest periods for 3 weeks to peak for the test.

Kettlebell Selection

Identify a kettlebell size that enables you to, on different days:

- ✓ Do at least one set of 10 powerful reps with each arm when you are fresh
- ✓ Do multiple sets of 5 powerful one-arm swings with about a minute of rest between them, alternating arms every set

This bell will be used in pre-testing, the plan proper, and post-testing.

Swing Pre-Testing

After a general warm-up of choice do a special warm-up with the test kettlebell:

- 5/6 (reps/sets) one-arm swings OTM alternating arms from set to set.
- Then rest for exactly 2min before starting the test.

Use a timer and do your sets of 10 one-arm swings every 30sec. Naturally, you will no longer be able to pass the talk test. **Every rep must comply with the [StrongFirst standards](#).**

Keep doing sets of 10 every 30sec until you sense that on the next set you are about lose power, compromise your technique, or start gasping for air. **Stop before** you reach that point—even it is after only a couple of sets or in the middle of a set.

Swing Progression Instructions

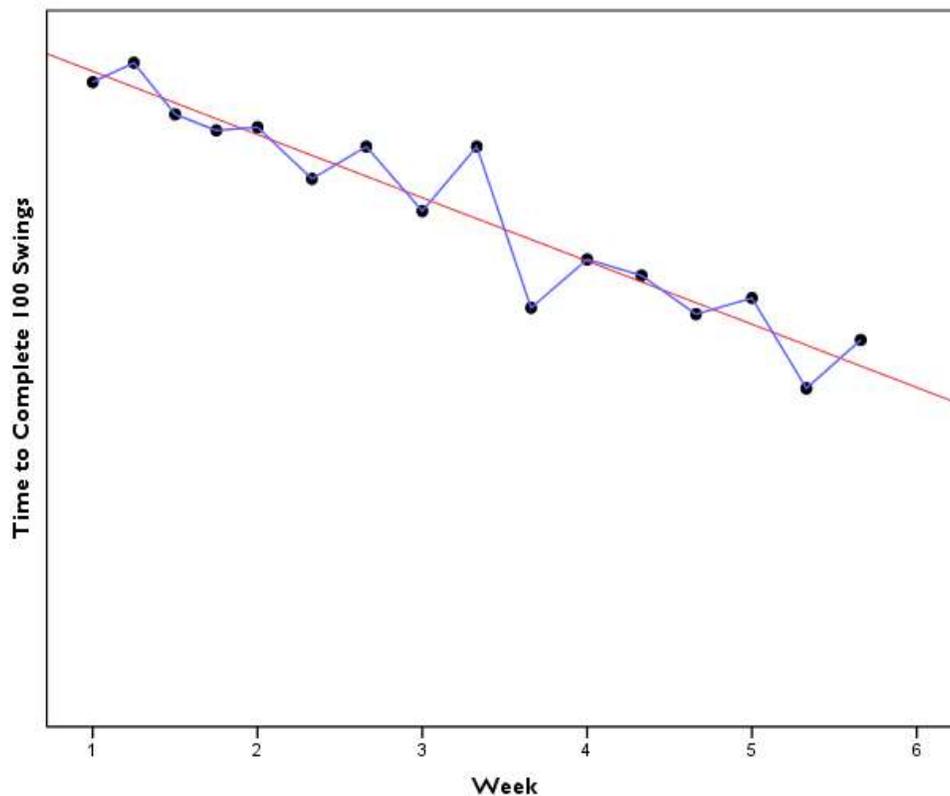
Swing 3-5 times a week always doing 10 sets of 10 total reps (6+4, 8+2, or 10).

Rest actively: walk around and do “fast and loose” drills. Do the next set when you have recovered enough to pass the talk test: you should be able to speak in short sentences. Give yourself even more rest than dictated by the talk test after the first couple of sets—the circuitry that tells your body it needs more oxygen is slow to get started.

Start the clock but do not look at it when going through the session. When you have finished your 100 reps, stop the clock and record your time. This time will shrink naturally as you get in better condition; **do not force the process, it is of essence that you pass the talk test before every set and maintain your power.**

Do not be concerned when the time it takes to complete 100 reps fluctuates from session to session. This is a reflection of short-term changes in your current state from variations in sleep, stress, nutrition, other types of exercise, etc. It is the time decrease over a longer haul, weeks and months, that matters.

E.g., on the sample chart below, it is the red line that matters, not the blue one.



Simultaneously with the above “conditioning” progression advance your grip: 6+4 ⇒ 8+2 ⇒ 10.

Start with combined sets of 6+4, alternating 6L+4R and 4L+6R every set. Note that you are starting every set with your left (if you are right hand dominant):

Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R

When you are 100% confident that you can do more reps with your non-dominant arm without losing grip or compromising power for multiple sets, move on to 8+2. Switch all sets to the new configuration; as before, start every set with your left:

Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R

If grip starts becoming a problem later in the session, do not retreat to an earlier configuration (e.g., if you have started doing 8+2, do not go back to 6+4). Instead switch to two-arm swings for several sets, then go back to one-arm swings.

E.g.:

Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R	8L+2R	2L+8R	10T	10T	8L+2R	2L+8R

When you “own” 8+2, move up to sets of consecutive 10 reps with one arm in the same manner. Now alternate arms every set:

Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R

As before, insert two-arm swings if grip becomes a problem.

Throughout the progression, if you are having an off day for any reason, do all sets with two arms.

At some point you should be able to complete both types of progression and do all sets of 10 with one arm and within 10min—with high power and still passing the talk test before each set. Stay at that load for 2 weeks, now using a timer and doing sets of 10 OTM. Then it is time to peak.

Squats

Do 3-5 sets of 3-5 prying goblet squats as a part of your warm-up before the swings.

Get-Ups

Do your get-ups after your swings or on alternate days.

Use three kettlebell sizes:

- **“M”**—the main or medium weight that allows you to do perfect singles without struggle. This is your test size kettlebell. Do sets of one rep with it.
- **“L”**—light. Do sets of one rep making exaggerated pauses at different transition points.
- **“H”**—heavy. Partial reps, e.g., “to the elbow” or “to the hand.” Do sets of 2-3 partial reps.

To randomly select the get-up weight for the day, roll a die or:

Die shows	1	2	3	4	5	6
Weight	Light	Medium			Heavy	

To randomly select the duration of the get-up practice for the day, roll a die:

Die shows	1	2	3	4	5	6
GU practice time	5min	10min		15min		20min

If your time is up and you still have not finished your rep on the second side, finish it.

Make sure to pass the talk test before the next set on the other side. To clarify: do a rep on the left, stand up, walk around until you can pass the talk test, then do a rep on the right, etc.

This is a timed practice—NOT escalating density training. Undoubtedly, you could do more reps every minute if you ignored the talk test and pushed yourself harder. While this is appropriate for a short time when peaking before a competition or a test (as you will be doing in the peaking phase of the plan), this not what you are supposed to be doing during the main part of the program.

Peaking & Post-Testing

Peaking, like crash dieting, leads to quick temporarily improvement.

Swing 3 days a week using a timer. Alternate two types of loads:

- Two-arm swings 10/10 OTM.** As the preferred option, you may use a heavier kettlebell—as long as you can still pass the talk test.

After the swings, rest until your breathing is back to normal and then do 5min of “L” get-ups followed by 5min of “H” get-ups, passing the talk test between every set.

- Sets of **10 one-arm swings every 30sec**; the talk test does not apply.

Following are the details of session “B.”

After a general warm-up of choice do a special warm-up with the test kettlebell:

- 1) 5/6 (reps/sets) one-arm swings OTM alternating arms from set to set
- 2) Then rest for exactly 2min before starting your main sets

Use a timer and do your sets of 10 one-arm swings every 30sec. Naturally, you will no longer be able to pass the talk test.

Keep doing sets of 10 every 30sec until you sense that on the next set you are about lose power, compromise your technique, or start gasping for air. **Stop before** you reach that point. Do not be concerned if you did an odd number of sets and stopped without working both sides equally or stopped in the middle of a set.

Rest actively for 10min: walk around, do “fast and loose” drills. Then do 5 sets of 1 get-up per side with the weight that you “own” (“M”). Rest as little as possible to make it through safely (again, you will not be able to pass the talk test).

Rest for 10min after the get-ups and repeat the above enjoyable one-arm swing experience: another series of sets of 10 every 30sec, with the same instructions on when to stop. No need for a warm-up this time.

Even if you finished the first series asymmetrically, one set short on your dominant side, still start the second series with the non-dominant side. As before, stop the series before the quality is compromised.

Write down how many sets you did before and after get-ups and the total. Do not be concerned if they do not add up to 10.

E.g., 3+2; 5+4; 5+3, etc.

Log the time it takes you to complete the get-ups as well.

Keep this up until any of the following happens:

- ✓ You are able to do 10/10 swings every 30sec in one group of sets. Congratulations!
- ✓ You started regressing—doing fewer sets in the first series than last time.
- ✓ 3 weeks have passed.

Alt-S&S Peaking Schedule			
Week	Mon	Wed	Fri
1	OASW GU/M OASW	TASW GU/L 5min GU/H 5min	OASW GU/M OASW
2	TASW GU/L 5min GU/H 5min	OASW GU/M OASW	TASW GU/L 5min GU/H 5min
3	OASW GU/M OASW	TASW GU/L 5min GU/H 5min	OASW GU/M OASW
OASW every 30sec sessions are shaded. On unshaded days do 10/10 two-arm swings OTM.			

Back to “Timeless” Training

Go back to talk test limited basic training 3-5 times a week.

If you have made your 100 reps in 5min with perfect form on the test, start over with (6+4) with a heavier kettlebell.

In case you have not done 100 in 5, alternate sessions with a heavier bell (6+4, etc.) with sessions of 10 swings with the “old” bell you have not yet conquered.

E.g., you have been training with 16kg, doing 70 reps in sets of 10 every 30se on the test. Do:

Session #1									
20kg									
Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R	6L+4R	4L+6R

Session #2									
16kg									
Set #1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R	10L	10R

Session #3 = Session #1

Session #4 = #2, etc.

Repeat the peaking plan 4-6 weeks later.

Power to you!

Please send your success stories to success@strongfirst.com.

Kettlebell 201 Workshop: The Rite of Passage

Once you have reached the impressive yet realistic “Timeless Simple” standard, you have choices to make. Stay on a monastic diet of swings and get-ups, slowly chipping away at “Sinister.” Or try something “same but different”: the snatch plus the clean and military press, the classic Rite of Passage.

Prerequisites

To attend this workshop, you need to be competent in swings, get-ups, and goblet squats. Ignore at your peril.

The Snatch is “the Tsar of the kettlebell lifts.” Thanks to more muscles working and twice the distance travelled, it accomplishes even more than the esteemed swing. Achieve total body explosive power, ruthless conditioning, and a vice like grip. Burn fat like never before. All with a lighter kettlebell—save space in your home, car trunk, or deployment kit.

Once we have taught you the skills with our usual attention to detail, we will send you off to succeed with a Strong Endurance™ snatch plan.

The one-arm Clean-and-Press will rival any other pressing exercise when it comes to shoulder strength and muscular development. It is untouchable when it comes to shoulder health, thanks to its ergonomic perfection.

The military press comes equipped with the “Rite of Passage” type programming—possibly the most reliable progression ever.

Three versions of the ROP—“Jurassic,” “907 Hypertrophy,” and “Heavy”—will keep you gaining for a long time.

Kettlebell 201 ROP sets high goals—and gives you the skills and the roadmap to reach them.

Do you have what it takes?

To find a Kettlebell 201 workshop in your area, [CLICK HERE](#)



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Welcome to our brotherhood and sisterhood of strength!

