

# Using Kettle Bells

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I am asked all the time what we do with kettle bells. Although they have been around forever, they have once again become the rage. There are kettle bell camps and certifications. Pavel has several DVDs on kettle bell workouts for strength training and flexibility. Zach Evan-Esh has an excellent DVD on combat training with kettle bells. He has really thought out a system for conditioning and strength endurance.

But what does Westside do with kettle bells?

We do very few kettle bell swings and cleans. At the Arnold Classic, I arranged with Kieran Kidder to have Valery Fedorenko do a demonstration. He jerked a 70 pound kettle bell for an unbelievable 2006 reps! Once he cleaned the first rep, he never touched the floor again until the last rep was completed.

Kettle bells are good for mobility, flexibility, and strength endurance, as noted by the 2006 reps made at the WPO finals. At Westside, some will do a few swings for a warm-up on dynamic squat day or max effort day for squatting or deadlifting. A few will do some cleans or snatches on these same days.

For shoulder therapy we do them with the bottoms up. Here the lifter holds the handles tight while stabilizing the bells with the bottom of the kettle bell on top. Thanks to Pavel for this one. We also do kettle bell bench shrugs with the bottoms up. For shoulder traction, bend over holding onto a kettle bell. With your arm straight rotate the shoulder internally and externally. This will help most rotator injuries.

For GPP we work up to a half mile holding the kettle bells. It's great for grip and shoulder traction. Passing a kettle around the body is very therapeutic for the shoulders as well.

We do a lot of presses from incline, decline, and seated positions, a few flyes, and a lot of triceps extensions with the kettle bells. Because the bell is either in front of or behind the wrist,

this makes pressing very awkward but effective. To make the exercises more difficult, we double up a set of mini-bands through the handles and do the exercises by holding the doubled-up mini-bands. This causes the kettle bells to move in all directions, creating a chaotic movement. This system will not only build superhuman strength but also build stability, and with light to moderate weights, this is very therapeutic.

Tony Ramos took it a step further by attaching the bands and kettle bells to the bar for all types of pressing. First, it truly teaches you to press correctly. This is accomplished by contracting all the pressing muscles. This includes the arms, delts, lats, and chest. To most effectively use kettle bells for bar pressing, double up a mini-band around the handle of each kettle bell and hang them from the bar. This can be very taxing and very precarious. Be sure to use spotters.

We have experimented with kettle bell and band pressing for over a year. It works. While lowering the bar to the chest, you of course must stop the bar from accelerating, but now you must stop not only the bar but also the kettle bells. This is not easy, as the bands' elasticity causes the bells to lower further even as the bar stops. The bells continue to move not only downward but in all directions, as an oscillating pendulum, creating a chaotic state (as noted by Joe Dell'Aquilo, Ph.D., physics). After reaching lock-out, the bells continue to move upward. All the pressing muscles must work together, as they seldom do, to provide stability.

Light weights and high reps will rehabilitate the pecs and delts. Do those before you suffer any injuries as prehabilitation? Heavy weights for lower reps will build muscle mass and great strength. I suggest you try this combination of weight, bands, and kettle bells. It is not just for the powerlifters but also for ball players and fighters of all types.

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