



# Kettlebell Session Structure

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# Introduction

A kettlebell workout follows the same general guidelines as any other 1:1 or group session, with (potentially) the addition of a movement mechanics component:

- Warm up (RAMP protocol)
- Movement mechanics
- Main session
- Cool down
- Cool down stretch

# Warm up purpose

The goal of a warm up is to mentally and physically prepare the participants for kettlebell workout. A well designed warm up will:

- Increase muscle temperature
- Increase core temperature
- Increase blood flow
- Disrupt transient connective tissue bonds (loosen up the muscles and tendons so that a full range of motion can be achieved at a joint)

These changes will have positive effects on performance which are listed on the following slide

# RAMP Protocol

Using the RAMP protocol for warm ups may help a kettlebell instructor to identify and plan key phases of warm ups:

R – Raise (core temperature, muscle temp)

A – Activate (neurological system)

M – Mobilise (joints)

P – Potentiate (muscles)

# Raise

Raising core temperature and muscle temperature is most easily done by completing CV exercise. This could be done either on a Cv machine, or if in a class situation, by completing full body rhythmical movements – jogging on the spot, jacks, burpees etc can be used. Of course, kettlebell exercises such as swings using lighter weights can also be incorporated into the Raise element

Ideally RPE should be raised from 1/10 to 4-7/10 (with consideration given to both the client and the intensity of the planned main session)

# Activate

Kettlebell workouts require participants to be both alert and fully balanced and proprioceptive. Simple muscle activation exercises such as plank, back extension and glute bridge can be used, as well as kettlebell exercises such as; Halo, Around the World, Figure of 8's and Turkish Get Up

Throughout the activation component, care should be taken to progress the client appropriately

# Mobilise

Good kettlebell technique, whatever style of lifting you are using, will ultimately depend upon your client having a full range of motion. Time spent in the warm up opening up hip joints and shoulder joints in particular will pay dividends in terms of their ability to carry our exercises safely and efficiently.

Have a look at the Warm up Drills and Exercises lessons for some examples on how to activate and mobilise your client!

# Potentiate

Potential refers to exercises that will increase the effectiveness of the main session. Generally this means completion of lighter resistance or bodyweight movements that replicate those that are to come in the main session. As an example, a press up prior to a barbell chest press – or relevant to kettlebells, a single leg straight leg deadlift prior to kettlebell swings. By completing these exercises, more motor units will be firing in the utilised muscles.

# Movement mechanics

The warm up is an excellent opportunity to rehearse the mechanics of certain movements. This will help 'engrain' the movement pattern into your client's brain, prior to adding load. It is useful during the teaching of movement mechanics to use the 'whole-part-whole' approach – Whereby you:

- Look at the client's technique during a full movement
- Break the movement down into its components, analyse and instruct correct movement pattern
- Complete the full movement again with reinforced movement pattern

This is an important session component to complete when client's are new to kettlebells and will help them learn the exercises effectively. Focus on making your cueing as descriptive as possible, using analogies and terms that are understandable, as well as using constraint methods that force clients to change their movement. For example, standing close to the front of your client to 'force' them to hinge by pushing their centre of mass backwards

# Movement mechanics cont.

Key teaching points include:

- The kettlebell should usually be kept close to the midline of the body (vertical line dividing the body into its two sides)
- Wrist position remains rigid and straight
- Grip should be firm but allow some movement – thumb should be wrapped underneath the handle. Some prefer to allow the kettlebell to be held by fingers, rather than be held by the palm
- Knees should always align with toes
- Knee 'valgus' should always be avoided
- Back should not be rounded (with the one exception of a GS racked position, where some curvature of the back is necessary for the elbow to make contact with the hip)

# Main session

Of the 3 styles of kettlebell training (hard, GS and Crossfit), all have their worth. It is possible to combine all three styles into a single workout. However, your clients may struggle to adapt styles unless they have a background in kettlebell lifting. Therefore it may be advisable to use one style, until all participants have mastered that style. The most logical progression route through the styles would be:

1. Hardstyle – This teaches excellent form and is closer to traditional gym work
2. GS – This uses a modified technique and requires some posture changes that should only be attempted by an already strong person
3. Crossfit – The combination of hardstyle and GS would be best undertaken by someone already familiar with them individually

# Main session cont.

The main session component can be as short or long as client fitness allows. Bear in mind that kettlebell sessions tend to be intense, therefore 15-30 minutes is often plenty!

You should incorporate a balance of posterior and anterior muscle group exercises in order to promote muscle balance. Special care and attention should be paid to the lower back/abdominal balance

Logical exercise order would be to put high skill or power exercises and large compound movements first, with smaller muscle groups being exercised last

Exercise prescription can be rep based or time based

Strict controls on technique and form should be enforced in order keep client's safe

# Cool down purpose

The purpose of an effective cool down is to 'return the athlete to their pre activity state'. This includes:

- Reduction in temperature
- Reduction of heart rate
- Reduction of breathing rate
- Reduction of lactic acid levels
- Reduction of 'blood pooling' in muscles

A cool down also allows Oxygen and nutrients to be transported to the still working muscles via the increased blood flow to them

# Cool down content

A cool down usually includes just two components:

1. A cardio component that progressively reduces in intensity allowing venous return to continue post-activity, whilst still having a 'normalisation' effect
2. A stretching component that helps muscle fibres to realign and the muscle (and participant) to relax post activity

In some sports, post-training/event massage is common. Massage can aid with venous return and muscle relaxation. It can also help relax the participant post activity