

The Russian Kettlebell is the *hardware*...



...the Russian Kettlebell Challenge™ (RKC) is the *software*.

What makes the RKC™ method different from *all other* strength and conditioning techniques?

The RKC™ emphasizes safety above all else—this is the result of *mindfulness* and *correct technique*, two foundations of RKC training.

The RKC™ is a “system of strength”—it is a comprehensive way of teaching people how to be strong.

Strength is expressed through technique, not independent of it.

Strength is expressed by exerting force; force is created by generating tension in the muscles, so strength is taught by learning how to *create and manage tension in the body*.

The RKC™ recognizes and emphasizes that all aspects of fitness are types of strength. For example: *balance* is the ability to exert force around joints to maintain the position of the body. *Speed* is the ability to exert force explosively against the ground and propel the body. *Agility* is the ability to change the lines of force through the body and into the ground, in order to change position or direction *rapidly* and *forcefully*.

Disciplined breathing coordinates and enhances all physical movement.

High-repetition *explosive* strength training is the foundation of the system, more appropriate for most violent sports.

The Russian Kettlebell Challenge™ (RKC)



Despite the imposing appearance, there is nothing particularly special about a kettlebell: it is, essentially, an iron ball with a handle. By itself it is like a computer with no programming: hardware, no more useful than any other weight. It is the Russian Kettlebell Challenge™ (RKC) method of training that is creating a revolution in physical training. The RKC™ is a “system of strength”—a set of interlocking and synergistic ways of *teaching people how to be strong*.

Following are some of the basic **principles** that we employ. We use individual kettlebell **techniques** to demonstrate principles of movement, and then we connect this to a specific **application** in sport or daily life. We always teach in the format: Principle—Technique—Application so that the athlete not only *understands* the exercise and is competent *performing* it, but also succeeds in *applying* this knowledge of how to generate force.

1. The RKC™ emphasizes safety and injury prevention. In order to train consistently enough to attain a high state of fitness, it is essential that injuries are minimized. Training injuries due to carelessness or improper technique are simply unacceptable—as the Army says “If we cannot make the military safe during training, how can we make it safe during fighting?” Injuries are reduced or eliminated by understanding **joint compression**—the principle that *muscular tension* protects joints by preventing external forces from reaching the vulnerable connective tissue.
2. Strength is exerting force. *Force* is created through muscle tension. The RKC™, like the martial arts, is a system of *tension management*, or creating internal tension and converting it into external force. Learning to use a kettlebell properly is learning how to use your body properly, or how to best create muscular tension to apply the appropriate force for the situation.
3. Strength and technique are *interchangeable*—there is no such thing as ‘pure’ or ‘abstract’ strength. Technique is the way in which strength is expressed. Poor technique means that more effort is used to generate the same work—or to display the same physical strength. Proper kettlebell instruction reinforces the safest most effective way of creating tension and thereby exerting force.
4. *All strength comes from the ground*. All forces generated to lift, push, run, jump, throw, and so forth are created by *pushing against the ground*. The RKC™ principles of **rooting** and **linkage** teach you how to ground or base yourself, generate force, and transfer it through your body by tightening the connections and linking body segments.
5. The core is *dramatically* misunderstood and improperly trained in the United States. The core should be seen as an area that *transfers force*—the massive forces generated by the hips and legs through the pillar of the trunk and out through the limbs. The core should be trained more for stability than mobility and should be understood as a conduit in most cases. The RKC™ principle of **linkage** teaches that tightening the connections in the body as force is

transferred up from the ground allows the most efficient expression of strength. In contrast, leakage occurs when joints are loose and some of the energy generated from pressing against the ground is lost or 'leaked' out of the loose connections. This further reinforces the *importance of technique*. Instead of implying that strength is a *substitute* for skill (which is a dangerous and growing delusion in American strength professionals and athletes), the RKC™ emphasizes technique as the medium through which you express strength, and therefore inextricably intertwined with it.

6. **Explosive movement IS safe.** The RKC™ teaches ballistic or explosive lifts almost immediately. It is simply a fallacy promoted in commercial gyms that slow, "controlled" movement, especially on machines, is safe. The rate of acute injury is much higher using machines than free weights, and it is higher using free weights in the slow controlled fashion of bodybuilding than in the explosive manner of Olympic Style Weight Lifting. All sports are explosive by nature, a further indication that this type of movement is normal and safe. Finally, explosive motions such as the Two Hand Swing and Snatch can be used for high-rep strength-endurance training that is superior to anything else ever developed for training true aerobic power and the ability to tolerate lactic acid—as well as dramatically reducing body fat. Exercises like this simply do not exist in other systems.
7. **All athletic attributes are forms of strength.** Different forms of strength require different techniques to learn, understand, and improve. For example, **balance** is the ability to *exert force* or balance the tension around joints to maintain the position of the body. **Linear speed** is the ability to exert force explosively against the ground and propel the body. **Agility** is the ability to change the lines of force through the body and into the ground, in order to change position or direction *rapidly* and *forcefully*. **Explosive strength** is the ability to generate the greatest force in the shortest time AND distance; explosive **strength-endurance** is the ability to generate this type of full-body high-intensity effort repeatedly over the duration of a game. *Explosive strength-endurance is commonly mistaken for "wind" and has been mis-trained forever—*think jogging for sports like football in which there is no low-intensity effort at all. The ballistic kettlebell lifts such as swings, pulls, cleans, and snatches are the ultimate in creating "game-quality" fatigue.
8. **The RKC™ is the *only* system that is synergistic with other types of skill training AT THE SAME TIME.** Coaches and athletes have been led to believe that there is a necessary "trade-off" between strength and skill training: too much lifting and there isn't enough time or energy for proper technique practice; too much running around on the field in practice and the team might get pushed around on the field during the game for lack of weight and strength. **THIS IS A FALSE DICHOTOMY.** Kettlebell drills can be conducted during skill workouts and the quality of BOTH the resistance workouts and the skill practice can be improved.
9. **To sum up:** it is the RKC™ method that is going to produce the enormous improvement in athletes who use it. **BUT PLEASE**, if you do not use me, *hire another RKC™*—accept no substitutes for those who have been personally certified by Pavel Tsatsouline. *It is the method not the metal that makes the magic.*