

the **CrossFit**
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Kettlebell Clean Combinations

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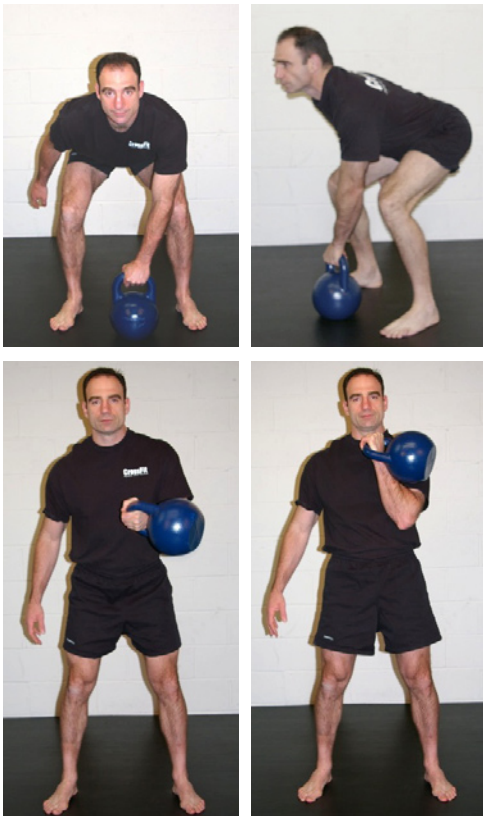
In the last issue, I outlined the basic mechanics, common errors, and corrective drills for the traditional kettlebell clean. This month, I will quickly cover two variations on the move—the dead clean and the bottoms-up clean—and then give you several challenging combination drills that incorporate them. These drills are best performed on a flat, level surface with a kettlebell that has a flat and even bottom.

1 of 4

KB clean variation 1: Dead clean

The dead clean is a little more challenging than the traditional KB clean, which typically cycles immediately from one clean into the next, because it has removes momentum from the complex and because each rep begins and ends on the floor.

1. Place a kettlebell on the ground between your feet.
2. The starting position is the same as if you were going to perform a one-handed deadlift. Look straight ahead and keep your chest open and your weight on your heels.
3. Clean the kettlebell to the “rack” position (with the handle at shoulder height and the bell resting between the forearm and the biceps, almost in the crook of the elbow).
4. Return the kettlebell to the floor.
5. Repeat for reps or time on each side, or alternate hands after every rep.



KB clean variation 2: Bottoms-up clean

The bottoms-up clean is a great grip and wrist strengthener. It is also a great exercise when the calluses on your hand start acting up.

1. The bottoms-up clean is performed exactly the same way as the traditional KB clean, except that you do not allow the kettlebell handle to rotate in your hand. The KB remains upright (bell over handle) at the top of the clean.
2. It is critical to instantly and simultaneously tighten your entire body, especially your grip and glutes and the armpit of the working arm at the moment the kettlebell reaches the “bottoms-up” position.



Combo drill 1: Squat thrust and dead clean

By inserting a squat thrust between the reps, you'll dramatically increase the intensity.

1. Place a kettlebell between your feet
2. Perform a squat thrust over the kettlebell. Resist the urge to perform a push-up in this position.
3. Inhale deeply through your nose as you move back into the squatting position. It is essential to pressurize your abdominal cavity by breathing "into the belly" and bearing down with the diaphragm.
4. Simultaneously place your left hand on the kettlebell handle.
5. Perform a dead clean.
6. Immediately place the kettlebell back on the floor, perform one squat thrust, and dead clean the KB with the right hand.
7. Alternate hands after each squat thrust rep.
8. Perform for time or reps.



Combo drill 2: Squat thrust/ offset push-up/dead clean

This is a great exercise for anyone whose job or sport requires being able to move quickly into and out of the prone position with the use of one arm.

1. Place the kettlebell between your feet.
2. Squat as if you were going to perform a standard squat thrust.
3. Place your left hand on the KB handle and your right hand on the floor to the right of the kettlebell.
4. Quickly extend your legs until you are in the push-up position.
5. Perform an offset push-up, loading most of your weight on your right arm.
6. Explode out of the push-up position into a squat and then dead clean the KB with your left hand.
7. Place the KB back on the floor, switch hand positions, and repeat on the other side.



Combo drill 3: Dead clean/swing/clean

This simple, yet demanding, combination of the dead clean and the swing will challenge both your cardiovascular and strength systems.

1. Perform a dead clean.
2. Allow the kettlebell to swing between your legs; then perform a Russian or American swing.
3. Allow the kettlebell to swing between your legs again; then immediately perform a traditional clean. Be sure to “dial down” the power for the traditional clean (you don’t need as much power for the clean as for the swing), but make sure that you still extend your hip fully.
4. Place the kettlebell on the floor between your feet.
5. Switch hands and repeat the sequence.
6. Alternate hands after every DC/S/C combination.
7. Perform for sets or time.

Combo drill 4: Squat thrust/ clean/swing/clean

We’re going to add one more element and pick up the pace for this combo.

1. Place a moderate-weight KB between your feet. Perform a squat thrust and then, keeping your arms straight from the squat thrust, inhale and pressurize your midsection.
2. Grab the KB handle with your right hand, rip it from the floor, and perform a dead clean, followed by a swing, and then a traditional clean. Return the KB to the floor between your feet.
3. Perform another squat thrust and repeat the dead clean/swing/clean sequence with your left hand.
4. Completing the combo with both hands equals one repetition. Perform one repetition every 30 seconds for 10 minutes.

Mastery of even just these few moves opens the door to a number of combinations you can do. Your goal should be to become “brilliant in the basics” and then begin to mix them up.

Here are a few combinations I particularly like:

- Squat thrust / bottoms-up clean
- Dead bottoms-up clean / swing / bottoms-up clean
- Squat thrust, dead bottoms-up clean / swing / bottoms-up clean

But there’s nothing sacred about these particular groupings. Be creative about putting together new complexes of KB moves and about constructing varied workouts by combining them with other exercises in couplets, triplets, chippers, or any number of functional groupings.



Jeff Martone, owner of [Tactical Athlete Training Systems](#), was one of the first certified senior kettlebell instructors in the United States. He is best known as the creator of “hand- 2-hand” kettlebell juggling, SHOT training, and the T.A.P.S. pull-up system. He is also the author of six training DVDs. He was the first to implement kettlebell training in a federal law enforcement agency and now offers instructor-level certifications. He has over 15 years of experience as a full-time defensive tactics, firearms, and special-response-team instructor.