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Sarah Lurie, RKC, CSCS

Owner and founder of Iron Core Kettlebell Strength and Conditioning



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by Sarah Lurie, RKC, CSCS



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About the Author

In October 2004, **Sarah Lurie** founded Iron Core, the first kettlebell training studio in the country to exclusively offer Russian Kettlebell Challenge (RKC) certified kettlebell instruction. Lurie is a former fitness competitor and did traditional weight training for more than ten years before discovering kettlebells. After experiencing a debilitating injury during a workout, Lurie discovered that kettlebell training helped her overcome her injury and get back into a comprehensive fitness routine.

Lurie is a nationally recognized kettlebell expert and has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fitness Magazine*, *Oxygen Magazine*, *Women's Health*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Newsweek*. She has appeared on *E! News*, *The Big Idea* with Donny Deutsch, *Better Homes and Gardens TV*, *Home Shopping Network* (HSN), and numerous local television fitness programs. Her at-home workout DVDs are sold at retailers nationwide.

Lurie earned a BA in Economics from the University of Arizona and a Masters in Public Administration from San Diego State University. She lives with her husband and two daughters in San Diego.

Dedication

For my husband Jesse, daughters Emma and Grace, and P.A.L. Thanks for teaching me love, patience, persistence, courage, commitment, and dedication (among many other things!). And, of course, Emma, your 3 a.m. wake-up calls made this book possible.

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Last but certainly not least, I am grateful to the readers of this book. Thank you for purchasing the book and for wanting to learn how to use kettlebells!

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Introduction

The biggest question on your mind when you picked up this book may have been, “What exactly are kettlebells?” Simply stated, kettlebells are weights that look like cannonballs with handles; exercising with them combines strength training and cardio training into one workout. Using kettlebells has been hailed in recent years as the most efficient and effective way to train your body for burning tons of fat, getting super strong and lean, and obtaining the ultimate physique. Professional athletes, Hollywood stars, fitness enthusiasts, and novice exercisers have all found in kettlebells what they couldn’t find in other workouts — an exercise program that can be done in half the time of a regular workout routine with twice the results.

I got involved with kettlebells when they were still in their infancy — not many people had heard of Russian kettlebells back in 2003, and very few qualified kettlebell instructors, books, or workout DVDs existed. However, since that time, kettlebell training has grown by leaps and bounds; major fitness organizations recognize it not only as a legitimate training tool but also as one of the best tools available for getting lean and strong. Many qualified trainers now teach students across the country how to use kettlebells. And university research studies are beginning to surface, proving what Russian kettlebell expert Pavel Tsatsouline and his first wave of kettlebell enthusiasts knew all along — kettlebells are the ultimate exercise tool for anyone who’s willing to put in the time to learn how to use them and isn’t afraid of a little sweat.

About This Book

My goal in this book is to use both photos and step-by-step instruction to explain precisely and concisely how to use kettlebells, beginning with the most fundamental principles (such as proper form for your spine and hips). I guide you through a number of basic exercises to help you start using your kettlebell properly, quickly, and safely, and I help you progress to more advanced moves to help you get the absolute most out of your exercise time.

In addition, although I wrote this book with the novice in mind, those of you who have used kettlebells before can find plenty of useful information that you may have missed when you first started using kettlebells — nuances on form and technique that can make a big difference in the results you get from your routine. I also include information on advanced moves to take your workout to the next level and pointers for special audiences who want to use kettlebells, such as young adults, baby boomers, seniors, pregnant women, and others.

And keep in mind that you don't have to read this book from cover to cover; I've organized this book so you can dip into and out of it to find the information you need when you need it.

Conventions Used in This Book

The instructions in this book are meant to be simple, yet comprehensive, to help you establish proper form and technique from the very beginning of your kettlebell practice. With that in mind, I use the following conventions to help you navigate through the information easily:

- ✓ For most of the fundamental kettlebell exercises, I walk you through the basics of the exercise without using your kettlebell before I explain how to do it using your kettlebell.
- ✓ I include at least two photos (and in some cases three or more) with the majority of the exercises in this book so you can see what each stage of the exercise looks like.
- ✓ I include opportunities for you to practice your technique and form after I explain how to do each exercise by providing you with a practice set of reps.
- ✓ I write all instructions and explanations in nontechnical terms so that you aren't bogged down by unfamiliar language; whenever necessary, I use *italics* to point out new terms or add emphasis.
- ✓ I present step-by-step instructions in **boldface** to help you easily identify what you need to know to properly execute the exercise.

Any extra explanatory text that helps you get a better handle on a particular step appears in roman text after the boldface step.
- ✓ I use `monofont` to make Web sites stand out.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist.

What You're Not to Read

This book is packed full of detailed information that explains how to use kettlebells, and it's based on my experience of teaching new students how to use kettlebells for the first time. I certainly won't object if you read this book from cover to cover, but if necessary, you can safely skip anything

marked with an Advanced Stuff icon; you can also skip sidebars (in shaded gray boxes). These items contain interesting information but aren't crucial to understanding how to use kettlebells.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made a few assumptions about you. Basically, I assumed the following:

- ✔ You're a novice when it comes to kettlebells. In other words, you've either heard of or read about kettlebells and may have watched clips of other people using them, but either have never touched a kettlebell or recently bought one and don't know what to do with it.
- ✔ If you have used kettlebells and are self-taught, you may be lacking in some areas of your form and technique. For you, the instructions I present in this book will provide clarification on what you already know — and will undoubtedly make a big difference in the results you get from your kettlebell routine.
- ✔ You possess little fitness experience and are looking for a workout routine that's fun and challenging and that gets results; oh, and you aren't afraid of elevating your heart rate and working your muscles!

How This Book Is Organized

Kettlebells For Dummies is organized into five parts with each part offering you detailed information on specific topics related to kettlebells. The following sections explain what each part covers.

Part I: Gearing Up for a Kettlebell Workout

Part I gives you an overview of kettlebell training and explains how it differs from traditional fitness programs. It provides information on the benefits of kettlebell training, the reasons why it works, and essential safety considerations you need to take before and during your workouts. Knowing what size kettlebell to start with and how to pick the right quality kettlebell is a subject that many newbies have trouble with, so I dedicate an entire chapter to helping you pick the right kettlebell and set up a safe and effective home gym. In addition, Part I details essential hip, spine, and breathing techniques to get you moving and using your kettlebell properly, and it offers warm-up and cool-down options to help you start and finish your workouts safely.

Part II: Beginning with Basic Kettlebell Moves

Part II is one of the most important parts of the book because it shows you how to build the foundation for your entire kettlebell practice. It's full of step-by-step instructions that take you through the fundamental kettlebell exercises, like the swing and the Turkish get-up. For each exercise, you find valuable information on how to fix your form or technique if you're having trouble with the exercise. You also find some basic workout routines that allow you to start practicing right away with a cohesive workout program (after you master the basics, of course!).

Part III: Mastering Advanced Kettlebell Moves

When you're ready to kick your kettlebell workouts up a notch, take a look at Part III; it offers intermediate and advanced moves to help you keep your workout challenging. In addition, it covers some great abdominal-specific exercises that work your core even more than the advanced full-body kettlebell exercises do. Be forewarned, though, this part contains five ultimate kettlebell exercises that will take your training to a whole new level — with a little time and patience, of course! To help you put the exercises I cover in this part together into an effective (and challenging) workout routine, I offer a few workout options for you to try out at the end of this part.

Part IV: Using Kettlebells in Special Situations

Over the years, I've been lucky enough to work with a variety of individuals at different life stages and fitness levels. Whether you're a young adult, a baby boomer or senior, a pregnant woman, an athlete, or someone who's overweight or rehabbing from an injury, you find what you need to know in this part to adapt your kettlebell workout to your particular situation. Kettlebells are a highly adaptable tool if they're used correctly. In this part, I use a conservative approach to help you incorporate a few kettlebell exercises into your specific workout routine, but, as you gain confidence with kettlebells, you'll find that the rest of this book is just as helpful as this particular part.

Part V: The Part of Tens

A signature of *For Dummies* books, the Part of Tens contains lists of ten things you may want to know about kettlebells. Chapter 18 details ten ways you can set and meet your kettlebell fitness goals, and Chapter 19 points out ten tips for working with a kettlebell trainer. The appendix lists resources to help you find anything and everything you may need related to kettlebells, including a list of certified trainers near you.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons in this book are true to *For Dummies* style and point out especially useful tidbits of information. Here's a list of the icons I use in this book:



This icon points out important information that you should take away from this book and apply to every kettlebell workout you do.



This icon points out nuances and variations on form and technique that can help make the exercises easier.



This icon alerts you to some essential information on safe form and technique. Read the information attached to this icon so you don't hurt yourself!



If you master a basic exercise and feel ready to progress, use the information highlighted with this icon to guide you in doing more challenging variations.

Where to Go from Here

If you're a beginner and just want to dive right in, flip to Chapter 2 to take note of some important safety considerations you need to follow, Chapter 3 to choose the right size kettlebell, and Chapter 4 to begin with some spine and hip essentials. Then be sure to read Chapter 5 on warming up, cooling down, and breathing right before attempting the basic exercises in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

If you've used kettlebells before, you may still want to take a look at Chapters 4 and 5 to make sure you're using the right form and techniques in your exercises. Then feel free to move on to Parts II and III, where you can start working on basic and, eventually, more advanced kettlebell exercises.

If you fall into any of the special-situation categories in Part IV, begin with Chapters 4 and 5, and then skip to the appropriate chapter on your particular situation, where you can find the guidance you need to get started.

No matter where you fall on the fitness spectrum, kettlebells will help you achieve your fitness, health, and wellness goals. As you start your kettlebell fitness journey, get ready to be encouraged with some instant results: your skin will feel firmer, your posture will improve, and you'll have more energy for life's everyday challenges. After you commit to a workout schedule, within weeks, you'll notice more positive changes. For example, you'll feel stronger, your clothes will begin to fit better, you'll have more endurance, and your friends and family will probably ask you what you've been doing differently. I've seen some remarkable results from my clients who have committed themselves to learning and practicing kettlebells. Use this book to begin your journey to achieving your ultimate body — and don't forget, I'll be with you every step of the way!

Part I

Gearing Up for a Kettlebell Workout

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"A kettlebell? Imagine something the weight of a bowling ball only with a handle, like Mommy's purse."

In this part . . .

If you're ready to get moving with kettlebells, you're in the right place. In this part, you find information on what kettlebells are, the benefits your body gets from a kettlebell workout, and the important safety considerations you need to keep in mind as you train. If you want to find out what size kettlebell to use, get the scoop on where to buy it, and determine how many bells you need, look no further — this part has all these answers, too.

To be successful with a kettlebell workout program, you need to know how to align your spine and move your hips as well as how to warm up, cool down, and breathe properly. Lucky for you, this part is here to show you how to do all this and more.

Chapter 1

Shaping Up with Kettlebells

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeing how kettlebell workouts are different from other routines
 - ▶ Choosing a kettlebell and other gear
 - ▶ Knowing how to align your spine and hips
 - ▶ Breathing right, warming up, cooling down, and being careful if you overdo your workout
 - ▶ Introducing basic and advanced moves
 - ▶ Adjusting workouts for special circumstances
-

Welcome to the world of kettlebells! A kettlebell, which looks like a cannonball with a handle, is a very simple, yet effective piece of equipment that allows you to work most of your muscle groups at the same time. Because of the fast-paced, dynamic motions in kettlebell exercises, your heart rate increases with each repetition, keeping your body in the fat-burning zone throughout your workout.

One of the greatest things about using kettlebells is that you don't need to be a hard-core, experienced fitness enthusiast to start using them. However, if you want to get the results that a kettlebell offers, you do have to challenge and tax your muscles and cardiovascular strength. Kettlebells are a tough, no-nonsense workout tool that will challenge you both physically and mentally. So, if you're someone who prefers to read your paper on the treadmill, kettlebells are probably not a good choice for you. On the other hand, if you're someone who enjoys being challenged when you work out, you'll surely find success with kettlebells. As you become a more experienced kettlebeller, you'll be pushed to your limit as you swing and snatch your way to a stronger and more confident you.

In this chapter, I introduce you to some kettlebell fundamentals, including how kettlebells are different from other workouts and how to move your spine and hips properly when using them. I also describe a sampling of basic exercises, show you where to go if you're ready to advance to more challenging exercises, and note how special audiences can work out with kettlebells. Prepare to get moving!

Comparing Kettlebells to Other Workouts

Kettlebell exercise is different from traditional weight lifting and other fitness programs in many ways. For example,

- ✔ **Kettlebells combine a strength-training and cardiovascular workout into one program.** Very few workout programs accomplish such a combination, and those that do aren't accessible to or easily learned by the novice. Olympic lifting comes close to the power and strength you get from working out with kettlebells, but it lacks the versatility of kettlebells. Ever try swinging a barbell between your legs? Besides, Olympic lifts aren't nearly as easy to learn as kettlebell exercises. And I don't know about you, but I don't have any desire to squat 400 pounds on a regular basis.
- ✔ **Most kettlebell exercises utilize all your major muscle groups.** A kettlebell workout doesn't isolate muscle groups, so instead of working just one muscle group like you do with a dumbbell, kettlebells work multiple muscle groups with each exercise. The result is a workout that's quicker, more efficient, and more effective than a traditional workout routine.

Check out Chapter 2 to find out more about the benefits of working out with kettlebells and how to use them safely.

Selecting Your Kettlebell and Gathering Other Gear

One very appealing aspect of kettlebell workouts is that you don't need much equipment to do them. One kettlebell is all you need to start with, and, if you choose the correct size at the beginning, you won't have to go and buy another one for a while. Plus, even when you are ready to move up in kettlebell weight, you'll still have uses for your lighter kettlebell (such as during warm-up exercises that involve the kettlebell; see Chapter 5). Typically, experienced kettlebellers (or those who just want to try a few of the two-kettlebell workouts like the ones I provide in this book) have two or three kettlebells, but even so, relative to some other fitness programs, kettlebells are an inexpensive fitness tool. Refer to Chapter 3 for a complete discussion on how to pick the right size kettlebell and where to get one.



The only other gear besides your kettlebell that you really need to get started is a stopwatch, a yoga mat (or some sort of padded flooring like carpet), and this book. Any other equipment listed throughout the book is optional, and I give you plenty of alternatives for using items you probably already have in your house (like a chair) so you can get started right away. And it's okay if you

haven't purchased your kettlebell just yet, because, with most of the foundational exercises, I help you practice without your kettlebell before I show you how to do the exercise with your kettlebell.

Getting a Grip on Proper Spine and Hip Alignment

When it comes to using kettlebells the right way, you need to take some time to figure out how to position your spine and move from your hips to maximize the benefit you get from your workout and minimize the chance of injury. The majority of people I've trained over the years don't know how to position their spine and hips properly when they take their first kettlebell class because most traditional exercises don't incorporate these essential principles. Here's one big example: People who perform squat exercises in the gym typically use a machine to assist them, and, when they squat, their range of motion is limited.

However, when you squat down to the floor to pick up a box or some other object (like a kettlebell), not only do you need a greater range of motion than a typical squat requires of your body, but you also need to know how to initiate the movement from your hips (so you don't hurt your back), how to brace your abdominals (so you stabilize your core for strength and control throughout the movement), and how to press through your heels to activate your glutes and hamstrings (see Chapter 4 for more details). Kettlebells help you master these basic techniques and show you that moving in this way is actually very natural.



I can't emphasize enough how the essential techniques in Chapter 4 will benefit your body and get you moving for success. There, you find the details on achieving *neutral spine* (the natural S curve in your back) and snapping your hips the right way so you're properly aligned throughout all your kettlebell workouts.

Breathing Correctly, Warming Up, Cooling Down, and Easing Up

Mastering the right breathing technique is an essential part of using kettlebells properly. But, don't worry — it isn't as technical as it sounds. In fact, breathing the right way for kettlebells comes quite naturally, and after you know how to use the right breathing pattern during your exercises, your breathing in everyday life will feel much more powerful and less shallow.

The technique I recommend is called *diaphragmatic breathing*, and it's simply a way to tighten your *virtual belt* — which is also known as abdominal bracing. Using this breathing technique allows you to protect yourself from the weight and force of your kettlebell before you even execute an exercise by stabilizing your core with breath control.

In addition, like any fitness program, warming up, cooling down, and making sure you haven't overdone it are important parts of being successful with your routine.

- ✔ You can use dynamic stretches and Z-Health options during your warm-up; you can also incorporate your kettlebell into your warm-up.
- ✔ To cool down, you can do some quick 'n' easy stretches as well as use a band and a foam roller.
- ✔ If you find yourself sore after a workout, you can try some simple techniques to ease the soreness; if you've really gone overboard, you need to modify your program for success.

Make sure to read through Chapter 5 to figure out how to breathe, warm up, and cool down properly and how to relieve muscle soreness. (As a bonus in that chapter, I also discuss some options for making your workout's rest periods a little more active.)

Starting with Basic Exercises

To begin your kettlebell practice, you need to learn a few basic foundational exercises. If you take the time to hone these basic movements, you'll find it much easier to learn more intermediate and advanced exercises, not to mention you'll be less likely to develop bad habits in form and technique. Starting with the basic exercises I cover in Chapters 6 through 8 (and introduce in the following sections) is necessary for you to get above-average results from your kettlebell workout — and speaking of workouts, I provide a few full-length routines built from these basics in Chapter 9.

The swing

The swing is the first foundational exercise I walk you through in this book, and it has many variations. However, you need to master only three basic variations to have a well-rounded kettlebell routine: