



ONE LIFE

FREE GUIDE

The Hold

One weight, one hand, stand still. Three minutes a day for the muscles that hold up your lower back, your shoulders and your balance, and a number about your own body that nobody has given you before.

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What this is

You pick up one kettlebell in one hand and stand completely still. No swing, no walk, no reps. Then you switch hands. That is the entire exercise.

It looks too simple to matter. It is the opposite. A weight hanging off one side tries to bend you toward it, and the whole other side of your body has to switch on to keep you standing straight. With two hands on a bar the strong side quietly does more, every rep, for years. With one bell in one hand there is nowhere to hide.

That one demand reaches four things most training never touches:

1. Your lower back.

The muscles that stiffen your spine against a sideways load are the quadratus lumborum, from pelvis to lowest ribs, and the side wall of the abdomen. In a 2009 study of one-handed carries, McGill and colleagues found those were the muscles doing the work. They are what protect you in the moments most backs actually go: a suitcase, a child, a bag out of the boot.

2. Your shoulders and posture.

Holding the shoulder down and back under a weight forces the muscles around the shoulder blade, the lower trapezius and the serratus, to work in exactly the position a desk pulls you out of. That is coaching, not a lab finding, and it is the cue that matters most in section 5.

3. Your balance.

Uneven load makes the hip muscles on the outside of your pelvis keep it level. Standing, they hold it. Walking with the bell, as in section 6, they hold it on one leg at a time.

4. Your grip.

In a Lancet study of nearly 140,000 adults, grip strength tracked all-cause mortality better than blood pressure. It is an association: nobody has shown that building grip changes the outcome. We give you both halves, always.

So the Hold does two jobs. It builds the side of you that has been coasting, and it tells you, in seconds, how big the gap is. Most people have never had a number for either side. By the end of section 2 you will have two.

The entry test

No equipment. About four minutes. Do this before you buy anything, because it decides what you buy.

It is a side plank, held to the point the line breaks, not the point it burns. Burning is fine. A broken line is the end of the test.

- 1. Set up.** Lie on your side, elbow directly under your shoulder, forearm flat. Feet stacked, or top foot just in front if you need it. Knees straight.
- 2. Lift.** Push the floor away and raise your hips until your body is one straight line from ankle to ear. Start the timer.
- 3. Hold the line.** Hips up, chest facing forward. Breathe normally. Do not hold your breath.
- 4. Stop when it breaks.** The clock stops the moment your hips drop, or you roll forward or back. Not when it starts to hurt. When the line goes.
- 5. Rest two minutes, then the other side.** Same setup, same rule. Write both numbers down straight away, left and right, in seconds.

Your weaker side is the one that matters. It sets your level, and your level decides which kettlebell to buy.

If your weaker side is under twenty seconds, buy nothing yet. Do the side plank instead: three holds per side every day, weaker side first, each one stopped a few seconds before the line breaks. Re-test after two weeks. When the weaker side reaches twenty seconds, come back to section 3.

One warning. You will hear that a ten percent difference between sides is the line between fine and a problem. That number got repeated until it sounded like a finding. A systematic review of fifty-three studies on left to right differences found the ten to fifteen percent cut-off was, in its own words, not always supported by appropriate evidence, and that the link to injury was inconsistent across the research.

So do not panic at a gap and do not relax at a small one. The comparison that matters is you now against you in three months, same test, written down. There is one figure here that is published rather than inherited, and it belongs to the side plank you just did: the two sides are considered balanced when they sit within about five percent of each other.

Your level

Take your **weaker side** number from the test and find it here.

WEAKER SIDE	LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS
Under 20 s	Buy nothing yet	Side plank only, re-test in two weeks
20 to 44 s	Level 1	Bell about 0.15× your bodyweight
45 to 74 s	Level 2	Bell about 0.20× your bodyweight
75 s or more	Level 3	Bell about 0.30× your bodyweight

The multiplier is the bell weight as a share of your bodyweight. You do not need to work it out. The chart in section 4 has done it for you.

These levels are a starting point, not a verdict. Their only job is to put a bell in your hand that is heavy enough to teach you something and light enough to hold square. If the first week tells you it is wrong, change it.

Which bell to buy

Find your bodyweight on the left and your level across the top. Rounded **down** to the nearest common kettlebell size, on purpose.

BODYWEIGHT	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
50 kg	6 kg	10 kg	14 kg
60 kg	8 kg	12 kg	16 kg
70 kg	10 kg	14 kg	20 kg
80 kg	12 kg	16 kg	24 kg
90 kg	12 kg	16 kg	24 kg
100 kg	14 kg	20 kg	28 kg
110 kg	16 kg	20 kg	32 kg
120 kg	16 kg	24 kg	32 kg

Between two rows, or between two bells? Take the lighter one. A bell you can hold square for the full time is worth more than a heavier one you hold crooked.

No kettlebell yet? A loaded backpack held by its top handle, or the heaviest water jug you own, does the job for the first week. Weigh it on a bathroom scale.

You will only ever need one bell at a time. When you outgrow it, section 6 tells you when.

The setup in eight steps

Do this every time. The setup is most of the exercise.

1. **Bell beside your foot.** Weaker side first. Handle lined up with the outside of your foot.
2. **Hinge, do not squat.** Push your hips back, back flat, and take the handle in the middle so the bell hangs level.
3. **Stand up tall.** Like a deadlift, not a curl. The arm stays long and straight.
4. **Feet hip-width.** Weight even across both feet. Not more on the bell side.
5. **Pack the shoulder.** Pull it down and slightly back, away from your ear. It stays there the whole time.
6. **Brace and breathe.** Breathe into your belly and the sides of your waist, like filling a barrel, not your chest. Tighten your middle around it as if someone is about to poke your stomach. Keep taking small breaths behind the brace: you can talk, just not sing.
7. **Stand square, free hand quiet.** Shoulders level, no lean away from the bell. Let the free arm hang relaxed, or rest that hand on your stomach to feel the brace. A clenched fist or a flared arm means the wrong side is doing the work. Check once in a mirror or a dark window.
8. **Start the clock.** It stops when you lean, the shoulder rises or the grip slips. Put the bell down the way you picked it up: hinge, flat back.

The three ways a hold fails. Almost nobody notices these on their own. **The lean:** tilting away from the bell to balance it. **The shrug:** the shoulder creeping toward the ear, which hands the load to your neck. **The hip hike:** the hip on the bell side rising. The clock stops the moment any of them shows up. Twenty seconds held square is worth more than a minute held crooked.

The daily three minutes

Three rounds. Each round is your weaker side for thirty seconds, then switch hands, then your stronger side for thirty seconds. That is three minutes of holding. It fits while the kettle boils, in a kitchen, in a hotel room, before a call.

1. Weak side first. Always.

It gets you fresh, every round, every day.

2. Thirty seconds is the target, not the start.

If thirty seconds is not clean yet, hold for twenty and add five seconds when every hold that day was square.

3. The time stays. The bell grows.

When all six holds are a clean thirty seconds for a full week, move up one bell size. You never hold for longer than thirty seconds. You hold something heavier.

4. A big gap gets one extra.

If your test showed a clear difference between sides, add one more thirty second hold on the weaker side at the end.

5. Then take it for a walk.

Once the stand is clean, walk ten slow steps out, turn, ten back, same rules. Each step puts you on one leg for a moment with the weight on the other side, and the hip muscles have to keep your pelvis level. Balance work, inside a walk across the kitchen.

6. Travelling?

A packed suitcase held by its top handle is a perfectly good bell. Same setup, same rules.

7. A bad day still counts.

One round, weak side only, is still the habit. A missed day is nothing. Three missed days in a row is the thing to avoid.

8. Re-test every four weeks.

Same side plank, same time of day, written down. That number is the one that tells you it is working.

Your numbers

Print this page, or copy it into your phone. A measured thing is real. An intention is not.

	DAY 1	WEEK 4	WEEK 8	WEEK 12
Left (s)				
Right (s)				
Gap (s)				
Bell (kg)				

Gap is your stronger side minus your weaker side. Watch it shrink. That is the whole point.

What this does not do

The Hold is one excellent movement. It is not a programme, and it will not fix a week where you are sleeping five hours and eating whatever was closest.

Movement is one of four pillars: movement, real food, sleep and stress. They fail together and they come back together. The Hold gave you a number for one of them in four minutes. The other three do not come with a stopwatch, which is why most people guess, and guess wrong.

The full programme, all four pillars

coachcassio.com/method · ninety days, three sessions a week of thirty minutes, self-paced.

Find your starting point with me

A fifteen minute call. You tell me where you are, I tell you which of the four is costing you most. Tap here to book.

Keep holding the thing. Weak side first.