

Quick Wins for Improving Grip Strength

**Jedd Johnson, CSCS, RKC
Captain of Crush | Red Nail Certified**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 5
Sledge Hammer	Page 6
Pony Clamp	Page 7
EZ Bar	Page 8
Fat Gripz	Page 9
Block Weights	Page 10
Plate Pinches	Page 11
Kettlebells	Page 12
Rubber Bands	Page 13
Common Questions	Page 14
Additional Products	Page 18

Introduction – Quick Wins for Improving Grip Strength

Following are what I call “Quick Wins” for improving your Grip Strength because they will bring about rapid improvements in hand strength.

I feel very strongly that these pieces of equipment are **EXCEPTIONAL PIECES OF EQUIPMENT FOR BUILDING GRIP STRENGTH**. I also believe them to be highly versatile pieces of equipment that you can use in many different ways. They are good investments for your training routine. However, if you do not have the funds to invest in these pieces of equipment NOW, I am going to offer up some suggestions for how you can perform an acceptable work-around, make the equipment yourself, or just use something similar.

So let's take a look at this equipment...

Sledge Hammers

Sledge Hammers are awesome for building Grip Strength as well as increasing your conditioning level. You can pick up a Sledge Hammer for about \$30 from a local hardware store.



If you can not afford a Sledge Hammer, a suitable replacement can be made using a long 1-inch pipe and some standard-sized weights. Remember, the Sledge is essentially just a weight at the end of a 30 to 33-inch long handle. If you have a sturdy pipe and some plates laying around, you can build something very similar to a Sledge Hammer AND you will even be able to perform the movement in the circuit. However, I would caution you against using the home made device to hit things like Tires as is often done for conditioning, because the weights will not be as secure on the handle as the Sledge Hammer head will be.

The only real downside to Sledge Hammers is that they do not lend themselves to being very adjustable. Sure, you can add loading bars to the head so that you can attach weights, but this becomes a real pain in the neck. If you are looking for adjustability in weight, along with the ability to swing and hit things with your sledge hammer, then I recommend

Stronger Grip's line of products, especially their Shot Loadable Sledges – they are fantastic, and all of Stronger Grip's products are Top of the Line.

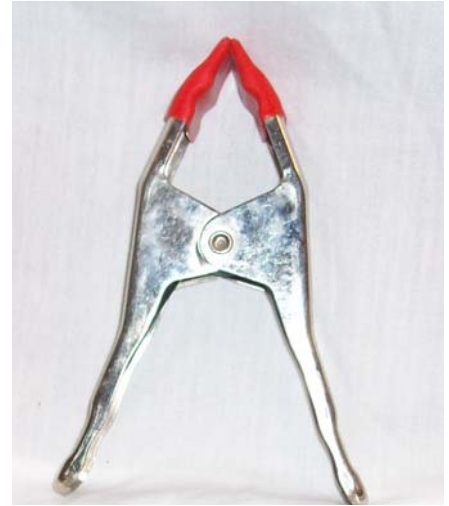
Go here to see Stronger Grip loadable Sledges

<http://www.strongergripaffiliate.com/114-8.html>



Pony Clamp

The Pony Clamp is a device used in carpentry for holding pieces of wood together, as well as other industrial settings where an extra hand is needed when working solo. However, the strength level of the spring in the Pony Clamp also makes it excellent for training the thumb. The thumbs are often one of the most severely neglected parts of the Grip.



You or a family member may already own a Pony Clamp that you can use from time to time in your training. If not, however, just go buy one. They only cost a few bucks if you go to a major chain. If you go to a Dollar store, you can get them even cheaper. Either way, the price is minimal and you should be able to afford the Pony Clamp without too much agony.

E-Z Bar

The E-Z Bar is the bar that is often used in the Preacher Curl station at the gym. Most commercial gyms have them, and they work out great for performing Reverse Curls, which is the movement that I include in Circuit 1.



You can pick up your own E-Z Bar or something similar with a different name at most Dick's Sporting Goods stores for less than \$50.

However, if the price of an E-Z Bar is too much or if your gym does not have one, a suitable replacement is simply performing the Reverse Curls with dumbbells. The most important thing is that you perform Reverse Curls. They are a very valuable movement for working the elbow flexors on the back of the forearm. Training these muscles and keeping them strong can help you prevent the onset of Elbow problems such as tendonitis, epicondylitis, and other irritations to the soft tissues of the lower arm and elbow.

Fat Gripz

Certain pieces of equipment are must-haves. I feel that Fat Gripz are one of them because they are extraordinarily versatile. You can put these on just about

any normal-sized piece of training equipment in order to instantly increase the handle size and thus increase the Grip Component of an exercise that is normally very easy on the Grip.



Fat Gripz can be used on: Dumbbells, Barbells, Chinning Bars, Cable Row Devices, and many other pieces of equipment. I am a Fat Gripz affiliate and you can buy a set through my affiliate link here:

<http://www.dieselcrew.com/fat-gripz> . Making a purchase through my affiliate link will result in a commission, which helps me out as well.

However, if buying Fat Gripz is not possible for you at this time there are many alternatives you can use.

The cheapest alternative is simply using a small hand towel. Just take the towel and wrap it around the handle of whatever you are training on. This will instantly thicken the handle and force you into an open hand position, increasing the Grip component of the lift.

Another more challenging way to instantly thicken a dumbbell or barbell is to use a Pool Noodle. Just take a pool noodle and cut it to your desired length. It can then be placed right onto the handle of the dumbbell, barbell, pull-up station, etc. I'd also recommend wrapping some tape around the Pool Noodle in order to keep it on there, otherwise, it will probably slip off.

Block Weights

Block Weights are some of the best things you can use in your training to improve hand strength.

The term Block Weight was coined by John Brookfield, author of *Mastery of Hand Strength* and *The Grip Master's Manual*.

By definition, a Block Weight is the severed head of a dumbbell.



However, you can also get the same benefits from simply pinching a dumbbell by the head in a vertical position, as shown above.

The most important benefit that comes with Block Weight Training is that it forces you to lift with an open hand. Instead of being able to wrap your hand around the handle of a device, Block Weights force you to use the tips of the fingers and thumbs in order to lift the object, which is MUCH tougher.

Plate Pinches

Conventional training does little to train the thumbs. That is unfortunate because the thumb is used to secure our grip so we can lift more weight and perform more repetitions. We can use the plates that we have in our collection or at the gym to strengthen our thumbs by doing plate pinches.



For plate pinches, the plates should have smooth sides. Positioning plates together smooth sides out enable us to perform the lifts included in the Circuits that follow such as Around the Worlds, Pinch Cleans, and other valuable thumb strengthening exercises.

If you have absolutely no plates at your disposal, hand-sized stones might be a good option for you, as well as soup cans or a piece of lumber with some type of weight duct taped onto it. Just please make sure that the work-around you use to build grip strength is safe so you do not hurt yourself.

Kettlebells

There are a lot of things you can use Kettlebells for besides just Swings and Snatches in order to build Grip Strength.



First off, Kettlebell Flipping is a tremendous way to build Grip Strength with Kettlebells. I love it and try to include it in my training once a week, at least for a few sets of 20 repetitions with my 95-lb Kettlebell. I really like going heavy with these.

Lighter Kettlebells can also be used to train for Grip Strength as well. For instance, Kettlebells can be gripped by the bottom like Block Weights in order to work the open hand strength (shown below to the left) and they can also be used to strengthen the fingers and wrists by perform Kettlebell Curls (below and to the right).



You can pick up Kettlebells of various sizes here: www.Dragondoor.com

Rubber Bands



Rubber Bands are one of the cheapest types of equipment that can be used to build hand strength while also keeping your lower arms free of injury. Go to Office Max or Staples and look for rubber bands that are about ½ inch in thickness. At Staples they are labeled as #84 Rubber Bands, but they may be different in other stores. These will only cost you a few bucks and they will last you a long time.

Rubber Bands are used for training the extensors, which are the muscles on the back of the hands and forearms that open the fingers. Training these muscles is extremely important for antagonistic balance – balance of strength between opposing muscle groups. When the muscles on the back of your hands and forearms are stronger, that lends itself to a stronger grip and a less likely chance of injury from over-use.

The above pieces of equipment are what I feel to be your best bets if you are looking for equipment that is guaranteed to give you a stronger Grip. However, if there is something else you're thinking about, I am always open to questions, so please feel free to email me at jedd.diesel@gmail.com!

Common Questions

How often should I train Grip

While the hands and forearms can often handle more volume and more frequent workouts, when starting, I am a firm believer that trainees should start out slowly. As a general rule, I suggest anyone who has never practiced specialized Grip Training before start out training the grip at most twice per week.

My suggestion would be to use these Circuits as finishers for your program twice a week. For instance, on Week 1, you can perform Circuit 1 on Monday and then Circuit 2 on Wednesday or Thursday. This way, there is plenty of time for the hands to rest between Grip workouts.

Once you are better conditioned to the load being put on the hands and forearms, you can ramp up to 3 or even 4 Grip workouts per week. In most cases, a trainee I work with can comfortably ramp up from zero experience with grip training to training 4 times per week after 6 weeks or gradually increased volume.

What if I want to strengthen my hands for a specific feat of strength

In this case, I would do one day per week training the specific feat of strength and then one or two other days during the week to strengthen the aspects of the feat as well as training for antagonistic balance and recovery. For instance, if you want to train to tear cards, do one day per week of card tearing practice, one day to strengthen the fingers, thumbs and wrists, and

then one workout to strengthen the extensors and to help the forearms recover.

What if I want general hand strength to assist my workouts or my job

In this case, I think it is fully acceptable to ramp up to training Grip 4 times per week. Start out by training just twice per week, then 3 and then work towards 4 times per week. However, in this case, volume per workout would be less. For instance, you could work with two pieces of equipment on day to strengthen support, a couple pieces another day to train the thumbs, on another day work on wrists and then another day do something else. Working on all of the disciplines will help you become well rounded.

What if I want to train for Grip Competitions

These groups benefit from higher volume. You take the schedule dictated directly above and really ramp-up the volume, training on multiple implements per workout instead of just one or two. Training for contests involves work on the contest-specific equipment as well as general preparation, and feat preparation. In other words, for a contest, you have to be ready to compete well at the exact events that will be at the competition, you have to put work in toward being as well rounded in everything as possible, plus, you have to be ready to tear phone books, rip cards and bend nails. For these people, two of the biggest battles is finding the balance they need to do all this, plus be able to recover for the rest of their workouts.

Another suggestion I will also make to anyone who plans on getting into Grip Training is making sure to include Recovery Work and Antagonistic Balance Efforts into their training on a regular basis.

Recovery Work involves practices that help the body to better and more quickly heal. For instance, contrast baths are outstanding for the lower arms. It is as easy as filling up one side of a sink with warm water and the other with cold and then doing dips back and forth for 10 to 15 minutes, 30 seconds to a minute for each dip.

Antagonistic Balance is different. It involves promoting a strength balance between the flexors and the extensors of the hand. In the DVD, I show you rubber band extensions with rubber bands and the Extensor Bucket lifts to train the extensors. These are great. I strongly suggest you do at least the Rubber Band Extensions for 2 sets of 20 each day you train. This helps strengthen that musculature and goes a long way toward promoting hand health.

How many Sets / Reps should I perform

For Circuits like these, I like to shoot for 6 to 12 repetitions per exercise for a total of 18 to 36 reps per set. However, this is only a guideline. If I choose a weight that is slightly too high, I may end up finishing short of my goal. I do not let this bother me though. In fact, if I do not hit this goal, I may not even adjust the weight. The important thing I look for is quality reps. This will bring about growth and strength. Doing extra reps sacrificing mechanics will do nothing to help you progress. In fact it will more likely put you into a position to get injured.

As far as sets, I generally perform two. This allows me to keep everything even and balanced as far as hand positioning is concerned. For example, in Circuit 3, there is a movement called Sledge Hammer Figure 8's. In an attempt to keep strength levels balanced, I do one set with the right hand on top and the next set with the left hand on top (or vice versa).

I do not usually go through Circuits more than twice, because I set the loads and the rep ranges high enough to get well stimulated after two sets. If I still feel fresh after two sets of Grip Circuits, I probably held back too much.

Do I HAVE to perform these specific movements?

Hell NO! The exercises prescribed in this manual are suggestions only. In general, if you do not have the equipment, I do suggest getting it or building it yourself, because the equipment and movements I included, I feel, are very beneficial.

If buying new equipment is not possible, then choosing a similar exercise with a similar movement pattern is totally acceptable. For instance, the Reverse Curls with the EZ Bar can be substituted with Reverse Curls with Dumbbells.

Also, other work-arounds can be employed to mimic the effects of specialized equipment, such as using a towel wrapped around a dumbbell handle instead of using Fat Gripz.

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<http://www.TheGripAuthority.com/bending.htm>

The Ultimate Sled Dragging Manual – Sled dragging is a very beneficial type of training for athletes because of its potential to develop strength, power, speed, and to support restoration. Within this manual, we define dozens of sled dragging exercises which will bring a variety to your sled dragging that you never thought was possible.

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<http://www.dieselcrew.com/ultimate-sled-dragging-ebook/>

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Only \$29.95!

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Card Tearing eBook – The Card Tearing eBook is loaded with techniques you can use to build the hand strength to start doing serious damage to a deck of cards. With the extensive exercise index, designed to build strength in all the components needed for card tearing (strong wrists, fingers and thumbs), in no time flat you'll be ripping stuff up!

Only 29.97!

<http://www.cardtearing.com>

The Sh*t You've Never Seen DVD – This DVD shows you real live workout footage from the Diesel Crew. This DVD includes footage that has never been released to the public eye, including kettlebell feats that have never been repeated, extremely rare grip strength feats, and other ground-breaking exercises that only the Diesel Crew has performed.

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<http://dieselcrew.com/the-sh-t-youve-never-seen-dvd/>

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