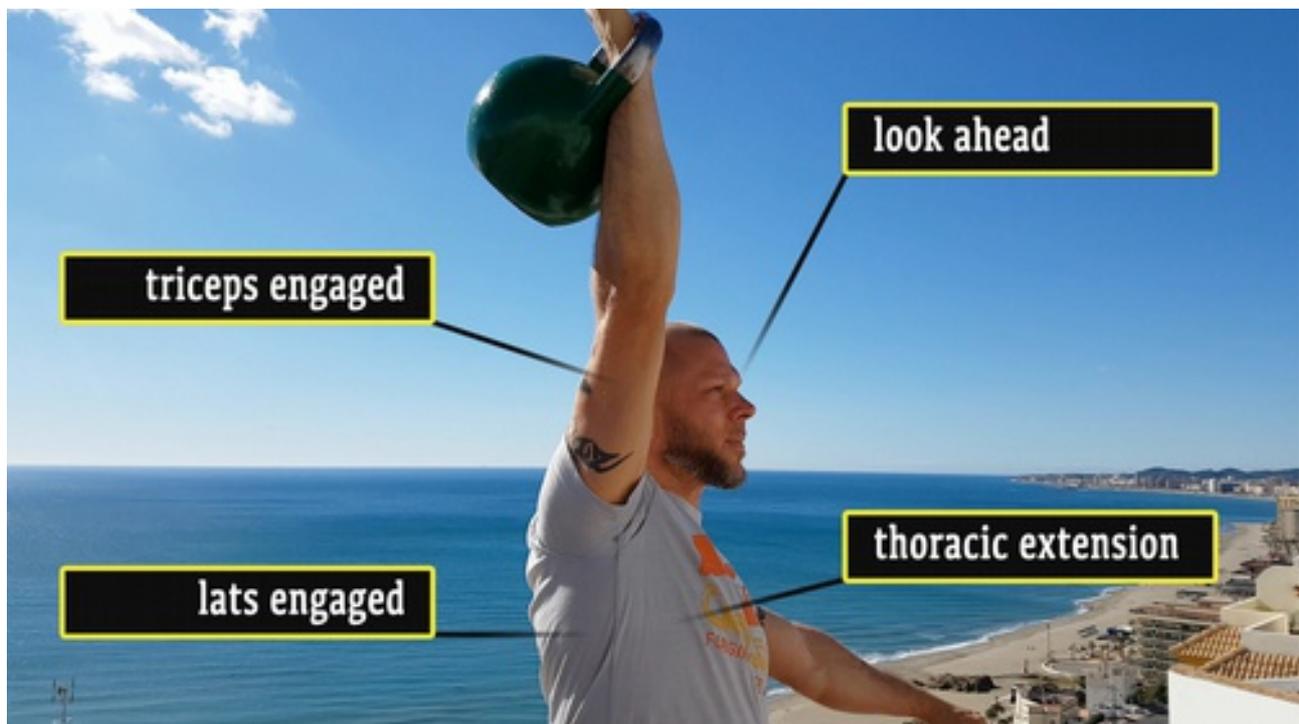


Overhead lockout for Kettlebell Training or CrossFit

This pdf contains further information on the article and video featured on Cavemantraining.com about achieving good overhead lockout through thoracic extension, whether for overhead work in kettlebell training or overhead work with the barbell in CrossFit.

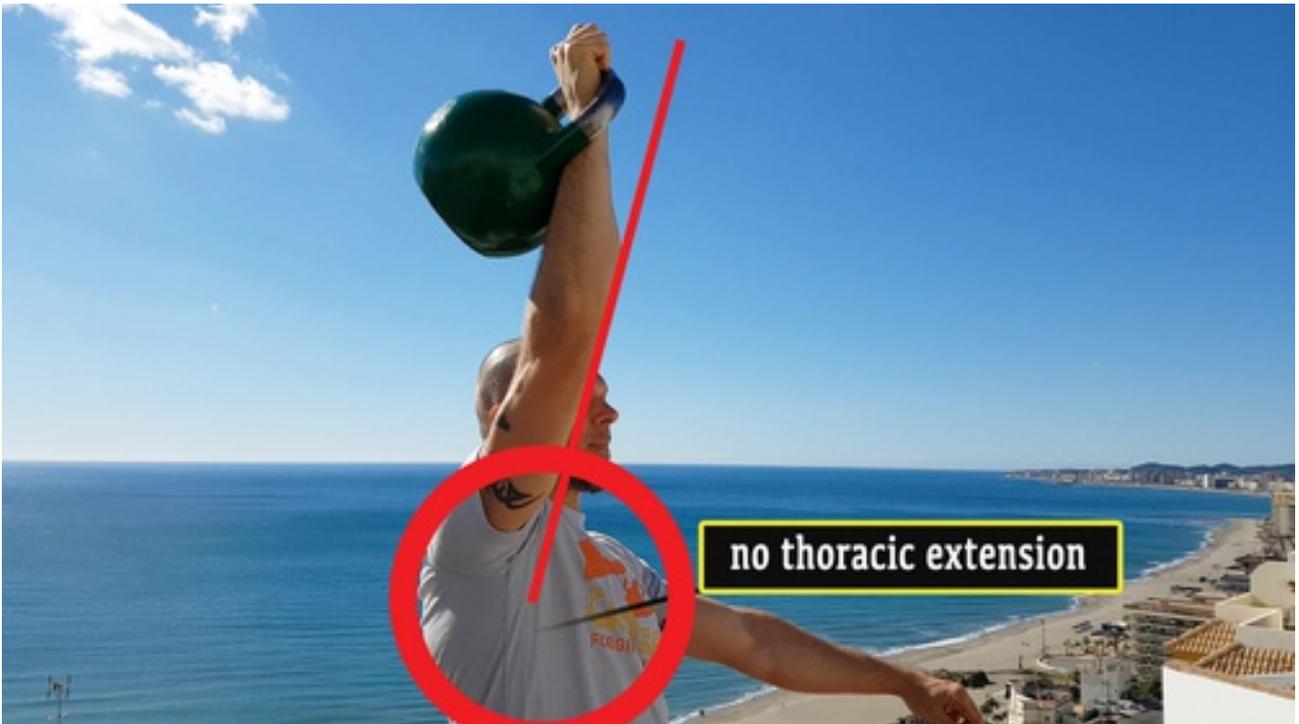
I chose to write about this subject on it's own as I find that, number one, it's a subject not covered in many courses or reading material, and two, it's a phrase that most trainers just use without real meaning “push the chest out” but not knowing why or what that is supposed to do, it's important to bring across the reason for pushing it out, i.e. to create thoracic extension which creates better range of motion for the overhead lockout. It's important to demonstrate where the extension happens and how much range it can create within your athlete.

You can see the thoracic area marked in purple from TH1 till TH12 which is your upper and middle back.



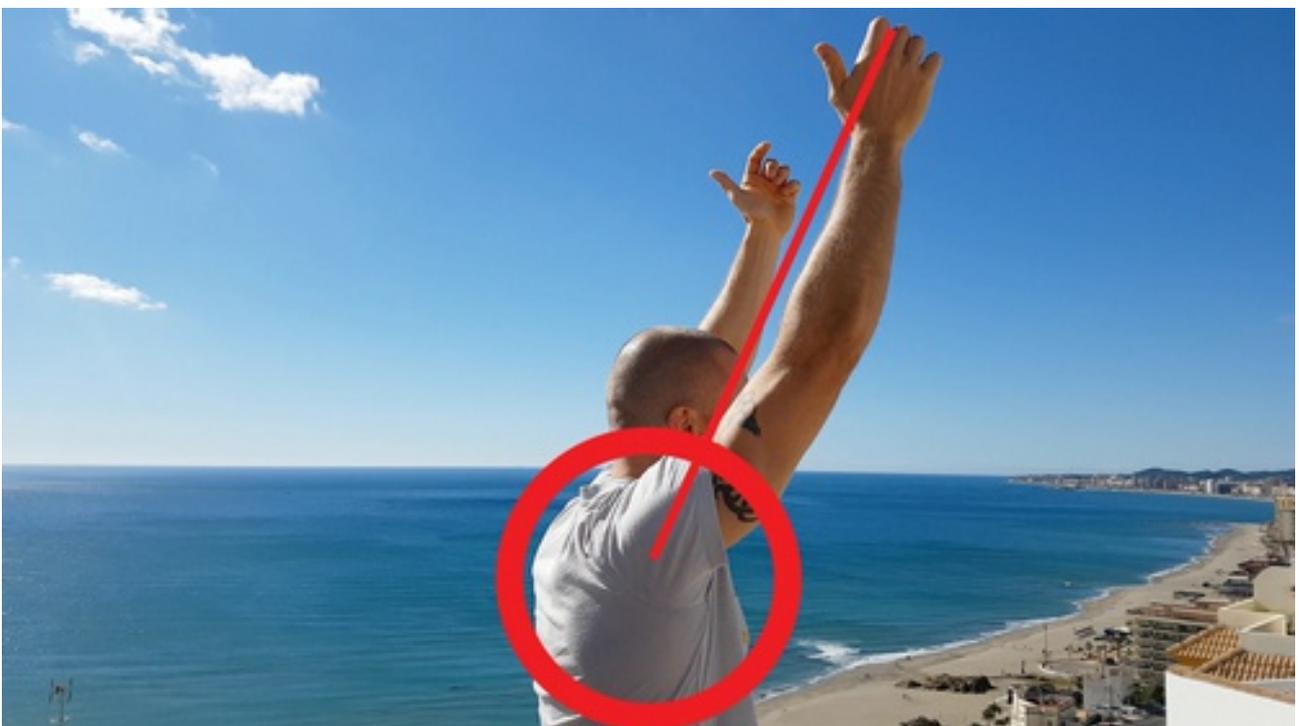
Common mistakes

- just pushing the head forward while not creating any thoracic extension.
- looking at the kettlebell
- shoulder to the ear
- no lat activation



If you watch the video you'll see a great exercise to open up the thoracic and work on your mobility www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEmdDdEZh_M make note that I'm not pulling on the neck, think of it as crunching and the reverse, pushing the chest out.

Another great exercise is the standing pull-over which you can see here www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIKb53V6Its



Illustrated is an overhead position with no thoracic extension.



Illustrated is a good overhead position with thoracic extension.

Please note that in the video you'll also see me demonstrate no lat activation and a raised shoulder as part of incorrect technique.

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Based on a work at <http://www.cavemantraining.com/caveman-kettlebells/overhead-lockout-for-kettlebells-and-crossfit-barbell>.

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Mobility

With mobility it's best you focus on the work to come, if you're going to do a lot of overhead stuff, focus on shoulders, chest, scapula, thoracic spine, lats, lower traps etc. The plank is great for lat activation, or just hang from a bar and activate the lats, alternating superman or cobra are also great for the back. As a final point, be sure to throw in some rotational work, as that's mostly overlooked.

Flexibility

Put simply, the length of muscles that allow a greater range of motion through the joints is what defines good flexibility. To have a good press you need a good overhead lock-out, and for the overhead lock-out to be good you need to have good flexibility. To rest in racking you need to have a good rack, and for the rack to be good you need to have good flexibility. Flexibility is just as important as strength.

Lack of thoracic mobility

If there is no thoracic mobility shoulder injuries and/or lumbar area injuries tend to be seen more. Many people can have limited thoracic mobility due to prior strength training and/or sitting at work for many hours per day. If you cannot extend at the mid spine, your lumbar spine will usually hyperextend to compensate, opening the door for disc issues and lots of pressure at the facet joints of the spine.

Lats, pecs or triceps too tight

Even though these muscles may not be actively contracting to act as prime movers to press the weight overhead, they are definitely helping to stabilize and support. If they are too tight, this can lead to an improper groove or trajectory of the press. Think of pressing with overly tight muscles as driving with the brakes on; if you can fix their tension issues you may be able to lift a few pounds more. The pecs and lats will affect the upper arm range of motion. The triceps, which not many people think about, cross two joints. They are attached to the mobile scapula and then insert at the ulna in the lower arm. Tight triceps can pull the scapula as you press overhead, causing stability issues.

Stability

If you don't have good flexibility, then your stability will more than likely be affected as well. This is due to the fact that you won't be able to get full-range movement with certain joints to allow the weight to rest on your skeletal system, therefore it will need to rest on your muscular system, thus causing fatigue, and through that instability.

The following is a great test to see if you're ready to start bringing heavy objects overhead with one arm or not.

- Stand with your back to the wall, shoulder blades, buttocks and heels touching the wall, and the back of the head touching the wall but looking straight ahead; arms hanging down, with thumbs pointing forward and elbows locked out.
- Now raise your arms overhead, moving in a semicircle, till the thumbs are touching the wall.
- If you were able to do this without excessively moving or adjusting any other part of your body, for example, hyperextending your back to make the move possible, then you're ready to start lifting a weight above your head that is appropriate for you. If you were not able to perform this movement, then you should be working on your flexibility and range of motion with some of the assistance exercises described in this book.



If you do not pass the test, you can certainly start with the most basic press using lightest weight available to perform partial presses, then gradually work up to full overhead lock-out, but

progression is key: one should never grab anything other than a light weight or attempt to force the overhead lock-out.

The double arm, open-palm grip and front press is great for this type of progression, but should only be used to work on strength and get to about 80% of the full overhead lock-out. This type of press is also great for the novice because less stability is required due to working with only one kettlebell and two arms.

If you're lacking flexibility, you should not neglect looking at other potentially tight areas, like the triceps, latissimus dorsi, and pectorals. Regularly perform dynamic stretches like arm circles or one arm up one arm down, and for static stretching after your warm-up you can use the following stretches:

- **Tricep Stretch** – bring one hand behind the head, aligning the pinkie on the spine and looking straight ahead, while pulling the elbow towards the head with the other arm to stretch the triceps.
- **Lat Stretch** – continuing from the tricep stretch, push the hip towards the side that is stretching, slowly bending and stretching the whole side from hip to elbow. Also great for the thoracic spine.
- **Pec Stretch** – you can do this one side at a time if you don't have a door-frame or TRX handy, otherwise you can do both sides at the same time. If you have a door-frame you slowly walk into it with your arms out to the side making a 'T' shape. Keeping the elbows slightly bent, slowly lean forward to stretch the pecs.
If you have a TRX, you face away from the anchor, if you have neither, just find a post or wall to put the hand flat on in line with the shoulder and gently turn away from it with the other shoulder leading to get the stretch. Also great for the thoracic spine.
- **Thoracic Stretch** – this is one I like to use personally, standing in neutral position with one hand holding just above the wrist of the other arm, both arms out in front and slowly rounding the upper back one vertebrae at a time while pulling the shoulders together at the front. At the top, bring the head between the arms, breathing out, releasing the wrist, and push the chest outward while trying to pull the elbows together behind you.
- **Bodyweight Windmills** are also great for all-round flexibility. See the windmill info in later chapters, and try including them in your regular stretching routine.
- **Hip flexor Stretching** is extremely important stretch for good racking, and is also great to help prevent anterior pelvic tilt (tight hip flexors can produce anterior pelvic tilt).

Perform this stretch by kneeling on the ground: one knee down, the other knee up with the leg and body lunging forward, hands on the hips, and pushing the chest out. Keep the shoulders back, the torso vertical, and squeeze the glutes, moving the hips towards the leg that's lunging—you need to prevent the pelvis from tilting forward during the stretch with the glutes. Focus on the stretch, not the range of motion: you could be leaning forward into the stretch without actually *feeling* the stretch. The biggest mistake made during this stretch is arching the back or leaning forward.

You need to prevent the pelvis from tilting forward during the stretch with the glutes. You can also change the angle slightly by bringing the kneeling knee slightly to the side and pushing the hips forward and slightly sideways, away from the kneeling knee. You can achieve an increased stretch by bringing the arm on the kneeling side overhead. You can

also turn this into a dynamic stretch by rocking the hips back and forth, coming in and out of the stretch in a controlled manner. Biggest mistake made is arching the back or leaning forward. Alternating lunges are also a great way to dynamically stretch the hip flexors and psoas if you focus on the stretch during the lunge.

A great tool to improve your flexibility and mobility in the upper body are resistance bands; you can attach them to anything sturdy and have them provide gentle resistance and/or pulling in your stretching. Examples include, but are but are not limited to:

- shoulder dislocates
- frontal band pull aparts
- overhead band pull aparts
- one arm pull down
- overhead shoulder stretch

Continued in the book Master The Kettlebell Press available in paperback, kindle or ebook edition.
www.cavemantraining.com/kettlebell-press



Sponsor spots available. Contact me@tacofleur.com