

How to Generate Power for Hand Strength

By Chuck Halbakken, RKC Level 2

Having a firm handshake is what most people think of when discussing hand strength. While often used in greeting as a “measure of the man”, it is only one type of strength, and is only a partial indication of overall hand strength. The purpose of this article is to show you how to generate huge amounts of power by increasing your total muscle tension. In the next two articles I will discuss in detail how to channel that newfound power through your hands so you have the potential to bend a 60d nail into a U-shape, tear a deck of playing cards in half, or tear a phone book in half lengthwise. As you learn to master these skills you will be amazed at how your strength will carryover to other physical activities.

So how do you get stronger? Where does strength come from? If you ask these questions at most gyms, you will receive mostly ridiculous and quite a few comical answers to your questions. The answers are simple, to get stronger you must work on more intensely contracting your muscles, and as you increase your ability to do so you will become stronger. The second answer is very simple; strength is developed from the ground up. Every muscle in your body is important to your capacity to generate power, from your head to your toes. The only way you will get better is to practice—Strength is a skill and the ones who can generate the most muscle tension are the strongest. What I am talking about is called neurological strength training.

Start by standing on firm ground either barefoot or with flat-soled shoes with no padding. Keep your feet about shoulder width but don't get too concerned just be comfortable. Grip the ground with your feet and toes—Hard! While maintaining your grip on the ground tighten your quads—think of pulling up your kneecaps. Now while maintaining this tension drive your hips forward by tightening your glutes and at the same drive your heels into the ground. Lets refer to this series as lower body tension. You may have noticed I didn't mention your calves or hamstrings—these will be tight when you drive your heels down. If you have some experience in strength training you may have performed some or all of these movements, if you have great! If not, just practice maintaining tension one step at a time and do not get discouraged, this requires what I refer to as “Mental Coordination” and can take a bit of practice. If this is new to you, practice lower body tension until it is seamless, it should be virtually instantaneous from thought to execution, but a word of caution to beginners - do not hold the tension for more than a few seconds at a time initially- it will be a bit of a strain at first, so please use common sense and listen to your body.

Did you notice how strong and rooted you feel while practicing? Did you feel tension climbing into your abs and lower back? Did it take an effort to stop increasing tension above your waist? If the answer to these questions is yes, then you are defiantly ready to move to the next step.

The next step is to increase you inter abdominal pressure (pressurize) the steps are very simple, but the description can be distasteful. First you need to lock your sphincter as if trying to prevent a bowel movement (bm), while maintaining this, inhale about a one half to three quarter breath and bear down as if trying to have a bm. This will increase your strength significantly while helping to reduce the chance of a number of injuries that can occur while exerting a maximum effort. Practice lower body tension with the addition of pressurization, the combination should make you feel very solid and strong. When you feel comfortable with this combination it is time to proceed to full body tension.

While maintaining lower body tension and pressurizing put tension on your lats and shoulders - it may help to pull your elbows slightly down and in as if you were guarding against a punch. Tense your forearms and then make a fist – a white-knuckle fist. At this point you should feel total body tension with no weak areas, if you feel any weak areas go back to the basics (the ground) and start over slowly. Your ability to generate power will be greatly reduced if you have any weak areas (power leaks) so work patiently to prevent them. Your body should feel like a rock at this point and you should feel extremely powerful.

It may seem odd to you that I have not given specific exercises to strengthen your hands but in reality I have. Work the above sequence until you can achieve total body tension in less than a second. I have broke down the parts to make it easier to learn, but please understand it should be a seamless transition from normal to extreme tension, not a series of steps. In regard to sets and reps, start with five sets of one rep per day with plenty of rest in between the sets, as you progress do not exceed five sets of three reps per day, two to three days per week. Remember, you are not looking for volume at this point but an acceptable level of Mental Coordination, which will give maximum tension.

Key Points: Focus on coordinated tension.
 Quality not quantity
 Eliminate power leaks
 Allow ample rest between sets



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