

# Saved By the Bell

Bust out of that rut—and get more out of your practice—by adding this metabolism-revving, lower body-toning kettlebell routine to your repertoire.

by Karyn Staples, PT, PhD, OCS, PMA-CPT®

If you're not getting the results you used to with that same old mat routine, spice up your workout regimen by giving kettlebells a swing, says Polestar Pilates-trained Karyn Staples.

"Adding a complementary element such as kettlebells enhances the overall effectiveness of your training by increasing your awareness of different muscle groups and where movement is initiated (i.e., the hamstrings/glutes and scapular region)," says Staples.

If you haven't worked with kettlebells before (or don't have a set), the following workout, which should be performed two to three times per week, is a perfect starting point. Although bells are preferred—Staples says they're more challenging due to the weight distribution—you can do the moves with 5- to 8-pound hand weights, or get creative with household objects like a gallon of water or soup cans.

"It's important to note that kettlebell conditioning has signature moves," adds Staples. "The kettlebell swing is such a movement, and it was purposefully excluded from this series of exercises, since it's imperative to perform the fundamentals before adding any ballistic movement."

And above all, says Staples, "Be mindful of breathing and limits of flexibility, and focus on the quality of the movement."

Before you get started on the moves, do Joseph Pilates' archival warm-up, which adds a cardio element to get your muscles firing. Make sure to check out the breathing cues and tips to squeeze the most juice out of every move. You'll be whizzing through that mat routine with bells on in no time.

**Did you know...**  
Joe liked kettlebells, too! Early photos of Joseph Pilates perfecting his method show some kettlebells in the background.



## Joe's Archival Warm-Up

As told to first-generation teacher Romana Kryzanowska.

### Sequence A

**1. EXTENDED LEG RUN:** Run in place, reaching your legs forward and alternating them. Do 10 reps.

**2. JUMPING TO SECOND:** Start with your legs together and jump quickly out to a wide stance and then back together; keep moving from one position to the next. Do 5 reps.

**3. JUMPING TO FOURTH:** Start with your legs together and jump quickly to one foot, placing one foot in front and the other behind it; return to start and jump apart, then repeat with your other foot in front and the opposite foot behind. Do 5 reps per side.

**4. SWITCHING FROM FOURTH:** Same as Jumping to Fourth, but switch your feet from front to back more quickly. Do 10 reps.

**REPEAT SEQUENCE A.**

### Sequence B

**1. JUMPING ROPE** Do 10 reps.

**2. JOGGING WITH HIGH KNEES** Do 5 reps.

**3. JOGGING WITH KNEES DOWN, HEELS TOWARD BUTTOCKS** Do 5 reps.

**REPEAT SEQUENCE B.**



## Face-the-Wall Squat



**PROP:** none

**PURPOSE:** strengthens the legs, glutes and upper back; increases hip mobility; improves postural awareness

**SETUP:** Stand tall facing a wall with your toes 2 to 3 inches away from it. Open your heels as wide as your shoulders and turn your feet out slightly. Place your hands behind your head, elbows wide to your sides.

**1.** Grounding your weight in your heels, fold your hips back and allow your knees to bend.

**2.** Keep your chest open and your shoulders back as you begin to slowly lower your seat toward the floor as if you were about to sit in a tall-back chair.

**3.** Continue lowering your seat until you reach your point of control (either you will fall backward or will want to lean forward into the wall).

**4.** Push your heels into the floor as you unfold your hips to stand upright, returning to the starting position. Do 10 repetitions.

**BREATH:** Inhale for 3 counts as you squat, and exhale for 1 as you return to standing.

**TIP:** Draw your abdominals in and up as you squat, using your core to maintain your postural integrity.





Setup



## Sumo Deadlift



**PROP:** kettlebell, water jug or hand weight  
**PURPOSE:** strengthens the legs, glutes and lower back; increase posterior flexibility; improves postural awareness  
**SETUP:** Stand directly over the kettlebell (or water jug, as shown) with your heels shoulder-width apart, feet turned out slightly. Place your arms at your sides.

1. Keeping your back flat, fold your hips back until your torso is parallel to the floor, bending your knees. Shift your weight into your heels and clutch the handle of the kettlebell with both hands.
2. Push your heels into the floor as you pull your hips up and your shoulders back, standing upright with a proud chest.
3. Fold your hips back as you lower the kettlebell back to the floor, resisting the weight. Do 10 repetitions.

**BREATH:** Inhale for 3 counts as you squat, and exhale for 1 as you return to standing.  
**TIPS:** Draw your abdominals in and up, and engage your core to maintain your postural integrity.  
**MODIFICATION:** Instead of holding a kettlebell, use a gallon-size jug filled with water. And, if you have tight hamstrings, place the weight on a step.

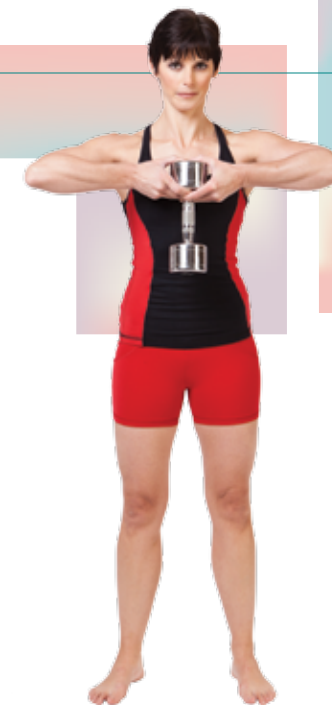
## Upright Row



**PROP:** kettlebell or hand weight  
**PURPOSE:** strengthens the upper back, shoulders and arms; increases scapular stability and mobility  
**SETUP:** Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart and in parallel or slightly turned out. Clutch the handle of the kettlebell (or hand weight) with both hands in front of your body.

1. Keeping your shoulders drawn back and your chest proud, pull the kettlebell up the front of your body, bending your elbows wide to your sides.
2. Once the handle of the kettlebell (or top of the weight) reaches neck height, begin to resist the weight back down to the starting position. Do 10 repetitions.

**BREATH:** Exhale for 1 count as you lift, and inhale for 3 as you lower.  
**TIP:** Lift your chest as you lower the kettlebell to maintain your postural integrity.  
**MODIFICATION:** Instead of holding a kettlebell or weight, use a resistance band.



## Roll-Up



**PROP:** kettlebell or hand weight  
**PURPOSE:** promotes better spinal articulation; warms the core  
**SETUP:** Lie on the floor with your legs together and extended straight. Holding the kettlebell with your thumbs through the handle and the handle facing the floor (or the weight), extend your arms directly over your chest, crushing the kettlebell.

1. Inhale to prepare. Exhale as you roll your body up one vertebra at a time, reaching your breastbone through your arms and keeping your arms as stable as possible.
2. Inhale as you come to a seated position, sitting up tall and extending the kettlebell overhead.
3. Exhale as you roll back down, reaching your legs away from your head. Do 5 repetitions.

**BREATH:** Inhale to prepare, exhale for 3 counts as you roll up; inhale to prepare and exhale for 3 counts as you roll down.  
**TIP:** Push your heels forward as you pull your abs back, using the opposition to create greater control as you roll down.  
**MODIFICATION:** Do the exercise without any weight. Anchor your legs by placing them underneath something heavy (e.g., your bed). **PS**

AFTER YOU'VE MASTERED THE FUNDAMENTALS, CHECK OUT OUR E-NEWSLETTER FOR A NEXT-STEP EXERCISE!

Karyn Staples, PT, PhD, OCS, PMA-CPT®, operates ProHealth Physical Therapy and Pilates Studio in Peachtree City, GA. The Polestar Pilates instructor and educator received her Bachelor of Science and Master's degree in Physical Therapy from University of Evansville and her PhD in Orthopedics and Sports Science from Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions. Additionally, the PMA-certified teacher is a proud wife and mother of two.



Setup



Step 2.

## Halo



**PROP:** kettlebell or hand weight  
**PURPOSE:** strengthens the shoulders, arms and grip; increases shoulder and scapular mobility; improves thoracic/chest expansion  
**SETUP:** Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart. Wrap your hands around the spherical portion of the kettlebell (or right hand on top of the left around the handle of a hand weight, as shown), gripping it as tightly as possible (called "crushing"). Hold the kettlebell directly under your chin with your arms connected to your rib cage. (Note: If using a hand weight, the weight should be below your shoulders, and your elbows are bent to your sides instead of against your ribs.)

1. Lift your right elbow away from your body and in line with your forehead as you bring the kettlebell over your left shoulder.
2. Lift your left elbow as you bring the kettlebell behind your head, opening your chest and keeping your elbows wide to your sides.
3. Connect your right arm to your rib cage as you circle the kettlebell back to the starting position. Do 10 repetitions.

**BREATH:** Inhale for 2 counts as you circle back, and exhale for 2 as you circle forward.  
**TIPS:** Strongly engage your abdominals as you bring the kettlebell behind your head. Work to keep your chest open and shoulders back as you move it under your chin.  
**MODIFICATION:** Instead of holding a kettlebell, use a light weight or household object (e.g., a can of soup or water bottle).