



Olympic Lifts for Fitness

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The two Olympic lifts are the clean and jerk and the snatch (both with the barbell). These exercises are great to improve power, strength, coordination, and overall fitness. Olympic lifts are very technical and take hours in the weight room to master. On the other hand, if you are not competing in weightlifting competitions the movements can be looked at with more simplicity. For example, the clean is really a vertical jump into a front squat. The jerk is a vertical jump landing in an overhead lunge. Finally, the snatch is a vertical jump landing in an overhead squat position.

There are numerous Olympic lift variations that can be incorporated into any training routine. Here is a list of a few:

- Barbell Hang Snatch (Starting off the ground anywhere between the shin and upper thigh)
- Single Arm Dumbbell Snatch
- Single Arm Kettlebell snatch
- Barbell Hang Clean
- Dumbbell Clean
- Kettlebell Clean (1 or 2 bells)
- Medicine Ball Clean and Jerk
- Barbell Push Jerk
- Barbell Split Jerk
- Dumbbell Jerk
- Single Arm Dumbbell Jerk (Landing in a split or squat position)

Many trainers and fitness enthusiasts do not take the time to learn and implement these movements. Once you understand and begin using these lifts on a regular basis, you will see how they can be fun and challenging. In addition, incorporating these exercises can bring about adaptations that you have not seen before. They are great for improving your overall strength

and power, which may actually help you with other core lifts such as squats, deadlifts, or pressing movements.

Program Design

Many strength coaches and organizations recommended doing no more than 6 repetitions of any Olympic lift variation in one set. This is due to the high neural demand on the body. Once fatigue kicks in there is a greater risk for injury because your technique is compromised (this is true with most ground based multijoint exercises). I agree that high-level competitive weightlifting athletes should limit the volume due to the stress on their body. However, for the average person that is looking to incorporate these lifts to improve their overall fitness the volume can be manipulated. For example I will have a client perform 10 repetitions of the dumbbell snatch (5 in each hand), or have a client do 15 clean and jerks with a heavy medicine ball. When you begin to use these lifts with moderate to lighter weights and more repetitions, you will see how taxing it is on your body and how beneficial it can be to your overall fitness.