

# STRONGER TODAY BY PAVEL

*INCREASE YOUR STRENGTH IMMEDIATELY  
WITH 3 PRO TIPS, COURTESY OF STRONGFIRST*



**STRONGFIRST.**



How can a skinny 150-pound Russian bench press 500 pounds?

How can a wiry karate master break a stack of boards or bricks?

How can a gymnast perform an iron cross on the rings, his body rigid as steel beams welded together?

The answer is the skill of strength. Indeed, strength is a skill, the skill to tense one's muscles harder. Regardless of your goals—be it getting stronger without putting on an ounce of weight or getting massively muscled and powerful—learning the skills of strength will help you get there faster.

Much faster. Apply the following “high tension techniques,” a small sample from StrongFirst's massive arsenal of secrets of strength, and you will see an immediate jump in your strength in 30min or less, guaranteed.

The techniques apply to any type of resistance: a barbell, a kettlebell, or your bodyweight. We suggest that you start with a relatively simple exercise like a one-arm curl (kettlebell, dumbbell, or barbell), a pushup, a chin-up, or a bench press.

## WARNING

The following techniques may not be appropriate to people with cardiovascular and some other medical conditions. Clear these techniques with your doctor.

Warm up as usual, then select a resistance that you can lift approximately six to eight times with perfect form—your 6-8RM or “repetition maximum.”

If you chose the pushup as the test platform for your new strength skills, adjust its difficulty accordingly by elevating your feet or your hands. And do your pushups on your palms, not on your fists or fingertips. Cool as they are, the two latter versions are not optimal for learning what you are about to learn.

Do not go heavier than 7RM—you need to master the tension skills with a moderate weight before applying them to near-max and max weights.

Do not go lighter either. Later you can apply the tension skills you are about to learn from StrongFirst to the tough last reps of strength endurance exercises, such as repetition pullups tested in the military. But not yet. Now what you need is a moderately heavy resistance that you will lift a moderate number of times.

Do five perfect reps, stopping two to three short of failure. Note exactly how they felt.

Rest for 5min—no less.

Then do another set of five, but with one difference...

# 1. CRUSH GRIP

This time grip hard on the way up.

Crush the bell or the pullup bar to pulp.

If you are doing pushups, grip the deck so hard that your fingertips turn white.

Have you watched the comedy *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*? Recall [the scene](#) in which Dell Griffith drove on the wrong side of the highway and almost killed himself and Neal Page? During a close call with two semis, his passenger gripped the dashboard so hard, that afterward he had to yank his fingertips out of the dented plastic. Grip this hard when doing your pushups—only on the way up.

Del Griffith bent the steering wheel, which is what you should attempt if you are doing chin-ups. Again, only on the way up—the “concentric” or “positive” half of a rep.

As before, stop after five reps. Note the difference from the first set.

You cannot help noticing that your arm and torso muscles have suddenly gotten a jolt of extra energy, as if your tensing gripping muscles has sent some juice up into them.

Which is exactly what has happened. Whenever a muscle contracts, it irradiates “nerve force” around it and increases the intensity of the adjacent muscles’ contraction.

*Irradiation* is a one of the so-called *Sherrington’s Laws*. Because our hands are heavily overrepresented in our brain, compared to all other body parts, the effect of irradiation is also disproportionately strong in your hands.

Stand up. Make a fist. A tight fist. A white-knuckle fist! Note that as you grip harder, the tension in your forearm overflows into your upper arm, and even your shoulder and armpit. You will amp up your strength in any upper body exercise by strongly gripping the bell, the bar, the floor.



## 2. BRACE YOUR ABS

Tensing your abs will amplify the intensity of the contraction of ANY muscle in your body—but it has to be done right.

NOT by sucking the stomach in like a beauty queen or a pretty boy; that is a prescription for weakness and injuries. To be strong, your abs must contract in a straight line, not in a curve.

The following “back pressure crunch” will teach you how to contract your six-pack flat and strong.

Assume a regular crunch position, your knees at ninety degrees and your feet flat. But instead of crunching up, **put all your effort into pressing your lower back down hard.**

Your spine will naturally round. Both your torso and your pelvis will come up as the ends of a mattress when a big guy flops in the middle.

If you are doing it right, you will not be able to sit up, no matter how hard you try. It is impossible when your lower back is grounded.

Remember the sensation in your abs and try to replicate it in your strength exercise—without rounding your back. Of course, do not forget the crush grip.

### A bonus: a killer ab exercise

The back pressure crunch is not just a drill to learn proper bracing. It is a great ab training exercise in its own right, superior to most of the weak non-sense that is passed as “core work.”

Pay attention to these subtleties to get the most out of it.

First, minimize the movement of the neck. “Pack” it, if you know how. If you do not, at least pretend that you are an insect who does not have a neck.

Second, hold your breath<sup>1</sup> while crunching and holding a contraction on the top for a couple of seconds.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mel Siff explained why: “I have taken EMG readings and muscle tension measurements of the abdominal muscles while bodybuilders have been carrying out every imaginable type of exercise with and without machines... In most cases...carefully executed concentration crunches using powerful mental focus and held breath produced greater electrical activity and muscle tension than [other exercises with traditional breathing patterns]... The recommended method of inhaling during trunk extension and exhaling naturally during flexion is undoubtedly safer for persons with hypertension or heart disease, but it produces a much smaller training effect on all of the abdominal muscles.”

Third, during those two seconds, keep pushing the narrow band of your lower back harder and harder into the floor. Poke your thumbs into your sides, where the six-pack meets the obliques. This tactile feedback will help you produce a more intense contraction.



*To test yourself to make sure you are doing it right, tie one end of a thin bungee cord to a stationary object at the ground level or have your training partner hold it. Lie down, stretch the band, and stick its free end underneath your lower back. Crush the cord into the deck and hold. If the band snapped out from underneath you, you have failed.*

Fourth, passively exhale and relax on the way down, the “negative.” Rest your head on the floor and completely relax for a second before doing the next rep.

Fifth, this is a tension exercise, not an endurance exercise. Focus on an intensity of the contraction, not on how long you can hold it or how many you can do. This mindset change is paramount for a strength seeker.

### 3. CRAMP YOUR GLUTES

Stand up straight. Brace your abs.

Now cramp your glutes. “Pinch a coin” or “crush a walnut.” Silly but effective.

When you got a hang of it, go back to your “test bed” strength exercise: the pushup, the chinup, etc. Do another set with all three techniques—crush gripping, bracing the abs, and cramping the glutes. We use the acronym “GAG” to remember them: “grip-abs-glutes.”

You will experience a remarkable difference in your strength from the first, GAG-free, set. Guaranteed. This time do as many perfect reps as possible. Enjoy your PR!



### A Success Story

A classic example of how effective the above techniques are, is the experiment by gymnast Brad Johnson. In his own words:

*The strength exercise that I used was the Iron Cross. I stood on a bathroom scale while pushing down on the rings to measure the amount of my own bodyweight that I could lift off the scale with a variety of tension conditions. I rested my hands on the rings and extended my locked arms to an angle approximately 20 degrees above the perfect Iron Cross position (a slight Y instead of a T shape). This angle increased the leverage disadvantage of the exercise and I was fairly certain that I would not be able to lift my body completely off the scale... I pressed down for approximately three seconds and watched the needle on the scale... I used four tension conditions:*

- 1 *Pushing down on the rings as hard as I could without any of the following three tension techniques*
- 2 *Squeezing the rings as hard as I could*
- 3 *Tensing my abdominal muscles*
- 4 *Tensing my glutes*



*I repeated all four of these conditions six times... In each condition, I pressed down on the rings as hard as I could. I attempted to utilize only the prescribed tension technique(s). This was challenging because, [as a gymnast], I was accustomed to utilizing all of them together...*

*Now for the good stuff! An average strength increase from the use of the three tension techniques combined was 40 pounds...for each condition when it was the only technique utilized was: hand squeeze—10 pounds, ab squeeze—30 pounds, and glute squeeze—13.5 pounds.*

*In conclusion, [as a gymnast], I knew that the tension techniques increased strength, but I was surprised by the size of the increase... the results were more than enough to convince me of the POWER OF TENSION!!!*

***Please do not keep these secrets to yourself. Forward this course to your friends!***

## **Take the next step in your strength journey today**

Whether you are starting from scratch or seeking new PRs, StrongFirst has your back with our gold standard online video courses.

Select your power tool: kettlebell, barbell, or bodyweight.

(If you are not sure, the kettlebell is the right choice.)



### **StrongFirst Kettlebell Fundamentals**

The Russian kettlebell is a complete, no-compromise, extreme hand-held gym. Let us show you how to get the most out of it. No-one knows the kettlebell better than StrongFirst—it was our founder Pavel Tsatsouline who started the kettlebell revolution in 1998.

**[CLICK HERE](#)**



### **StrongFirst Barbell Fundamentals**

At StrongFirst we are experts at making the weak strong and the strong stronger. Learn professional grade lifting skills in the four classic lifts—plus a couple of “underground” exercises perfect for training around injuries or when you have no bench or power rack.

**[CLICK HERE](#)**



### **StrongFirst Bodyweight Fundamentals**

In case civilization is temporary®, learn how to get a powerlifting quality strength workout anytime, anywhere, using only your bodyweight as resistance.

**[CLICK HERE](#)**

Still not sure?—The kettlebell is the answer to most questions.

Power to you!

## About StrongFirst

StrongFirst is a global school of strength. We are experts at making the weak strong and strong stronger.

Our methods are scientifically based and have a proven record with professional athletes, elite military and law enforcement operators, as well as regular folks who have decided to be weak no more.

Our school is elite but not elitist. The price of admission is a strong spirit and obsessive attention to detail.

**[Join our FORUM](#)**, a classy online joint where we help each other get stronger, today.

