



The Last Two

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When developing overall hand strength, you must address your weaknesses. When talking about hand strength - everyone has different weaknesses. They are either genetic or directly related to your history of activity. If you are looking at genetics your hand size and musculature (connective tissues, ligaments, tendons, innervation) - are the potential limiting factors of the weakness. If you are talking about **Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands (SAID)** - then you are referring to the difference between someone who has been in the Chess club and someone who has been throwing hay for the past 20 years. Dependant on all these factors, genetic or adaptation, you will see a variety of different weakness. Remember, to build the complete athlete - Grip is the forgotten element of functional training. All athletics and strength endeavors create and apply force through the body and direct it through the hands. So you can see why great attention must be focused on the hands and the development of their weaknesses.

One of the most common weaknesses, independent your current level of hand strength, is your Last Two Fingers. The Last Two Fingers (LTF) is defined as the ability to apply force from your pinky and ring fingers, across your palm, into your thumb. Bringing up this weakness for all Athletes, Strongmen, Powerlifters and Dinosaur trainees - will allow for longevity in your sport, greatest potential power development and decrease recovery time after a chronic or acute injury. This article is the first of many that will address weaknesses of the hand and lower arm. After the Athletes' needs have been identified - we can start inputting direct exercises into their program. Here are 3 simple ones:

Blockweights:

Para-phrasing John Brookfield, Grip Icon, "*Blockweights will help you to development overall hand strength.*" What are Blockweights? Blockweights are half of a hex dumbbell that have had the handle broken or sawed off. The remaining dumbbell end is a blockweight. Blockweights are an essential tool when you are looking to develop a comprehensive hand strength program. We are focusing on LTF, so lets look at finger isolated blockweight lifting - but keep in mind there are many, many other applications for these tools (which will be discussed in future articles). In Image 1, you will see how to take an average size blockweight - half of a 50 lb, 60 lb or 70 lb hex dumbbell - and perform a simple 2 finger deadlift with it. The goal is to have your thumb opposing your pinky and ring fingers - and the feeling will be to "flex your palm". Deadlift the blockweight and hold for time. You will not believe how quickly your grip will turn into a vice.



Sledge Hammer Levering:

Another way to isolate the LTF is a sledge hammer weaver stick. A weaver stick is a specific levering lift where the athlete grasps a sledge hammer at the end of the handle, with his/her arm at their side and radial flexes their wrist until the sledge is parallel to the ground and perpendicular to your forearm. See Image 2. Using a 6 lb to 8 lb sledge should be just right for the average athlete first trying this exercise. What you'll find is a great amount of stress being applied to your LTF and in a completely separate way than a blockweight. Your goal is to try for something like a 4x10 (set x rep) scheme.



Developing your LTF will pay huge rewards for your Athletes and transfer to the specific grip strength component of their respective sports.