OG Underground Judging Standards

Kettlebell Sport Judging Standards for OGUnderground.com and OGUndergroundGym.com

1. Purpose

This document sets out the foundation of kettlebell sport judging: the role of the judge, how to apply standards consistently, platform awareness, communication procedures, the technical standards for Long Cycle, Snatch and Jerk, hand changes, attire and equipment, and challenges.

Good judging is one of the most important parts of kettlebell sport. Athletes train for months, even years, to step onto the platform. It is the responsibility of every judge to ensure that the competition is:

- Fair
- Safe
- Professional
- Standardized

2. The Role of the Judge

A judge's job is not simply to count repetitions. A judge's job is to enforce the standards. The judge is responsible for ensuring fairness, consistency and athlete safety throughout the competition.

Responsibilities

- Determining whether repetitions are valid.
- Enforcing the rules and standards.
- Holding athletes accountable to the technical requirements.

Platform Judges and the Head Judge

- There is at least one platform judge on every platform.
- Platform judges judge and count the athletes on their platform, and report to the head judge.
- The head judge has the final say on scores and on equipment, and certifies the results.

Neutrality

Neutrality is one of the most important qualities of a judge. Do not judge an athlete based on who or what they are, including their reputation, their rank or their experience level. A world champion and a first-time competitor must be judged exactly the same.

The Judge Is Not the Coach

During the competition, the judge is not the athlete's coach. It is not the judge's role to encourage the athlete, correct their technique or help them succeed. The judge's responsibility is to determine whether each repetition meets the competition standards.

The judge is in charge on the platform and is responsible for ensuring fair competition.

3. Judging Principles

Consistency

Consistency is the most important principle in judging, and it matters more than personal opinion. Every athlete should receive the same standard from the first minute of the competition to the last. Apply the same standard to every athlete, every rep and every platform.

Judge the Standard, Not the Athlete

An athlete may move quickly, look strong or appear technically sound overall. If the rep does not meet the standard, it is still not a rep. Judges are judging movement standards, not effort, and are not rewarding effort or speed.

When in Doubt

- If something is questionable, it is a no rep.
- If there are questions, look to the head judge and ask after the set is over.
- A good rule to remember: if a rep was bad enough for you to think about giving a warning, it probably was a bad rep.

Be Decisive and Confident

Hesitation creates confusion for the athlete, coaches and spectators. Make clear decisions and apply the standards consistently and confidently.

4. Platform Awareness

A judge must always maintain visual control of the athlete. The judge's position in front of the athlete matters: a poor angle can cause the judge to miss important technical details.

Three Things to Watch Constantly

- **Lockout position:** the position the athlete holds overhead.
- **Fixation and control at the top.**
- **Feet:** the athlete's feet must remain on the ground for the repetition to count.

Fixation. Fixation means the athlete demonstrates clear control of the kettlebell(s) in the overhead position: an actual pause above the head before returning the bell back down. If the athlete fails to show proper fixation, the judge gives a fixation warning and calls a no rep: the repetition does not count.

Stop Sets in All Lifts

In every lift, the following end the set immediately (stop set):

- **Setting the bell(s) down.** The athlete sets the bell(s) down on the platform during the set.
- **Leaving the platform.** Any part of the body touches the floor outside the platform, or the athlete steps off the platform.

Stay in Position

Stay in position throughout the set. Do not drift, become distracted or lose your viewing angle. Poor positioning often leads to missed calls and inconsistent judging.

5. Commands and Communication

Judges must use clear, standardized commands during the competition.

Command	Hand Signal	Verbal	Card Option (Some Competitions)
Fixation (fixation warning; always given with a no rep)	Hold one arm straight overhead.	Clearly say "fixation" (or "fixate").	Some competitions may use a yellow card instead of the hand signal.
No rep	Swipe one hand parallel to the floor in front of the body.	—	Some competitions may use a red card instead of hand signals.
Stop set	Swipe both hands across the front of the body, parallel to the floor.	Clearly state "stop set."	Some competitions may use a black card to indicate a stop set.

Failed Fixation: Warning Plus No Rep. When an athlete fails proper fixation, the judge gives the fixation warning and calls a no rep. The repetition does not count.

Start and Time

- The set begins with a 5-second countdown (5, 4, 3, 2, 1), then the command "Start."
- If the athlete picks up the bell(s) before "Start," the bell(s) are put down and the athlete starts again on the command.
- Time is called every minute. After the ninth minute, time is also called at 30 seconds and at 50 seconds, and then the last 5 seconds are counted down to "Stop."
- No rep counts after "Stop."
- A set ends when time runs out, when the athlete stops, or when the judge calls a stop set.

Counting

- Count a rep as soon as the athlete's body and bell(s) are motionless at fixation.
- A judge using a handheld counter counts each rep aloud, and confirms the final count with the athlete at the end of the set.
- Timers and counters must be visible to both the athlete and the judge.

Verbal Warnings and Communication

- Judges may issue verbal warnings when necessary.
- Communication must always be clear and professional. Remember that you are not the athlete's coach.
- Avoid over-communicating with the athlete. It can be very distracting, and when the judge is farther away from the athlete it can be very confusing for the athlete to understand what error they are making.

6. Common Judging Mistakes

- **Counting before full lockout.** Do not rush the count. The athlete must demonstrate the required standard before the rep can be awarded.
- **Letting reputation or fatigue influence decisions.** As an athlete becomes tired, technique often declines, but the standards must remain the same from the first rep to the last rep.
- **Inconsistent lockout standards.** A lockout is either complete or incomplete. Standards cannot change from athlete to athlete.

Athletes Who Cannot Fully Extend the Arm

Some athletes are unable to fully extend their arm during the set because of anatomical issues. The athlete must tell the platform judge and the head judge before the set. The judge must then judge consistently throughout that set, which depends on platform awareness and maintaining visual control at all times. (See also Section 7.5.)

7. Long Cycle Standards

These standards cover both one-arm and two-arm Long Cycle: what to look for during each phase of the lift and the most common mistakes that lead to no-rep counts. The goal is consistency in what is seen on the platform, not just memorizing rules.

7.1 Structure of the Lift

- Long Cycle has two phases: the Clean and the Jerk.
- The athlete must successfully complete both phases for the repetition to count.

- At the top of the movement, the athlete must demonstrate control and fixation before the rep is awarded.
- Do not rush the count. A fast athlete can sometimes make a rep look cleaner than it actually is. Always wait for a clear fixation before counting the repetition.

7.2 The Clean

- The bell(s) should move smoothly into the rack position.
- **Two-arm Long Cycle:** both bells must come up together as one unit. They should look synchronized and controlled.
- **One-arm Long Cycle:** the movement should still be smooth and controlled. The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set.

Watch for additional swings:

- **Single-kettlebell lifts (one-arm Long Cycle, Snatch and single-kettlebell Jerk):** an extra swing at any point must be the single swing hand switch: the judge gives a command to switch hands. The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set.
- **Double-kettlebell lifts (two-arm Long Cycle, Jerk and any two-kettlebell lift):** an extra swing is always a stop set.

Common no-rep indicators during the Clean:

- **Unsynchronized Clean.** If one bell clearly arrives before the other, the Clean is not valid. The athlete must re-Clean the bells before starting the next repetition.
- **Rebound.** The athlete must establish the rack position before beginning the Jerk. If the athlete immediately bounces the bells into the drive without control in the rack (a rebound), the repetition is not counted, and the athlete must re-Clean the bells to start the repetition over.

7.3 Rack Position

The rack position is where the athlete should demonstrate control before initiating the Jerk.

- **Bell must reach the rack.** On the way up and on the way down, the bell(s) must touch the shoulder in the rack position. A bell that does not touch the shoulder on the way up or on the way down is a stop set.
- **No leaning or resting on the shoulder.** A bell leaning or resting on the shoulder is a stop set.

Free hand (one-arm Long Cycle). In one-arm Long Cycle, the athlete cannot touch the bell with the free hand. Using the free hand to touch or support the bell is a violation:

- **On the first hand:** give a command to switch hands.
- **On the second hand:** give a stop set.

7.4 Failed Cleans, Dropped Racks and Swings

- Unsynchronized Clean (the athlete Cleans the bells separately): the athlete must re-Clean the bells before starting the Jerk.

- Bells fall out of the rack position before the Jerk: the bells must be re-Cleaned before starting the next Jerk.
- Bells fall out of the rack position and then hang below the athlete without swinging: a stop set must be given.
- Resting with the bell(s) hanging between the legs is a stop set.
- Two-arm Long Cycle: an extra swing, including two swings without a Clean in between them, is always a stop set.
- One-arm Long Cycle: an extra swing must be the single swing hand switch (command to switch hands). The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set.
- The athlete does not establish the rack properly: the movement sequence is broken, and appropriate judging action should follow based on the competition rules.

7.5 The Jerk Phase: Overhead Lockout

At the top of the Jerk, look for full overhead lockout:

- Elbows straight.
- Knees straight.
- Body stable.
- Feet planted on the platform.
- Control shown overhead.

Limited arm extension. Some athletes may not be physically able to fully straighten their arms due to mobility limitations or their own anatomical structure. In those situations, look for a clear pause and fixation overhead with the best possible lockout position the athlete is able to display. The athlete must tell the platform judge and the head judge before the set. The key is consistency: decide what is acceptable early and apply that same standard throughout the whole set.

7.6 Fixation

Fixation is one of the most important concepts in kettlebell sport judging. If fixation is not achieved, the judge gives a fixation warning and calls a no rep: the repetition does not count.

When evaluating fixation, you should see:

- Motionless bells.
- A controlled body position.
- Arms, torso and legs straight.
- Legs and bells in one line, parallel to the body.
- No excessive movement or instability.
- Clear control overhead.
- Be especially careful with athletes who move very quickly. A fast Jerk can create the illusion of fixation when there was no pause at all. There should be a clear moment where the athlete is stable and controlled before the rep is counted.

- The arms must straighten before the legs fully lock out. If the legs lock out before the arms, it becomes a pressout and is a no count.
- Do not count the repetition until fixation is achieved. Failed fixation = fixation warning + no rep.
- After the rep is counted, the athlete may lower the bell(s) any way they like.

7.7 Common Long Cycle No Reps

- **Pressout.** A Jerk should be explosive and finished properly overhead. If the legs lock out before the arms (the athlete has to muscle or press the bells to finish the lift), it is a pressout and is a no count.
- **Soft lockout.** If the elbows or knees are still bent at fixation, the rep does not count.
- **Uneven bells.** In two-arm Long Cycle especially, the bells should arrive and stabilize together.
- **No fixation.** If there is no clear pause and control overhead, give a fixation warning and call a no rep. Do not count the repetition.
- **Early drop.** The athlete must demonstrate clear fixation before beginning to descend the bell(s). Dropping the bell(s) before fixation is always a no rep plus a fixation warning.

For hand changes in one-arm Long Cycle, see Section 10.

8. Snatch Standards

Snatch and Jerk move fast, especially at higher levels. Judges need to stay disciplined and avoid anticipating reps before the standards are clearly met. The job is not to reward effort or speed; the job is to judge the standard.

8.1 The Movement

- The Snatch is one continuous movement from the backswing to the overhead position.
- Unlike Long Cycle, there is no rack position. The bell travels directly from the swing into overhead fixation, or directly from the platform into overhead fixation.
- At the top, the athlete must finish with a clean lockout: the arm must be straight overhead.
- An athlete may use an undersquat during the Snatch. This is acceptable, but the arm must straighten before the legs fully lock out. If the knees lock out before the arm straightens, it becomes a pressout and is a no count.

8.2 Overhead Lockout

A proper lockout includes:

- A straight elbow.
- A stable shoulder position.
- A motionless bell overhead.

Free arm. Watch the free arm. The free arm cannot rise higher than the shoulder during fixation. If it does, the rep is a no count. Newer judges often miss this because they focus on the kettlebell alone.

8.3 Fixation

Fixation in the Snatch follows the same standards as Long Cycle. No fixation means a fixation warning and a no rep. At the top, the athlete must clearly demonstrate control. Watch for:

- Wobbling or instability.
- A soft elbow.
- The bell touching or moving overhead.
- Feet not fully planted on the platform.

A fast athlete can make these errors hard to see. Do not rush the count, and make sure you actually see fixation before awarding the repetition.

8.4 Body Contact and the Free Hand

- **Body contact.** If the free arm or any part of the body touches the platform, the legs, the working arm or the bell, the rep is a no count. The only exception is the moment of the hand change.
- **Free hand on the way up.** If the free hand touches the bell while it is moving up, the rep is a no count.
- **Free hand at the top.** If the free hand touches the bell at the top while the athlete is trying to fix it (for example, to stop it falling onto the shoulder or head), it is a stop set.

8.5 The Drop Phase

Many technical violations occur during the drop.

- **Bell touching the shoulder.** On the way down, the bell cannot touch the shoulder. If the athlete rests the bell on or contacts the shoulder during the descent, the result is a stop set, or a command to switch hands if the athlete is on the first hand.
- **Extra swings.** The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed in the Snatch. An extra swing on the first hand must be the single swing hand switch: the judge gives a command to switch hands. Any other extra swing, including an extra swing after the single swing hand switch, is a stop set.
- **Resting between the legs.** Resting with the bell hanging between the legs is a stop set.
- **Early drop.** Dropping the bell before fixation is always a no rep plus a fixation warning.
- **Bell grazing the platform.** The bell may sweep or lightly graze the platform during the backswing, as long as the movement remains continuous and the bell does not stop swinging.
- **Throwing or setting down the bell.** If the athlete throws the bell or sets it down, it is a stop set.

8.6 Hand Switches

- The athlete gets one hand change per set (see Section 10).
- Switching must be completed cleanly and independently, using one of the methods in Section 10.
- Changing hands on the way up is a no count.
- If the bell touches the shoulder during the hand change, it is a stop set.

- Single-kettlebell lifts only: an extra swing must be the single swing hand switch. The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set. No extra swing is allowed after the hand change.

9. Jerk Standards

9.1 The Movement

- In the Jerk, the athlete begins from the rack position and drives directly overhead.
- At the top, look for clear fixation and control.
- Watch for rebounding. The athlete must establish proper control and movement mechanics instead of bouncing or rushing through the lift.
- **Extra swings.** In the double-kettlebell Jerk, an extra swing is always a stop set. In the single-kettlebell Jerk, an extra swing must be the single swing hand switch (command to switch hands). The single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set.

9.2 Overhead Standards

The overhead standards in the Jerk are the same as in Long Cycle. At fixation, look for:

- Elbows locked.
- Knees locked.
- Arms, torso and legs straight.
- Legs and bells in one line, parallel to the body.
- A stable body position.
- Both bells locking out together, at the same time.

If one bell arrives before the other, it is an uneven lockout and is a no count. After the rep is counted, the athlete may lower the bells any way they like.

9.3 Fixation

Fixation in the Jerk must be clearly visible. This is extremely important. The judge must see control and cannot assume it. Even at high speeds, there must be a visible moment where the athlete demonstrates stability, pause and control before the rep is counted. If fixation fails, give a fixation warning and call a no rep.

9.4 Common Jerk No Reps

- **Pressout.** If the arms lock after the knees lock, it is a pressout and is a no count.
- **Split or uneven lockout.** One bell finishes before the other.
- **Soft knees.** The knees do not fully straighten before the athlete brings the bells down.
- **No fixation.** Dropping the bell(s) before fixation is established is always a no rep plus a fixation warning.

- **Bells moving alternately.** The bells go up one after the other instead of together.
- **Bells not lowered together.** The bells come down from overhead one after the other.
- **No pause in the rack.** The athlete does not pause in the rack between reps.
- **Break in the movement.** The drive overhead stops and restarts instead of being one movement.

Do not anticipate reps. Wait until you clearly see the standard met.

9.5 Jerk Stop Sets

- **Bells below the belt.** Letting the bells drop below the belt is a stop set. The only exception is the partial drop used for a hand change in the single-kettlebell Jerk (see Section 10).
- **Resting the bells on the shoulders.** Resting the bells on the shoulders is a stop set, except when the bells first come to the chest at the start of the set.

10. Hand Changes (Single-Kettlebell Lifts)

10.1 How Many

- Single-kettlebell lifts get one hand change per set.
- A marathon event may allow more hand changes if its event rules say so.

10.2 Snatch and One-Arm Long Cycle

- The bell may be passed from one hand to the other during a swing (both hands may be on the handle for the pass), or on the way down from fixation at any height: face level, stomach level or between the legs.
- After the pass, the bell must be lifted from the bottom point with one arm only.
- Changing hands on the way up is a no count.
- Snatch: if the bell touches the shoulder during the hand change, it is a stop set.
- Snatch: the single swing hand switch is the only extra swing allowed; any other extra swing is a stop set. No extra swing is allowed after the change.

10.3 Single-Kettlebell Jerk

- The hand change is made by lowering the bell partway down between the legs (with one or both hands) and bringing it back to the rack in the new hand.
- If the free arm touches the bell in the rack, the rep is a no count.

11. Attire and Equipment

- **Visibility.** Shoulders, elbows, hips and knees must be visible. Elbows and knees must be uncovered unless the athlete has a medical or religious reason, declared before the set.
- **Shoes.** Closed-toe and closed-heel shoes only.

- **Belt.** At most 12cm tall (6cm at the front) and 1.5cm thick, worn over the shirt. Elbows may rest on the belt in the rack, but no hand or arm may go inside the belt.
- **Wrist wraps.** At most 6" of coverage and 0.5" thick, with no hard pieces.
- **Knee and elbow sleeves.** Under 5mm thick.
- **Knee and elbow wraps.** At most 25cm of coverage.
- **Rebounding gear.** Not allowed.
- **Hats.** Not allowed, unless for a medical or religious reason.
- **Chalk.** Calcium or magnesium carbonate only. Liquid chalk may contain only water, isopropyl alcohol and non-sticky emulsifiers.
- **Kettlebells.** All kettlebells are weighed before use.

12. Challenges

- Right after the set, before leaving the platform area, the athlete may challenge a call.
- The challenge must give a specific reason and be backed by video that shows clear and convincing evidence.
- The platform judge and the head judge review the challenge together.
- The head judge's ruling is final.

13. Quick Reference: No Rep, Stop Set and Switch Hands

This table summarizes the calls described in Sections 4 to 10. Rows are grouped by lift.

Lift	Situation	Call
All lifts	No fixation / failed fixation (no clear pause and control overhead)	Fixation warning + no rep (no count)
All lifts	Bell(s) dropped before fixation	No rep + fixation warning
All lifts	Repetition is questionable	No rep (ask the head judge after the set if there are questions)
All lifts	Feet not remaining on the ground / not fully planted on the platform	Rep does not count
All lifts	Bell(s) set down on the platform during the set	Stop set
All lifts	Any body part touches outside the platform, or athlete steps off it	Stop set
All lifts	Bell(s) picked up before "Start"	Bell(s) put down; athlete starts again
All lifts	Rep finished after "Stop"	No count
Double-kettlebell lifts	Two-arm Long Cycle, Jerk or any two-kettlebell lift: extra swing at any point, including two swings with no Clean in between	Stop set
Single-kettlebell lifts	One-arm Long Cycle, Snatch or single-kettlebell Jerk: extra swing, single swing hand switch not yet made	Must be the single swing hand switch: switch hands
Single-kettlebell lifts	One-arm Long Cycle, Snatch or single-kettlebell Jerk: extra swing after the single swing hand switch has been made	Stop set
Long Cycle	Clean or Jerk phase not successfully completed	Rep does not count
Long Cycle	Unsynchronized Clean (one bell clearly arrives before the other)	Clean not valid; athlete must re-Clean before the next repetition
Long Cycle	Rebound: bells bounced from the Clean into the drive without control in the rack	Not counted; athlete must re-Clean to start the repetition over
Long Cycle	Bells fall out of the rack before the Jerk	Bells must be re-Cleaned before the next Jerk
Long Cycle	Bells fall out of the rack and hang below the athlete without swinging	Stop set
Long Cycle	Resting with the bell(s) hanging between the legs	Stop set
Long Cycle	Bell leaning or resting on the shoulder	Stop set
Long Cycle	Bell does not touch the shoulder (rack) on the way up or down	Stop set
Long Cycle	Rack not established properly	Movement sequence broken; judging action based on the competition rules
Long Cycle	Pressout: legs lock out before the arms (bells muscled or pressed to finish the lift)	No count
Long Cycle	Soft lockout (elbows or knees bent at fixation)	Rep does not count
Long Cycle	Early drop (descent begins before clear fixation)	No rep + fixation warning
One-arm Long Cycle	Free hand touches or supports the bell	First hand: switch hands. Second hand: stop set
One-arm Long Cycle	Hand change made on the way up	No count

Lift	Situation	Call
Snatch	Pressout: knees lock out before the arm straightens	No count
Snatch	Free arm rises above the shoulder during fixation	No count
Snatch	Free arm or any body part touches the platform, legs, working arm or bell (except at the moment of the hand change)	No count
Snatch	Free hand touches the bell on the way up	No count
Snatch	Free hand touches the bell at the top while trying to fix it	Stop set
Snatch	Bell rests on or contacts the shoulder during the descent	Stop set, or switch hands if on the first hand
Snatch	Bell touches the shoulder during the hand change	Stop set
Snatch	Hand change made on the way up	No count
Snatch	Any extra swing other than the single swing hand switch (including after the change)	Stop set
Snatch	Resting with the bell hanging between the legs	Stop set
Snatch	Bell sweeps or lightly grazes the platform, movement continuous	Allowed
Snatch	Bell thrown or set down	Stop set
Jerk	Pressout: arms lock after the knees lock	No count
Jerk	Split or uneven lockout (one bell before the other)	No count
Jerk	Soft knees before bringing the bells down	No rep
Jerk	Bell(s) dropped before fixation	No rep + fixation warning
Jerk	Bells moving alternately	No count
Jerk	Bells not lowered together	No count
Jerk	No pause in the rack	No count
Jerk	Break in the movement	No count
Jerk	Bells below the belt (except the single-kettlebell hand change)	Stop set
Jerk	Bells resting on the shoulders (except when first brought to the chest at the start)	Stop set
Single-kettlebell Jerk	Free arm touches the bell in the rack	No count

14. Summary

- A great judge creates fairness, consistency and professionalism on the platform.
- Consistently identify valid movement standards while maintaining fairness across the platform for every athlete.
- Apply the same standard to every athlete, every rep and every platform.
- Experience and repetition improve a judge's ability to recognize movement quality quickly and confidently.
- The judge is in charge on the platform and is responsible for ensuring fair competition.