



The gold standard for building and testing grip strength



Congratulations on being the proud owner of a Captains of Crush® (CoC®) gripper. Known worldwide for their precision, durability and beauty, Captains of Crush are the gold standard of grippers, and the fastest route to a stronger grip.

Learning how to use your Captains of Crush gripper safely and effectively is simple and fun.
Let's get started!



Made in the USA

How to hold a Captains of Crush (CoC) gripper

We recommend positioning your new CoC gripper in your hand naturally, putting one handle by the pad at the base of your thumb and then wrapping your four fingers around the other handle. As you become familiar with your gripper, you will develop a sense of exactly where you most like to have it positioned, and we refer to this as the sweet spot. Whether you have a small or large hand, you will find that your preferences will emerge naturally as you train.

For reasons related to both grip strength and hand health, we recommend that you primarily train on full-range movements, just as you would any other exercise. The normal positioning is with the spring facing up, but for variety, you can also train with the spring facing down.



WARNING:

Captains of Crush grippers are designed for the superior performance—including extreme durability—that has made them a legend around the world. While many of these grippers are in active use year after year, spring failure is always a possibility. Only use your grippers in a manner that is safe for both you and any bystanders.

Training with your Captains of Crush gripper

Low Reps = High Strength

Those cheap plastic-handled grippers you had as a kid were so easy that you probably got used to doing sets of 50 or 100 reps because it took that many before you got tired. But if you were trying to bench press 500 pounds, would you do sets of 50 or 100 push-ups? No, you would use the heaviest weight you could, and you would focus on doing low reps. This proven path to increased strength applies in the gripper world just as it does in the barbell world, so before we lay out your training program, let's define three basic terms.

Warm-up gripper: This is where you begin each workout. Ideally, this is a gripper that allows you to do 10 reps or so quite easily. Even though this is low-intensity (i.e., a low percentage of your one-rep maximum), it is where you set the stage for your workout. Properly done, warm-ups will reduce your chance of injuries, boost your maximum performance, and reduce your recovery time in between workouts. As you get stronger, you will have more than one warm-up gripper: it is like adding plates to the bar when you are doing squats, for example, and you might end up doing reps with 2, 3, or 4 progressively harder warm-up grippers.

Work-set gripper: This is where you do the reps that are specifically aimed at increasing your strength. Ideally, your work-set gripper will put you in the range of 5–7 reps, plus or minus 2–3 reps, on an all-out set to failure. This is the gripper you use for your maximum-effort work sets, the part of your workout where you make progress in terms of boosting your strength.

Challenge gripper: This is the gripper that you are trying to close next—it's a step beyond where you are right now, so whether it's a CoC No. 1, CoC No. 2 or CoC No. 3, for example, it represents your goal for developing your next level of grip strength.

Now, let's take a look at a proven training program.

Beginner

1) Start with 1 or 2 sets of about 10 reps with your warm-up gripper. Even though these reps are quite easy for you, be sure to concentrate on them. If anything, exaggerate the precision of your form on your warm-up sets, taking advantage of the fact that with a sub-maximum effort, it's easier to concentrate on your technique and execute each rep perfectly. If you don't have a suitable strength CoC gripper, use whatever you might have—even an ordinary sponge rubber ball can do the trick. Remember, even though these are your warm-up sets, don't treat them lightly: these sets establish the tone of your workout as they warm you up psychologically as well as physically.

2) Next, go to your work-set gripper and do 1 to 3 sets with a maximum effort, going to failure. Yes, these are hard, which is why they are called "work sets." After you have become acclimated to training, you must really fight for each rep in these work sets—this is where and how you will get stronger.

3) In addition to working your flexors (the muscles that close your hand) with your Captains of Crush grippers, we highly recommend that you do 2 sets of 10–15 reps with the Expand-Your-Hand Bands, training the extensors (the muscles that open your hand).

Repeat this workout 2 or 3 times a week, and the effort you put into it will be reflected in your progress. Armed with a Captains of Crush gripper, a set of Expand-Your-Hand Bands, this training program, and the motivation to succeed, in a short time you will see very noticeable gains in grip strength, not to mention improved hand health.

Intermediate

1) Start your warm-up as explained for Beginners (above), but depending upon your strength level, you might well be doing multiple sets of progressively heavier warm-ups (e.g., CoC Trainer x 10, CoC No. 1 x 10 reps).

2) Enter the arena of your work sets: once again, this is where you will carve out your progress. Move up one more level, ideally to a Captains of Crush gripper that allows you to do something like 5–7 reps, but the most important thing is that the reps are quite low and the effort is very high. Do 1 to 3 work sets.

3) If you can do at least 10 reps with your work-set gripper, we recommend that you begin incorporating your challenge gripper into your training. After you have finished your work sets, give your challenge gripper a maximum effort and hold it in this position for 3–5 seconds. If you like, rest and repeat this for up to a total of 3 maximum efforts with the 3–5 second holds.

4) Finish off your workout by going back to the gripper you used for your last warm-up set and do about 10 perfect reps with it. Alternatively, using IMTUGs, do 1 to 2 sets for the first and second fingers together and also for the ring finger and pinky together. Keep your reps moderate for your IMTUG training, in the range of 8–12, for example.

5) In addition to work on CoC grippers and related training for your crushing grip, we highly recommend that you do 2 to 3 sets of 10–15 reps with the Expand-Your-Hand Bands at least twice a week for muscle balance.

Train like a tiger at this level and you will be on your way to getting the kind of grip strength you have dreamed about.

Advanced

1) Warm up as above in the Intermediate routine, using progressively heavier sets to make sure that you are thoroughly ready for the hard work to follow. You might be doing something like CoC Trainer x 10, CoC No. 1 x 10, CoC No. 2 x 10.

2) Move up to your work-set gripper and, continuing with this example, do the CoC No. 2.5 for 3 sets of about 5 reps, going to failure on each set.

- 3) Once you get to at least 10 reps on your work-set gripper, start to incorporate your challenge gripper into your training. If you have a CoC Key, use it to help track your progress.
- 4) Choose two assistance exercises and do 2 to 3 sets of each. We strongly recommend that IMTUGs be one of your assistance exercises, targeting your fingers one or two at a time. We also place a very high priority on the Rolling Thunder[®] or the Apollon's Axle[™], or some other form of thick-bar training.
- 5) In addition to work on CoC grippers and related training for your crushing grip, we highly recommend that you do 2 to 3 sets of 10–15 reps with the Expand-Your-Hand Bands at least twice a week.

Captains of Crush certification is a reasonable goal at this point: not attainable by all, this distinction is recognized worldwide as the mark of a world-class grip.*

Assistance exercises



If you want to make progress on Captains of Crush grippers, your assistance exercises need to be closely related for maximum benefit. At IronMind, some of our Crushed-to-Dust! grip products are designated **CoC²** (Captains of Crush Compatible), which tells you that these products are specifically designed to help you excel on Captains of Crush grippers. Each of the assistance exercises listed below is **CoC²**—consider this designation to be a signpost pointing to your success with Captains of Crush grippers.

- **IMTUG[™]** — this two-finger utility gripper will take you places that are inaccessible to a traditional gripper. It allows you to target your fingers in pairs (or individually, if you'd like) and it even allows you to work your thumb for pinch gripping.
- **Zenith** — this digital-age gripper is the perfect companion for CoC grippers; its silky-smooth ergonomic handles and moderate-rep training allow you to focus on strength and conditioning for strong and healthy hands.
- **Left-Turn** — tailor-made for lefties, it will complement a Captains of Crush gripper.

- **CoC Silver Bullet** — it combines strength, endurance and power in one movement, perfect for training and competitions, and gives you a fresh way to train your crushing grip.
- **CoC Key** — gauge and track your progress precisely—exactly how close were those CoC gripper handles?
- ***Captains of Crush Grippers: What They Are and How to Close Them*** — Joe Kinney (the first to officially close the CoC No. 4!) calls this book the Captains of Crush owner's manual. Facts, history, training—it's all here.

Also:

- **Expand-Your-Hand Bands™** — muscle imbalance is the cause of numerous injuries and pains that could easily be avoided. In the case of grip strength, there is an overwhelming focus on the flexors, but a little effort on the extensors will pay rich dividends in hand health as well as enhance your grip strength.
- **IronMind EGG™** — best known for active rest applications, you can also use the IM EGG for white-knuckle, strength-developing crushes . . . give it a maximum-effort squeeze, hold it for a second or two, relax, and then repeat.
- **Go-Really-Grip™ Machine** — here's the way to fine-tune both the load and the range of motion when you are training your crushing grip. Go as heavy or as light as you would like; use a full range of motion or do partials; and add negatives (eccentric contractions), as well as positives (concentric movements) if you'd like. You can even train isometrically with it.
- **Rolling Thunder®** — best known as a pre-eminent test of grip strength, the Rolling Thunder is also a results-producing training tool: do reps and holds for time, and use it for everything from chins to rows, in addition to deadlifts.
- **Apollon's Axle™** — thick bars are what gave early 20th-century strongmen their fearsome grip strength, so take a lesson from their book and incorporate some thick-bar training by using an Apollon's Axle for cleans, rows, curls, reverse curls, deadlifts, etc.



Low volume—high intensity work / Full range of motion

You'll want to take your grip training as seriously as if you were working on a big power clean. Doing endless easy reps while sitting at your desk, driving, or watching TV will do little to improve your grip, but a lot to shorten the life of your gripper. Instead, focus on full-range movements, combining low reps and high effort, as the route to building strong and healthy hands.

Comments, questions, suggestions?

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*Please see the IronMind website at www.ironmind.com for:

How to Certify and Rules for Closing: go to Certification > Captains of Crush® Grippers > Rules for Closing & Certification

Who's Who Captains of Crush certification lists: go to Certification > Captains of Crush® Grippers > Who's Who CoC No. 3 (or No. 3.5 or No. 4); for women > Who's Who CoC No. 2 (or No. 2.5)

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