

Kettlebell or Dumbbell Farmer's Carry

Do it Right!
Exercises you Should Do

FORM: Hold a dumbbell (equal weight) in each hand with a tight, firm grip and the palms facing down, and allow the arms to rest along the sides of the body so the dumbbells are next to each hip. Keep the back straight and walk a specified, pre-determined distance. Once reaching the end, turn around and return to the starting point. Keys which are the same as in the suitcase carry: Keep your neck, shoulders, and pelvis aligned throughout the exercise, brace your core, keep your shoulders (arms by side) as tight as possible to improve joint stability, take a shorter stride—your feet less than 12 inches apart—gives you a stronger support base, keep your ears directly over your shoulders and hips—this aligns your spine (keeping it injury-free), keep your ribs flat—If they flare out, you're putting undue stress on your back. Do not flare ribs, breathe in through your nose and then forcefully out through your mouth. That helps push your ribs down and keep your core engaged.



This is another great functional intermediate movement, like the Suitcase Carry Exercise previously reviewed. It is also an intermediate exercise, but I feel it is easier and safer to do. The Suitcase Carry is the same type of exercise but you are holding a weight in one hand. Many of the benefits incurred with the Suitcase Carry are incurred with the Farmer's Carry, but which one is better is up for debate. I prefer the Suitcase Carry in my own training, but start people off with the Farmer's Carry. In a review of Strongmen Exercises Taylor and Reed state there is currently little research on loaded carries in the fields of strength and conditioning and rehabilitation. They did described research that compared muscle activation of different strongman events showing the importance of the lateral spine muscles, such as the quadratus lumborum and the lateral abdominal wall, which are especially used during the Suitcase Carry. They suggest during the suitcase carry these muscles had to stiffen the pelvis to prevent it from bending toward the side of the leg swing. This effect would be different in a Bilateral Farmers Carry. Lateral pelvic stiffening is important in functional motions, like running, jumping, and even walking, since it helps the hip abductors create a stable platform for the spine. Taylor and Reed also cite research that found carrying a load in one hand generates a greater spine load than if the load were split between two hands. In other word when carrying the load in only one hand, compared to having a balanced load in each hand, there was a greater spinal load even though twice as much weight was carried when both hands were loaded. **Considering this it might be wise to start with the Farmers Carry before the Suitcase Carry when starting to use Carry Type Exercises in your training, but to create greater Lateral Spinal and Total Body Stability the Suitcase Carry compared to the Farmer's Carry might be more beneficial in the long run (Only do if you are at an Intermediate Level).** Taylor and Reed did suggest not using loads that are too extreme for most people looking for fitness improvement. I would suggest working at 10 to 25% of body weight to start (so if you are 200 pounds then work with no more than 25 lbs. in each hand to start). **This exercise is considered intermediate ([see list](#)).**