

50+ Single Leg Romanian Deadlifts (RDL)

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66yr old client performing an excellent Single Leg RDL.

Whilst single leg Romanian Deadlifts (SLDL) aren't new, there are many variants to this exercise that can make this a fantastic addition to any program if you are an older trainer.

As mentioned in last week's blog post, I will be spending the majority of this year covering what I calling the 4-Pillars of Fitness for the 50+ year old.

As a reminder, the 4-pillars are:

1. Core Control
2. Balance/Proprioception
3. Strength@Range
4. Flexibility.

The great thing about one particular variation of the SLDL is that it targets all four of the above pillars in the one exercise. Also you don't need a gym or weights to complete the exercise.

The main muscles being targeted are:

Glutes, Hip External Rotators, Hamstrings, Spinal erectors, Obliques (core), Gastrocnemius/Soleus, Peroneus longus (outer shin), Posterior tibialis (in the foot).

The traditional SLDL looks like the following:



It is very similar to the single leg stiff leg deadlift – whilst there are small differences in knee joint angle and associated muscular loading, for the purpose of this article, we can call these two exercises the same thing.

They key technical points to the traditional SLDL are:

1. 15-20° knee bend.
2. only bend over until your upper body is parallel to the floor.
3. Extend your leg out the back for balance.
4. Add weight for increased load on your hamstrings/glutes, etc.

The SLDL in this format is a great exercise, with a focus on strength and balance – BUT if you want to bring in all 4-pillars, I would suggest the following modifications:



1. Keep knee bend to a minimum ($<10^\circ$) – more like a stiff leg deadlift.
2. Don't use any weight in the early stages of the exercise.
3. Don't stop when your body alignment reaches parallel to the floor – continue to reach down as far as you can go.
4. Your technical focus is on lifting as high as you can your rear leg (reach for the sky with your rear foot)

THIS IS THE KEY TECHNICAL ASPECT TO THIS EXERCISE



5. Try to lightly touch the floor with your hands whilst maintaining balance and a strong high back leg (this is a tough position with poor posture, core control and flexibility).

6. You have to stay in this extended reach position for ~1 second before slowly returning and repeating (without the free foot touching the floor).

7. You can add a further movement by bringing the free leg forward into a high knee flexion with each repetition (See image).

In the early stages of this exercise your lack of hamstring/pelvic stability will be a major limiting factor, as will your likely lack of balance on one foot (particularly when you are then required to bend over which really changes your vestibular system).

I have all my clients perform this exercise 2-3 times per week with the goal of completing the following routine:

****** 2-3 sets of 3-4 repetitions per leg (the 3-4 reps are completed continuously without the free leg touching the floor at any time).

The movement should be slow and controlled – the slower the better.

SUMMARY:

- A must add routine to your functional fitness routine is the Single Leg RDL.
- Aim to extend the movement to the extremes of range (will improve both your flexibility and strength@range)
- Complete the exercise slowly and with control (will increase the need for good balance).
- Finally, you will find as your core strength improves, your ability to get into the correct position and hold this position will improve – leading to a significantly more functional body regardless of your age.

For a technically correct video of this technique, check out this youtube clip ([The Right way to do Single Leg RDL](#)).