Perfecting the Turkish Get-up

The Turkish Get Up (TGU) has become a common feature in my programming, as it promotes shoulder stability, mobility and resilience. Even though there are multiple ways of doing the TGU, I have observed the same reoccurring errors. Below are the five most common.

*Mistake #1 The Foot coming off the ground*

![Image of a person performing TGU with foot coming off the ground]

The foot coming up off the ground happens during the post up onto the elbow. This also can lead to the posting leg collapsing inward also known as valgus collapse.

**Reasons for this are as follows:**

- Starting in the supine position with legs running parallel.
- Improper neck position.
- Failure to drive off the posted heel, leading to valgus collapse of the posted leg.

**The Fix:**

- In order to make sure there is optimal transitioning in the TGU, one must start in the supine position with the arms and legs 45 degrees to the body. This will allow for good mechanics for driving the body from the press to elbow position.
- If the first fix fails, try repositioning the individual, with his or her leg down and outstretched leg against a wall with the legs 45 degrees to their body. Tell them to drive their heel into the wall in front of them. This will create compression through the heel up the leg, into the core and prevent the leg from swinging upward and disconnecting from the floor. A partner can come in handy as they can lightly tap the heel of the outstretched foot while transitioning from the press to posting onto the elbow.

- Belly breath, hold and go. Before the press to elbow, cue the individual to take a deep belly breath, hold and proceed with rolling onto their elbow.

- Pull the posted leg inward with a band to reinforce the mistake which will also reinforce a solid arch in the down foot to optimize leg drive as seen below.
Mistake # 2 The bent elbow

Incorrect position of the elbow:

While first learning the TGU, the arm supporting the kettlebell almost always starts with a bent or “broken” wrist. This error can lead to loss of control over the kettlebell causing a potential shoulder injury.

Reasons for this are as follows:

- Insufficient crushing of the kettlebell handle. The TGU performed with an open grip, in my opinion, tends not to be the best way to perform this movement, since it limits irradiation to the shoulder. Crushing the handle causes irradiation which provides optimal neural firing to the rotator cuff. This combination allows for proper packing of the shoulder.
- A properly packed shoulder allows for proper centration for the joint creating optimal stability of the humeral head.

The Fix:

- Start with a lighter kettlebell. You may need to improve your stability before moving to a heavier weight.
- Have the individual take off any jewelry they may be wearing. If there is still wrist discomfort, put a towel through the handle so it lays flat over the kettlebell. This will cushion the kettlebell while resting on the forearm.
• A simple cue such as “crush the grip” or “keep your wrist in the position as if you were going to punch something” tends to work well as long as wrist discomfort is not a factor.
• Try to think of pushing yourself away from the kettlebell on the descent.

Correct Position of the elbow:

\[\text{Image of a person demonstrating correct elbow position.}\]

*Mistake # 3: Eyes coming off the kettlebell*

Incorrect:

For anyone first learning the TGU, keeping eyes on the kettlebell can be an afterthought. However, vision is very important in the TGU as it gives visual feedback to where one’s shoulder is in space. Without the eyes glued to the weight above one’s head, it is almost certain that the shoulder will not remain vertical.

Reasons for this are as follows:

• Lack of attention
• Looking into a mirror
• Looking down at the feet on the descent
• Wearing a hat

The Fix:

• While lying in the supine position, find a focal point on the ceiling with the arm holding the kettlebell.
• Position individuals away from mirrors as this can cause them to lose their gaze upon the kettlebell.
• Make sure they are not wearing a hat or any other headwear that might hinder their vision.
• Do not let people look down on the descent of the movement.
Performing the TGU with a shoe balanced on top on ones tightly closed fist is a very effective technique as minimal verbal coaching is necessary. This instinctively will force visual focus in order to complete the movement with integrity.

Correcting with the shoe on fist:

*Mistake # 4: Bringing the ear towards the shoulder not the arm towards the ear.*

Incorrect position of the shoulder when going from elbow to post:

Shoulder packing is an important concept to master when first learning the TGU.
Reasons for this are as follows:

- Lack of shoulder stability.
- Not providing an external rotational force (also known as “cork screwing”) on the hand that’s fixed on the floor.
- While transitioning from press to elbow and elbow to post, not putting the down hand in back of the hip or too close to the hip.
- Eyes forward and the neck bending into flexion. The faulty alignment of the neck is usually due to the thoracic spine (T-spine) going into flexion while transitioning from elbow to posting onto the hand.
- Too heavy of a kettlebell.
- Maneuvering too quickly.

The Fix

- While you post, be sure to “cork screw” your hand into the floor as if trying to undo the lid to a pickle jar.
- Make sure adequate T-spine mobility is present. If there is a lack of t-spine mobility, practice only going onto the elbow with no additional external load.
- Position the T-spine so it is aligned with the posted thigh and foot.
- For men, put your finger on the individuals’ sternum and tell them to push your finger away with their chest. For women, tap in between their scapula and tell them to get their chest up.

Correct position of shoulder away from the ear:

Shoulder is properly packed and the hand is “corkscrewed” into the floor.
**Mistake # 5: Forgetting the “windshield wiper” of the down knee while descending**

This seems to be the most common mistake during the decent of the TGU. When this happens you will notice the swiping leg clipping the opposite foot while swiping the leg through on the descent.

**Forgetting the windshield wiper leading to**

**Improper hinging of the hip:**

- Moving too fast through the transitions of TGU. It’s not a max effort lift so take your time.
- Forgetting the “windshield wiper” or pivoting of the down knee leading to faulty transitioning.
- Misalignment of foot, knee and hand in bending position.

**Proper position for windshield wiper allowing proper hinging of the hip:**

- Break the movement into parts. After post to high pelvis, you may literally have to point to the floor where you want the individuals’ knee to go.
- Position the foot, knee and hand in line with one another while going from high pelvis or bridge to the bend pre-half kneeling.
- The hand must be within 12 inches of the knee. The closer to the knee the better, as this centers everything directly underneath the kettlebell.

**Conclusion**

There you have it, the 5 most common errors I have noticed while implementing the TGU. Keep in mind; not everyone is built the same therefore repositioning here and there is acceptable during the movement. In the meantime, learn it, practice it on yourself, and master the movement before you teach it to others. What mistakes are you noticing?