



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE'S PERSONNEL CENTER
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, TEXAS**

Fitness Program Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Why does the Air Force have a fitness test?

Answer: Being physically fit allows you to properly support the Air Force mission. Although commander-driven physical fitness training is the backbone of the Air Force physical fitness program, the fitness assessment provides commanders with an Air Force-wide standard with which to measure their Airmen and assist in the determination of overall fitness of their military personnel. The fitness assessment ensures every Airman is mission-ready by holding them accountable to a year-round culture of fitness required to pass their assessment. Maintaining an active lifestyle increases productivity, optimizes health, and decreases absenteeism while maintaining a higher level of readiness.

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2. Why do we have an abdominal circumference measurement as a part of the fitness assessment?

Answer: Measuring body composition is a Department of Defense requirement. The DOD recommends that the services use a body mass index screen as an initial test and if an individual fails then he/she performs a 2 or 3 site taping depending on gender (neck and waist for men; neck, waist, and hips for women). The Air Force decided that an abdominal measurement was a more efficient and scientifically based test and therefore received a permanent waiver from the DOD to use the abdominal circumference measurement as the body composition component. The abdominal circumference measurement targets the amount of visceral adipose tissue (or gut fat) surrounding the internal organs. Abdominal circumference is directly linked with current and future health risks.

3. What is the Air Force chief of staff's vision and expectation of the fitness program?

Answer: The chief of staff wants a fitness program that is clear, understandable and simple. He expects the fitness program to support a year-round fitness culture, provide visible score increases for improved performance, and a clear message that health and fitness are directly related to mission accomplishment. Airmen should incorporate a "year-around culture of fitness" into their daily lives.

4. I never have to run a mile and a half in combat, and the enemy doesn't care how big my waist is. Why doesn't the Air Force adopt a combat-performance test?

Answer: The intent of the fitness program is a science-based test that incorporates health-based standards across all fitness components. The Air Force's goal is to motivate Airmen to improve their health and fitness by rewarding incremental improvement and moving them from unsatisfactory to satisfactory and from satisfactory to excellent, thereby reducing their health risk both now and in the future.

5. The other services run longer distances and allow more time for pushups and sit-ups. Why doesn't the Air Force change these aspects of the test to be more in line with the other services?

Answer: Air Force officials could have increased running distance to 2 or 3 miles, and changed the pushup and sit-up times to 2 minutes instead of 1 minute. However, all it would have accomplished was creation of a longer test. Consensus among fitness experts indicates that we can adequately gauge a member's fitness with a 1 ½-mile run and 1 minute each of pushups and sit-ups.

6. Who maintains the sole responsibility to meet and maintain Air Force fitness standards?

Answer: Each Airman is responsible for meeting and maintaining fitness standards. Commanders have the responsibility of their unit fitness program.

7. Who conducts fitness tests and where is the program administered?

Answer: Trained civilian employees and physical training leader augmentees will conduct fitness tests. The fitness program will be administered at new centrally located fitness assessment cells, or FAC. For geographically separated units or other locations with less than 1,000 military members, Airmen may travel to the closest base with a FAC at their commander's discretion, or physical training leaders and/or unit fitness program managers will continue to administer the test at the GSU location.

8. How were the minimum requirements for each component determined?

Answer: The minimum requirement for the aerobic and body composition components was established at the cut line between moderate and high health risk associated with that component. Air Force officials want Airmen to avoid the high health risk region in order to pass the test. For pushups and sit-ups, the minimum requirements were established at the 50th and 60th percentiles, respectively, for performance among the entire U.S. population based on widely accepted fitness data.

9. Will the Surgeon General community continue to have ownership of the fitness program?

Answer: No. The Air Force's manpower and personnel staff now is responsible for the fitness program, but will continue to partner with the Surgeon General community in regards to the health aspects of overall fitness.

10. I've heard that there will be "random" or "no-notice" fitness tests. Is that true?

Answer: Regular Air Force members will test once a year (excellent), twice a year (satisfactory), and every 90 days (unsatisfactory).

11. How will the Air Force senior leadership keep fitness on his radar and as a top priority?

Answer: Air Force leadership will remain keenly aware of the service's state of fitness through metrics reported in regular increments from the Air Force's Personnel Center.

12. In what other ways does the Air Force measure fitness compliance?

Answer: Air Force officials measure compliance by continuing to incorporate fitness into the inspector general unit compliance inspections. This will ensure overall compliance in the administration and execution of the fitness program, not whether all members in a unit or wing can pass the test.

13. How are other personnel actions affected by a member's fitness category?

Answer: Officers and enlisted members are required to have a passing, current fitness score to be selected for or attend professional military education. All members must have a current fitness test in order to deploy. There are other restrictions regarding retraining, reenlistment eligibility and assignment eligibility that could be impacted by a failed fitness score. The appropriate Air Force instructions reflect the impact fitness results have on these personnel programs.

14. Are commanders required to provide fitness time during duty-hours?

Answer: Commanders will continue to emphasize the importance of fitness and may provide Airmen fitness time during duty hours when the mission permits, but not mandated to allocate fitness time during "traditional" duty hours. Again, it is every Airman's responsibility to achieve and maintain Air Force fitness standards.

15. Does the fitness program allow Airmen who fail a fitness test to retest prior to 42 days?

Answer: Unit commanders may not mandate Airmen to retest before the end of the 90-day reconditioning period. However, Airmen may volunteer to retest at any time. Retesting in the first 42 days after an unsatisfactory fitness assessment is not recommended. Recognized medical guidance recommends 42 days as the minimum time frame to recondition in a manner that reduces injury.

16. What if I have a profile that prevents me from doing one or more components of the test?

Answer: Effective July 1, 2010, the Air Force no longer uses the ergo cycle, the 3-mile walk, nor the STEP test as alternate aerobic tests. In October 2013, the Air Force determined members who cannot run due to a profile perform a 2-kilometer walk. If an airman is exempt from any component, they are categorized as "pass" based on an adjusted composite score of 74 or 75, or "fail" because of an adjusted composite score below 75.

17. Why did the Air Force make the run scores harder to max out for certain age groups?

Answer: Air Force officials chose to use proven databases used by the Cooper Institute and recognized by the American College of Sports Medicine. New 1.5-mile run times that assess the most important physical fitness component, cardio respiratory endurance or aerobic fitness, are based on the most current scientific data for age and gender.

18. How did the Air Force determine the risk levels?

Answer: Air Force exercise physiologists and preventive medicine physicians developed a new health-related physical fitness test with science-based criterion standards for aerobic fitness and body composition, a first in Department of Defense history. These standards provide health risk ratios that indicate a susceptibility to cardiovascular diseases, Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers; diseases that affect Air Force medical care cost; and member productivity and lost duty time. The health risk ratios indicate high, moderate and low risk for disease using published scientific data as the basis for age and gender specific thresholds. Movement from High to Moderate or Moderate to Low health risk signifies an improvement in fitness and a reduction in health risk with a corresponding important reduction in health care cost. The critically important Moderate zone identifies "creeping" health problems earlier in a service member's life cycle providing a genuine window for successful intervention and prevention.

19. How did the Air Force determine the different point scales and who determined them?

Answer: Air Force officials determined point values based on the mathematical inverse to the above health risk ratios. The lower the health risk, the more points a member will receive in that component. A change along the point scale is directly tied to the amount of increased or decreased health risk associated with that component.

20. Do you expect these numbers to change?

Answer: No. The point scales are based on current, scientifically published data and are a historical first for the Air Force and DOD.

21. Can actual scores be annotated on enlisted and officer performance reports as a stratification tool?

Answer: No, actual passing scores cannot be annotated on performance reports to serve as a stratification measure for promotion. However, fitness will continue to be a key component of whether an individual meets military standards. Consistent with current policy, failing scores may be annotated in performance reports if an Airman is not meeting the standard.

22. Why did the Air Force establish a biannual testing requirement?

Answer: Increasing the test frequency emphasizes the importance of maintaining year round fitness vice a brief "fitness cram" and one-time annual test. Airmen that score Excellent by completing all four FA components only test annually.

23. How were the point values assigned?

Answer: Points were established with the advice of biomedical experts to indicate levels of fitness throughout the components. While points assigned below the minimums might not help the Airman achieve a passing score, it does account for the increased health benefits one receives as he or she improves his or her fitness level. The overall minimum passing score of 75 was established by the Air Force as a composite of minimal overall fitness.

24. When does body mass index become a factor for calculating scores? When is a body fat assessment necessary?

Answer: In October 2013, the Air Force changed the body composition component to include a body mass index screen and a body fat assessment. If an Airman fails the abdominal circumference measurement of the fitness assessment yet takes and passes the other three components with a score of at least 75 points of the remaining 80 points, the fitness assessment cell will administer the Department of Defense prescribed BMI screen. If the Airman passes the BMI screen, the Airman passes the body composition component of the fitness assessment. If the Airman does not pass the BMI screen, the Airman will receive a BFA. If the Airman passes the BFA, the Airman passes the body composition component of the fitness assessment. If the Airman fails the BFA, the Airman fails the body composition component of the fitness assessment.

25. What is the fitness assessment appeal process designed to do?

Answer: The fitness assessment appeal process provides an avenue for administrative relief to address injustices or errors derived from the administration and execution of the Air Force Fitness Program. There are three levels of appeal: Wing Appeal, Fitness Assessment Appeal Board, and the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records.

26. Who may submit a fitness assessment appeal?

Answer: Any active, Guard or Reserve member of the Air Force may apply for appeals consideration.

27. How does an Airman submit an appeal?

Answer: Appeals packages are initiated via memorandum. Submit the memorandum and all supporting evidence to your unit fitness program manager, who will route it through the chain of command to the first level appeal authority (the wing commander or equivalent).

28. What documents should be submitted with a request?

Answer: The fitness screening questionnaire and completed and signed fitness assessment score sheet are mandatory. Optional supporting evidence may include any document you deem appropriate to support the appeals request. Some examples include AF Form 469, *Duty Limiting Condition*; AF Form 108, *Physical Fitness Education and Intervention Processing* and AF Form 422, *Physical Profile Serial Report* (Note: In providing documentation, you consent to its use in making a determination).

29. When should an Airman initiate a request for appeal?

Answer: The application should be initiated as soon as possible after the error or injustice was discovered. Keep in mind, applications reviewed by the Fitness Assessment Appeal Board must be filed within two years after the error or injustice was discovered, or, with due diligence should have been discovered. The two years does not include the time it takes the application to go through the wing appeals process.

30. If the wing commander (or equivalent) disapproves the request, what should an Airman expect?

Answer: The wing commander will notify the individual through their unit commander. If the individual wishes to appeal the decision they may submit the request for relief to the Fitness Assessment Appeal Board through their unit fitness program manager and/or FAC.

31. How does an Airman apply for the Fitness Assessment Appeal Board's consideration of an appeal?

Answer: They must initiate an appeals package through the same appeal memorandum they submitted for wing appeal consideration. Be sure it includes the wing commander endorsement indicating his or her disapproval. Airmen must submit the memorandum, the endorsement, and all supporting evidence to their UFPM who will route to the FAC who will in turn forward to AFPC.

32. How long will it take the Fitness Assessment Appeal Board to consider a request?

Answer: The Fitness Assessment Appeal Board convenes once a month. Depending on when the application is received by the Air Force's Personnel Center, the appeal could be reviewed anywhere from one week to one month after submission. However, processing time may extend these timelines by a week.

33. If the Fitness Assessment Appeal Board grants relief for a request, what happens next?

Answer: AFPC will update the AFFMS II and notify the individual of the update via email with a signed memo.

34. If the FAAB disapproves a request, what actions follow?

Answer: AFPC will notify the individual with a signed memo via email, at which time they will be provided guidance on submitting appeal to Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records.