

MAXimize your APFT score

By Sgt. Maj. Robert S. Rush

Many soldiers can increase their physical fitness beyond their present level if they're willing to concentrate on deficiencies instead of just trying to run faster.

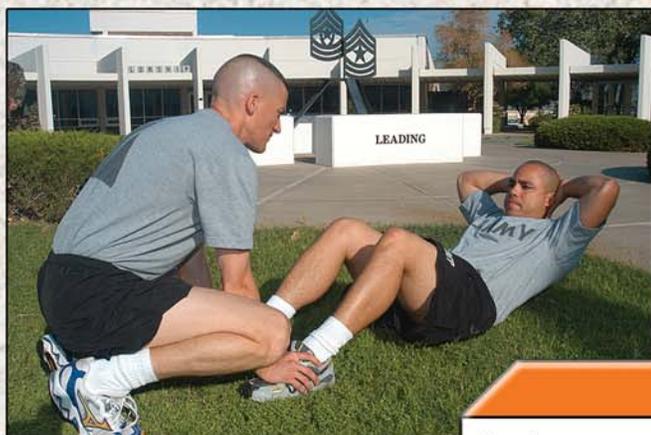
This individual physical training (PT) program was developed for soldiers with little time to devote to PT.

The program was validated using 40 students in a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. Students exercised three times per week for 20-25 minutes, not including running. The following results were achieved: after one month the average score for students increased by 15-20 points from an

average of 192 to 212; at the end of three months, students went from their average of 212 to 243; the second three months saw average scores climb to 267 with the low score 242 and the high score 300. Since this is an individual program, it is designed to fit each soldier's physical ability. The program gradually takes a soldier to a higher level of physical fitness.

Take a look at your last Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). From your scores you can determine where the starting point for your Individual Fitness Program should be. If you haven't taken an APFT in the last three to four months, you may want to conduct an assessment of your physical abilities before beginning.

To conduct a self-assessment, do as many correct push-ups and sit-ups as you can in one minute, and then run as hard as you can for a timed one-half mile. Multiply your push-up and sit-up scores by 1.25 to find an entry point in the charts. Multiply your one-half mile time by four.



Sgt. 1st Class James L. Thorpe, assists Staff Sgt. Felipe Albino to perform a set of sit-ups. Both NCOs are assigned to the Fort Bliss, Texas, NCO Academy.

The program

If done correctly, the program will bring you to muscle failure. This exercise regime is designed to be done every other day, as your muscles need from 24 to 48 hours to recover from hard usage.

APFT number of sit-ups

| Number | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 85 |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Sit-ups | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 34 |
| Crunches | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| Flutter kick | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |
| Legs spreader | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |

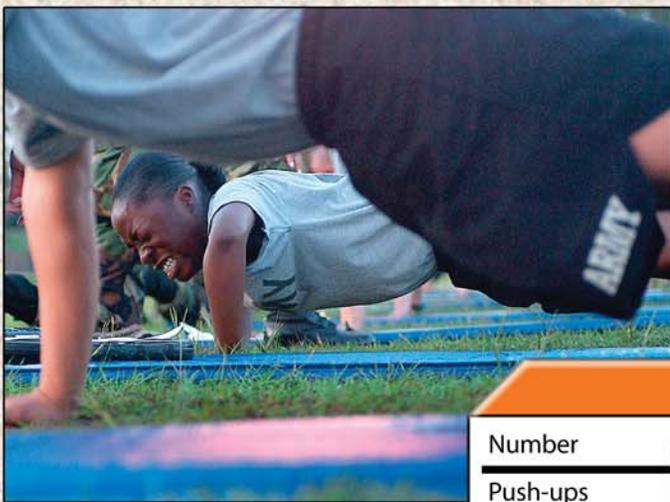


Photo courtesy of Fort Jackson, S.C., PAO

A soldier strives to knock out one more push-up during her APFT.

APFT number of push-ups

| Number | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 85 |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Push-ups | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 34 |
| Close-hand | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Wide-arm | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Turn & bounce | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 |

To get your starting numbers, look at the charts. The numbers along the top of the charts are the number of push-ups or sit-ups you performed. Follow the number down the row to give you the number of repetitions for each exercise you're to begin with in your individual program.

Push-up and sit-up improvement

1. Regular push-ups: Do three sets with one-minute rests between sets. Form is important. If you can't do the push-ups properly, go to your knees and continue until you've finished the sets. After three workouts, add three push-ups to each set. (Example: you start with 14 push-ups on Wednesday, the next Wednesday you go to 17 push-ups.)

2. Regular sit-ups: Do three sets with one-minute rests between sets. If you can't do all the sit-ups properly, lower the angle of your legs until they're almost parallel to the ground. After three workouts, add three sit-ups to each set. (Example: you start with 11 sit-ups on Wednesday. The next Wednesday you go to 14 sit-ups.)

3. Close-hand pushups: Put your hands close together under your chest. Perform the push-ups. Go to your knees if necessary. Add one close-hand after every three workouts.

4. Wide-arm push-ups: Place hands as far apart as possible. Perform the push-up. Go to your knees if necessary. Add one wide-arm push-up after every three workouts.

5. Crunches: See separate chart on next page.

6. Turn and bounce: Hold arms parallel to the ground. Palms facing up. The exercise is an eight-count movement at a slow cadence. Pivot slowly at the waist to the right for four counts and then to the left for four counts. Add two turn and bounces after every three workouts. (Editor's note: Since this program was developed in 1993, studies have shown that, during the turn and bounce, exaggerated or excessive bouncing at the turn can be harmful. The turn and bounce done more like a turn and stretch is much more effective.)

7. Flutter kicks: Put your hands under your buttocks while lying flat on your back. Lift your feet six to eight inches off the ground to start. Begin by lifting legs in sequence six to 18 inches.

Keep legs slightly bent to reduce the strain on your back. One repetition equals four counts. Add two flutter kicks after every three workouts.

8. Leg spreaders: Put your hands under your buttocks while lying flat on your back. Lift your feet six to eight inches off the ground to start. Begin by spreading legs 18-30 inches and then bringing them back together. Keep legs slightly bent to reduce the strain on your back. One repetition equals four counts. Add two leg spreaders after every three workouts.

Use the running chart to increase your aerobic and anaerobic stamina and to improve your run time. Enter the table using your run time from your APFT or your time from your self-assessment (half-mile times four). For example, your run time is 14:15. Enter the chart at +14. This program is designed to be run every other day, although there is no harm in running more often.



Photo courtesy of Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., PAO

Soldiers at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., run during unit PT.

Running

Sprint day: Enter the sprint portion of the chart at your run time now. Do four sprints of each of the distances, alternating your sprints between the distances. Begin with the lower distance for your speed. Attempt to beat the time listed. Rest one minute before you run the longer sprint. Rest two minutes between the longer and shorter sprints. If you feel you are not properly stressed (and as you develop your wind), decrease the amount of rest time between sprints. For those with run times of +17 to +19, when the 220-yard sprint goal is met, move up to the one-quarter mile (440 yards) and one-half mile (880 yards) runs.

Fast run day: Begin with the lower distance for your speed. When you beat the time for the distance, move to a longer distance in the same row. When you surpass the time for the distance at the bottom of the row, move to the left one row maintaining the same distance. When you move one row to the left on the fast run, also move your sprint goals to the same row.

Long and slow run: Run at least 20 minutes for a good cardiovascular workout. Run for time during this session, not necessarily distance.

Using the program

The program is designed to have very little paper overhead. Each soldier is responsible for his or her pace in the program, which has the additional benefit of exercising the soldier's self discipline.

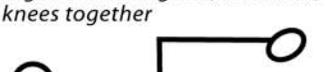
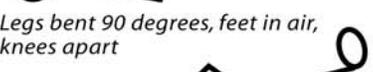
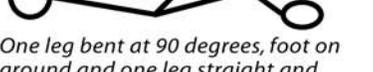
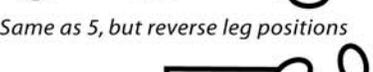
One technique to start the program would be to give each soldier a packet and have the program explained after an APFT or diagnostic APFT. Organized PT would still be conducted, but with each soldier doing the amount of exercise determined by his or her specific program. As a check, periodic diagnostic tests could be used to review progress.

As with any program, results are directly attributable to the amount of effort expended. Soldiers who can't keep up on the battlefield are losses just as much as casualties suffered through enemy action. We, as NCOs, are charged with not letting this happen.

(Editor's note: Rush was the Army advisor to the 26th Infantry Division, Camp Edward, Maine, when this article was written. Reprinted from the NCO Journal Summer '93 issue.)

The crunches

Start position is with arms across chest, hands grasping shoulders. Try not to stop between sets.

- 1   *Legs bent 90 degrees, knees together*
- 2   *Legs bent 90 degrees, knees apart*
- 3   *Legs bent 90 degrees, feet in air, knees together*
- 4   *Legs bent 90 degrees, feet in air, knees apart*
- 5   *One leg bent at 90 degrees, foot on ground and one leg straight and six-and-one-half inches off the ground*
- 6   *Same as 5, but reverse leg positions*
- 7   *One leg bent at 90 degrees, foot on ground and one leg straight and six-and-one-half inches off the ground*
- 8   *Same as 7, but reverse leg positions*

APFT run times

| minutes | +12 | +13 | +14 | +15 | +16 | +17 | +18 | +19 |
|-------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 220 yards | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | :48 | :51 | :48 |
| 440 yards | 1:07 | 1:15 | 1:23 | 1:30 | 1:37 | 1:45 | 1:52 | 2:00 |
| 880 yards | 2:45 | 3:00 | 3:15 | 3:30 | 3:45 | 4:00 | 4:15 | 4:30 |
| Fast run | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | +mi>4:00 ↓ | +mi>4:15 ↓ | +mi>4:40 ↓ |
| | 2+ mi 11:30 ↓ | 2+ mi 12:30 ↓ | 1 mi 6:30 ↓ | 1 mi 7:00 ↓ | 1 mi 7:30 ↓ | 1 mi 8:00 ↓ | 1 mi 8:30 ↓ | 1 mi 9:00 ↓ |
| | 2 mi 14:30 | 2 mi 15:30 | 2 mi 13:30 | 2 mi 14:30 | 2 mi 15:30 | 2 mi 16:30 | 2 mi 17:30 | 2 mi 18:30 |
| Long and slow run | Run at least 20 minutes, for time and not distance | | | | | | | |