

An Officer's Guide to Preparing for the Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT)



Prepared for the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association by
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Introduction

Passing the Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) demonstrates an officer's basic level of fitness and is one item that officers need to complete to achieve USPHS Commissioned Corps basic readiness.

The Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) determines an officer's level of cardiovascular fitness as well as specific core and upper body muscular fitness and endurance. These areas will be measured through a combination of exercises and events including: a 1.5 mile run/walk or 500-yard/450-meter swim for cardiovascular endurance, side-bridge or sit-up for core muscle endurance and push-ups for upper body muscular endurance.

This Guide is intended to prepare officers, who are currently classified as beginner to intermediate exercisers or who are currently sedentary or inconsistent in an exercise regimen, to complete the APFT. The information provided in this Guide provides a 12-week training progression to prepare the officer to take the APFT.

Please note that some officers may require more or less time to prepare for the APFT than the 12-week training progression provided in this Guide. It is recommended that officers begin to prepare more than 12 weeks in advance for the APFT in case that amount of time is not sufficient. Officers are also encouraged to meet with a Lifestyle staff person, if in Atlanta or Hyattsville, or other fitness professional if available at other locations to assist them as they prepare for the APFT.

General Guidelines

Outline of a Typical Training Week to Prepare for the Annual Physical Fitness Test

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Run	Strength	Run	Strength	Run	Rest Day	Run
Walk	Exercises	Walk	Exercises	Walk		Walk
Swim		Swim		Swim		Swim

Guidelines for Warm-up and Cool Down at Each Exercise Session

Warm-up: You should always prepare your body for exercise with rhythmical activity that gradually increases in intensity.

For Walking and Running this could be:

- Simply starting with a slow walk, increasing the walking pace, and then moving into your running pace.
- Running easy in place before starting into your running pace.
- Performing jumping jacks, jumping rope or other rhythmical activity with your legs.
- Pedaling a bike at a low intensity.

For Swimming this could be:

- Marching in place, jumping jacks, or other rhythmical activity in a dry area on the pool deck before entering the water.
- Marching or jogging in place or other rhythmical activity in the water before starting into your swim.
- Slow swimming to gradually move into your swimming pace.

For Strength Training this could be:

- Rhythmical activities such as arm swings, jogging in place, riding a bicycle.

Cool Down: You should always decrease your activity gradually, allowing your heart rate and muscles to return close to your pre-exercise level.

For Walking and Running this could be:

- Progressively slowing your run down to a brisk walk, and then to a slower walk.
- Continue to walk and check you pulse every 2-3 minutes until it is at or below 100 beats/minute (17 beats /10 seconds).

For Swimming this could be:

- Slowing down your swimming pace or changing to an easier swim stroke that takes less energy, i.e. side stroke.
- Slow walking in shallow water.
- Slow walking on a pool deck.

For Strength Training this could be:

- Rhythmical activities decreasing in intensity, such as arm swings, jogging in place, riding a bicycle.

Determining Your Current Fitness Level

Officers should use the guidelines below to determine if the Beginner or Intermediate level training program is most appropriate for your training progression.

I. Run/Walk

Beginner Level: Not currently running or walking consistently. May do equal walking and running in the early weeks. You should progress to walking no more than 1 minute of every 5 minutes running.

Intermediate Level: Presently able to run/walk a minimum of 30 minutes continuously with 24 minutes spent running. For example: Walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes; walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes; walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes = 30 minutes

II. Swim

Beginner Level: Not currently swimming/exercising consistently. May do an equal amount of swimming and rest during each workout for the first week. For example: swim for 30 seconds; rest for 30 seconds. In the early weeks swim at a pace that will allow you to recover in 10-30 seconds between laps. You should progress to resting for no more than 10-30 seconds for every 100 yards of swimming.

Intermediate Level: Able to swim a minimum of 30 minutes continuously with 25 minutes spent swimming. For example: Swim 4 laps, rest 30 seconds, Swim 4 laps, rest 30 seconds, repeat cycle for 30 minutes.

III. Strength

Follow the Beginner Strength Workout if you are unable to meet the following levels:

Follow the Intermediate Strength Workout if you are able to meet or exceed the following levels:

Men

Push-ups: 28

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 26 seconds

Women

Push-ups: 9

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 10 seconds

Selecting Your Workout Schedule

Once you have determined your correct current fitness level, refer to the attachments listed below to find your example exercise schedule.

- **Runners/Walkers:**
 - Attachment A if you are a Beginner
 - Attachment B if you are Intermediate
- **Swimmers:**
 - Attachment C if you are a Beginner
 - Attachment D if you are Intermediate
- **Strength Training:**
 - Attachment E – if you are a Beginner
 - Attachment F – if you are Intermediate

You will see that on each schedule there are days when you are asked to test your fitness level against time or distance targets. These “tests” are incorporated into the training program to provide you with feedback on your readiness for the actual APFT.

Tracking Your Progress

The last page of this guide is an exercise Recording Form. Three weeks of exercise sessions can be recorded on this card. You should make 4 copies of this card to track your 12 week training program.

Note: Do not write on the form in the guide. Use this as your template to make copies as needed.

Qualifying Standards for Physical Fitness Evaluation Events can be found at <http://oep.osophs.dhhs.gov/ccrf/physical.htm>

Beginner Example Run/Walk Progression

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed.	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Run/Walk 10-15 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 10-15 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 10-15 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 10-15 min
2	Run/walk 15 min	Strength workout	Run/walk 15 min	Strength workout	Run/walk 15 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 15 min
3	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 20 min
4	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 15-20 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 25 min
5	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 30 min
6	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 20-25 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)
7	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 35 min
8	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 25-30 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 40 min
9	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)
10	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 45 min
11	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 50 min
12	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)

Beginner Level: Not currently running or walking consistently. May do equal walking and running in the early weeks. You should progress to walking no more than 1 minute of every 5 minutes running.

*This training progression can be adjusted to best fit your weekly schedule.

Intermediate Example Run/Walk Progression

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed.	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 45 min
2	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 45-60 min
3	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 30-45 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)
4	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 60 min
5	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 60 min
6	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)
7	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 60 min
8	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 60 min
9	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)
10	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 45 min
11	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/walk 50 min
12	Run/Walk 45 min	Strength workout	Run 30 min fast pace	Strength workout	Run/Walk 45 min	Rest Day	Run/Walk 1.5 miles (Record Time)

Intermediate Level: Presently able to run/walk a minimum of 30 minutes continuously with 24 minutes spent running. For example: Walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes; walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes; walk 2 minutes; run 8 minutes = 30 minutes

*This training progression can be adjusted to best fit your weekly schedule.

Beginner Example Swim Progression

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed.	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Swim 10-15 min	Strength workout	Swim 10-15 min	Strength workout	Swim 10-15 min	Rest Day	Swim 10-15 min
2	Swim 15 min	Strength workout	Swim 15 min	Strength workout	Swim 15 min	Rest Day	Swim 15 min
3	Swim 15-20 min	Strength workout	Swim 15-20 min	Strength workout	Swim 15-20 min	Rest Day	Swim 20 min
4	Swim 15-20 min	Strength workout	Swim 15-20 min	Strength workout	Swim 15-20 min	Rest Day	Swim 25 min (Record Time of first 100 yards)
5	Swim 20-25 min	Strength workout	Swim 20-25 min	Strength workout	Swim 20-25 min	Rest Day	Swim 30 min
6	Swim 20-25 min	Strength workout	Swim 20-25 min	Strength workout	Swim 20-25 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)
7	Swim 25-30 min	Strength workout	Swim 25-30 min	Strength workout	Swim 25-30 min	Rest Day	Swim 35 min
8	Swim 25-30 min	Strength workout	Swim 25-30 min	Strength workout	Swim 25-30 min	Rest Day	Swim 40 mins
9	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)
10	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Rest Day	Swim 45 min
11	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Rest Day	Swim 50 min
12	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)

Beginner Level: Not currently swimming/exercising consistently. May do an equal amount of swimming and rest during each workout for the first week. For example: swim for 30 seconds; rest for 30 seconds. In the early weeks swim at a pace that will allow you to recover in 10-30 seconds between laps. You should progress to resting for no more than 10-30 seconds for every 100 yards of swimming.

*This training progression can be adjusted to best fit your weekly schedule.

Intermediate Example Swim Progression

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed.	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Rest Day	Swim 45 min
2	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Rest Day	Swim 45-60 min
3	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30-45 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)
4	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 60 min
5	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 60 min
6	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)
7	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 60 min
8	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 60 min
9	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)
10	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 45 min
11	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 50 min
12	Swim 45 min	Strength workout	Swim 30 min fast pace record distance	Strength workout	Swim 45 min	Rest Day	Swim 500 yards or 450 meters (Record Time)

Intermediate Level: Able to swim a minimum of 30 minutes continuously with 25 minutes spent swimming. For example: Swim 4 laps, rest 30 seconds, Swim 4 laps, rest 30 seconds, repeat cycle for 30 minutes.

*This training progression can be adjusted to best fit your weekly schedule.

Beginner Strength Workout

For information on proper form and execution of these exercises, check the APFT website:
<http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/ccrfapft.htm>.

In the workout plan below you should perform the exercises indicated on two non-consecutive days each week.

Week	Workout
1	Push-ups (modified or regular)* to fatigue Sit-ups or Side-bridge to fatigue **Record the number of repetitions you are able to complete for push-ups and sit-ups or the length of time you are able to hold the side-bridge. This will help to determine if you should follow the Beginner or Intermediate Workout plan.
2-4	Push-ups (modified or regular) for 1 minute Sit-ups for 1 minute or Side-bridge to fatigue
5-7	Push-ups (modified or regular) for 1.5 minutes Sit-ups for 1.5 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue
8	Push-ups (regular) for 1.5 minutes Sit-ups for 2 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue
9-12	Push-ups (regular) for 2 minutes Sit-ups for 2 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue

*If you are unable to perform push-ups on your hands and feet, modify the exercise by placing your knees on the floor.

**Working to fatigue is defined as the point where you are unable to perform another repetition correctly.

Follow the Beginner Strength Workout if you are unable to meet the following levels:

Men

Push-ups: 28

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 26 seconds

Women

Push-ups: 9

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 10 seconds

NOTE: This strength program only includes exercises that are performed in the APFT. For a complete strength workout, it is important to include exercises for all of the major muscle groups. These muscles include: chest, back, shoulders, arms, legs, hips, and abdomen. For more information on developing a complete postural strengthening program, check CDC's Physical Activity website: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html#Musclestrengthening>.

Intermediate Strength Workout

For information on proper form and execution of these exercises, check the APFT website:

<http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/ccrfapft.htm> .

In the workout plan below you should perform the exercises indicated on two non-consecutive days each week.

Week	Workout
1	Push-ups (modified or regular)* to fatigue Sit-ups or Side-bridge to fatigue **Record the number of repetitions you are able to complete for push-ups and sit-ups or the length of time you are able to hold the side-bridge. This will help to determine if you should follow the Beginner or Intermediate Workout plan.
2-3	Push-ups (modified or regular) for 1 minute Sit-ups for 1 minute or Side-bridge to fatigue
4-5	Push-ups (modified or regular) for 1.5 minutes Sit-ups for 1.5 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue
6-7	Push-ups (regular) for 1.5 minutes Sit-ups for 2 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue
8-12	Push-ups (regular) for 2 minutes, Sit-ups for 2 minutes or Side-bridge to fatigue

*If you are unable to perform push-ups on your hands and feet, modify the exercise by placing your knees on the floor.

**Working to fatigue is defined as the point where you are unable to perform another repetition correctly.

Follow the Intermediate Strength Workout if you are able to meet or exceed the following levels:

Men

Push-ups: 28

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 26 seconds

Women

Push-ups: 9

Sit-ups: 37

Side-bridge: 10 seconds

NOTE: This strength program only includes exercises that are performed in the APFT. For a complete strength workout, it is important to include exercises for all of the major muscle groups. These muscles include: chest, back, shoulders, arms, legs, hips, and abdomen. For more information on developing a complete postural strengthening program, check CDC's Physical Activity website: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html#Musclestrengthening>.

Exercise Recording Form

Name: _____

Dates: _____

Week _____							
Date							
Cardio							
Push-ups							
Sit-ups							
Side-bridge							
Notes							
Week _____							
Date							
Cardio							
Push-ups							
Sit-ups							
Side-bridge							
Notes							
Week _____							
Date							
Cardio							
Push-ups							
Sit-ups							
Side-bridge							
Notes							

This recording form can help you to identify if you are ready to take the APFT or if you may need more assistance in your preparation. It allows you to record your workouts for 3 weeks. Print 4 copies of this form to use during the 12-week training progression.

Use this recording form to track your progress as you prepare for the APFT. You can use each block to record the following:

- Cardio: record your run/walk or swim time
- Push-ups: record the number completed
- Sit-ups: record the number completed
- Side-bridge: record the length of time you were able to hold a side-bridge
- Notes: make note of anything you'd like to remember about that day's workout. For example, make note if you were able to reach a specific goal that day or if you were able to progress from a modified push-up to a full push-up.