

Preparing for the Army Combat Fitness Test

INFORMATION AND FUTURE BOOK UPDATES BASED ON THE LATEST CHANGES TO THE ACFT

From Nate Palin and Rob Hartman, the authors of *Preparing for the Army Combat Fitness Test*: “The world is more dynamic than ever. Training for the ACFT is a priority of soldiers and leaders at every level. Our book is not a manual, it’s a part of a solution - it’s the X’s and O’s (no matter what test is required).”

ACFT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

These are taken from <https://www.army.mil/acft/#faq>. **NOTE:** The Q/A below are only a portion of all the FAQs; go to the link and review the other FAQs as well.

What has changed since ACFT 3.0?

The Army will implement a revised ACFT, starting on April 1, 2022, that will include several differences based on 630,000 sample ACFT test scores, the RAND independent assessment, and feedback from Soldiers. **The test now includes performance-normed scoring standards, scaled to age and gender. Additional changes include the plank as the sole core-strength event and the addition of the 2.5-mile walk as an alternate aerobic event.** In addition, the Army will establish an ACFT governance body to continue to assess testing data and provide a comprehensive analysis, with any recommended future modifications to the ACFT, in April 2023. The new scoring standards were developed from historic performance rates and more accurately assess individual physical fitness goals reflective of age and gender categories. **The leg tuck was removed** after RAND concluded the exercise did not correctly measure core strength in all Soldiers. Instead, the plank was determined to provide a similar testing experience and more accurately assess core strength for all Soldiers.

For more information about the PLANK: <https://www.army.mil/acft/#event5>

Why the change to an age and gender performance-normed scoring scale?

The shift to an age and gender performance-normed scoring scale was based on thorough analysis of all data, Soldier feedback, and analysis from the RAND independent study. The adjustment in scoring scales more

accurately reflect a distribution of performance across all elements of the Army and ensure a fair transition to a new fitness test of record. The resulting ACFT scoring scales are still rigorous and will enable the Army to promote a culture of physical fitness and readiness.

How were the new scoring scales developed?

The new age and gender performance-normed scoring scales were developed using the data from the nearly 630,000 ACFT scores, historic performance rates from the APFT, and scoring scales from other branches of the U.S. military. The maximum (100 points) was set at the 96th percentile of performance within each age group and for each event. Similarly, the minimum passing score (60 points) for the MDL [3 repetition maximum deadlift], SPT [standing power throw], HRP [hand release push-up–arm extension], and SDC [sprint-drag-carry] was set at the 5th percentile. The remainder of the scales were set using an even distribution of observed Soldier performance. The Army used data from the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy to set the baseline for the plank scale. The two-mile run [2MR] minimum score was initially set at the 3rd percentile; however, based on observed data, it was adjusted to ensure that no subgroup will be required to complete the ACFT two-mile run faster than the old APFT run standard. The Army has commissioned additional analytic support from RAND and established a six-month delay before commencing record testing to further reduce any remaining risk to our Soldiers. Additionally, the Army has established a governance structure with oversight by Army Senior Leaders to continue analysis and closely monitor the ACFT. The Army expects Soldiers to pass the ACFT at rates similar to the APFT and will reassess standards over time.

The new SCORING SCALES: https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/acft/ACFT_scoring_scales_220323.pdf

Why did the Army decide to remove the leg tuck from the test?

Based on analysis of observed test data, the Army determined that the plank simply provides a more accurate measure of core strength for all Soldiers. The RAND independent study observed that the leg tuck was not an accurate predictor of core strength for all Soldiers, as it requires a minimum pre-requisite upper body strength that made it impossible to measure core strength across all Soldiers commensurately. In response, we are using the plank as the sole exercise to assess core strength, using recognized standards from the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy as a baseline and modifying the scales based on Army requirements.

Why not continue to allow Soldiers to choose between the plank and leg tucks?

Moving to the plank as the sole core assessment allows the Army to verify that the ACFT properly measures all Soldiers' core strength consistently and equally. In addition, it ensures Soldiers have a similar testing experience and opportunity to succeed during every event of the ACFT. Incorporating the plank in a time-phased, deliberate manner will ensure that all Soldiers can adjust to the plank prior to the ACFT being implemented for personnel actions.

When is the ACFT going to be implemented for administrative actions?

The ACFT will be incorporated into personnel policy in a time-phased, deliberate manner, beginning April 1, 2022, to ensure all Soldiers have the opportunity to test and familiarize themselves with the new event and scoring scale. Regular Army and Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldiers will take a diagnostic ACFT between April 1, 2022 and Sept. 30, 2022. Soldiers who pass the ACFT during the diagnostic period can use their test for record any time after Oct. 1, 2022. Reserve Component Soldiers will take a diagnostic ACFT between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023 and will have the same option to use their diagnostic test for record after April 1, 2023. All Regular Army and AGR Soldiers are required to take a record ACFT beginning Oct. 1, 2022, with Regular Army and AGR Soldiers taking their first record test prior to April 1, 2023 and Reserve Component Soldiers taking their first record test prior to April 1, 2024. Record ACFT scores will be used for RA & USAR AGR administrative actions starting Oct. 1, 2022, while the Reserve Component will use ACFT beginning Apr. 1,

2023 for personnel actions, to include retention and evaluations. The ACFT will be a requirement for all Professional Military Education starting on or after Oct. 1, 2022, regardless of component.

UPDATES PLANNED FOR THE NEXT PRINTING OF THE BOOK

This section explains what will be changed in the *Preparing for the Army Combat Fitness Test* book in its next printing. The purpose of the page-specific details is to **show the updates that will be made** in the tables, figures, photos, sections, paragraphs, and sentences to reflect the latest information released by the Army as found on the www.army.mil/acft website.

- Throughout the book: The leg tuck test will be removed in all places (but, as an exercise, it still will be included in the training programs)
- Table of contents: Chapter 6 will be retitled as *Plank*
- Page ix: The reference to the leg tuck in the third paragraph will be replaced with the plank
- Page ix: The paragraph starting with, *In appreciation for the differing...* will be deleted (because there are not multiple levels of scoring standards)
- Page x: The photo of the leg tuck (figure 1.2e) will be replaced with a photo of the plank (see page 20)
- Page 4: Figure 1.1 will be deleted and the related text will be revised to reflect that a pull-up bar is no longer needed for the ACFT
- Page 5: The term *scoring standards* will be changed to *scoring scales* (this will be changed throughout the book) because age and sex performance-normed scoring scales have replaced the previous scoring standards
- Page 5: The information surrounding the March 2022 date will be deleted
- Pages 6-8: Table 1.1 will be replaced with the new March 23, 2022 tables that are found at: https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/acft/ACFT_scoring_scales_220323.pdf
- Page 10: The maximum score information will be deleted and table 2.1 will be replaced with this table:

Table 2.1 3 Repetition Maximum Deadlift Minimum Scoring Scale (in pounds)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120	140	120

(NOTE: For the new tables in chapters 2-7, the source is the PDF that will be used to update table 1.1)

- Page 12: The maximum score information will be deleted and table 3.1 will be replaced with this table:

Table 3.1 Standing Power Throw Minimum Scoring Scale (in meters)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	6.0	3.9	6.3	4.0	6.5	4.2	6.5	4.1	6.4	4.1	6.2	3.9	6.0	3.7	5.7	3.5	5.3	3.4	4.9	3.4

Page 14: The maximum score information will be deleted and table 4.1 will be replaced with this table:

Table 4.1 Hand Release Push-Up–Arm Extension Minimum Scoring Scale (reps in 2 minutes)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Page 17: The maximum score information will be deleted and table 5.1 will be replaced with this table:

Table 5.1 Sprint-Drag-Carry Minimum Scoring Scale (min:sec)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	2:28	3:15	2:31	3:15	2:32	3:15	2:36	3:22	2:41	3:27	2:45	3:42	2:53	3:51	3:00	4:03	3:12	4:48	3:16	4:48

Page 19: The chapter will be retitled to *Plank* and the photo of two soldiers doing the leg tuck will be replaced with a photo of a soldier doing the plank

Page 19: The description of the leg tuck will be replaced with a description of the plank:

The Plank (PLK) event tests core strength and muscular endurance. Relevant soldiering tasks include any that require anterior core strength, like combatives and shooting from various positions.

The ready position is with your hands on the ground, either in fists with the little finger side of your hands touching the ground or with your palms flat on the ground; elbows flexed and aligned under your shoulders; forearms flat on the ground and angled toward each other; and hips flexed with one or both knees resting on the ground. On command, lift both knees off the ground and move your hips into a straight line with your legs, shoulders, and head and with your eyes focused on the ground. Your feet may be up to a boot-width apart and your elbows should be positioned over your shoulders with your forearms forming a triangle. Your ankles should be flexed with the bottom of your toes on the ground. Your head, shoulders, back, hips and legs must be straight from your head to your heels throughout the test (figure 6.1). Further, your feet, forearms, and fists (or palms) must remain in contact with the ground. The plank event is terminated when you touch the floor with any part of your body (except your feet, forearms, fists, or palms), raise a foot or hand off the ground, or fail to maintain the straight-line position your head to your heels.

Page 20: The photos for figure 6.1 and figure 6.2 will be deleted and replaced with this photo of the plank:



Page 20: The scoring information about the leg tuck will be deleted and table 6.1 will be replaced with this table for the plank:

Table 6.1 Plank Minimum Scoring Scale (min:sec)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	1:30	1:30	1:25	1:25	1:20	1:20	1:15	1:15	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10

Page 21: The paragraph on this page will be deleted (and the photo will be moved to be figure 6.1)

Page 23: A correction will be made to state that the two-mile run is conducted after the *plank* (since the leg tuck was replaced)

Page 24: The maximum score information will be deleted and table 7.1 will be replaced with this table:

Table 7.1 Two-Mile Run Minimum Scoring Scale (min:sec)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Minimum	22:00	23:22	22:00	23:15	22:00	23:13	22:00	23:19	22:11	23:23	22:32	23:42	22:55	24:00	23:20	24:24	23:36	24:48	23:36	25:00

Page 24: There are now *four* alternative aerobic events; the 2.5-mile walk will be added as an option to support the testing locations that are unable to provide the equipment or facilities needed for the row, bike, or swim alternate events

Page 24: The sentence starting with, *To pass, the selected event...* will be revised to state that *to pass, the selected event must be completed by the time maximums provided in table 7.2* (which will be a new table added to the book)

Page 25: The three photos in figure 7.2 will be deleted and replaced with a new table 7.2:

Table 7.2 Alternative Events Maximum Allowed Time (min:sec)

Age	17-21		22-26		27-31		32-36		37-41		42-46		47-51		52-56		57-61		62+	
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
2.5-mi walk	31:00	34:00	30:45	33:30	30:30	33:00	30:45	33:30	31:00	34:00	31:00	34:00	32:00	35:00	32:00	35:00	33:00	36:00	33:00	36:00
12-km bike	26:25	28:58	26:12	28:31	26:00	28:07	26:12	28:31	26:25	28:58	26:25	28:58	27:16	29:50	27:16	29:50	28:07	30:41	28:07	30:41
1-km swim	30:48	33:48	30:30	33:18	30:20	32:48	30:30	33:18	30:48	33:48	30:48	33:48	31:48	34:48	31:48	34:48	32:50	35:48	32:50	35:48
5-km row	30:48	33:48	30:30	33:18	30:20	32:48	30:30	33:18	30:48	33:48	30:48	33:48	31:48	34:48	31:48	34:48	32:50	35:48	32:50	35:48

Page 41: Within the Muscular Endurance section, the information about the leg tuck will be replaced with information about the plank: *The HRP tests muscular endurance of your upper-body pushing muscles while the PLK tests muscular endurance of your trunk muscles.*

Page 41: The job title of Major Donny Bigham will be deleted on a previous page, so it will be added back here: *head strength coach at the Army's Tactical Athlete Performance Center (TAP-C)*

Page 46: Table 10.1 will be updated to reflect the inclusion of the plank instead of the leg tuck:

Table 10.1 Fitness Components by Event

Fitness component	ACFT event
Muscular endurance	Hand Release Push-Up–Arm Extension, Plank
Muscular strength	3 Repetition Maximum Deadlift
Power	Standing Power Throw
Anaerobic endurance	Sprint-Drag-Carry
Aerobic endurance	Two-Mile Run

(**NOTE:** The words that appear under table 10.1 will be deleted)

- Page 47: The definition of muscular endurance in the fourth paragraph will be revised:
Muscular endurance is essentially the ability to produce force repeatedly or hold a contraction (position) for an extended duration.
- Page 48: The second paragraph will be replaced with: **The PLK is also intended as an assessment of muscular endurance.** Unlike the HRP, the PLK requires the involved musculature to have a sufficient level of endurance to hold the body in one position, rather than to perform many submaximal repetitions. It is similar to the HRP, however, in that muscular strength and body composition will influence your ability to perform the test (i.e., to hold the plank position for an extended period of time). If your MDL does not need to be a priority based on your initial evaluation but the PLK does, it is important to examine the likelihood of a body composition limitation. If this does not fit your specific situation, upper-body muscular strength (specifically horizontal pushing) is likely the limiter.
- Page 49: The reference to the leg tuck in the third paragraph will be replaced with the plank
- Page 177: The reference to the leg tuck in the first paragraph will be deleted
- Page 217: The reference to the leg tuck in the first paragraph will be deleted
- Page 255: The reference to the leg tuck in the third paragraph will be replaced with the plank
- Page 279: The acronym for the leg tuck will be deleted and the acronym for the plank will be added: **PLK: Plank**
- Page 281: The citations for the first three United States Army resources will be updated:
United States Army. Army Combat Fitness Test. Accessed April 7, 2022. www.army.mil/acft.
United States Army. ACFT scoring scales. Accessed March 23, 2022. www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/acft/ACFT_scoring_scales_220323.pdf.
United States Army. FM 7-22 Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F). Accessed April 7, 2022. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN30714-FM_7-22-000-WEB-1.pdf.
- Page 283: The bios for the two authors will be updated:
Nate Palin, MS, CSCS, served as a leader in the 2nd Ranger Battalion for seven years prior to his transition to strength and conditioning. He began his coaching career in 2010 as owner of The Movement Project LLC, an entrepreneurial personal training effort, then narrowed his focus to tactical strength and conditioning as a performance specialist for EXOS in 2012. Palin coached Special Operations Forces at Joint Base Lewis-McChord from 2015 to 2018 before leading the NSCA's tactical program until 2020 when he became the Director of Education for the FitOps Foundation. In 2021, Palin collaboratively launched The Initiative, a physical and psychological health and performance collective that empowers military, fire and rescue, and law enforcement professionals through coaching, education, and consultation.
Rob Hartman, MAEd, CSCS, serves as a supervisory strength and conditioning specialist at the United States Air Force. He began his career servicing the Special Operations community in late 2010, spending the first six years with the 1st Special Forces Group and more recent years working with the Special Operations Aviation Regiment. During his tenure in the tactical community, Hartman educated others in the field with his participation in the NSCA's TSAC Practitioners Course, EXOS' Tactical Training course, NSCA's TSAC Annual Training conference, the Tactical Athlete Human Factors Summit, and

briefs to various units on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. His experience allows him to be consulted for macro and micro areas in the field, but he typically deals with modeling programming and profiling of tactical operators' aerobic and anaerobic attributes.