

Passing the basic Air Force fitness exam: Could you do it?

25 March 2011

Can you do 27 push-ups in 1 minute, 46 sit-ups in 1 minute and run 1.5 miles in under 14:22? If so, you can graduate from the United States Air Force Basic Mandatory Training.

That is, if you are a [woman](#).

[Men](#) must complete 45 push-ups in 1 minute, 50 sit-ups in 1 minute and run 1.5 miles in 11:57.

"Those numbers are tough to hit even for many 18-year-olds who are supposedly in their prime," said Staff Sgt. Jacob Colon, USAF.

Recruits have six weeks from the time they report to military training to pass the examination. Failing to pass the physical fitness test is the top reason why recruits are "recycled" - sent back for additional training.

To give his Chicago team a "leg up," Colon regularly trains new recruits at Gottlieb Center for Fitness in Melrose Park to help get them in shape before their official entrance exams.

"I have recruits do two kinds of push-ups - diamond and also pyramid," he said of the more than 100 Chicagoans he trains each year. "It's better that they get introduced to what is expected of them now than wait till they get to boot camp and potentially feel overwhelmed."

An advanced form of push-up, the diamond style, involves kneeling on all fours with the hands close together so the two index fingers and two thumbs are touching and form a diamond.

The pyramid push-up is the diamond push-up but with a different style of counting. "You may start with completing 15, then you complete 14 and work down to 1," Colon said. "And does that last push-up ever feel good."

Gottlieb Center for Fitness recently received an

award from the USAF in recognition of the health facility's willingness to partner in training.

"Many of our Gottlieb members actually are inspired to work even harder when these young recruits exercise alongside of them," said Ursula Dams, manager, Gottlieb Center for Fitness. "We have many members who once served in the armed services and they feel a sense of pride in believing they have maintained their physical fitness."

Training Tips to Pass the Armed Services Examination

Here is training advice to help you "drop down and give me 5" with confidence:

To pass the push-up test, you need to master the push-up technique and then practice, practice, practice. You can add a variety of push-up styles into your routine, such as decline push-ups, diamond push-ups, plyometric push-ups, etc. When you complete your push-up workout, finish with easier push-ups on your knees and continue until you can't do any more.

To pass your sit-up test, you need excellent abdominal and hip flexor strength and endurance. Doing lots of sit-ups is your goal, but to get there, you may want to add a variety of ab and core exercises into your sit-up training routine. This will help you to develop good overall core strength and endurance. Practice sit-ups, as well as planks, knee raises and oblique exercises.

If you are new to running, get your body accustomed to the activity. Once you are able to jog for 30 minutes, you are ready to build more speed and power.

To improve your 2-mile run time, you can incorporate sprint interval training or run "ladders" at a 400-meter track. Here is a basic ladder

workout that will get you ready for the 2-mile run test.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

Do this workout at a 400-meter track, twice a week with at least three days between workouts.

Warm up by jogging for two laps (800m)

Run 1 lap (400 m) at your goal pace

Jog 800m

Run 400 m at goal pace

Continue for 8 laps (2 miles)

Over time (every two weeks) increase the laps run at goal pace and decrease the laps jogged, until you can maintain your goal pace for the entire 2 miles.

Opened in 1961, the Gottlieb Center for Fitness is the first health center in the Midwest to be part of a hospital and also open to membership by the community.

"Not just the new recruits, but also our special-services forces train at Gottlieb and come to us in much better shape, on average, than many others in around the nation," said Lt. Col. Mark Formica, 347th Recruiting Squadron commander.

Air Force personnel are required to take a physical fitness test at least twice per year. "The atmosphere at Gottlieb is very welcoming, and the fact that a full-scale community hospital is right next door gives added confidence to try and push harder."

Featuring two indoor pools, a running track and more, the Gottlieb Center for Fitness has partnered with the United States [Air Force](#) for more than five years.

"I've always wanted to offer a real boot camp training class led by the sergeant to our members," Dams said. "I'd sign up to take it, too; I want to know if I could meet the challenge!"

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