

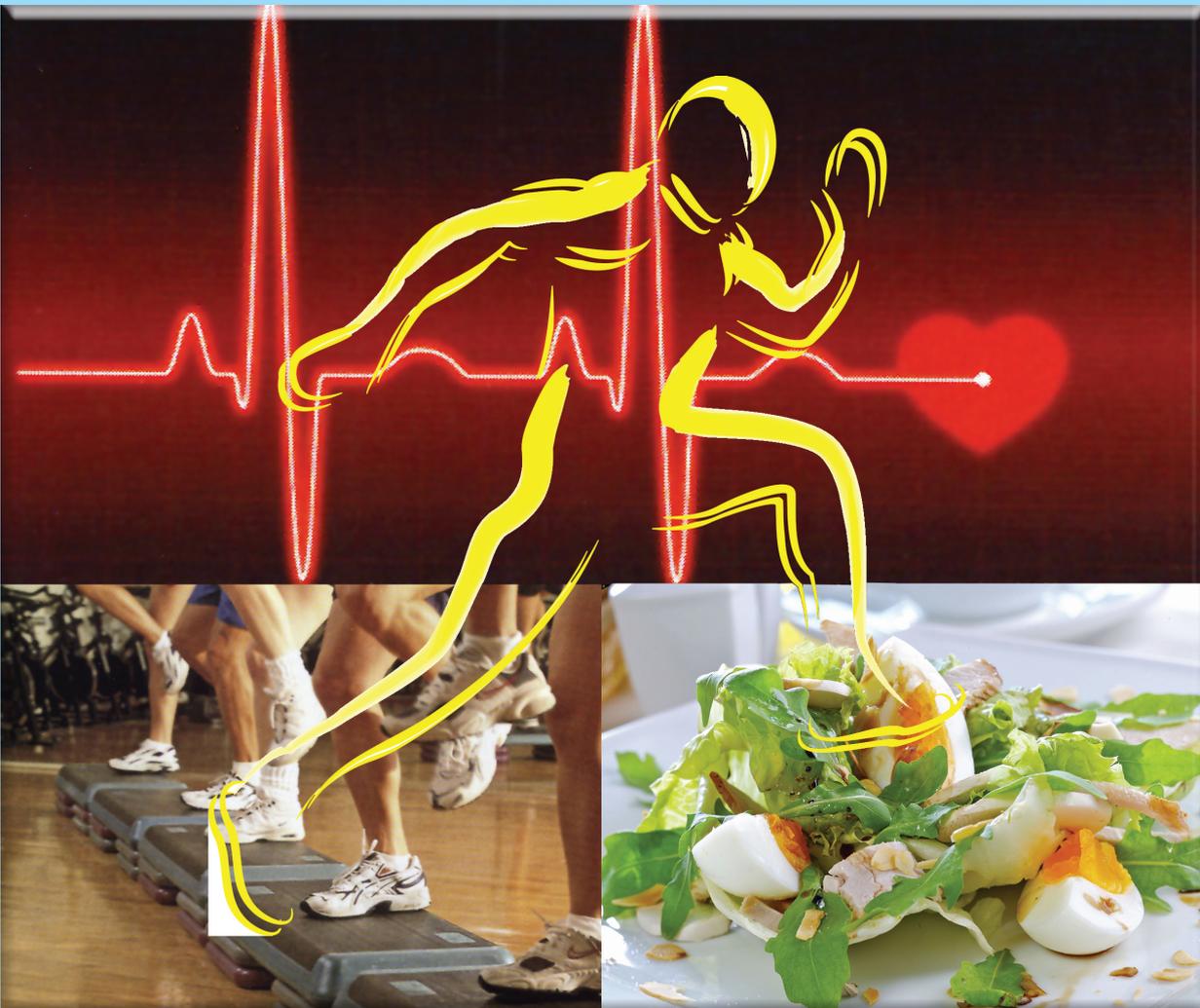


HM Prison &  
Probation Service



# HOW TO PASS YOUR FITNESS ASSESSMENT

*Guidance for candidates*



updated 25 Jan 2022

## **Some thoughts....**

It is helpful when you see fitness testing as a positive. Along with regular moderate exercise, that can have benefits to you and your family!

Physical activity can help reduce blood pressure, cholesterol, helps to control body weight, help reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, helps reduce risks of type 2 Diabetes and some cancers.

Regular exercise helps you feel more relaxed, increases energy levels, improves concentration, helps you sleep more easily and can benefit your mental health & wellbeing - helping you look and feel great.

## **Introduction**

This booklet has been produced by the National Fitness Strategy team to help you reach the level of fitness required to pass the mandatory basic fitness test.

It sets out a basic exercise programme that will assist you in training to pass the fitness test.

None of the actions set out in this booklet are mandatory but by following them you will greatly increase your chances of passing the test.

The exercise programme set out in this booklet does not require any specialist equipment, supervision or activities.

However, the programme can be tailored according to your lifestyle and the facilities available to you.

This could incorporate personal factors not taken into account by this booklet, such as:

- The level of exercise you already undertake, for example sporting activity or cycling to work
- The time you are able to devote to your training, given other commitments
- The facilities available to you, either in your establishment gym or elsewhere
- Your personal preferences.

You are advised to consult with your doctor before beginning any exercise programme.

The test has been set at the level of fitness required to perform Control and Restraint.

By meeting this level, you demonstrate to yourself and the Prison Service that you have the necessary physical fitness to perform all aspects of your job safely.

## **Top Tips**

Keep these in mind when planning your training programme.

### ***The bleep test lasts for under 4 minutes***

Your training should be based around maintaining a high intensity of exercise for a short period of time, not a low intensity of exercise for a long period of time.

A short run will be better training than a long walk.

### ***Make best use of the resources available***

Begin training as soon as possible.

Fitness doesn't improve overnight but a little effort over an extended period of time can have big dividends.

### ***Be positive***

You do not need to be an athlete to pass the test. 99.99% of candidates pass the test by the third attempt.





# EXERCISE SAFELY

You should always warm up and stretch before exercising and cool down and stretch when you have finished. This improves your performance, flexibility and helps you to avoid injury.

## Warm up

- Begin with 2-3 minutes of brisk walking or light jogging, then increase the pace slightly for another 2-3 minutes
- Then loosen all your major joints for 2-3 minutes, including shoulders, hips, knees and ankles
- Finish with a series of stretches (see right). Stretch gently and slowly, and hold the position for 15-20 seconds.

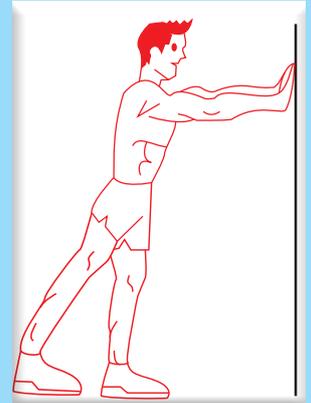
## Recommended Stretch Routine

### Calf muscles

The basic calf stretch is ideal for loosening up the lower legs ready for a run or walk. Stand about one or two feet away from a solid wall and ease into the position shown.

Once in a comfortable position the leg can be placed back.

Try to keep the feet pointing straight ahead in line with the lower leg and not with your toes pointing outwards.

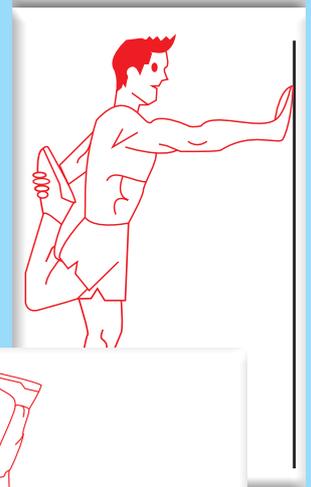


### Thigh Muscles

A popular stretch for the muscles of the upper legs, and also to help loosen the knee joint.

Using a wall for stability, reach and grab your foot firmly.

Stand straight with the thighs pointing down to the floor, and gently push the foot further towards the lower back until you feel the slight stretch in the quadriceps or thigh muscle of the upper right leg.

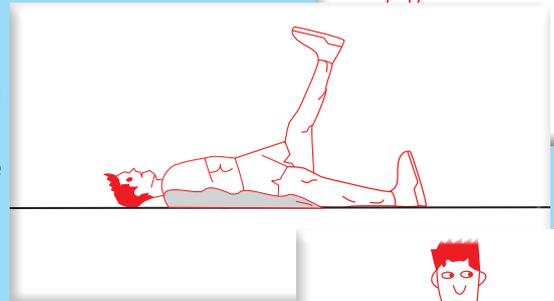


### Hamstring

Lying down, lift your leg so that it is almost perpendicular to the floor.

Try to slowly lock the knee joint at this point, holding it in position with your arms.

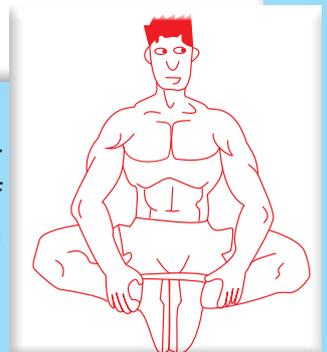
Alternatively, you can stretch these muscles by touching your toes.



### Groin

With your knees pointing outwards put the soles of your feet together and hold onto your toes.

Rest your elbows around the shin area in line with the lower legs and make sure you feel stable. Gently pull yourself forward, bending from the hips until you feel a little stretch in the groin area.



## Cool down

- Begin with some light jogging, slowly reducing the pace over 2-3 minutes
- Finish with some light stretches (see right), holding the position for about 10 seconds.

## Remember

- Don't bounce while stretching
- Don't ask someone else to push your stretch further
- Don't hold your breath while stretching

The following table sets out your recommended fitness programme, the exercises are explained on subsequent pages.

Not everyone will need to start at Week 1: your Fitness Assessor will tell you what stage you should start at, given your performance on the Fitness Test and where you fit into the six to eight week programme.

	<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 3</i>	<i>Day 4</i>	<i>Day 5</i>	<i>Day 6</i>	<i>Day 7</i>
<b>Week 1</b>	Run 1	Strength 1	Run 1	Rest	Strength 1	Run 1	Rest
<b>Week 2</b>	Run 1	Strength 1	Run 2	Rest	Strength 1	Self Test	Rest
<b>Week 3</b>	Run 2	Strength 1	Run 2	Rest	Strength 1	Run 3	Rest
<b>Week 4</b>	Run 3	Strength 1	Run 3	Rest	Strength 1	Self Test	Rest
<b>Week 5</b>	Run 4	Strength 2	Run 4	Rest	Strength 2	Run 4	Rest
<b>Week 6</b>	Run 5	Strength 2	Run 4	Rest	Strength 2	Self Test	Rest
<b>Week 7</b>	Run 5	Strength 2	Run 5	Rest	Strength 2	Run 5	Rest
<b>Week 8</b>	Run 6	Strength 2	Rest	Run 5	Rest	<b>Fitness Test</b>	Rest

## TRAINING RUNS - EXPLANATIONS

### Run 1

Walk / jog for 15-25 minutes, at a pace at which you could still hold a conversation with someone else.

### Run 2

Jog for a full 15-25 minutes, at a pace at which you could still hold a conversation with someone else.

### Run 3

Jog to warm up for 10 minutes, then pick up the pace slightly to one you can sustain, then run faster for 3 minutes.

Jog for 3 minutes and then run faster again for 3 minutes.

Jog to cool down for 6 minutes.

### Run 4

Jog to warm up for 10 minutes, then increases the pace slightly but so you can sustain it for 5 minutes.

Jog for 5 minutes and then run faster again for 5 minutes.

Jog to cool down for 5 minutes.

### Run 5

Jog to warm up for 10 minutes. Increase the pace and run faster at a pace you can sustain for 10 minutes.

Jog for 10 minutes to cool down.

### Run 6

Set up 2 markers 15 metres apart. Jog for 5 minutes to warm up and practise turning on your left and right legs by running at about 70% of your sprinting pace from one marker to the other, turn as fast as you can around the second marker and jog back to where you started.

Repeat 6 times.

When turning stay as close to each marker as possible.

Next, sprint from one marker, around the other and back again.

Rest for 30 seconds and repeat but turn in the opposite direction.

Complete the sprint 4 times, rest for 3 minutes and repeat another 4 times.

Jog for 10 minutes to cool down.



# YOUR FITNESS PROGRAMME



In the run-up to the Fitness Test, it is a good idea to test yourself to see if you are achieving the pass mark.

Please practice the bleep test and agility test by going on the Prison Officer Portal link. <https://prison-officer-online-ac.co.uk/after-assessment-centre>

Select **After your assessment tab**, then scroll down to practice fitness tests all information and instructions are listed to assist your preparation.

- Use a treadmill.  
The following table shows how to compare distance covered on a treadmill to performance in the Bleep Test  
*NB: all treadmills are calibrated differently by different suppliers and they are aided by a motor.*
- This is a training aid and does not take into consideration the 'turns' on the bleep test. You need to complete the Self Test.

Remember to do each level one after another without resting, to simulate the conditions of the actual test.

BLEEP TEST			TREADMILL EQUIVALENT		
Level	Number of Lengths	Minimum Seconds per Length	Speed (km/hour)	Distance to Cover (Metres)	Total Level Time (Secs)
1	7	7	7.7	105	49
2	8	6.5	8.4	225	51
3	8	6	9	345	48
4	8	5.7	9.1	465	47
5	4	5.4	9.9	600	49



# SELF TEST



TEST ELEMENT	PASS LEVEL
GRIP TEST	25 KGF
SHIELD TEST	1 MINUTE
MSFT	LEVEL 5.4
SPEED / AGILITY	34 SECONDS

## THE JOB RELATED FITNESS TEST

Four tests have been devised to measure the fitness standards that underlie the physical tasks that Prison Officers perform.

These are tests of grip strength, endurance fitness, agility and a functional shield hold.

Performance on the tests will provide a good indicator of a candidate's capability to perform various officer tasks safely and without the risk of injury.

The tests run consecutively and minimum standards must be achieved on each.

### TEST 1

#### **GRIP STRENGTH** *level required, 25 kilogrammes of force (KGF) on each hand*

Prison Officer's duties such as lifting objects and performing Control & Restraint, (physically restraining disruptive or violent prisoners) techniques, require what is called 'static strength'.

This is the force that a muscle or a group of muscles can exert over a brief period of time.

The most easily administered test of static strength is the grip strength test.

Grip strength has been shown to provide an accurate representation of your overall bodily strength and will reflect your ability to perform those tasks that require strength.

The grip strength will be assessed by the use of a grip strength dynamometer.

This involves simply gripping the dynamometer in the hand and squeezing as hard as possible.

The dynamometer will record the maximum force exerted in kilograms.

The employee will be allowed up to three attempts on each hand.

### TEST 2

#### **STATIC SHIELD HOLD**

Prison Officers are sometimes called upon to use protective equipment, including shields.

During an incident the shield may need to be held up to protect yourself and colleagues, for some time.

The test involves holding a 6Kg short shield in front of the body in a functional position, arms semi flexed and elbows clear of the body, one leg forward of the other.



# PRISON OFFICER RECRUITMENT FITNESS TESTING LEVELS

## TEST 3

### ENDURANCE FITNESS or bleep test.

Level 5.4 required - running back and forth between two lines which are 15 metres apart.

Prison Officers are sometimes required to perform physical activities such as Control and Restraint Basic training and application, alarm bell response, C&R Advanced training and application.

The ability to perform activities such as these will largely be based upon your level of endurance fitness which is the capacity to continue prolonged physical activity.

As such, endurance fitness is a reflection of how efficient the heart and lungs are and it is required in any activity that causes a person to get out of breath for a prolonged period of time.

This particular test of endurance fitness involves running back and forth along a measured track in time with a series of “bleeps” on an audio disc.

The test is progressive in that the timing bleeps start off slowly but become faster as each level is reached.

The Vo2 Max level required is 34.7.

You only get 1 attempt to pass this test so please ensure you are fully prepared and have practiced this test before attending your recruitment day.

## TEST 4

### SPEED AGILITY

The speed agility test measures both your ability to run /jog as well as to negotiate obstacles and change direction.

Running / jogging at pace, often around objects and corners, is needed when responding quickly to an incident.

The test involves performing two straight-line shuttle runs separated by an agility course (slalom), in a reasonable time.

The agility course involves running around a series of cones in a ‘slalom’ fashion and is designed to assess your ability to change direction whilst responding to incidents (agility).

## **Strength Training - Explanations**

### **Strength 1**

Complete 2 sets of 10 repetitions of each of the following exercises. Rest for 60 seconds between each set and for 2 minutes between each exercise type.

#### **Squats**

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and put your hands on your hips. Keep your back straight and squat down until your knees are parallel with your thighs and stand up again. Keep your head and chest up throughout.

#### **Dips**

Sit on the front edge of a chair. Place your hands either side of your thighs to grip this edge. Keep your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Ease yourself forward so that you are suspended over the front of the chair. Now bend your arms and dip down in front of the chair as low as possible, then return to your starting position.

#### **Step-ups**

Stand at the bottom of the stairs with your hands by your sides and head up. Step up onto the bottom stair so that both feet are on it and your legs are extended. Then return to the starting position.

#### **Tennis ball squeezes**

Hold a tennis ball in each hand. Stand with your knees relaxed and your feet shoulder width apart. Keeping your hands by your sides but not touching them squeeze the ball as tightly as possible. Hold for 3 seconds then release.

#### **Hamstring lifts**

Lie on your back on the floor facing a chair with your knees bent and your calves resting on the seat. Keeping your hands by your sides, raise your pelvis off the ground as high as possible, and then return to the start position.

#### **Press ups**

Lie on your front with your elbows bent your hands palms down and level with your shoulders. Keep your back flat and push yourself up with your hands until your arms are straight. This is your starting position. Now lower yourself back to the ground until your chest is almost touching the floor, then push back up to the starting position. This counts as a complete press-up. To begin with you may need to do this exercise off bent knees. If initially you cannot complete a set of 10, do as many as you can and build up to 10.

### **Strength 2**

Complete 3 full sets of 10 repetitions each of the exercises in strength 1. Rest for 60 seconds between each set and for 2 minutes between each exercise type.







# NOTES



# NOTES

A large, empty white rectangular area with a thin black border, intended for taking notes.



Designed and printed by Albany Print & Design  
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**APD3892**