

Fitness Testing Study Sheet

Fun Facts

Why test for fitness? Fitness is an important indicator of a healthy life, and it can be lost or gained with a change of lifestyle. It is important to know whether we are fit so that if we are not, we can work on it, and if we are already fit, we can maintain it.

Is it important to be the best in the class to be fit? When taking the Fitnessgram, you will find out whether you are in the healthy zone in a variety of areas. It is not important to have the longest reach, the fastest times, or the least body fat. It is only important that what you have and what you do falls into the healthy zone.

Why learn about a normal bell curve? Scientists and mathematicians have looked at many measures and learned that if they take them all, stack them up so they are organized into highs and lows, and connect all the stacks with dots, they get a bell curve where 1% of the scores are at the top, 1% are at the bottom, and all the others fall equally distant from the middle score. When that happens and all the scores are equally distributed on a curve, there is a normal distribution of all the possibilities. From that phenomenon springs the notion that if the scores reflect normal possibilities, then when we talk about fitness, the average range or above must be fit. However, if we did a statistical analysis of current fitness scores, the curve would be lopsided toward the bottom of the range. When this happens, we do not have a normal curve and what is average may not be fit. That is why performance on the NYS fitness test, which was statistically analyzed many years ago, gives us something to compare our performance to. It reflects a normal distribution of performance when a relatively fit generation handed in their scores across the state of New York.

Is there a difference between skill-related activities and fitness-related activities? Yes, there is—it is not necessary to do the most or be the fastest or reach the farthest. It is only necessary that what we do and how we let our body grow does not hinder our health or lifestyle.

Why is an achievement level 4 or a score in the 34th percentile acceptable in fitness when it is failing in other subjects? Teachers would love if everyone learned everything they taught and could score 100% when tested. However, when assigning values to performance scores, there is no such thing as a score of 100. If people have performed in the top 1% and thus have done better than 99% of the scores submitted, they have performed in the 99th percentile. Similarly, if scores fall in the low average range, they will be in a perfectly acceptable range of performance and in the 34th percentile. Though they did better than only 34 percent of their peers, that performance was perfectly all right!

Why would I want to compare myself with someone my age who may have been tested years ago? Curiosity would be my motivation, especially when my teachers and parents claim that their generation did better. Even today's sport heroes would love to be able to see how they would do against the athletes they grew up wanting to be like. All they can compete against is their record because their heroes can no longer perform at the level they did when they won their accolades.

Why do we use music when getting scores for the Fitnessgram? The best possible score is not important; being in the healthy zone of performance is. That is why some tests are done to music. It provides the same beat for everyone. No one will be going faster or slower, though some people might have to stop. The goal is to learn if you perform in a healthy range or not and how and where to improve in order to get or maintain health-related fitness.

How is it possible that my friends look so much bigger than me, but I weigh more? Fat composition and body weight are not necessarily the same. Muscle weighs far more than fat. The BMI will figure out how much of the body is fat.

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How is it possible that my friend is thinner than I am and eats more? Many variables make us burn our caloric intake differently. Among them is how much activity we do. If we burn what we eat, we do not gain weight. If we don't, the body stores what we don't burn and we get bigger. For now, we must remember that muscle requires more nourishment and burns more calories than fat does. This is important to know because a high level of body fat is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

What does sitting and reaching have to do with fitness? As important as having abdominal muscles strong enough to take the pressure off the spine is having flexibility that limits the risk of pulling a muscle in the low back. In youth, it is rare to suffer an aching back or sciatic pain because the damage is not done—yet. The curve of the human spine puts an extraordinary burden on the back. To help keep the spine in line, we strengthen both the abdominal and back muscles, but stretching helps keep them in line, too. Joint flexibility is crucial to avoiding serious injury. Repetitious activities strengthen muscles but make them shorter. Muscles need to be stretched to maintain range of motion because short or imbalanced muscles influence movement and have the potential to cause injury.