

PFT Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

The questions and answers for the Physical Fitness Test.

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More Information

More information about the PFT and the *FITNESSGRAM* are available on the CDE-sponsored [PFT Training](#)  Web site. Materials offered on this Web page included training modules to assist PFT coordinators with the submission and correction of PFT data and video clips of the *FITNESSGRAM* tests using California's testing protocol (i.e., employee of the district administering and scoring the tests.)

Background

1. Why does California have a Physical Fitness Test?

By law (California *Education Code* Section 60800), all public local educational agencies in California are required to administer the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) annually to all students in grades five, seven, and nine. The PFT provides information that can be used by (1) students to assess levels of health-related fitness and to plan personal fitness programs; (2) teachers to design the curriculum for physical education programs; (3) parents and guardians to understand their child's fitness levels; and (4) by teachers, parents, and guardians to monitor changes in the student's fitness levels.

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2. What is the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

The State Board of Education designated the *FITNESSGRAM* as the PFT for students in California public schools. The *FITNESSGRAM* is a comprehensive, health-related physical fitness battery developed by The Cooper Institute. The primary goal of the *FITNESSGRAM* is to assist students in establishing lifetime habits of regular physical activity.

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3. What fitness areas are tested? What test options are available for each fitness area?

The *FITNESSGRAM* is composed of the following six fitness areas, with multiple test options provided for most areas:

Aerobic Capacity

- 20-Meter PACER (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run)
- One-Mile Run
- Walk Test (only for ages 13 or older)

Body Composition

- Skinfold Measurements
- Bioelectric Impedance Analyzer
- Body Mass Index

Abdominal Strength and Endurance

- Curl-Up

Trunk Extensor Strength and Flexibility

- Trunk Lift

Upper Body Strength and Endurance

- Push-Up
- Modified Pull-Up
- Flexed-Arm Hang

Flexibility

- Back-Saver Sit and Reach
- Shoulder Stretch

A graphic display of the fitness areas and test options is found in the “*FITNESSGRAM: Fitness Areas, Test Options, and Equipment*” on the [California Department of Education PFT Program Resources](#) Web page. Descriptions of the six fitness areas and test options can be found in the *2012-13 PFT Reference Guide* on the [California PFT Resources](#) Web page.

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4. What are the criteria for each fitness area?

The *FITNESSGRAM* uses objective criteria to evaluate performance for each fitness area (e.g., aerobic capacity, body composition, abdominal strength and endurance). The Cooper Institute established these criteria using current research and expert opinions. These criteria represent a level of fitness that offers some protection against the diseases associated with physical inactivity. The criteria for boys and girls are different for tests where there is a valid rationale from a health-related perspective. For example, differences in cardiac function and body composition between adolescent boys and girls result in boys having a higher aerobic capacity than girls. You can find additional information about the criteria and how they were established in the *FITNESSGRAM* Reference Guide available on [The Cooper Institute](#) Web page. The Healthy Fitness Zone standards are available on the [California Department of Education Physical Fitness Test FITNESSGRAM: Healthy Fitness Zone Charts](#) Web page.

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5. Why did The Cooper Institute change the FITNESSGRAM Healthy Fitness Zone standards?

In 2011, The Cooper Institute revised the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ) performance standards for the aerobic capacity and body composition fitness areas. The performance standards for these two fitness areas have been classified into three general areas: HFZ, Needs Improvement (NI), and NI-High Risk (now NI-Health Risk).

The Aerobic Capacity prior to 2011 was reported in the number of laps completed for the PACER, the One-Mile Run was reported in minutes and seconds, and only the Walk Test was reported in terms of $VO_2\text{max}$. Now all three-test options are calculated and reported in terms of $VO_2\text{max}$. $VO_2\text{max}$ refers to the maximum oxygen consumption of an individual during exercise. It reflects the body's ability to provide energy to the muscles. $VO_2\text{max}$ is derived from $V=\text{volume}$, $O_2=\text{oxygen}$, and $\text{max}=\text{maximum}$. Students can be assessed with any of the three-test options, and the result will be based on the same estimate of aerobic capacity, $VO_2\text{max}$. HFZ standards for Aerobic Capacity have been adjusted for gender and age differences, where the HFZ for boys and girls are similar for younger students (i.e., 12-years old and younger) and as age increases, the $VO_2\text{max}$ increases for boys and decreases for girls.

HFZ standards for Body Composition changed but the calculations did not change. The new body composition standards take into account the natural development of boys (gain muscle) and girls (gain fat). The standards for percent body fat have been equated with Body Mass Index values. The new HFZ standards for boys and girls help identify students at risk for metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is an indicator of current and future health risk and includes the following factors:

- High fasting glucose
- Large waist circumference
- High triglycerides
- Low high density lipoprotein cholesterol
- High blood pressure

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6. How did the FITNESSGRAM standards change in 2013?

The only change to the standards for 2012–13 is to the name of the Needs Improvement – High Risk designation for Aerobic Capacity and Body Composition. This designation will be reported as Needs Improvement – Health Risk. The *FITNESSGRAM* or Healthy Fitness Zone standards are available on [FITNESSGRAM: Healthy Fitness Zone Charts](#) Web page.

Physical Fitness Test (PFT) Administration

7. Who takes the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

All California public school students in grades five, seven, and nine are required to take the PFT, whether or not they are enrolled in a physical education class or participate in a block schedule. These students include those enrolled in elementary, high, and unified school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools. Students in alternate programs, including, but not limited to, continuation schools, independent study, community day schools, county community schools, and nonpublic schools must also take the PFT. Students who are physically unable to participate in the entire PFT should complete as many of the tests as possible.

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8. When is the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) given?

The designated testing window for administering the PFT to students in grades five, seven, and nine is February 1 through May 31 (California *EC* Section 60800). The test may not be administered outside of this window. (Note: The PFT window **does not** apply to students who may be given the *FITNESSGRAM* in grades ten or higher to determine exemption eligibility.) Local educational agencies seeking flexibility in the statutory time requirements due to block scheduling (e.g., 400 minutes of physical education every 10 school days) may be permitted to administer the PFT outside of this window after obtaining a waiver from the SBE. Information on this waiver policy is available on the [California Department of Education Waivers](#) Web page.

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9. Who can administer the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

The PFT shall be administered and scored by employees of the LEA (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 5, Section 1043). For purposes of the PFT, students may not administer the tests to each other, and parents or guardians may not administer or help with the administration of the PFT to students.

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10. How can schools best prepare students for the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

Students should be instructed in basic concepts of fitness development and maintenance in the required physical education program. (The required physical education program consists of 200 minutes every 10 school days for grades one through six, and 400 minutes every 10 school days for students in grades seven through twelve [California *Education Code* sections 51210 and 51222].) Physical fitness instruction should include explanations of each fitness area and its relationship to good health as well as specific physical activities that improve or maintain each of the components of health-related fitness. Further, teachers should provide students opportunities to participate in vigorous physical activity and exercise throughout the school day and in physical education classes. Because conditioning prior to testing is important to the safe administration of the PFT, adequate time should also be allowed for students to learn about how each fitness-area test is administered and to engage in practice sessions.

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11. Can students complete more than one test option for each fitness area?

Multiple test options are provided for most fitness areas so that all students, including those with disabilities, have the maximum opportunity to participate in the tests. The teacher or the student may select the test to be counted for each fitness area. Only one test for each fitness area should be reported. It is not necessary for all students within a school or all schools within a local educational agency to select or use the same test option for a fitness area.

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12. Are make-ups allowed for students who are absent on a particular day of testing?

Yes. Schools should provide make-up opportunities for students who are absent on testing days; however, all make-ups need to take place within the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) administration window (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 5, Section 1043).

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13. Are students who repeat a grade required to re-take the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

Yes. Students repeating grade five, seven, or nine, are required to re-take the PFT.

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14. Can students be excused from the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

The general opt-out provision of California *Education Code* Section 60615 does not apply to the PFT. There are a limited number of allowable reasons for not participating in parts or all of the PFT (e.g., medical excuse, student with disabilities); therefore, most students cannot be excused from the PFT.

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15. What is done to assist students with disabilities on the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

Certain variations or accommodations may be provided for students with disabilities who need special assistance on the PFT. *Matrix 1. Matrix of Test Variations, Accommodations, and Modifications for Administration of California Statewide Assessments* provides a list of the types of variations and accommodations that are available for the PFT. This matrix is available on the [California Department of Education Student Testing](#) Web page. Teachers of students needing accommodations or modifications for the PFT, which are not listed on this matrix, should contact the California PFT Coordinator, Linda Hooper, Education Research and Evaluation Consultant, by phone at 916-445-9449 or by e-mail at pft@cde.ca.gov. Any accommodations or modifications should be specified in the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

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16. What is the process for making the decisions about accommodations for students with disabilities?

The individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan team is responsible for deciding how students with disabilities will participate in the PFT. Students with disabilities should be given as much of the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) as conditions permit, which means they may end up being partially tested.

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Materials and Training

17. Where can the test administration materials be ordered?

FITNESSGRAM materials are not available from the California Department of Education. The materials needed for the *FITNESSGRAM* administration may be ordered from Human Kinetics by phone at 800-747-4457, extension 2423, or through the Human Kinetics *FITNESSGRAM* [Web site](#). Human Kinetics offers most of the resources needed for the test administration, including the *FITNESSGRAM/ACTIVITYGRAM Test Administration Manual* (Updated Fourth Edition) and other materials, such as skinfold calipers and curl-up measuring strips.

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18. What training should local educational agencies (LEAs) provide for staff to administer the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

To better understand the requirements of the *FITNESSGRAM* and to ensure the integrity of the PFT data, LEA and school PFT coordinators should ensure that all personnel involved with the administration of the PFT are thoroughly familiarized with the test materials and administration procedures. PFT coordinators should use the *FITNESSGRAM/ACTIVITYGRAM Test Administration Manual* (Updated Fourth Edition) available on the [Human Kinetic FITNESSGRAM Training Options](#) [Web page](#) and involve personnel with prior experience in the test administration. The manual includes a DVD with video clips of all the test procedures and a CD with the pace or cadences for the 15-meter and 20-meter PACER, curl-up, and push-up. (Cadences help students with pacing their movements for the curl-up and push-up.)

PFT coordinators and teachers may also participate in face-to-face *FITNESSGRAM* trainings, which may be available locally, or by completing the free online training course offered by [Human Kinetics FITNESSGRAM Training Options](#) [Web page](#). The online *FITNESSGRAM* training resource and the *FITNESSGRAM Test Administration Manual* show students administering the tests. It is important to note that this aspect of the online training and the manual does not comply with *California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 1043* requiring the PFT to be administered and scored by employees of the LEA or county office of education.

Video clips using California's testing protocols, and other training materials, which can also be used by district and school PFT coordinators and physical education teachers to conduct PFT training sessions, are available on the [PFT Modules, Videos, and Training](#) [Web site](#).

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19. What is the annual apportionment for the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

The state does not provide annual PFT apportionments. Most costs associated with the test administration are the responsibility of the LEA. These costs include purchasing materials and equipment, training teachers and examiners, and processing and analyzing the data. These costs may be recoverable as "state-mandated costs." The State Controller's Office administers cost recovery and may be contacted by phone at 916-445-2636. Detailed mandated cost claim instructions are found on the [California State Controller's Office State Mandated Costs](#) [Web page](#). Under the heading of "Annual Manuals," select the most current fiscal year under "School Districts." Next, under the "State Mandated Cost Programs" heading, scroll down and select the "Physical Performance Tests – Program No. 173 form."

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Data Collection

20. Where should the local educational agencies (LEAs) send the data from the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) administration?

An LEA that processes its own PFT data should submit the data to the current state PFT contractor, San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJC OE) that is responsible for collecting and preparing the PFT reports for California. If an LEA contracts with a vendor to process the PFT results, the LEA must submit the data from the PFT administration directly to PFT contractor. For more information, refer to the *2012-13 PFT Coordinator Manual* available on the [California PFT Resources](#) Web page. SJC OE does not provide vendor services for LEAs.

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21. What are the options for submitting the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) data?

There are two options for submitting the data electronically to the San Joaquin County Office of Education, the state PFT contractor:

Web Data Entry

- Enter each student's data via an interactive Web data collection application.

Web Data Upload

- Upload tab-delimited text file (which may be converted from the MS Excel template)

Note: Submission of data files via e-mail attachments is **not** permitted.

In addition, some LEAs prefer to contract with vendor for pre-ID and scannable data collection services. Vendor services or software exports must also follow the required state format. A list of known vendors is presented in the "2012-13 PFT Resources" document on the [CDE PFT Program Resources](#) Web page.

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22. Why does the California Department of Education and the state Physical Fitness Test (PFT) contractor, San Joaquin County Office of Education, have to refuse submissions of e-mailed PFT student data?

Submission of student personal information through e-mail or e-mail attachments violates student privacy (*California Government Code* Section 11019.9, *Education Code* sections 49073 through 49079, and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA]). Data submission to state contractor must be made through the secure [District Portal of the California PFT](#) Web site.

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23. What is the Template Generator Tool?

On February 1, 2013, the Template Generator application will be available to PFT coordinators through the secure [District Portal of the California PFT](#) Web site. This application generates a Microsoft (MS) Excel student data template using a Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Pre-ID file or an exported FITNESSGRAM 8 or 9 data file. The Template Generator provides the MS Excel template with the information filled in from the fields in the uploaded file. If the STAR Pre-ID and FITNESSGRAM files are both uploaded, the demographic data from the STAR Pre-ID and test data from the FITNESSGRAM file are combined into one MS Excel template file by matching Statewide Student Identifiers (SSIDs). More details about the Template Generator will be made available closer to February 1, 2013.

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24. Can the optional FITNESSGRAM software be used for collecting the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) data?

One option for collecting data involves the use of the *FITNESSGRAM* software. However, versions 8.6 and 9.2 of this software includes a data export feature, which does not produce files that conform to California PFT data collection and reporting requirements. However, *FITNESSGRAM* software users can now use the Template Generator application on the secure [District Portal of the California PFT](#) Web site, which will generate an MS Excel student data template. Because the *FITNESSGRAM* software does not use the two-part race/ethnicity question and the California Department of Education has added two fields to determine the economic status of the student, additional steps are required and instructions will be provided to upload the PFT data file to the state PFT contractor, San Joaquin County Office of Education. These instructions, which are included in the *FITNESSGRAM* Instruction Kits for Versions 8.6 and 9.2, which is available on the [California Physical Fitness Test Resources](#) Web page.

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25. What is the timeline for submitting the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) data?

Data from the 2012–13 PFT administration must be submitted to the state PFT contractor, San Joaquin County Office of Education, by the reporting deadline of June 30, 2013. This is one month after the close of the PFT administration window. Only one additional window will be provided to submit PFT data and it must be done using via Web-Data Upload. The Web Data Entry application is not available after the June 30 deadline.

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26. How are the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results reported?

Performance on aerobic capacity and body composition fitness-area tests is classified into three general areas:

- Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ)
- Needs Improvement (i.e., not in HFZ)
- Needs Improvement – Health Risk

Performance on the other fitness-area tests is classified into two general areas:

- Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ)
- Needs Improvement (i.e., not in HFZ)

The desired goal for each test option is the HFZ. The range of measurements that fall into the HFZ for each test option can be found on the [California Department of Education \(CDE\) PFT *FITNESSGRAM*: Healthy Fitness Zone Charts](#) Web page. All students should strive to achieve a score within the HFZ for each fitness-area test.

The Needs Improvement, or NI, designation signifies a fitness area where the student's score is not in the HFZ and where the student would benefit from physical activities designed to improve performance in the designated fitness area to achieve the HFZ. NI – Health Risk specifically indicates increased health risks due to the student's level of fitness. It may be possible for some students to exceed the HFZ; however, this practice is not recommended since exceeding the HFZ may result in injury to the students. Therefore, the CDE scores a student who exceeds the HFZ as NI. For Body Composition only, however, the CDE considers a student who exceeds the HFZ as meeting the HFZ.

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27. How does one determine the student's age for reporting the annual Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results?

The student's age is determined by the first date of PFT testing. This date may be different for students in the same physical education class in the same school.

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Reporting and Using Results

28. When can parents and guardians expect to receive their children's score reports?

Students must be provided with their individual results, either orally or in writing, upon completion of the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) (California *Education Code* Section 60800). Although not legally required, local educational agencies (LEAs) may choose to send a PFT score report to parents and guardians. Parents and guardians should be advised to check with their LEA to determine if and when PFT score reports will be sent home.

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29. When are the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results available on the California Department of Education Web site?

The CDE usually posts annual PFT results in the fall on the [CDE DataQuest](#) Web site. Local educational agencies that contract with an outside vendor to process their PFT results may receive a copy of their summary results from the vendor earlier than this date.

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30. Are the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results included on the School Accountability Report Card (SARC)?

Schools are required by law to include the most recent PFT results, which include the percentage of students scoring in the Healthy Fitness Zone for all of the six fitness areas tested in the SARC (California *Education Code* Section 60800). To protect student privacy, scores are not shown when the number of students tested is ten or fewer. The *SARC Preparation Guide for Public Schools*, which is available on the [California Department of Education SARC](#) Web page, contains a sample table for the physical fitness data.

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31. How can the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results be used?

The PFT results can be used in several ways. Schools can use them to determine the fitness levels of their students and to provide direction for curricular plans. Students can be encouraged to use the results to develop personal fitness programs of maintenance or improvement. Parents and guardians can use the results to help their child plan fitness activities matched to their individual needs. Since the PFT is given annually, schools and local educational agencies can also use the results to monitor changes in the fitness status of students. PFT results should always be reviewed and used to make decisions in conjunction with other information related to physical performance and physical education curriculum.

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32. What are inappropriate uses of the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) test results?

The PFT results should not be used as the sole basis to evaluate individual students in physical education (e.g., grading), teacher effectiveness (e.g., teacher evaluations), or the overall quality of a physical education program.

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33. Do the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results appear on student transcripts?

There is no requirement to include PFT results on student transcripts.

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34. Is there a requirement to keep the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) results in student permanent records?

Yes. Schools should keep the PFT results in student cumulative records or files (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 5, Section 1044).

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35. Is there an awards program for the Physical Fitness Test (PFT)?

No. California does not offer an awards program for the PFT. Local educational agencies, schools, parents and guardians, and community members are encouraged to recognize students, including those with disabilities, for improving exercise behaviors or achieving the Healthy Fitness Zone in different PFT fitness areas. Care should be taken, however, to protect students' individual results.

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program has begun transitioning to full implementation of the *FITNESSGRAM* in the 2013-14 school year. More information about this awards program is available from the [Presidential Youth Fitness Program](#)  Web site.

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