



POLICE INITIAL FITNESS ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENT OFFICERS

1. INTRODUCTION

Policing has never been an easy job. As a police officer you will be required to handle a variety of situations involving physically challenging tasks. For this you need a reasonable level of strength, agility and stamina to deal effectively with situations as well as to defend yourself or others.

One element of the assessment for appointment as a constable is a physical fitness test. Every candidate must pass this test if his or her application is to be processed further.

There are two elements and you must pass both to achieve the required standard. If you prepare and train properly for the test, there is no reason for you to fail.

Once you are appointed you must keep up your level of fitness. Your fitness will be regularly assessed during training. You will be required to take and pass a job related fitness test on an annual basis. Failure to pass the test at that stage may lead to your discharge. It is essential therefore that you maintain your fitness level.

The purpose of this document is to provide candidates with information on the test, the test procedures and on ways to improve your test score.

2. THE TEST ELEMENTS

Police officers are sometimes required to perform physically demanding tasks as part of their police duties. It is essential that they maintain a standard of physical fitness, which will enable them to perform these tasks safely and effectively. It is for this reason that candidates wishing to join the police service must achieve minimum standards of physical fitness.

In order to assess a candidate's fitness, two tests have been developed by Loughborough University to measure the fitness qualities that underlie the physical tasks performed by police officers. These are tests of grip strength and endurance fitness. Performance on the tests provides a good indicator of a candidate's capability to perform various police tasks. The tests run consecutively and minimum standards must be achieved on each.

The minimum test levels required to pass the physical fitness test are:

Grip Strength	32 kgs
Endurance Fitness (multi-stage shuttle run)	Level 5.4

Test 1: Grip Strength

Police officers are required on occasion to lift heavy objects or people and to restrain suspects. The ability to perform such activities is required over a brief period of time. The best and 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 police tasks that require strength.

Your grip strength will be assessed by the use of a grip strength dynamometer. This involves simply gripping the dynamometer in the preferred hand and squeezing as hard as possible. The dynamometer will then record the maximum force exerted in kilograms. You will be allowed two attempts and your best score will be recorded.

You will need to exert a force of 32 kgs to pass this element of the test.

Test 2: Endurance Fitness – multi-stage shuttle run

Police officers are sometimes required to perform prolonged activities such as foot chases, stair climbing and public order duties. The ability to perform such activities is largely based upon your level of endurance fitness, which is your capacity to continue prolonged physical activity. As such, endurance fitness reflects how efficient your heart and lungs are, and is required in any activity which caused you to get out of breath.

The endurance fitness test involves running to and fro along a 15-metre track and placing your leading foot on each end line in time with a series of audio bleeps. If you arrive at the end of the line before the bleep sounds you should turn around, wait for the bleep before resuming running and adjust your speed. The test is progressive in that the timing of the bleeps starts off slowly but becomes faster so that it becomes more difficult to keep up with the required speed. You will run until you can no longer keep up with the set pace. To pass the element of the test you must reach a minimum of one shuttle at level 5.4.

3. TRAINING TO IMPROVE YOUR TEST SCORES

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GRIP STRENGTH

Type of Exercise:

Use a tennis ball or roll up a couple of sheets of waste paper into a ball, just large enough to fit in your hand. Crush the ball as hard as possible for six seconds, then release. Repeat until your gripping muscles are tired.

Duration:

This depends on which exercise you choose.

Number of sessions:

Three, five or even more times per week because the muscles in your hands and forearms recover quickly.

Intensity:

To failure.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ENDURANCE

Type of exercise:
Continuous jogging.

Duration:
20-40 minutes without a break. Your aim should be to achieve three nine-minute miles (that is running three miles in 27 minutes).

Number of sessions:
Three to four per week.

Intensity:
Make sure your muscles and breathing are fatigued and that your heart rate rises to 140-160 beats per minute by the end of the session. This is not particularly intense and you should be able to sustain a conversation with a running partner.

4. SUMMARY

To make sure that you pass the physical fitness test we strongly recommend you begin the training programme outlined.

- There is no reason why you shouldn't do all the elements of the training in the same session, but don't allow a session to last more than one hour.
- At least once during a training period, practice all the test elements together; one three mile run and five minutes of grip training.
- Between sessions your muscles need time to recover from exertion, so spread your sessions out throughout the week, rather than cramming them into the weekend when you may have more free time. In particular, try not to do press-ups on three consecutive days.

During each training session, note down the distance covered in your runs and how long you actually run for. Doing so means you can monitor your progress to make sure the training programme is working for you.

- Remember, the more you put into a session, the more you get out of it.

If you have any doubt about your ability to take part in these tests you are advised to seek medical advice before commencing a fitness-training programme with or without specialist supervision.