Preparing for the physical rigors of Cadet Basic Training (CBT)

A New Cadet’s fitness level and individual preparation for the specific physical rigors of CBT will directly influence their success and minimize the chance of injury. New Cadets can expect long days that are mentally and physically taxing.

Physical Requirements

1. **Weighted Foot Marches.** A routine part of military operations is moving from one location to another while carrying a load. As such, New Cadets are introduced to weighted foot marches (“ruck marches”) during CBT. New Cadets will conduct foot marches 3-5 times over the summer across varying distances which culminates with a 12-mile foot march from Lake Frederick to West Point while carrying 45lbs of equipment.

2. **Swim Test.** During the first week of CBT, New Cadets will swim 150 yards for time. Performance during the swim test will determine which level of survival swimming class (e.g., novice, intermediate, high, advanced) an individual will take at the Academy.

3. **Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT).** The ACFT is a physical fitness assessment with age and gender normed scoring. The test consists of six events and provides an evaluation of preparedness for the physical demands of military service. The following link provide a detailed description of each event: [Army Combat Fitness Test](#).

4. **Daily Physical Readiness Training.** Military life includes daily physical readiness training (PRT). CBT will introduce New Cadets to PRT to impose stress, expose them to Army PRT, and enforce proper movements standards. This training builds foundational skills necessary to develop fitness and meet the physical rigors of USMA.

How to prepare

1. **Weighted Foot Marches.** Foot marching requires mental toughness. It also requires toughened feet and lower body muscular endurance capable of moving oneself and one’s equipment across miles of hilly terrain. These can be developed by starting with weight and distance that is reasonable to your ability. Start by conducting a weighted movement 1-2 times per week. Begin with a distance of three miles, a weight of 20lbs and a goal pace of 16 minutes per mile without running. Increase the weight and distance 5% weekly.
2. **Swim Test.** For non-swimmers, it is imperative to enroll in a recognized program of basic swim instruction prior to arrival at West Point. Many organizations offer "Learn to Swim" programs, most notably the American Red Cross and the YMCA/YWCA. Those who are already qualified swimmers should place a greater emphasis on conditioning and swimming proficiency to maximize performance on the swim test.

3. **Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT).** Preparation for the ACFT can be accomplished by adhering to a comprehensive training plan that includes muscular fitness, cardiovascular, and flexibility activities. Training should consist of compound exercises, that utilize the whole body, and progress in difficulty by increasing resistance, intensity, or time. Training should not be restricted to only practicing ACFT events. Starting early, keeping a detailed training log, and working with a friend are helpful ways to stay accountable and be ready for R-Day.

4. **Daily Physical Readiness Training.** The general recommendations outlined above for the ACFT will also provide an adequate preparation for daily PRT. To maximize preparedness and minimize injury, New Cadets should apply extra emphasis to improving their flexibility and strength-to-body weight capacity. This will improve range of motion and the ability to move effectively during military activities that occur over the course of the summer.

   a. Flexibility training should occur 5-7 times a week using a both static and dynamic stretching. Static stretching involves lengthening a muscle to near its furthest point and then holding that position for 30 – 45 seconds. Dynamic stretching uses gentle and controlled movements where joints and muscles go through a full range of motion (e.g., exaggerated lunge step).

   b. To improve strength-to-body weight capacity, New Cadets should incorporate bodyweight exercises into their fitness program. Bodyweight exercises are strength training activities that use an individual's own weight to provide resistance against gravity. For example, pull-ups is a common exercise that improves an individual's ability to pull their own weight.

      i. For those who can repetitively move their own weight, consider increasing the intensity (additional resistance/weight) or volume (number of repetitions).

      ii. For those who cannot move their own weight, start with assisted exercises (e.g., banded or partner-assisted pull-ups).

**End State**

Cadet Basic Training is a demanding progression of sequenced training requirements, which form the foundation for all future instruction at the United States Military Academy. New Cadets will be challenged daily with difficult physical demands as they learn fundamental military skills. For New Cadets to perform their best and avoid injury, they should prepare themselves physically through regular, challenging fitness training. New Cadets should arrive physically toughened, prepared for training.