

RUN TO WIN: MASTERING MILITARY FITNESS WITH A SMARTER TRAINING PLAN



All military fitness tests include a running component designed to measure your aerobic capacity. Depending on your branch of service, the required distance can range from 1.5 miles (as in the Air Force) to 3 miles (as in the Marines). To maintain readiness and ensure success, it's essential to train consistently throughout the year, not just in the weeks leading up to your test. However, many physical training leaders in the military aren't equipped with the best practices for enhancing performance and minimizing injury risks.

The old advice of "just run double the test distance once a week, and you'll pass" might work for some, but it's not the most efficient or effective approach for most service members. Instead, I'll outline a more strategic training model that prioritizes technique, intensity, and volume to improve your running performance and reduce your risk of injury.

Focus on Technique

Just like in weightlifting or gymnastics, mastering the correct technique in running is crucial for both improving performance and preventing injuries. I recommend training with the Pose Method, a system developed by Dr. Nicholas S. Romanov, a two-time Olympic coach. The Pose Method emphasizes key concepts like using gravity, maintaining a key pose, and efficiently managing your body weight and support. By focusing on these principles, you can enhance the effectiveness of your running and reduce your risk of injuries such as shin splints, plantar fasciitis, and runner's knee.

Poor running technique can lead to injuries, which not only hinder your training but can also affect your ability to perform your duties in garrison or downrange. Correcting these technical flaws early is essential for long-term success and health. Over 30 scientific studies support the Pose Method's effectiveness in promoting proper running form, making it a reliable choice for military members aiming to improve their performance. Consider working with a Pose Technique Specialist to refine your form before progressing to more intensive training.



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2. Prioritize Intensity

Intensity in training is relative to each individual, which means your running program should be adaptable to your current fitness level. While a structured six-week training plan provides a solid foundation, it's crucial to have the flexibility to adjust as needed to ensure you're meeting the intended training stimulus. Alternatively, you can work with a coach who can tailor your plan accordingly.

Though the running portion of your fitness test is designed to measure aerobic capacity, incorporating a significant amount of anaerobic training—like high-intensity sprints and time trials—will yield better results. This approach boosts your performance more effectively than moderate jogging or simply accumulating mileage.

Managing rest times between intervals smartly is another way to maintain high intensity. For example, if you run 6 x 400 meters with 90 seconds of rest between rounds, aiming for a consistent pace (say 1:55-2:00 per round), and later in the program you can maintain the same pace with only 60 seconds of rest, that's a clear sign of improvement. If you can't maintain your pace with reduced rest, it might be time to reassess your training plan to ensure you're progressing positively.

3. Control Your Volume

The principle of "Quality over Quantity" is key when it comes to volume. By focusing more on technique and high-intensity workouts, you can reduce the overall volume of your running, which in turn helps prevent injuries. Remember, the goal is to train smarter, not longer.

For example, when preparing for a 1.5-mile test, I rarely exceed a total of 2 miles in any single training session, whether that's through intervals or a specific time trial. Reducing volume can be a challenging mindset shift, especially if you're accustomed to the long-distance running emphasized in many basic training programs. However, those programs often prioritize volume for efficiency rather than optimizing individual performance. If you have control over your training time, always prioritize quality over quantity.

By focusing on these three pillars—technique, intensity, and volume—you can develop a running training program that not only prepares you for your fitness test but also keeps you healthy and ready for duty. This foundational approach will set the stage for a more detailed six-week training plan designed to maximize your performance and minimize injury risk.

Two Mile Training Plan

WEEK	DAY ONE		DAY TWO		DAY THREE	
1	8 x 200m	Consistency	3 rounds	Consistency	2 Mile Run	Time Trial
	Rest 2 mins	Intervals should not exceed 3-5 seconds in range	3 mins run, 4 mins rest	Distance should not exceed 100m in range	Run smart and fast	
2	6 x 400m	Consistency	20 min EMOM	Effort	For distance	Effort
	Rest 3 mins	Intervals should not exceed 5-7 seconds in range	100m	Keep all intervals under 1 min	15 mins @ 80% of Time Trial pace	Calculate pace and do not exceed 80%
3	2 x 800m, 2 x 400m, 2 x 200m	Effort	3 rounds	Consistency	Moderate pace	Effort
	Rest 1:1	Second interval must be faster than first	5 mins run, 1 min rest	Distance should not exceed 100m in range	5K	Run smart and fast
4	For 15 mins	Effort	2 x 1200m	Effort	For distance	Effort
	Every :45 secs 100m	Keep all intervals under :45 seconds	Rest 3 mins	Distance should not exceed 100m in range	20 mins @ 80% of Time Trial pace	Calculate pace and do not exceed 80%
5	3 rounds 100m, 200m, 400m. Rest :30 secs between intervals	Effort	4 x 800m	Consistency	For distance	Consistency
	Rest 1:30 mins between rounds	Run smart and fast	Rest 1 min	Intervals should not exceed 5-7 seconds in range	2 x 8 mins Rest 2 mins	Distance should not exceed 100m in range
6	Easy pace 1 mile	Tapering run	8 x 200m	Tapering run	2 Mile Run	Time Trial
			Rest 1:2			Run smart and fast

Notes:

Train three days a week at your discretion. If possible, do not train on back-to-back days. Integrate strength training and mobility work for a balanced approach to fitness.

Types of training sessions:

Effort - Focus on purposeful intensity and pacing

Consistency - Focus on technique and energy management

Tapering - Focus on recovery and preparation

Time Trial - Focus on execution