

## Training for ACFT

The recent ACFT announcements have a lot of people asking how to train for the new test. Designed to more thoroughly and broadly test physical ability for combat and functional roles, the ACFT shouldn't be scary or intimidating, as long as you're executing the right training to prepare for it. I've written this article to outline how to train for each event. The events are listed in order of perceived difficulty from most to least difficult, based on my observations and conversations with the majority of Soldiers during an ACFT.

### #1. **EVENT: Hex Deadlift (3RM/Three Repetition Maximum)**

Components Tested: Muscular Strength

Unfortunately, many units don't train the muscular strength component of physical fitness sufficiently. In reality, this is an easy event to train for. The best way to dominate this event is to train for it with heavy sets of the exercise in a 5x5 structure. The ideal weight for 5x5 is about 80% of your 1RM/one repetition maximum.

### **SOLUTION: 5 x 5 Strength Work, Hex Deadlift**

Time: 15-20 Minutes

Components Trained: Muscular Strength

1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - 2-3 Sets of 10 Bodyweight Squat, Controlled Reps
  - 1 Set x 5 Reps of Hex Deadlift at 25-30% of 1 Rep Max
  - 1 Set x 5 Reps of Hex Deadlift at 50-60% of 1 Rep Max
2. 5x5 (Execute 5 sets of 5 repetitions each)
  - Set 1: Pick a weight you can comfortably lift for 5 reps, about 60-70% of 1RM
  - Sets 2, 3, 4: Add weight progressively until you are struggling to complete 5 reps (with good form). 80% of 1RM is a good target.
  - Set 5: Execute the last set of 5 reps, then drop the weight by 30% and immediately execute a 2<sup>nd</sup> set of 5 reps (drop-set)
  - Rest as much as 2-3 minutes between the 5 sets
3. Cool Down (5 Minutes)
  - Static Stretching (Quads, Hams, Lower Back focused)

## **#2. EVENT: Sprint Drag Carry**

Components Tested: Anaerobic Cardio, Work Capacity

This event is essentially a test of your anaerobic ability and work capacity. There are two general categories of workouts that I advocate for the Sprint Drag Carry event: HIIT Training and METCON circuits.

### **SOLUTION 1: High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)**

Time: 20 Minute or 10 Minute Variation

Components Trained: Anaerobic Cardio

1. Pick any exercise (these are just samples)
  - Track Sprints
  - Treadmill Sprints
  - Stationary Bike
  - Swimming
  - Ammo Can Swing
  - Sandbag Throw
  - Burpees
  - Sprint
  - Jump Rope
2. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - Perform 2-3 rounds at 50% effort
  - Ballistic/dynamic stretching
3. HIIT (20 or 10 Minute)
  - Set your watch for either 20 or 10 minutes
  - Starting from zero, execute 1 minute of work followed by 1 minute of rest for 10 total rounds (20 Minute) **OR** execute 30 seconds of work followed by 30 seconds of rest for 10 rounds (10 minute)
  - Max effort each round! Clock your distance or reps achieved each round and constantly seek to improve in future sessions
4. Cool Down (5 Minutes)
  - Walk slowly until you reach your resting heart rate, record this amount of time and compare to future sessions (time to reach resting heart rate should decrease)
  - Static Stretching

## **SOLUTION 2: Metabolic Conditioning Circuit (METCON) For Fixed Rounds**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Muscular Endurance

Note: This works well for a Fire Team or Squad, the element can circle up and rotate stations in a circle. You can also add “take a lap” where everyone runs a sprint after each round.

1. Decide if your focus is full body, upper body, lower body, push, or pull
  - Full body, upper body, or lower body are recommended
2. Pick six exercises for a circuit which target your focus
  - Alternate opposing motions. For example, in a full body METCON, follow some rotation between Lower, Push, Pull
    - Ex 1: Squat
    - Ex 2: Military Press
    - Ex 3: Bent Over Row
    - Ex 4: Lunge
    - Ex 5: Weighted Push-Up
    - Ex 6: Chin-Up
3. Pick an objective for total rounds to accomplish (3, 4, or 5 are ideal)
4. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - Perform 2-3 rounds of bodyweight exercises for the focus (samples)
    - Push-Ups, Pull-Ups, Sit-Ups
    - Bodyweight Squat or Lunge
  - Ballistic/dynamic stretching
5. METCON
  - Start your timer
  - Execute the planned # of rounds
  - Max effort, but pace yourself and use good form! Many athletes cheat form in the pursuit of a higher round count, do not do it
  - Stop the timer when complete with objective # of rounds
6. Cool Down (5 Minutes)
  - Walk slowly until you reach your resting heart rate, record this amount of time and compare to future sessions (time to reach resting heart rate should decrease)
  - Static Stretching

*Constantly seek to reduce the time it takes on the same workout scheme in future sessions, but don't cheat on form!*

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**This is my favorite METCON to do, ACFT Focused:**

Wearing Plate Carrier or IOTV (20-30#) using 60# sandbag, 40# dumbbells, 35# kettlebell.

5 Rounds:

- 10x Sandbag Squat
- 50 Yd Sprint
- 10x Curl to Overhead Press (dumbbells)
- 100 Yd Sprint
- 10x Sandbag Weighted Sit-Ups
- 150 Yd Sprint
- 100 Yd Sandbag Carry
- 50 Yd Sled Drag (same form as the ACFT event, can use chains/straps and sandbag if no sled)
- 100 Yd Farmer's Carry (dumbbells)
- 50 Yd Overhead Kettlebell Carry (unilateral)

### **#3. EVENT: Leg Tuck**

Components Tested: Muscular Strength (Abdominal)

One of the biggest issues with the APFT is its failure to address muscular strength, or “fast-twitch” muscle fibers. Training the abs with thousands of sit-ups is not sufficient for required core ability. In combat, if you pick up a casualty or move a heavy load very quickly, you can give yourself a hernia and make yourself an extra/unnecessary casualty for your unit to deal with, unless you’ve trained otherwise.

#### **SOLUTION 1: Weighted Dumbbell Core Exercises**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Muscular Strength. Your goal is to train the abs with multiple ranges of motion, using heavy weight.

1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - Perform 2-3 sets, 10 repetitions each, of sit-ups (slow reps)
  - 1x Warm-Up Set of 5-10 reps Dumbbell weighted sit-ups (50% effort)
  - 1x Warm-Up Set of 5-10 reps Dumbbell weighted knee lift
  - 1x Warm-Up set of 5-10 reps of Dumbbell or medicine ball russian twist
2. Lift
  - 5 sets x 5 reps each of dumbbell weighted sit-up. Try to do these on a decline bench for more difficulty, and follow the same 5x5 principles expressed earlier in this document
  - 5 sets x 8-10 reps each of dumbbell weighted knee raise or leg lift (hold the dumbbell with your feet, in-between ankles)
  - 5 sets x 10-12 reps each of weighted Russian twists
3. Cool Down
  - Static stretch and yoga poses for the abs

#### **SOLUTION 2: L-Chin-Ups, Gorilla Chin-Ups, Weighted**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Muscular Strength

1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - Perform 2-3 sets, 5-10 repetitions each, of pull-ups or chin-ups
2. Lift
  - 3 x 10-12 L-Chin Ups, add a weight vest if these are easy
  - 3 x 10-12 Gorilla Chin-Ups, add a weight vest if these are easy
  - 3 x 10-12 Chin-Ups, add weight if too easy
3. Cool Down
  - Static stretch and yoga poses for the back, abs

#### **#4. EVENT: Standing Power Throw SPT**

Components Tested: Flexibility, Coordination, Muscular Strength

This is very awkward to execute without training and practice. Generally speaking, the leg and hip strength, core power, and additional abilities you need to execute this, are being training with the other workouts in this handout. However, you should make sure you do try the additional solutions below to train for the SPT.

#### **SOLUTION 1: Weighted Box Jumps**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Flexibility, Coordination, Muscular Strength

1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - 2-3x Rounds of 1 minute each, jump rope
  - 2-3x sets of 5-10 reps each, slow bodyweight squat
2. Put on weight vest, plate carrier, or IOTV
  - Start with a 24" box and about 20-30# with your vest
  - 5 sets x 10-12 reps weighted box jumps
  - NOTE: add weight and add height to your jump as these get easy, continue to increase difficulty to ensure continued growth
3. Cool Down
  - Static stretch and yoga

#### **SOLUTION 2: Medicine Ball Throws and Slams**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Flexibility, Coordination, Muscular Strength

1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
  - 2-3x Rounds of 1 minute each, jump rope
  - 2-3x sets of 5-10 reps each, slow bodyweight squat
2. Using a 20 lb medicine ball, execute 5 rounds of the following:
  - 10 medicine ball throws from chest, stand forward
  - 10 medicine ball slams (Squat deep to start and fully extend overhead before slam)
  - 10 medicine ball power throws (same form as the actual SPT test), reverseNOTE: use a heavier medicine ball as these get easier
3. Cool Down
  - Static stretch and yoga

### #5. **EVENT:** Hand Release Push-Up

Components Tested: Muscular Endurance

The obvious answer to this event is a healthy amount of “push” weight lifting exercises which train the chest, shoulder, and triceps. Additionally, weighted push-up pyramids are a great way to train for this event. You can find two different samples below

#### **SOLUTION 1: 10 x 10 Strength Work, Bench (ALA German Volume Training/GVT)**

Time: 20-30 Minutes

Components Trained: Muscular Strength

##### 1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- 2-3x Rounds of Push-Ups, 10 reps each, slow and deliberate
- I/Y/T Shoulder Cuff mobility with 5# plate
- 1-2x sets of Bench Press at 50% of 1RM

##### 2. Lift

- Execute 10 sets x 10 repetitions each set, of bench press
  - Rest 60-90sec max in between each of the 10 sets
- NOTE: you should be trying to add weight each subsequent workout

##### 3. Cool Down

- Static stretch and yoga

#### **SOLUTION 2: Bodyweight Resistance + Plate Carrier Pyramid**

Time: TBD

Components Trained: Muscular Endurance

##### 1. Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Perform 2-3 rounds 10 reps of sit-up, push-up, squat (slow reps)

##### 2. Decide if you want to include push-ups, sit-ups, squats, 2 or all 3 of them

##### 2. Decide your rep count for the pyramid (can be anything, you decide!)

- a. EX: 20 -> 1 pyramid is 20 reps, 19 reps, 18, etc. down to 1 rep
- b. EX: 20 -> 10 pyramid is 20 reps, 19 reps, 18, etc. down to 10 reps
- c. EX: 10 -> 1 pyramid is 10 reps, 9 reps, 8, etc. down to 1 rep

##### 3. Decide if you want to use bodyweight or add plate carrier

##### 4. Execute

- a. Sample workout (very difficult, especially as a finisher to another workout): a 20 -> 1 rep pyramid of weight vest squat // weight vest push-up // weight vest sit-up. That means 20, 20, 20. Then 19, 19, 19. Then 18, 18, 18. Etc.

##### 5. Cool Down (5-10 Minutes) static stretching and yoga

**#6. EVENT: Two Mile Run**

Components Tested: Muscular Endurance

The biggest challenge with the new, two mile run, is obviously that you've done quite a bit of work before executing the run. You need to have superior work capacity and conditioning to execute the two mile run. The best way to accomplish this, is a healthy mix of HIIT (addressed earlier), METCON workouts (addressed earlier), and conducting 2-5 mile runs after a resistance training workout/lift.

**SOLUTION: HIIT, METCON (see earlier in document)**