

COMMUNITY PROTECTION PREVENTION TEAMWORK



**APPLY YOURSELF
BECOME A FIREFIGHTER**

FITNESS INFO



PREPARING FOR THE FIREFIGHTER FITNESS TESTS

Firefighters undertake a range of roles across response, prevention and protection, all of which require a level of physical fitness.

Your fitness will be tested as part of the application process to become a firefighter. This guide explains why it is important for firefighters to be fit, what physical activity the job involves and gives you advice on activities you can undertake to prepare for the recruitment process.

WHY DO FIREFIGHTERS NEED TO BE FIT?

Being a firefighter involves responding to emergency situations and working closely with the local community to prevent fires happening in the first instance.

The work often involves responding to rapidly changing situations in different environments and weather conditions. This requires a range of skills including good communication, team-work and a level of physical fitness.

Examples of physical activities that can be regularly required by firefighters as part of their role include hose runs, climbing stairs of high-rise buildings, working in a team to lift ladders, using ropes to manoeuvre equipment up tall buildings and rescuing people and animals.

“In my mind I was very fit, but wasn’t strong enough to lift the ladders and extend them. I booked a meeting with the local Station Manager who booked me a meeting with the Service Fitness Advisor. She was amazing. She provided me with guidance on how to develop my strength. I am now proud to say I am serving my local community in a job I love.”

**Steph, Lancashire
Fire and Rescue Service**

“My fitness assessment started with some initial disappointment when I got told I hadn’t achieved the required standard after being tested on station. But I wasn’t going to let the fitness beat me. I was invited to the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Fitness and Rehabilitation Suite to work with the Exercise Psychologist, where I was able to set a benchmark to work on.”

**Chris, North Yorkshire
Fire and Rescue Service**

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY FITNESS?

Fitness is something you can improve in preparation for both the taster days and recruitment rounds. Being a firefighter requires cardiovascular fitness, strength and flexibility. You don't necessarily have to join a gym or buy equipment to improve in these areas. Many of the suggested exercises in this guide can be done at home or in your local park.

Good to know

You should warm up before you undertake any physical activity. Warming up prepares your body, helping to improve performance and reducing the risk of injury by increasing blood flow through the body and reducing muscle stiffness.

Common warm up exercises include stretching, walking and low intensity activities.

Cooling down after you exercise is as important as warming up. Lowering the intensity of your exercise before you stop will gently lower your pulse and prepare your body for recovery.

You should also adapt your training plan every month or so to challenge yourself and make sure you continually improve.

Correct exercise technique is essential to improve your fitness and avoid injury. If you have any doubt about your ability to do any of the exercises, please seek advice from a qualified professional.

CARDIOVASCULAR

Cardiovascular exercise is sustained or prolonged physical activity that raises your heartbeat. It includes most activities you would think of as 'exercise'.



Running



Cycling



Swimming



Team sports



Rowing



Skipping



Group exercise classes



Climbing classes

STRENGTH

Strength training works your muscles as they move against resistance, developing your muscular strength and endurance. This will allow you to lift, lower, push and pull heavy objects and produce force during repetitive movements over longer periods of time.

You can use your own body weight as resistance (e.g. press ups) and/or do exercises that use external loads (e.g. dead lift).



Squat



Shoulder press



Step up



Press up



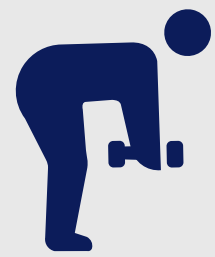
Bent over row



Load carriage lunge



Trunk rotation



Dead lift

FLEXIBILITY

Activities that lengthen and stretch muscles can help you prevent injuries, back pain and balance problems. Stretching gets blood and oxygen flowing to your muscles so they can more easily achieve their full range of motion.



Yoga



Tai chi



Pilates

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME AS PART OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS?

You will be required to undertake a series of tests which are designed to assess your ability to work in a team as well as your reaction to environments that you will be required to work in. The fitness element of the firefighter recruitment process differs slightly between fire and rescue services.

Wherever you are applying, however, you can expect to be assessed on your level of fitness, strength and manual dexterity, as well as your level of confidence in simulated exercises.

Don't worry if you haven't done these kinds of exercises before. You will be given clear guidance and instruction on how to use the equipment involved, as well as a demonstration of each individual test. You may be required to wear firefighter Personal Protective Equipment and undertake the following tasks:



Ladder climb
tests your confidence and ability to work at heights



Enclosed space entry
tests your agility and confidence working in this environment



Casualty evacuation
tests your lower and upper body strength and ability to walk backwards while dragging a weight of around 55kg



Simulated ladder lift
may involve raising a bar of around 5-15kg off the ground, lifting it above your head and back down to the floor



Equipment assembly
tests your manual dexterity and ability to follow instructions to assemble and disassemble a piece of equipment



Equipment carry
tests your cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance by carrying and running with a hose



HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Each fire and rescue service is different and the best way to find out about your local service is to attend a taster day. These are held by all services regularly throughout the year and we strongly recommend attending one before you apply to be a firefighter.

At a taster day you will be able to find out more information about the tests and talk to firefighters about their work. You'll be able to do some practice tests and be given guidance on the technique associated with each test and advice on how you can improve. Don't be afraid to give the practice tests a go. No one will judge you and it will give you a better idea of how you can prepare to be at your best on the actual test day.