

Entry Physical Competency Assessment Training Tips



As part of our sworn application process, you'll be asked to complete a fitness test called the Entry Physical Competency Assessment (EPCA). You don't need to be an athlete or have a membership to the best gym to train for the EPCA. Consistency, gradual progression and sensible recovery matters most.

Remember: small habits done regularly outweigh heroic one-off workouts, every time.

To pass the EPCA, you must complete 3 exercises to a set standard.

- / Push-ups (8 for females / 15 for males / gender X determined on a case-by-case basis)
- / Beep test (achieving a level of 6.5)
- / Plank (60 second hold)

Learn more about EPCA requirements on our website via afp.gov.au/jobs/application-process

The EPCA is designed to assess a combination of muscular endurance, core stability and aerobic fitness. For best results, aim to include a mixture of strength training, cardiovascular exercise and EPCA-specific practice sessions in your weekly training.

Before and after each session

Always ensure you warm up and cool down before and after each session.

Equipment

- / Adequate space to move your body.
4x2m space works best for the plank and push-up exercises
- / Access to an open field or running area.
This will assist in training for the beep test

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Plank

Does a 60-second plank feel impossible to you?
Not for long!

The below exercises will help build trunk stability and endurance. Before you know it, your planks will become stronger, and you'll be able to hold them for longer.

Aim to complete these exercises 2-3 times per week.
Start with a level that matches your current fitness
and gradually progress over time.

No equipment required

Plank hold

Maintain a straight line from your shoulders through to your ankles while bracing your core muscles, arms 90 degrees at the elbow, forearms parallel to each other. Focus on quality positioning throughout the exercise rather than simply holding for longer periods.

Demonstration video: <https://youtu.be/6skm6YAYcKc>

- / 2-4 sets
- / Hold 5-10 seconds (before technique begins to deteriorate)
- / Gradually work towards comfortably completing 2 x 60-second holds with good form and a 60-90 second rest between sets

Shoulder taps

Begin in a high plank position. Lift one hand at a time and tap the opposite shoulder while keeping your hips and torso as still as possible. This exercise will develop your trunk stability and control during movement.

Demonstration video: <https://youtu.be/kJyZ4tJooFI>

- / 2-3 sets
- / 8-12 repetitions per side

Technique notes

If you're struggling to maintain stability, widen your feet to create a larger base of support. As your balance and trunk control improve, gradually narrow your stance.

Dead bugs

Lie on your back with your arms extended above your shoulders and your hips and knees bent to 90 degrees. Slowly extend the opposite arm and leg while maintaining a stable trunk and keeping your lower back in contact with the floor.

Demonstration video: <https://youtu.be/0y6myq2RSR8>

- / 2-3 sets
- / 8-12 repetitions per side

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Push-ups

When you start out, you don't need to be able to do a full push-up from your toes and at ground level. Focus on maintaining a straight body position and achieving consistent depth on every repetition. If you are unable to perform quality floor push-ups through the required range of motion, continue to develop strength using an incline (such as a wall, bench or chair) until you can consistently meet the stand. Before you know it, you'll be achieving full ground reps on your toes.

Equipment: Wall, bench or chair

Incline push-ups

Perform push-ups using a wall, bench or chair to reduce the load. As your strength improves, gradually lower the incline until you can comfortably perform push-ups from the floor.

Demonstration video: <https://youtu.be/DowLn1023LY>

- / 2-4 sets
- / 8-15 repetitions

Tempo push-ups

Tempo push-ups improve strength, movement control and body awareness. They help reinforce good technique without requiring large numbers of repetitions.

Demonstration video: <https://youtu.be/GPCB4D6Kh7s>

- / 2-3 sets
- / 6-10 repetitions
- / Lower under control for 3 seconds
- / Pause for 1 second at the bottom
- / Push back up with control

Technique notes

During the EPCA, each repetition must be completed to the required assessment standard.

Push up requirements are:

- / Arms shoulder width apart
- / Feet hip width apart
- / Elbows 90 to determine depth
- / No resting longer than 3 seconds
- / Body not to arch, slump or rest on ground.

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Beep test

The exercises below replicate the stop-start movement patterns, turning demands and pacing requirements of the beep test. Including these exercises in your training **2-3 times per week** can assist in developing the fitness and confidence required to achieve level 6.5 and beyond.

Consider completing a practice beep test every 2-3 weeks during your preparation and every 1-2 weeks in the month leading into your assessment.

Becoming familiar with the pacing, audio cues and turning requirements can significantly improve performance and confidence on test day.

Avoid completing a maximal effort beep test in the final 2-3 days before your EPCA to allow adequate recovery for test day.

No equipment required

Interval walking or jogging

Beginner	/ 6-10 rounds / 1 minute jogging / 1 minute walking recovery
Intermediate	/ 8-12 rounds / 1 minute faster jogging / 1 minute walking or jogging recovery

Technique notes

Alternating periods of work and recovery helps improve aerobic fitness and prepares the body for repeated effort. Progress gradually by increasing either the speed of your work intervals or the number of intervals completed.

Shuttle runs

- / Mark out a 20-metre course
- / Perform 30-60 seconds of continuous shuttle running
- / Recover for 30-60 seconds
- / Repeat 6-10 times

Technique notes

Running repeated 20-metre shuttles closely replicates the movement, turning and pacing demands of the beep test.

Focus on efficient turns and maintaining a consistent effort throughout each interval.

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Advice from the AFP

Training consistency

You do not need to train every day to prepare for the EPCA.

For most applicants, 3-5 exercise sessions per week that combine cardiovascular fitness, strength training and EPCA-specific practice will provide an effective foundation for success. Focus on gradual progression and consistency rather than attempting large increases in training volume over a short period.

Getting started

If you are currently inactive, regular walking is one of the most effective ways to begin preparing for the EPCA.

Start with a duration and pace appropriate to your current fitness level and gradually increase both over time before progressing to jogging, running or higher-intensity training.

Nutrition

Having a balanced and nutritious diet is as important as physical fitness. Enjoying a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five groups outlined in [The Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) each day will support in your training and overall health. Building consistent, sustainable improvements tends to have the greatest long-term impact. Focus on your nutrition as much as your training and recovery.

Recovery

Recovery is an important part of training.

- / Get adequate sleep each night.
- / Stay hydrated.
- / Allow 1-2 lighter training or recovery days each week.
- / Increase training gradually over time.

Fitness improvements occur when training is balanced with appropriate recovery.

Note: Listen to your body and ensure you are doing each exercise correctly, and safely. While you don't need to complete the suggested exercises in a gym, it's important to seek medical advice from a doctor, physio or qualified fitness professional if you experience pain while exercising.

Good luck with your training

We look forward to encouraging you during your EPCA test – see you soon!