



Push-Ups

 	
Purpose	This test measures upper body muscular strength and endurance.
Goal	To complete as many correctly performed push-ups as possible, in 1 minute, or until the student can no longer continue.
Group Size	No more than 10 students at a time, to ensure proper monitoring of form and execution
Equipment	▪ Mats (optional) ▪ Timer ▪ Optional depth marker (rolled towel, small foam block, or ball), to help gauge a consistent ~90-degree elbow bend ▪ Scorecard and pen or pencil, OR tablet/laptop with digital scorecard
Space Needed	Open floor area, with rows spaced so partners can see students' elbow depth and body line
Setup	Line participants up in rows with enough open floor space between them for partners to clearly see each student's elbow depth and body line. Limit each group to 10 or fewer participants at a time so you can monitor form closely.

Safety Considerations



- Students with a wrist, shoulder, or elbow injury or another condition that limits weight-bearing on the arms should follow their physician's specific activity clearance.
- Tell students to stop and notify you if they feel pain, dizziness, or shortness of breath.
- If mats are used, make sure they are placed on a stable, non-slip surface.
- Students may rest between repetitions; the clock keeps running, and any repetitions counted after a rest must still meet the proper-form criteria below.

How to Administer the Test



- 1. Explain the test.** Tell students they will be doing the push-up test, which measures how long your chest, shoulder, and arm muscles can keep pushing without getting tired. The goal is to complete as many correctly performed push-ups as possible, keeping a steady pace until 1 minute is up or until they can no longer continue.
- 2. Demonstrate proper form.** Show a few correct repetitions, explaining elements of proper form. Consider also doing a few repetitions with incorrect form to point out common errors. Explain that the partner's role is to monitor form and count repetitions completed with correct form.
 - **Starting position:** Participants begin face down, then push up into the starting position with hands a little wider than their shoulders, arms fully extended, head in a neutral position, and back and legs straight.
 - **Proper form:** Participants lower their bodies until their elbows reach an approximately 90-degree angle, then push back up to full arm extension, keeping a straight body line from head to heels throughout the movement.
 - **Optional depth marker:** Place a rolled towel, small foam block, or ball under the student's chest. Lightly touching it at the bottom of each rep signals sufficient depth. The marker height should approximate a 90-degree bend for that student's arm length.
- 3. Position students.** Have students get into the starting push-up position.
- 4. Begin the test.** Say "Ready, go" and start the timer.

How to Administer the Test



- 5. Monitor and count.** Partners watch for correct form and count only correctly performed push-ups (see Common Errors, below, for what not to count).
- 6. End the test.** Stop the student's test after 2 consecutive form corrections, the student fails to continue push-ups, or the 1- minute timer has ended.
- 7. Score the test.** Record the total number of correctly performed push-ups on the scorecard.

Common Errors (Do Not Count These Repetitions)



- Elbows do not reach an approximate 90-degree angle at the bottom of the movement.
- Arms are not fully extended at the top of the movement.
- Back is not kept straight throughout the movement (hips sag or pike up).
- Repetition is bounced rather than controlled.

Read Aloud Script



The push-up test measures how long your chest, shoulder, and arm muscles can keep pushing without getting tired. The goal is to complete as many push-ups as you can in 1 minute while maintaining proper form.

Start face down with your hands under your shoulders and your body in line from head to heels. When I say 'ready', straighten your arms and lift your body up off the floor. When I say, 'go', lower your body until your elbows reach about a 90 degree angle, then push back up to full arm extension. Keep your body straight the whole time. Your partner will only count push-ups done with proper form. Ready? Go.

Modifications, Adaptations, and Alternative Tests



For students with an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, follow the modifications specified in that plan. Coordinate with the student's special education team as needed, and document any modification used alongside the student's score. The adaptations below address common scenarios but do not override plan-specific guidance.

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing	Use hand signals to signify start and stop. Show the count on your fingers and shake your head for repetitions with incorrect form.
Students who are blind or have low vision	Provide additional verbal detail when explaining the test. With permission, you may need to provide hands-on guidance to help the student understand proper form.
Students with intellectual or developmental disabilities	Extra demonstration, visual cue cards, peer modeling, and/or additional practice repetitions can be useful for students who need more processing time. For students with sensory sensitivities, consider using hand signals instead of a verbal start and/or proctoring the test privately.



Students with mobility limitations

Consider the following options:

- **Chest press (prone or seated) with a resistance band or dumbbells:** The student holds the handles or dumbbells with wrists neutral and presses forward to extend the arms, then returns to the starting position with control.
- **Arm curls (seated or standing) with a resistance band or dumbbells:** The student starts with weights or handles of resistance bands down by their sides with their arms fully extended. Keeping their elbows by their sides, the student lifts their hands toward their shoulders.
- **Seated push-ups:** The student sits in a stable chair or their wheelchair, places their hands on the armrests, wheels, or push-up blocks, and fully extends their arms to lift their body off the seat, holding that raised position for as long as possible.

Scoring: For chest press or arm curls, record the number of controlled repetitions completed. If using dumbbells, record the weight used. For seated push-ups, record the number of seconds the student holds the raised position.

Note: Students can also perform these tests with 1 arm, keeping the injured arm still.

Use these modifications only with medical clearance for the specific injury — some some mobility limitations may not tolerate even light resistance. When in doubt, exempt the student from this test and consult their physician.



Students who cannot perform a single push-up with proper form

Offer a modification that reduces the percentage of body weight the student needs to lift. Options are listed from most to least challenging — choose the level that lets the student complete repetitions with proper form.

- **Knee push-up:** The student starts on hands and knees with ankles crossed or feet lifted, keeping a straight line from knees to head. They lower their chest toward the floor until their elbows reach approximately a 90-degree angle, then push back up to full arm extension, keeping the back straight throughout.
- **Incline push-up:** The student places their hands on a stable elevated surface (bench, step, or sturdy box) with feet on the floor, keeping a straight body line from head to heels. They lower their chest toward the surface, then push back up to full arm extension. A higher surface makes the movement easier.
- **Wall push-up:** The student stands facing a wall, hands on the wall at shoulder height, feet a comfortable distance back. They bend their elbows to bring their body toward the wall, then push back to the starting position, keeping a straight body line throughout.

Scoring: Score each level using the same Common Errors criteria above, adjusted for the modification (for example, elbow angle at the bench or wall). Record which modification level was used alongside the score — scores from different modification levels aren't directly comparable to standard push-up counts or to each other.