

Military Calisthenics Workout Plan (Free PDF)

Military calisthenics is a social media name for high-repetition bodyweight circuits with short rests. No army has a program by that name. It does work: in four-week studies, push-up training raised bench press strength, and short bodyweight intervals raised aerobic fitness as much as treadmill running did. What it leaves out is the run, and the US Army's own fitness test ends with two miles of it. So this plan keeps the circuit, adds a strength day and a weekly run, and comes in three levels, with a short test to pick yours and a free PDF.

LENGTH

4 weeks, the last one lighter, with a retest

DAYS AND MINUTES

3 days a week, 20 to 45 minutes

KIT

Floor, wall, a bar or sturdy table, running shoes

LEVELS

3, set by one test: push-ups, plank, pull-ups

The US Army Fitness Test. Each event scores up to 100 points. Combat roles need 60 per event on the men's column and 350 in total. Other roles need 60 per event and 300 in total.

Event	What it tests	60 points at ages 17 to 21, men / women
3-rep max deadlift	Strength, with a 60 lb (27 kg) hex bar	150 lb (68 kg) / 120 lb (54 kg)
Hand-release push-ups in 2 minutes	Upper-body endurance	15 / 11
Sprint-drag-carry, 5 x 50 m	Anaerobic power and endurance, with a 90 lb (41 kg) sled and two 40 lb (18 kg) kettlebells	2:28 / 3:15
Plank	Core strength and endurance	1:30 / 1:30
Two-mile run (3.2 km)	Aerobic endurance	19:57 / 22:55

The level test

Do it before week 1, rested, after the 5 minute warm-up. Put a fist on the floor under your chest and do one set of push-ups, touching the fist on every rep with your body straight from head to heels. Stop when the form breaks: the hips sag, or the chest stops reaching the fist. Rest 3 minutes, then hold a forearm plank for as long as your body stays in one straight line. If you have a bar, do as many pull-ups as you can from a dead hang, chin over the bar on each one. If the push-ups and the plank point to different levels, take the lower one.

Beginner	Fewer than 10 push-ups, or a plank under 30 s.
Intermediate	10 to 25 push-ups and a plank of 30 to 60 s.
Advanced	More than 25 push-ups, a plank over 60 s and at least 5 pull-ups.

Session A: Circuit

Full body, short rests · 20 / 30 / 35 min

Warm up for 5 minutes: march or jog on the spot, 10 slow squats, 10 arm circles each way and a few easy push-ups. Then do the six moves back to back, top to bottom, with no rest between them. That is one round. Rest between rounds: 2 min for beginners, 90 s for intermediate, 60 s for advanced, and 15 s less in week 3. Rounds in weeks 1 to 4: beginners 3, 3, 4, 2. Intermediate 3, 4, 4, 3. Advanced 4, 5, 5, 3. If your form slips, slow down before you stop.

Exercise	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Push-up Body in one straight line, chest to a fist	8 Knee push-up	12 Push-up	15 Decline push-up (feet on a chair or step)
Air squat Heels flat, knees in line with your toes	12	20	30
Trunk Move slowly, lower back in control the whole time	6 per side Dead bug	15 Sit-up	15 V-up
Mountain climbers Hips level with your shoulders	20 s	30 s	40 s
Reverse lunge Step back far enough that the front heel stays down	6 per side	10 per side	12 per side
Forearm plank Squeeze your glutes so the hips do not sag	20 s	40 s	60 s

Session B: Strength

Pull, push, legs, shoulders, core · 30 / 35 / 40 min

Same 5 minute warm-up. Do all the sets of one move before the next, resting 60 to 90 s between sets, and end each set with a rep or two still in you. Before the first table row, kneel and pull on the edge with your full weight to test the table.

Exercise	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Pull Chest to the edge or bar, lower slowly	3 × 6 Australian pull-up (under a sturdy table or low bar)	3 × 4 Negative pull-up (jump to the top, lower for 3 to 5 s)	3 × 5 Pull-up
Push Two seconds down, no bouncing at the bottom	3 × 10 Knee push-up	3 × 8 Diamond push-up (hands close together under the chest)	3 × 5 per side Archer push-up (one arm bends, the other stays straight)
Legs Knees track over your toes on the way down	3 × 30 s Wall sit	3 × 6 per side Cossack squat (wide stance, sit to one side)	3 × 5 per side Pistol squat to a box or chair
Shoulders Hips high, head travels forward of the hands	3 × 5 Pike push-up	3 × 8 Pike push-up	3 × 8 Feet-up pike push-up (feet on a chair)

Exercise	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Core Ribs down and lower back flat	3 × 20 s per side Side plank	3 × 20 s Hollow hold	3 × 15 Hollow rock

Session C: Run

Aerobic base, then burpees · 30 / 35 / 45 min

Warm up with 5 minutes of brisk walking. Beginners: run 1 min, walk 1 min, and repeat. Intermediate: an easy run at a pace you could talk through. Advanced: tempo intervals, comfortably hard, with 2 min of easy jogging between them. Then the burpees, with 1 min of rest between sets. Beginners step back instead of jumping, both into the plank and out of it, and skip the jump at the top.

Exercise	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Run Start slower than you want to	10 × 1 min Run/walk intervals (run 1 min, walk 1 min)	25 min Easy run	3 × 8 min Tempo run (2 min easy jog between)
Burpee Keep the same pace in every set	3 × 5	3 × 10	3 × 15

Session D: Retest

Push-ups, plank, 12 minute run · 25 min

Warm up for 5 minutes and repeat the level test: push-ups to a fist until form breaks, 3 minutes of rest, then the plank. Everyone tests full push-ups, beginners included, because a full push-up count is what moves you up a level. Rest 5 minutes, then run as far as you can in 12 minutes on a flat route and note the distance. That is the Cooper test, checked against treadmill measures of maximal oxygen uptake in 115 US Air Force men in 1968.

Exercise	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Push-up Chest to a fist, stop when form breaks	max reps	max reps	max reps
Forearm plank Stop when the hips sag or lift	max hold	max hold	max hold
12 minute run (Cooper test) Even pace, then note the distance	12 min	12 min	12 min

Week by week

Week	Days	What changes
Week 1: learn the moves	Mon A · Wed B · Fri C	Circuit: 3 rounds for beginner and intermediate, 4 for advanced. Rest 2 min, 90 s or 60 s between rounds. Strength and run exactly as written.
Week 2: add volume	Mon A · Wed B · Fri C	Circuit: 1 more round for intermediate and advanced. Strength: 1 more rep per set, or 5 s more per hold. Run: beginners 12 intervals, intermediate 30 min, advanced 3 × 10 min.

Week	Days	What changes
Week 3: the hardest week	Mon A · Wed B · Fri C	Circuit: 4 rounds for beginner and intermediate, 5 for advanced, with 15 s less rest. Strength: a 4th set of the first 2 moves. Run: beginners 14 intervals, intermediate 35 min, advanced 4 × 8 min.
Week 4: lighter, then retest	Mon A · Wed B · Fri D	Circuit: 2 rounds for beginner, 3 for the others. Strength: 2 sets of everything. Friday: the retest instead of the run. Compare it with your first test.

The full plan, the evidence and the answers to common questions: aionthecoach.com/workout-plans/military-calisthenics-workout-plan

Aion Coach for iPhone builds this plan around your week and sets each next session from what you log: apps.apple.com/us/app/aion-coach/id6792793898

When to stop. Stop the session if you get chest pain or pressure, feel faint, or are far more out of breath than the effort explains, and see a doctor before you train again. Stop a move that gives you sharp pain, pain that changes how you move, or numbness or tingling down an arm or a leg. If a joint still hurts after a week, see a physiotherapist. Ordinary muscle soreness a day or two after the first sessions is normal. Muscle pain with swelling, stiffness that limits how far you can bend, or dark urine after a hard session can be exertional rhabdomyolysis, which the US military sees most often in recruits, and it needs a doctor the same day. If you are pregnant, recently had a baby, have a heart condition or high blood pressure, or are coming back from an injury or surgery, get cleared before you start.