

NUTRITION – FITNESS – WEIGHTLOSS

A Guide to Making Yourself Fit to Fight

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Part I: It's the carbs that make you fat!

As it turns out, the science behind Atkins, the Zone, the South Beach diet, and many others is Glycemic indexing; that different food affects blood sugar levels differently. Foods rich in refined carbohydrates (sugars, bleached flour, simple starches) are converted to blood sugar – aka, blood glucose; the body's SOLE energy source – quite readily. A slice of white bread or a potato can be converted to blood glucose in as little as 15 minutes. Because carbohydrates are the easiest to convert to blood sugar, they are the body's energy source of choice. Only in the absence of sufficient carbohydrates in one's diet does the body turn to fat stores for energy.

Notice I said fat “stores”. I.E., body fat. The fats you eat are never used as an energy source, nor are they ever stored as body fat. They serve pretty much two functions and two functions only: metabolizing the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E & K), and triggering signals of satiety to your brain. That's it. They also contribute to things like cholesterol levels and arterial plaque, but the one thing dietary fats will not do is make you fat. So what does make you fat? Where do the fat stores come from in the first place? They come from the excess carbohydrates in your diet. In a person with normal thyroid function, when you intake a bunch of carbs, your body converts to blood sugar only the amount needed to reach a certain blood glucose level in your bloodstream. Any carbs in excess of that necessary to reach this blood glucose level are converted to body fat and stored away for future energy needs. Later, if you don't eat enough carbs to maintain that certain blood glucose level, only then does your body turn to its fat stores for energy, converting that body fat to blood glucose for consumption by the brain and every other cell in your body. Again, it's all about blood glucose.

So, why are most Americans overweight then? Based on the above, it should be quite obvious; we eat far more carbohydrates than necessary. Why? Look at the US Government's dietary guidelines (the Food Pyramid we've all been indoctrinated with since the mid-80s), issued not so coincidentally by the Department of Agriculture, rather than the Department of Health and Human Services or the National Institutes for Health. Can you think of what else happened in the mid-80s that might have contributed to this? Here's a hint, John Cougar Mellencamp. Here's another hint, Farm Aid.

The carb-heavy Food Pyramid, which replaced the more balanced Four Food Groups, was created not for health or dietary reasons, but for economic ones; to spur consumption of agricultural products (corn and wheat, mostly) farmed in America's heartland. For a variety of reasons, a great many farmers found themselves in serious financial trouble in the mid-80s, and despite all the Farm Aid hoopla and the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987 designed to bail them out, many farmers were forced to sell their family-owned farms and have now been replaced by large farming corporations. But what was good for business for family-owned farms was also good for corporate farmers, so the Food Pyramid stayed.

Why is it that America is the only country experiencing an obesity epidemic? And if the Food Pyramid is so healthy, why did no other country in the world adopt it?

To be fair, the Food Pyramid has been evolving, but it is still a product of the Department of Agriculture, which some view as having a conflict of interest here. What is perhaps the best version of the Food Pyramid wasn't published by the government at all, but was developed by Harvard University's School of Public Health. Interestingly, Harvard's diet guidelines bear a strong resemblance to the average European diet, where they don't have near the incidence of obesity and heart disease that America does.

Starting in January 2010, I weighed between 230 and 235 lbs., depending on the day. I have always been an active member of a gym and concentrate heavily on cardiovascular exercises, usually for up to 45 minutes. Regardless, I gained enough weight to make me borderline obese, even at 6' 2" and 230 lbs. What was wrong? Why couldn't I keep the weight off? Because of the gross abundance of carbs I took in every day

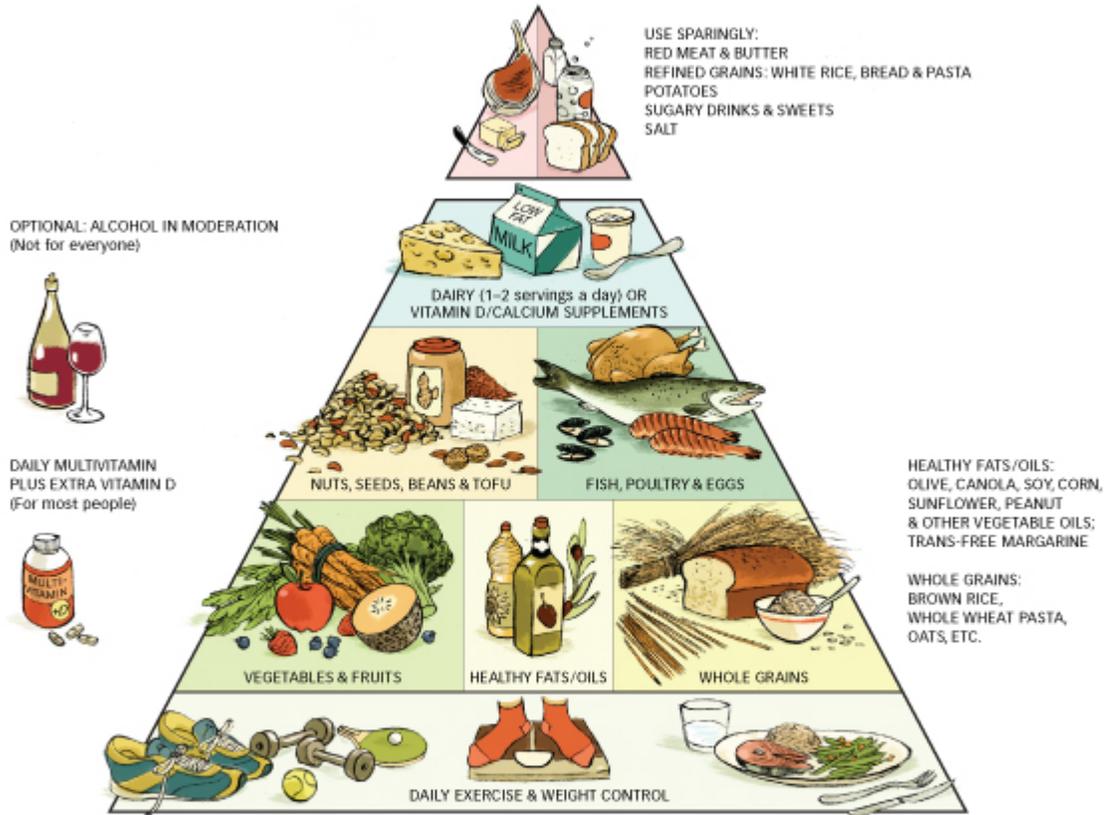
made me fat. While the “Atkins Diet” has a grown adult consuming 25 grams of carbs or less each day, I was consuming upwards of 400 to 500 grams daily. Sweet tea, regular soda, french fries, a lot of breads, chips and anything else that gives you that “tired feeling” after you eat. I was going way overboard. Instead of making a drastic change to something like a name brand diet like Atkins, I created my own nutritional plan. I identified the bad carbs and cut them in half and I increased my fiber intake. I maintained my fitness regimen but I limited myself to roughly 150 grams of carbs per day. Between January 2010 and January 2011, my weight dropped by 35 lbs while my energy levels increased. Once again, it was the carbs that made me fat.

5 Quick Tips from the Healthy Eating Pyramid

- 1. Start with exercise.** A healthy diet is built on a base of regular exercise, which keeps calories in balance and weight in check.
- 2. Focus on healthier foods, not grams.** Don't worry about specific servings or grams of food.
- 3. Go with plants.** Eating a plant-based diet is healthiest. Choose plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy fats, like olive and canola oil.
- 4. Cut way back on American staples.** Red meat, refined grains, potatoes, sugary drinks, and salty snacks are part of American culture, but they're also really unhealthy. Go for a plant-based diet rich in non-starchy vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. And if you eat meat, fish and poultry are the best choices.
- 5. Take a multivitamin, and maybe have a drink.** Taking a multivitamin can be a good nutrition insurance policy. Moderate drinking for many people can have real health benefits, but it's not for everyone. Those who don't drink shouldn't feel that they need to start. Read about balancing alcohol's risks and benefits.

THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

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For more information about the Healthy Eating Pyramid:

WWW.THE NUTRITION SOURCE .ORG

Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy
 by Walter C. Willett, M.D. and Patrick J. Skerrett (2005)
 Free Press/Simon & Schuster Inc.

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Part II: Hitting that Ninety Percent on the PT Test

We all generally agree on what it takes to score well on the PT test, but not everyone exceeds the minimum standards, while some fail to meet the minimums. As someone who struggled in the past just to pass, I want to share a few tips that helped me succeed in my physical fitness goals.

A few years ago I was borderline obese. I didn't look it, but according to weight charts from the National Institute for Health (NIH), I was literally just a couple of pounds away from being considered obese. In January 2010, when the Air Force announced changes to the fitness standards; that there would be cut-offs for each category, and Airmen could fail if they didn't meet minimum standards in just one part of the test, I knew it was time for change.

While I had been an active member of a gym since leaving the active Army in late 1995, I never really concerned myself with the possibility of failing a PT test. I was never overweight and I was one of those naturals who, as long as I worked out a few times a week, could almost max the PT test. But my lifestyle changed in the mid-2000s when I had children and my job went from beating the pavement to spending a majority of time behind a desk. The first thing I had to do was give myself a reality check. I had to be brutally honest with myself and accept the fact that my problem had more to do with my eating habits than the number of times I visited the gym each week. After all, my biggest challenge on the PT test was meeting the waist measurement standards. Before 2010 I often exceeded 38 inches, something that would fail me under the new standards.

After discussions with nutritionists, a doctor, and doing my own online research, I learned I needed to make one major change; I needed to cut the carbs. This is a common issue among Americans, and I wasn't immune to the issue. I learned that carbohydrates enter the body and if not burned within 15 minutes of consumption will start being stored as fat. And if you're not burning enough calories throughout the day, those deposits of fat will begin to add up. It was like a light switched on in my head after learning this. One evening I looked back over what I had eaten that day and I was disgusted. My day started with a bagel and cream cheese followed by a coke to wash it down. For lunch I had eaten a BBQ turkey sandwich with fries, baked beans, and a 32oz sweet tea (with refills). Finally, for dinner, I filled up with spaghetti, garlic bread, a salad, and a few glasses of juice. While spaghetti certainly has its share of nutrients, eating 2 or 3 servings worth can have the opposite effect. And of course, I failed to mention an evening snack. In the end, I realized I took in well over 400 grams of carbs that day, and this was probably the norm. They stack up really quick when you're not watching, and while it may not show in your early 20s, it'll certainly creep up on you a few years down the road.

I bring up diet, nutrition and carbs for a reason. It is because the biggest lesson learned through all of this was that for me, my level of health and fitness had nothing to do with me going to the gym. My problem was 80% diet. We hear this, we read it, and we usually agree with it, but rarely do we do anything about it. As battlefield airmen, we've experienced physical training in basic training and tech school, and sometimes during drill weekends. But our civilian lives are often not conducive to keeping ourselves fit to fight, let alone showing up to take the PT test without a fear of failure. For me, my answer was cutting carbs so I could slim down to around a 35 inch waist. Keep in mind that I cut down on carbs; I did not cut them out completely. I went from consuming more than 400 grams a day to allowing 25 grams per meal. This brought about a healthy reduction in my weight over a period of time. I began this lifestyle change in January 2010 and by July that same year I had lost almost 30 pounds and was able to achieve a 95 on the PT test. Today, more than 2 years later, I still watch what I eat, but have allowed myself a cap of 100grams of carbs throughout the day. What's great now is that I'm at a level where I can splurge occasionally. I can enjoy myself at Cici's Pizza with my kids or I can gorge myself during one of our barbeques at drill. The key to success here is maintaining consistency.

Now, about that fitness routine, the one that'll help prepare you to not just excel on the PT test, but that will keep you slim and trim, and more importantly, fit to fight. If you fall into the category of worrying about making the waist measurement, then you'll need to concentrate on burning calories. The best way to do this is by focusing on cardio exercises such as running or using an elliptical. Before I saw the light, I used to think that 20 minutes of running was enough, but I soon learned that I was probably wasting my time if I spent any fewer than 30 minutes working a cardio routine. A lot of people hate running, and I'm no different. So mix it up a little as there are more ways to burn calories than running. If you're an average built guy like me, my suggestion would be to set your goal at burning at least 500 calories during your cardio portion of your workout. Although in the beginning I often spent enough time on a cardio machine to burn 1,000 calories at least twice a week. As an example, for me to burn 500 calories, I have to run 25 minutes at an 8:00 minute pace. But your caloric burn will vary depending on your weight. Women will have a tougher time reaching that 500 calorie goal as running at the same pace for the same period will burn significantly fewer calories. The good news is you have fewer calories to burn. Don't forget to mix in some muscle building exercises as well. For me, I mostly use my own body weight when I work out. Exercises such as push-ups, sit-ups, dips, and pull-ups, or a version of these, are often part of my daily routine. One of my signature workouts includes 30 minutes on a cardio machine followed by 4 sets of push-ups, flutter kicks, box jumps, and curls with a weight bar.

About one month out from your scheduled PT test begin focusing on the PT test events. I usually use 2 days a week to workout solely on the push-ups, sit-ups and a 1 ½ mile run as fast as I can on the treadmill. A lot of people question my use of a treadmill, but I have proven time and time again, for more than 10 years, that I consistently shave a minute off of my PT test run after training exclusively on the treadmill. As an example, the fastest I have run on the treadmill was a little over 10 minutes. But come test day, I ran a 9:06. How? Well, I believe it's mostly psychological. On the machine I can see what my pace is, but when I'm out on the pavement and can't see my speed, my mind tricks my body into automatically speed up for fear of running too slow. Like I said, it's purely psychological. One caveat to my training on a treadmill that I often fail to mention is how I always set the incline to 0.5, just to make up changes in grade out on the road.

So that's it. That's how I stay in shape, keep the weight off, and achieve a score on the PT test in the nineties every time. You can read books, order P90X, or watch Dr. Oz, but if what you do is only temporary, then it's not successful. While passing the PT test is good, the more important thing is long term health. And as I learned, simply working out isn't the answer, it truly is an 80/20 equation; 80% nutrition and 20% fitness.

Part III: My lower (not low) carb diet!

When I first began my lifestyle change in January 2010 I was 230 lbs., give or take 5 lbs. That's when the light finally switched on after a conversation with my best friend (a doctor), a coworker (a legit genius), and my own online research from places like Johns Hopkins and UC Berkley. In a nutshell, "it's the carbs that make you fat". Today my average weight is 195 lbs. Occasionally I pick up a 35 lbs. weight as a reminder of the extra weight I used to carry every day.

I do not advocate a low carb diet in line with Atkins, but I do believe through research and my own observations (including my own experience) that we, as Americans, over indulge in carbohydrates. After more than two years of my lower carb diet plan, I finally looked at the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of carbohydrates. An important bit of information I gained was the difference between simple and complex carbohydrates. That's something you should research on your own for a better understanding. For a 2,000

calorie diet, 300g of carbs are recommended, along with 30g of fiber. You'll notice most foods out there offer plenty of carbs, but fiber can often be hard to find.

Something I didn't know was that carbs, if not burned within 15 minutes, start being stored as fat. I thought fat made you fat, but actually, fat passes through your body and either exits the natural way, or does all the bad stuff like clogging your arteries in due time. But we're talking about weight loss and nutrition here, not heart disease. And the fact is, carbs make you fat, fat doesn't. Beware that "low fat" foods are often heavy in carbohydrates; just some food for thought, so to speak.

So, as my good friend and former Army team leader asked, "what exactly did you eat to help you lose weight and keep it off?" Well, Calvin, this may seem a bit unorthodox, but you asked for it, so here is what I did back then coupled with how I eat now...

Starting in January 2010 – I actually did go to the extreme for the first few weeks, maybe a month. I actually limited my daily carb intake to about 75 grams a day; sometimes I managed to take in fewer than 50 because it actually became pretty easy.

Breakfast was and still is the Atkins shakes. I do not follow the Atkins diet, however I am NOT a breakfast fan, and I need something to hold me over so why not go with something low carb, high protein, and has fiber? Both the EAS "Carb Control" and Atkins shakes are my favorites. Atkins also has bars that go well with a serving of milk, which I sometimes opt for.

Previously, at my civilian job I never brought my **lunch** to work. I either ate out or went to the employee cafeteria. No matter what, I closely scrutinized the menu options and went for lower carb meals. Except for sandwiches where the bread is the carb culprit, most carbs come from side items like french-fries, potato chips, potato salad, mac n' cheese, baked beans, garlic toast, etc.; and worse, soft drinks or sweet tea (more of a southern thing). I didn't realize just how many carbs (i.e. sugar) I took in from what I drank...A LOT! As an example for lunch out at my favorite BBQ place, I'll get a BBQ pork lunch with green beans, baked beans, tell them to hold the garlic toast, and chase it down with a diet coke or water. It took me all of one week to learn to enjoy diet coke. The baked beans do have a lot of sugar (carbs), mostly in the syrupy sauce, but I use a fork which allows most of the sauce to drip out. In my opinion, every bit helps. And don't listen to your mother; you're an adult and you DO NOT need to finish your plate. After switching jobs, I was unable to go out for lunch, so it actually became a lot easier to eat healthier. Whole wheat bread for the occasional sandwich, or "Carb Balance" tortillas for a quality wrap; I learned to create some tasty lunches using freshly grilled chicken, tomato, and things like hummus or guacamole. Fresh fruit, mixed nuts or a yogurt are great snacks too.

Dinner became my favorite meal of the day because it offered me new challenges when I cook, and I love to cook. Look, guys, every carb counts, so some of the small things can make the difference. I created a few signature dishes, but nothing too out of the ordinary. My 3 favorite meals are seafood pasta, chicken & steak fajita salad, and tacos. How does pasta contribute to a lower carb meal plan? Cook smart! Buy pastas like Dreamfields or Barilla Whole Grains. Check out the nutrition facts on the side of the box. It'll look something like 41g of carbs and 5 to 7 grams of FIBER. Fiber is a key to your healthy diet, and so is following the magical term "serving size". I will eat a single serving size and be totally satisfied. So that's 41g of carbs with 7g of fiber. It's not scientific, but in my plan, I subtract 1 carb for every gram of fiber. It's called "net carbs". Dreamfields makes spaghetti and other pastas too.

For one of my other favorite meals, tacos, the carbs come from the soft tortillas or hard shells that you use. But you can buy smart here, too. For hard shell tacos I use Ortega Whole Grain Corn Taco Shells where a serving size is 2 shells with 18 carbs and 6 grams of fiber (12g net carbs). But if you like soft tacos, like me, go for Mission "carb balance" flour tortillas which have 19g of carbs, but a whopping 13g of dietary fiber for

6g of net carbs. That, my friends, makes for a good tasting taco or two with minimal carb intake. The main ingredients to tacos, of course is the meat. I use Jenny-O ground turkey. Trust me on this one! You won't be disappointed, but don't forget your taco seasoning or it'll just taste like meat on a tortilla.

Chicken and/or steak salads are amazing! Don't buy cheap stuff though, get the quality meats and use them within a day or two. Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, some quality shredded cheese, a scoop of guacamole, and some salsa, along with Marie's Chipotle Ranch makes for an awesome dinner salad. I often line the outside of the salad with Tostitos multi-grain chips (maybe 6 or 7) to help scoop up the guacamole, or sometimes I'll add sour cream too. Portion size counts! Just because I add sour cream and dressing to my salad, doesn't mean I drown my food. A single spoon full of sour cream and a serving of dressing is all that's called for. Carbs aren't always where you think they are, so things like dressing and sour cream; may not be "health foods", but they are low in carbs. Either way, don't over indulge just because they're low in carbs as they don't provide too much nutritional value either.

One more thing for dinner, my favorite, steak! Look, I'm not advocating eating nothing but meats and proteins, but a good portioned steak just makes me feel manly. With a healthy side of seasoned broccoli, you just can't go wrong. And where I used to have bread as a side, I just add some more broccoli, or if I'm feeling frisky, a small salad.

While I was asked for specific examples, it is hard to list everything we eat as part of our lower carb diet. It's all about choices, friends. You can go to McDonald's or Cracker Barrel and walk away satisfied without that tired feeling we get after devouring a heavy carb meal (*Big Mac has 47g of carbs, while 3 chicken selects have 21g*). Rolls or other breads, which are often handed out for free (Outback, Longhorn), french fries and tater tots, or the big no-no, regular soda, is what is going to add up in the end. And for what it's worth, Cracker Barrel actually has a low carb menu that rocks! Regardless of carb content, I have a rule that if it grows from the earth, I'll eat it. Green beans, broccoli (my favorite), zucchini, squash, and even a small baked potato, are all good in my book. Again, you can't live a no-carb lifestyle. Plain and simple, you need them and you must consume them. Just do so with portion size in mind.

If you are 30 to 40 lbs. overweight like I was 2 ½ years ago, then do what I did if you think it will help. I started by limiting myself to roughly 25 carbs per meal, and snacked a little throughout the day. Mixed nuts are a great snack, by the way (think net carbs, here). Once I was happy with the weight loss, I relaxed the diet a little. Today, 2 ½ years later, I probably average up to 250g of carbs per day versus more than 400g 2 ½ years ago. And there's no doubt that I splurge on occasion. Yes, occasionally I'll indulge myself by eating pizza, movie popcorn, or a pretty good dessert. You'll never have to schedule a "cheat day" as the world will schedule them for you. Someone will always be celebrating something at work where you'll find cake and cookies. Or Fridays will be "donut day" like in our very overweight accounting department where I used to work. Take a look at the carb content in a single Krispy Kreme donut (22g)...and no one can eat just one! So to all of you who allot yourself a "cheat day", you're only cheating yourself.

Lastly, drink wisely. Not just the whole soda thing (I drink diet sodas every day), but take a look at Gatorade, fruit juice, and beer. I enjoy the Crystal Light packets for bottled water, Gatorade G2, PowerAde Zero, and when it comes to alcohol, Bacardi (the clear stuff) and Diet Coke with a lime. It's all about decisions and it's not at all hard. It just takes some getting used to. For me, it took a week to get used to diet soda and about 2 weeks to master the carb content of foods after reading all the nutrition facts and serving sizes.

7 of our favorite dinners at home:

Ms. Paul's Extra Large Fish Sticks (4 to a serving, 18g carbs, 1g fiber, 190 calories)

9 medium cooked shrimp
Side of steamed broccoli

Rotisserie chicken (cooked & ready to serve) from the grocery store

Side of green beans
Serving of Velveeta Whole Grain Mac n' Cheese

Chicken & Steak Fajitas using Mission "carb balance" soft tortillas (low carb, high fiber)

All the fixin's on the fajitas (lettuce, tomato, sour cream, salsa, cheese)
Serving of refried or black beans (good source of fiber)

Catfish nuggets using a whole grain seasoning in a fry pan

Corn on the cob (or from a can)
Small side salad

Boneless chicken breasts on the grill

Zucchini & Squash on skewers on the grill as a side
Cucumber salad with dill dressing

Steak on the grill (don't go for the "old ninety-sixer", choose the size wisely)

Small baked potato (maybe a big one that you split with someone)
Side of steamed broccoli

Spaghetti with quality ground beef (97/3 lean) using Dreamfields carb smart pasta

Side salad to your liking (I prefer Marie's Light Blue Cheese dressing)
**be sure you watch your serving of pasta. Enjoy, but don't over indulge.*

Part IV: THE WORKOUT!

Over the course of 2 months on temporary AGR orders, I was fortunate enough to have a lot of much needed personal time. I was able to knock out SNCOA (PME Course 14) and able to maintain my fitness routine and add a few extras that I can't do regularly at home due to using the gym where my kids enjoy the Kids Club. At my gym, LA Fitness, I'm limited to indoor activities. But at the end of the day, I can't use the kids as an excuse because they offer the Kids Club so I can work out in peace without having to worry about them.

I know of a lot of full-timers (and traditional guardsmen alike) who struggle with passing the Air Force Fitness Assessment (PT Test) for a variety of reasons. I know one NCO who has a 32 inch waist and looks relatively fit, but we sometimes wrongfully associate a thin physique with being physically fit. Likewise, we often assume that because someone has a larger waist, exceeding the Air Force's 39 inch maximum, they lack strength or endurance. While the skinny guy scores the maximum points on his waist, he fails to run 1 ½ miles in the required time. Then, there's the "big guy" who fails the waist measurement, but smokes all three of the other components of the PT test. Who is right and who is wrong? According to the Air Forces Fitness program, they're both wrong. You and I may disagree with this, but at the end of the day, we ALL have to meet the same standards.

One of the things I have noticed during my time on base is all the walkers using the half mile track. Is walking bad for you? Of course not; ANY exercise is good for you. But walking is a natural act; we should all be walking roughly 3 miles per day as we go about our daily routine, not including our planned workouts. The average American adult walks roughly 3 miles per day, or about 5,000 steps. Think about your routine. Do you find yourself behind a desk the majority of the day? If you're a full-timer in the National Guard, then the answer is likely "yes". Not because you don't want to move around, but your job has you supporting a full-sized airlift wing where 80% of your colleagues are only working one weekend a month. It takes a lot of paperwork to keep us part-timers administratively on track and ready to deploy. So, you walk 100 feet to your car, then 100 feet to your office; spend 80% of your work day at your desk, and repeat the process on your way home. Of course, there is a huge "plus or minus" here. But the question is; are you burning enough calories? Are you moving your muscles and joints enough to maintain an acceptable level of fitness that's expected of today's Airmen? You can answer that question quietly to yourself.

In the first pages of this lengthy paper, I try to get the point across that 80% of weight control has to do with diet and nutrition, not so much exercise. But I also discussed in the above paragraphs that a thin physique doesn't always correlate to being fit to fight. You have to have muscle and you have to be able to perform missions for America when there is adversity, enemy, or conditions that require you to have endurance beyond the average American citizen. Can you carry your wingman 100 feet? Are you able to patrol for three hours with 50 lbs. of body armor and ammunition? We don't need everyone to be a CrossFit fanatic or knuckle dragging muscle heads; but we ALL need to be at a level of fitness that allows us to perform our jobs for the long haul. From changing out an engine in an aircraft in 120 degree heat to spending 4 hours at MOPP IV during an ORI in Mississippi, we all have a duty to be fit to fight and exceed the minimums set forth in our PT standards.

Below are 25 randomly selected (copied and pasted) workouts from my personal journal where I have more than 500 entries. I didn't always keep a workout journal, but it became a habit during my deployment to Afghanistan in 2011 where I made a goal of running 500 miles during the deployment. It wasn't a realistic goal due to work commitments and conditions, but I did run more than 400 miles during the 6 month deployment. These workouts are not in any type of order. My workouts vary in length, intensity, and movements, but generally include a mix of cardiovascular exercises, endurance, and strength conditioning. I don't claim to be a nutritionist, personal trainer, or athlete. I don't think I look like someone who works out, nor do I feel the need to. I love end result and it's nice to show up to a PT test and the only concern I have is whether or not I'll beat my previous score.

Note: Every gym has different equipment and I don't know the names of every exercise out there so I often make up my own names for them. The important thing is to do SOMETHING; and do it for at least 30 minutes, 4 times each week. If you can't run a mile, run until you can't run anymore, then walk back. But finish that mile! If you're struggling to improve your run time, then run; don't waste your time on the bench press. If you can't seem to do enough push-ups to meet the standards, then do dips, bench press, push-up pyramids, or research online on how to improve your push-ups.

1. 31 minutes on the arc-trainer followed by...

4 sets:

10 lat pull downs @ 160 lbs.

15 hanging leg lifts

10 low rows @ 120 lbs.

20 cross cable pulls @ 30 lbs. (10 left, 10 right)

Followed by a 1,250 meter swim for a combined 1,100 calories burned.

2. 1 mile warm-up run (175 calories) followed by...

4 sets:

10 burpees

30 medicine ball twists

20 dumbbell curls @ 30 lbs. (10 left arm, 10 right)

20 lunges

3. 12 minutes on elliptical (175 calories)
12 minute incline run on treadmill (250 calories)
12 minutes on arc-trainer (200 calories)

Followed by...

4 sets:

As many pull-ups as I could do

70 crunches (20 left, 30 center, 20 right)

20 medicine ball push-ups

4. 40 minutes on the Arc-Trainer (700+ calories)
20 minutes on the elliptical (300+ calories)
5. 20 "low & slow" minutes on the arc-trainer for 350 calories followed by...

4 sets of:

15 push-ups

40 2 count flutter kicks

10 curls @ 60 lbs.

10 24" box jumps

6. 5 mile outside run in 40 minutes
7. 4 ½ miles on elliptical at a lower setting the usual for 600 calories, followed by...

4 sets of:

10 lat pull-downs 140 lbs.

10 triceps push-downs @ 70 lbs.

20 incline crunches

10 curls @ 60 lbs.

10 low rows @ 120 lbs.

8. 4 mile ruck march (hike with back pack) @ 40 lbs. for 900 calories burned.

9. 30 minutes on cross trainer for 500 calories, followed by...

4 sets:

10 high rows @ 140 lbs.

10 body raises

10 curls @ 60 lbs.

10. A hard 4 ½ miles on the elliptical for 700 calories, followed by...

4 sets:

12 decline chest presses @ 100 lbs.

20 seated crunches @ 90 lbs.

12 high rows @ 140 lbs.

12 shoulder presses @ 100 lbs.

11. This one came from a hotel gym while traveling for work in May 2013. I always push myself to work out when I travel, mainly because most people allow themselves to skip it.

Ran 3 ¼ miles followed by ¼ mile cool down walk for 700 calories, followed by...

4 sets:

15 hanging leg lifts

10 triceps push-downs @ 60 lbs.

10 dual pulley low rows @ 100 lbs.

10 curls @ 60 lbs. curl bar

12. Another one from a hotel, this one while on vacation over Christmas in December 2012.

30 minutes on elliptical followed by...

4 sets:

10 burpees with 20 lbs. dumbbell lifts

40 2 count flutter kicks|

20 Alternating dumbbell curls @ 30 lbs.

10 Kettle bell swings @ 30 lbs.

13. Here's a day where I did two separate workouts. Sometimes, you just get the energy.

First Workout: 10 minute warm-up on the cross trainer, followed by...

6 sets:

10 medicine ball push-ups

30 incline crunches (10 left, center, right)

10 low rows @ 120 lbs.

40 2 count flutter kicks

Concluded with a 5 minute cool down on the cross trainer.

Second Workout: 3 ¼ mile hike over rolling hills with 40 lbs. pack for a little over 750 calories.

14. 1 mile warm-up on cross-trainer followed by...

4 sets:

12 chest presses @ 120 lbs.

45 crunches (15 left, center, right)

12 low rows @ 120 lbs.

20 cable crosses @ 32 lbs. (10 left side, 10 right)

15. 5 miles on elliptical for 700 calories, followed by...

4 sets:

20 push-ups

45 crunches (15 left, center, right)

16. 1 ½ mile jog for 200 calories, followed by...

4 sets:

10 24" box jumps

40 2 count flutter kicks

12 medicine ball push-ups

20 lunges

17. Three twenty minute blocks on 3 different cardio machines...

20 minutes on treadmill at 15% incline at 4.0 (15 minute pace) for 350 calories

20 minutes on elliptical set at 15 for 375 calories

20 minutes on arc-trainer at 12 for 400 calories

18. 3 mile interval-run (10 min pace, then 6:30 pace) 2 minutes slow, 1 minute fast, followed by...

4 sets:

15 push-ups

20 incline crunches

10 low rows @ 100 lbs.

20 alternating dumbbell curls @ 30 lbs. (10 left, 10 right)

19. 2 mile run and 2 miles on elliptical for 550 calories, followed by...

3 sets:

12 high rows @ 140 lbs.

12 curls @ 70 lbs.

20 hanging leg raises

20 seated crunches @ 80 lbs.

20. 4 miles on elliptical for 550 calories, followed by...

5 sets:

10 chest presses @ 120 lbs.

30 2 count flutter kicks

10 24" box jumps

10 triceps push-downs @ 60 lbs.

21. 1 ½ mile warm up on elliptical followed by...

20 sets:

5 push-ups

10 crunches

Followed by 1,500 meter swim for a combined 850 calories burned.

22. 100 calories on 5 pieces of equipment:

Cross trainer 8 min
Stationary bike 7 min
Stair master 9 min
Elliptical 7 min
Elevated treadmill 6 min

Followed by a 1,300 meter swim for a combined 1,000 calories burned.

23. 15 miles on stationary bike for 800 calories.

24. 4-mile run on treadmill and 1,300 meter swim for 1,000 calories.

25. 3 ½ mile run for 600 calories followed by...

3 sets:
10 back extensions @ 150 lbs
10 shoulder presses @ 120 lbs
10 chest presses @ 120 lbs

As you can tell from these 25 workouts, they vary day to day and while sometimes they mirror each other, I rarely, if at all, do the same workout twice in the same week. The important thing to remember is to keep yourself from being bored. Many people hate the treadmill, so that's why I mix it up with a variety of at least six different cardio exercises. Tired of the gym? Go outside for an hour long hike. If you get tired of music, download an audiobook and you may find yourself on the elliptical for an hour before you know it.

Note: Each of the four parts of this paper represents four separate articles and was combined in July 2013 to form a single script that can be read in its entirety. The information in this paper is based solely on opinion, open source research and personal experiences.