

# Parent Resource Guide





Dear Parents/Guardians:

The President's Council's on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Cooper Institute, the Amateur Athletic Union, and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance is pleased to announce the newly created Presidential Youth Fitness Program. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program provides educators with the tools necessary to help students adopt an active lifestyle and improve their health and overall well-being.

Healthy children have less absenteeism, are better able to learn, have higher self-esteem and are at lower risk for developing chronic diseases. Quality physical education programs empower students to embrace active lifestyles. Through implementation of this new program, students can learn how to set goals for and interpret fitness assessment results and learn what they can do to improve their physical well-being.

As part of every educational program, purposeful measurement is an appropriate component of quality physical education. This is where the Presidential Youth Fitness Program health-related fitness assessment, FITNESSGRAM® comes into play. FITNESSGRAM®, created in 1982, uses criterion-based standards that have been found to be associated with good health, as established by a scientific advisory board. FITNESSGRAM® measures aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition to provide a snapshot of a child's overall health as it relates to fitness. The assessment provides the starting point for developing physical activity plans to improve fitness.

Your child's physical education teacher can assist you in understanding your child's assessment results. Fitness assessments are a positive first step toward greater health and wellness. Grading students based on the results of the fitness assessment is strongly discouraged, and contrary to the philosophy of FITNESSGRAM®. Fitness assessment results are confidential and are intended to be shared only with the child and parent/guardian.

We thank you for your support of our efforts promoting the well-being of your child and look forward to enhancing the opportunities to positively impact the health of America's youth.

Sincerely,

Presidential Youth Fitness Program Partners:

President's Council's on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
The Cooper Institute®  
The Amateur Athletic Union  
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance



# INTRODUCTION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL YOUTH FITNESS PROGRAM

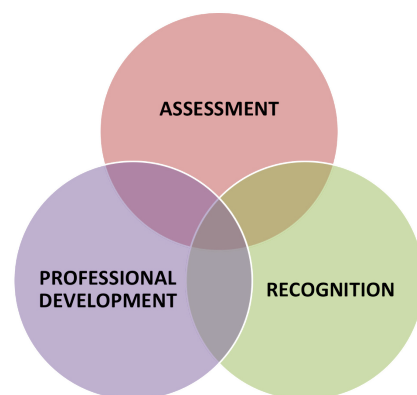
Physical fitness assessment has taken place in U.S. public schools for over 50 years. It is one component of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, a comprehensive, school-based program that includes a health-related assessment in addition to educational and motivational tools to empower students to adopt active lifestyles.

In general, fitness assessment is used to evaluate a student's level of health-related physical fitness, which is directly related to the quality and quantity of physical activity in which they participate. Physical fitness assessment results of U.S. children and adolescents have shown that our youth lack the levels of physical fitness that are important for daily living and future health. Most recently, physical fitness assessment has gained popularity because of increased childhood obesity levels, the relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement, and the idea that a "fit" child will lead to a "fit" adult. Therefore, it is likely that your child will participate in a fitness assessment at some point in their educational experience.

As a parent, you may have questions in regard to the purpose of fitness assessment, the components of the assessment, how the assessment is administered and reported, or the meaning of your child's assessment results. This document is designed to inform you of these timely issues related to physical fitness evaluation.

## Program Components

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is a voluntary school-based program that promotes health and regular physical activity for America's youth. As part of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program partnership, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition will no longer promote the President's Challenge Physical Fitness Test and instead will encourage use of the FITNESSGRAM® assessment, which focuses on health and lifelong physical activity. The comprehensive program provides resources for teachers to support quality physical education, recognition options to motivate schools and students, and materials for parents and students to help them be physically active.





## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

First and foremost, fitness assessments should be a positive experience for your child. By using an assessment that focuses on health-related fitness instead of athletic performance and skill-related fitness the potential for inappropriate comparisons between children is minimized. FITNESSGRAM® emphasizes what's really important—their well-being. After all, this isn't about creating elite athletes. It is about empowering kids and families to be active for a lifetime.

Second, physical activity and good nutrition make for happier, more attentive, and more productive students. The physical activity found in quality physical education enables children and adolescents to thrive academically and socially and is linked to increased academic achievement. Studies have shown a significant relationship between achievement on fitness tests and improved performance on State academic assessments. The physical activity found in quality physical education may have an impact on cognitive skills, attitudes, and academic behavior (e.g., time-on-task). In addition, quality physical education helps:

- Create a framework of life skills which shape the whole person, encourage smart choices, and influence a healthy lifestyle
- Expand social and cooperative skills; problem-solving competencies; and the ability to make self-assessments, plan personal programs, set goals, and make decisions
- Provide learning experiences that may improve mental alertness, academic performance, and readiness and enthusiasm for learning in youth



As students develop health-related fitness, physical competence, cognitive understanding, and positive attitudes about physical activity they can adopt healthy and physically active lifestyles. Parents play a critical role in ensuring their children receive the quality physical education they need to achieve their fullest potential.

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program partners are working to raise awareness about the need for children to be physically active on a daily basis and the role quality PE plays in helping children achieve recommended activity levels. For more information, log on to [www.presidentialyouthfitnessprogram.org](http://www.presidentialyouthfitnessprogram.org).





## FITNESSGRAM® Assessment

When it comes to your child's health, a fitness assessment is an important step for two main reasons. First, it serves as a way to identify your child's current level of health-related fitness. This information is directly related to his or her risk for developing conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or type 2 diabetes.

Second, it serves as a baseline for measurement. When children have an idea of the areas in which they're doing well (Healthy Fitness Zone®) as well as the areas that are in need of improvement, it's clear which components of fitness need the most attention. From here, you and your child can be involved in setting goals to improve or maintain his or her level of physical fitness. FITNESSGRAM®, the fitness assessment tool used as part of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, provides accurate and reliable information about your child's level of health-related fitness.

FITNESSGRAM® is designed to evaluate aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition (See Table 1). Your child's fitness scores are compared to Healthy Fitness Zone® standards, which represent the level of fitness needed for long-term, positive health outcomes. The use of health-related criteria helps to minimize comparisons between children and emphasizes personal fitness for health and well-being. Since only modest amounts of activity are needed to obtain health benefits, children who are physically active on a regular basis should be able to achieve the Healthy Fitness Zone® in all fitness components. More information on the Healthy Fitness Zone® standards can be found online at: <http://www.cooperinstitute.org/healthyfitnesszone>.

**Table 1. Components of FITNESSGRAM®**

Component of Health-related Fitness	Definition	FITNESSGRAM®
Aerobic Capacity	How well your heart and lungs work together to get oxygen to working muscles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mile run</li> <li>• PACER</li> <li>• Walk Test</li> </ul>
Muscular Strength	How much force can be exerted by a muscle or group of muscles in a single effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Push-ups</li> <li>• Curl-ups</li> <li>• Trunk lift</li> </ul>
Muscular Endurance	How long your muscles are able to continue working against a less-than-maximal resistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexed Arm Hang</li> <li>• Modified Pull-up</li> </ul>
Flexibility	The range of motion available around a particular joint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back-Saver Sit and Reach</li> <li>• Shoulder Stretch</li> </ul>
Body Composition	What part of total body weight is fat and what part is fat-free (bones and muscles).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body Mass Index</li> <li>• Percentage Body Fat</li> </ul>

*Pictures and descriptions can be viewed at: <http://www.cooperinstitute.org/fitnessgramtests>*



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Is this the same fitness test I had as a kid?

There is a good chance that as a child you participated in either the President's Challenge Physical Fitness Test or FITNESSGRAM®. This school year we are introducing a new program that uses the FITNESSGRAM® assessment as part of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program.

### Why is this important?

Physical activity is critical to our children's health and well being. Research shows that children with better health are in school more days, are better able to learn, have higher self-esteem and are at lower risk for developing chronic diseases. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is all about helping kids develop skills to assess and understand their fitness levels, set goals to improve, and find activities that keep them moving for a lifetime

### What is being tested?

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program uses measures to assess health related fitness, like how well your heart and lungs pump blood and oxygen, how strong muscles are and how long they can perform before tiring. Specific measures include aerobic capacity, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. In the past, we tested footwork and coordination, which was a measure of athleticism, but did not indicate if a child is healthy.

### What was wrong with the President's Challenge Physical Fitness test?

The old test wasn't "wrong" — we just know more about kids' health now than we did back then. The former test

compared students against norm referenced standards. Some adults have bad memories of the old test and it may impact (in a negative way) their levels of physical activity today. The new assessment incorporates criterion-referenced standards and is based on health-related fitness levels necessary for good health. The new program further provides teachers, kids and parents the resources they need to live healthy lifestyles.

### Do all kids have to do this test?

Fitness assessment has always been a valid component of a quality physical education program. Utilized as an educational tool to assist students in developing health-related fitness goals, decisions about how much and what is taught in physical education classes are made at the local level. However, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, which is completely voluntary, will provide quality resources to assist students and their parents in understanding fitness data, as well as provide recommendations to improve areas of concern.

### How is the FITNESSGRAM assessment used in schools?

Across the U.S., school physical education (PE) teachers administer FITNESSGRAM® in Physical Education classes. Throughout every school year, your child should practice each individual assessment in an effort to better understand the assessment and how it works. When a fitness assessment is used in a Physical Education class, your child may perform up to five separate activities in addition to having their body mass index assessed (described in Table 1 above).

Your child's scores are recorded and are available only to the teacher, your child, and you. In no way should your child's score be posted publicly for other students to view or for



anyone to make judgment on your child. You can contact your local school district for details regarding their privacy policy as it relates to your child's personal information.

## **What do the FITNESSGRAM® results mean?**

The Healthy Fitness Zone® means that a child's results on one of the individual fitness assessments show that he/she likely has good health. For example, the PACER test is used to measure aerobic capacity and a child's PACER test results can be related to heart health, which is a positive health outcome. Children either fall within the Healthy Fitness Zone® or below the standard. Those falling below the standard are classified in the "Needs Improvement" zone. Children placed in the "Needs Improvement" zone are provided with information on the health risks associated with low levels of fitness, as well as ways to reach the Healthy Fitness Zone® and ultimately improve their health. For example, if a child is in the "Needs Improvement" zone for the PACER test, he/she might receive information about increasing aerobic physical activity through activities he/she enjoys, such as walking, jogging, or swimming.

Health-based measures of fitness are those that are most meaningful for monitoring and improving health. The FITNESSGRAM® assessment gives you, your child, and their teacher a comprehensive and complete report on their fitness levels. In turn, your child's personal levels of physical fitness can be identified and a baseline for developing personal fitness goals can be achieved.

## **What is the point of measuring weight?**

Your child's body composition may be assessed through a measure called body mass index (BMI), or through a skin-fold test. BMI is a number based on the height and weight of your child. Whether measured through BMI or a skin-fold test, these numbers can be used to identify a risk for future health problems due to excess body weight"

## **What can I do to get my children more active?**

Get moving as a family. Parents are a child's first and best role models. It can be as simple as going for a walk together or turning on the radio and dancing around the living room.

## **How much physical activity does my kid need?**

Kids need at least 60 minutes of physical play each day. At least 50% of your child's activity can be achieved during, before, and after school, but the rest can be met through active family time.

## **Will this program be in all schools this year?**

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is available for your schools now if your child's school chooses to participate.

## **My child has a disability. Does this put them on the sidelines?**

Absolutely not! While there are some barriers for youth with disabilities, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program has teamed up with organizations to ensure that kids of all abilities have the tools they need to live active lifestyles. Students with disabilities can also be fitness tested and receive recognition for achievement.

## **Should my child get graded on this test?**

It isn't about who is fastest or strongest. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is about promoting healthy lifestyles, empowering students to set and achieve personal goals, and providing the materials teachers need to do what they do best. It is strongly recommended that schools do not grade students on their fitness levels.



## TIPS TO HELP YOUR FAMILY BE ACTIVE

Engaging in physical activity as a family can be a fun way to get everyone moving. Studies show that kids who believe they are competent and have the skills to be physically active are more likely to be active. And those who feel supported by friends and family to become active, or are surrounded by others interested in physical activity, are more likely to participate.

Children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day, but it doesn't have to occur at once. It all adds up! And remember, sleep is just as important and is an essential part of living an active, healthy life. A recent study found that with each extra hour of sleep, the risk of a child being overweight or obese dropped by nine percent.

Here are a few activities and steps that you and your family can consider to get started on a path to a healthier lifestyle:



- Give children toys that encourage physical activity like balls, kites, and jump ropes.
- Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity.
- Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child's bedroom. Children aged 2 years to 12th grade should limit TV viewing to no more than 2 hours per day.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk around the block after a meal
- When possible, have your child walk or ride their bicycle to school. Get some activity your self by accompanying them on the journey.
- Make a new house rule: no sitting still during television commercials.
- Limit screen time (computer and video games) for nonschool use to no more than 2 hours per day.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity: Family Park day, swim day or bike day.
- Issue a family challenge to see who can be the first to achieve a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award by committing to physical activity five days a week, for six weeks. Adults and children can both receive the award!
- Encourage schools to hold recess prior to lunch to increase physical activity before mealtime.
- Volunteer to help with afterschool physical activity programs or sports teams.
- Be sure that children get the sleep they need. Most children under age five need to sleep for 11 hours or more per day, children age five to 10 need 10 hours of sleep or more per day, and children over age 10 need at least 9 hours per day.
- Learn how engaging in outside activities can be fun and affordable for families through Let's Move Outside, which promotes a range of healthy outdoor activities for children and families across the country.





# PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVE LIFESTYLE AWARD

The promotion and adoption of physical activity is at the heart of the Presidential Youth Fitness Pro-



gram. The President's Challenge—the premier program of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition—offers PALA+ as a tool to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles. PALA+ is designed to motivate you and your child (aged 6 and older) to make physical activity and healthy eating part of everyday life.

The physical activity requirements for PALA+ are 60 minutes/day for kids, 30 minutes/day for adults, five days a week for six out of eight weeks. The nutrition component requires participants to add a weekly healthy eating goal and build upon those goals throughout the same six-week period. Once you achieve your physical activity and healthy eating goals you can receive a certificate signed by the Council co-chairs.

Participation in PALA+ is one way to meet the recommendations of the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. The healthy eating goals are based on the consumer messages from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. Building upon the healthy eating goals each week helps you make gradual changes that, when combined with regular physical activity, can improve their overall health and well-being.

Healthy eating goals in PALA+ include:

- I made half my plate fruits and vegetables
- At least half of the grains that I ate were whole grains
- I chose fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk, yogurt, or cheese
- I drank water instead of sugary drinks

- I chose lean sources of protein
- I compared sodium (salt) in foods like soup and frozen meals and chose foods with less sodium
- I ate seafood this week
- I ate smaller portions

The President's Challenge encourages all Americans to make physical activity and good nutrition part of their everyday lives. Regardless of age, background, or ability, the President's Challenge can help motivate individuals to move more often and eat healthy! PALA+ can help all Americans jumpstart or maintain a healthy lifestyle. Families can sign up online at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) or use a paper log form to track their physical activity and nutrition. See next page for the paper log form.





# PALA+

activity+nutrition

Be active. Have fun.

## Presidential Active Lifestyle Award: Activity + Nutrition (PALA+)

PALA+ promotes physical activity AND good nutrition, because it takes both to lead a healthy lifestyle. Sign up for the six-week program to help you maintain or improve your health. Anyone age 6 and older can earn their PALA+ today – sign up at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) or use the log on the reverse side.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** A healthy life is an active life. Youth (6-17 years old) need to be active at least 60 minutes a day (or 11,000 steps for girls and 13,000 steps for boys). Adults (18 and older), 30 minutes (or 8500 steps). So, take a walk with friends, bike ride after dinner, garden, or play a game of basketball at the park. Get your heart pumping and your muscles moving. When you've logged six weeks of physical activity, congratulations. You've started a regular routine for a more active lifestyle.

### GOOD NUTRITION

Start eating healthy. It's easier than you think! Take it one step at a time. Commit to one new healthy eating goal this week, and circle it on your weekly PALA+ log. The following week add a different goal – but make sure you continue to maintain your healthy eating goal(s) from the week(s) before. Focus on your healthy eating goals every week and remember, the more often you incorporate them into your lifestyle, the better you will feel. When you've achieved six different healthy eating goals, congratulations. You've started a routine for a healthier lifestyle.

### Tips for Healthy Eating:

#### Make half your plate fruit and vegetables.



Keep it simple by filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables at meal time. The more colorful you make your plate; the more likely you are to get the vitamins, minerals, and fiber your body needs to be healthy. Remember that all forms count – fresh, frozen, canned (fruit in water or 100% juice), dried, or 100% juice.

#### Make half the grains you eat whole grains.



An easy way to eat more whole grains is to switch from a refined grain food to a whole-grain food. For example, eat whole-wheat bread instead of white bread, brown rice instead of white rice, and low-fat popcorn instead of snack chips. Read the ingredients list and choose products that list a whole-grain ingredient first. Look for things like: "whole wheat," "brown rice," "bulgur," "buckwheat," "oatmeal," "rolled oats," "quinoa," or "wild rice."

#### Choose fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk, yogurt, or cheese.



To help build your bones and keep them strong, dairy products should be a key part of your diet because they provide calcium, vitamin D, and many other nutrients your bones need.

#### Drink water instead of sugary drinks.



Regular soda and other sweet drinks such as fruit drinks and energy drinks are high in calories because they have a lot of added sugar. Instead, reach for a tall glass of water. Try adding a slice of lemon, lime or watermelon or a splash of 100% juice to your glass of water if you want some flavor.

#### Choose lean sources of protein.



Meat, poultry, seafood, dry beans or peas, eggs, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the protein foods group. Select leaner cuts of ground beef (label says 90% lean or higher), turkey breast, or chicken breast. Grill, roast, poach, or boil meat, poultry, or seafood instead of frying. Include beans or peas in main dishes such as chili, stews, casseroles, salads, tacos, enchiladas, and burritos.

#### Compare sodium in foods like soup and frozen meals and choose foods with less sodium.



Read the Nutrition Facts label to compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, canned vegetables, and frozen meals – and choose the foods with lower amounts. Look for "low sodium," "reduced sodium," and "no salt added" on food packages.

#### Eat some seafood.



Seafood includes fish (such as salmon, tuna, and trout) and shellfish (such as crab, mussels, and oysters). Seafood has protein, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids (heart healthy fat). Adults should try to eat at least 8 ounces a week of a variety of seafood. Children can eat smaller amounts of seafood too.

#### Pay attention to portion size.



Check to see what the recommended portion sizes of foods you eat look like in the bowls, plates, and glasses you use at home. For example – check 3/4 cup cereal, 3 ounces cooked chicken, 1 cup milk, 1/2 cup of juice. When dining out avoid "supersizing" your meal or buying "combo" meal deals that often include large size menu items. Choose small size items instead or ask for a "take home" bag and wrap up half of your meal to take home before you even start to eat.



# PALA+

activity+nutrition



[www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Date Started \_\_\_\_\_

Group ID (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Week 1	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Select a goal for this week.

Week 2	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Circle and continue with last week's goal, and add a new goal.

Week 3	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Circle and continue with previous goals, and add a new goal.

Week 4	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Circle and continue with previous goals, and add a new goal.

Week 5	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Circle and continue with previous goals, and add a new goal.

Week 6	Day	Physical Activities	# of Minutes or Pedometer Steps
	Mon		
	Tues		
	Wed		
	Thurs		
	Fri		
	Sat		
	Sun		

Healthy Eating—Circle and continue with previous goals, and add a new goal.

## Healthy Eating Goals

I made half my plate fruits and vegetables

At least half of the grains that I ate were whole grains

I chose fat-free or low fat (1%) milk, yogurt, or cheese

I drank water instead of sugary drinks

I chose lean sources of protein

I compared sodium in foods like soup and frozen meals and chose foods with less sodium

I ate seafood

I ate smaller portions

**INSTRUCTIONS:** **Online:** Create an online account at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). Participate as an individual or join a group (ID at the top of page if applicable). Once you achieve PALA, you're eligible to receive a certificate! **Paper:** Use this hard copy log to track your progress. Once completed, report your accomplishment and receive your certificate at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)! Or, if part of a group, make sure to return it to your group administrator to get recognized.