

12-Minute Run Test (Cooper Test)

How Fit am I?

Fitness can be tested in all manner of ways. A common understanding of fitness is how long and, or, fast someone can run/cycle/row etc. for. This is a test of cardiovascular endurance – a person's ability to sustain prolonged exercise for minutes, hours or even days!

Cardiovascular endurance

Very simply put, cardiovascular endurance is the ability of the heart, lungs and blood vessels to deliver oxygen to working muscles and tissues (and remove the bi-products). To train for a half-marathon, you need to train your cardiovascular endurance. This type of training is different to the training you need to do to run a fast 800 metres.

Here's one simple test of 'fitness'.

12 Minute Run Test

Developed in the 1960s by Dr Cooper, the 12-minute run test measures how far a person can cover (run, walk, jog) in 12 minutes. Simple. Ideally you want to take this test on a standard running track, or a location where you can measure distance run without having to stop. If you're struggling to find anywhere the treadmill could be an option, however, remember that this is an artificial environment. You will need to raise the belt to a 1 degree incline to simulate outdoor running.

You will need:

- A stopwatch and
- Something to record the distance covered, such as cones placed around the running track at standardised distances.

What to do?

- Warm-up before you take the test (5-10 minutes of light jogging and stretching).
- Start the timer and off you go!
- Run, jog or walk for the whole 12 minutes.
- Record the distance covered.

12-minute run test

Age	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor
Male 20-29	>2800m	2400-2800m	2200-2399m	1600-2199m	<1600m
Females 20-29	>2700m	2200-2700m	1800-2199m	1500-1799m	<1500m
Males 30-39	>2700m	2300-2700m	1900-2299m	1500-1999m	<1500m
Females 30-39	>2500m	2000-2500m	1700-1999m	1400-1699m	<1400m
Males 40-49	>2500m	2100-2500m	1700-2099m	1400-1699m	<1400m
Females 40-49	>2300m	1900-2300m	1500-1899m	1200-1499m	<1200m
Males 50	>2400m	2000-2400m	1600-1999m	1300-1599m	<1300m
Females 50	>2200m	1700-2200m	1400-1699m	1100-1399m	<1100m

(Adapted from: Cooper, K.H. (1968), "A means of assessing maximal oxygen uptake," Journal of the American Medical Association, 203:201-204)