



A guide to taking the Physical Abilities Test

Test Preparation Kit

Strategies • Strength Training • Further Resources

- Upper Arm Strength
- Abdominal Strength and Endurance
- Trunk Strength

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WELCOME!

Congratulations! You are taking the first step to ensure your success on the tests and ultimately in your career at Sempra Energy utilities. The physical ability tests used at the Southern California Gas Company are designed to measure your physical capabilities for performing physically demanding jobs. This booklet will give you information about the procedures used to test candidates on the physical abilities necessary for successful and safe job performance.

This booklet will describe the tests you will be taking, as well as provide suggestions for training to improve your chance of success on the tests and in the job for which you are applying. **GOOD LUCK!**

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is divided into sections aimed at helping you become more successful on your tests.

- An overview of physical ability testing at the company
- General test taking strategies
- A description of each test
- Suggestions for developing your strength and endurance
- A list of resources to help you design a program for yourself

Whether you are a first time test taker or retaking the tests, take time to read this entire manual and familiarize yourself with the tests you will be taking, as well as the strength training suggestions. Start early, as it takes time to improve physical strength.

About Physical Ability Tests

Physical Ability Tests are used by Sempra Energy utilities to help ensure that employees will be able to successfully and safely perform the physical tasks associated with physically demanding jobs. Rather than tests that try to recreate the job, these tests measure basic strength and endurance that are related to success in the job in question.

Consider the example of someone applying for a job that requires digging trenches. Instead of being tested on the specific ability to dig a trench, he or she would be tested on the upper body strength, abdominal strength/endurance, and back strength that are all involved with digging trenches. This approach is more standardized and safe, more efficient, generalizes to other job tasks, is easier to administer, and relies less on techniques that can be learned on the job. Furthermore, research has shown that these fundamental physical abilities predict success in a wide range of physical job tasks.

General Test Taking Strategies

Preparing for the Test

Strength and endurance training is beneficial for your health regardless of whether you are taking the physical abilities test. If you are not currently involved in strength training and you are not in a physically demanding, it is highly recommended that you engage in strength and endurance training both to improve your overall health and to help you prepare to take the physical abilities test. You should always check with your doctor before engaging in any physical training program.

- Be positive! Start with a positive attitude and don't give up! Building your strength and endurance takes time and commitment.
- Start early and pace yourself. If you choose to prepare for your test, start slowly and allow yourself adequate time to build up your strength and endurance. For some, this may take as little as a few weeks, and for others it may take several months.
- Be consistent. Being consistent is important when building strength and endurance. Take time off for rest when necessary, but a consistent routine will help you stay on track.
- Condition yourself. Building strength is not only going to help your test performance, it is also good for your overall healthy.
- Rest and eat right. Make sure you get plenty of rest and eat healthy while you are training, especially the days leading up to the test and the day of the test.

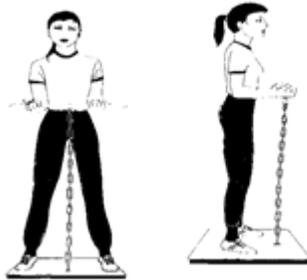
The Day of the Test

- Get ready. Take part in warm-ups and stretches that are described by the test administrator.
- Make good choices. If you do not feel well or have reason to believe you cannot safely perform the tests (e.g. illness, injuries, etc.), reschedule your testing session. There will be other opportunities. Your health and safety are of utmost importance.
- Listen carefully to all test instructions! To ensure that you perform at your best and do not get injured, listen to all test instructions. Make sure to assume the correct body positioning and perform the tests as instructed.
- Listen to your body. If you experience unexpected pain during stretching or testing, stop!
- If you find yourself in a situation where you do not understand the nature of the question or simply don't know the answer, mark it and return to it later. Spending valuable time on a test item that you cannot answer simply gives you less time to complete other items you may know. Marking your answer sheet when you skip an item can help you keep track of where you are on the test.

Description of the Tests

Arm Lift

This test is designed to measure the strength of your arms. This test requires you to stand on a flat platform and with your arms bent at a 90 degree angle and to pull up on a non-moving arm bar with your maximum force for 4 seconds. You will perform 1 practice trial at 50% effort and 3 trials at full effort. In some cases, you may be asked to perform a 4th trial at full effort. You will receive a 30 second rest between trials. See below for a picture of this test.



Sit-Ups Test

This test measures the strength and endurance of your abdominal (stomach) muscles. This test requires you to lie on your back (on a foam mat) with your legs bent at approximately a 90 degree angle, and to perform as many sit-ups as you can in one minute. You will be given specific instructions on how to perform the sit-ups. Your feet will be held steady while you perform the sit-ups. You will complete one trial only. See below for a picture of this test.



Trunk Pull Test

This test measures the strength of your lower back. This test requires you to sit on a mat with your feet against a flat wooden platform placed vertically against a wall, and to pull back on a non-moving bar with your maximum force for 4 seconds. You will perform 1 practice trial at 50% effort and 3 trials at full effort. In some cases, you may be asked to perform a 4th trial at full effort. You will receive a 30 second rest between trials. See below for a picture of this test.



Description of the Tests

Note: You should always check with your doctor before engaging in any physical training program.

The following suggestions and resources are aimed at developing the strength and endurance that are associated with SCG's physical abilities pre-employment test. It is highly recommended that you design a training program to include a wide variety of exercises that will improve your overall physical strength and fitness. This includes working all major muscle groups as well as performing aerobic activities (e.g., walking, swimming) that will help improve your overall fitness.

You might consider obtaining advice or assistance from a personal trainer to help you design a strength training program that is customized for you. You can often find certified personal training professionals who work at local fitness clubs such as the YMCA. It may be helpful to show this booklet to your personal trainer and discuss exercises that will help you prepare for the test.

Make sure you understand the proper techniques and form for performing all exercises. If you do not perform them the correct way, you may not benefit much — worse yet, you risk getting injured.

Upper Arm Strength Training

The first test in the physical abilities test battery measures your upper arm strength (biceps and forearms) using a static (non-moving) strength test. There are several exercises that will help build strength in upper arms.

Some basic exercises that focus on these muscle groups include wrist curls, concentration curls, hammer curls and chin-ups. You can learn more about using these and other exercises that strengthen your biceps and forearms by accessing the resources listed in the Resources section of this guide.

Abdominal Strength Training

Since one of the tests in this battery consists of sit-ups, the best way to prepare for this test is to build up your abdominal strength and endurance using sit-ups. There is no special equipment needed and you can perform these just about anywhere.

Some other exercises that focus on these muscle groups include crunches and the plank. You can learn more about using these and other exercises that strengthen your abdominal muscles by accessing the resources listed in the Resources section of this guide.

Trunk/Lower Back Strength Training

The trunk pull test measures your lower back strength using a static (non-moving) strength test. There are several exercises that will build strength in your lower back.

Some basic exercises that focus on these muscle groups include dumbbell rows, back extensions and stiff legged dead lifts. You can learn more about using these and other exercises that strengthen your lower back by accessing the resources listed in the Resources section of this guide.

Further Resources

Note: Below are various books and websites that may be useful in helping you design a strength training program. You may find the books at your local library or bookstore. There are also a large variety of videos or DVDs that have instructor-led strength training programs available.

Books

- C Hatfield, M. (2005). Health Series: Strength Training for Muscle Development. Doubleday Publishing.
- Farand-Taylor, J. (2006). Solid to the Core: Simple Exercises to Increase Core Strength and Flexibility. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Wuebben, J. & Stoppani, J. (2008). Stronger Arms & Upper Body. Human Kinetics Publishing.

Websites

- <http://www.shapefit.com/strength-training.html>
- <http://www.muscleandfitness.com/workouts/workout-routines/complete-mf-beginners-training-guide-0>