



The New MFTC: How Do I Get In?

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To enroll in the Master Fitness Trainer Course, NCOs must score an 80 on each event of the Army Physical Fitness Test, which is 20 points higher than passing on each event, and they can't be injured.

Stephen Van Camp, the Physical Readiness Division's deputy director, acknowledges that the requirements may prevent some capable NCOs from becoming MFTs, but said the PRD must ensure these standards are met to keep the program valid.

"We want you to be the above-average Soldier physically and have the mental ability to do this," he said.

Citing the NCO mantra of "Be. Know. Do," Van Camp said, "Our fitness standards are there for a reason. If they're trying to be mentors, they should be well in accordance with the body fat standard, they should have no problem with the physical test, and they should be able to do all the exercises and be unhurt. If they're not, that's going to limit their capability out there as a fitness leader and instructor. The course standards to get in are pretty fair."

Once Soldiers are in the course, the mental challenges can be significant, as well.

"We have a mix of military regulation and policy classes, so they know what rules and regulations they have to operate under," Van Camp said. "A lot of people come in with a lot of assumptions based on what they have done in their unit or what they've been told.

"As far as exercise, we have college-freshman-level anatomy and physiology," he said. "We don't really get into the microscopic bone structure, but we do talk about the skeleton as a lever system for movement and also about stress injuries and what improper training can do as opposed to proper training. We talk



MFTC students learn how to measure height and weight accurately.

about musculature. ... Even though we have this kind of crammed course in anatomy, if you relate it to exercise it makes it much more simple.

“The physiology’s a little different, because you have these conceptual things that happen cellularly in the body,” he said. “What they come away with is, ‘I have a basic understanding of how the body works, and now I know why I train this way: because that’s what makes this better; this is the optimal way to train.’”

During the course, two written quizzes are administered, testing the students’ knowledge on some of the specifics of the regulations and the science. The course’s final exam is a scenario-based, open-book test that checks “how much they can assimilate, where to go to look for [answers], and how to be a resource with the resources we’ve given them,” Van Camp said.

“The final, which is a cumulative, 50-question test over all four weeks, will talk about why we do a certain type of training: Why is speed training so important to improving our overall run time and cardiovascular

fitness? It’s because it gives benefits to all the energy systems that supply energy to the body; it helps you both aerobically and anaerobically. You wouldn’t even understand that if you hadn’t had the class on it, but it’s an overall question about an implementation on a PT scheme.”

The examinations aren’t restricted to the classroom, though.

“Out on the field, we introduce, we practice, and then they teach themselves,” Van Camp said. “Then they get up on the platform and start leading. By the fourth week of the course, they’re leading their own PT sessions.”

Frank Palkoska, the PRD’s director, called these pass-fail “teach back” methods critical to the success of the MFTC.

“They get taught how to conduct and set up the strength-training circuit (for instance), and then we assess their ability to teach that,” he said. “That way we understand and have a good feeling that when they get back to their unit, they can teach it like we teach it.” ■

More in this series

- [Master Fitness Trainer Course explains whys of PRT](#)
- [The new MFTC: What are the differences?](#)
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