



Flexibility

What?

Flexibility refers to the range of motion around a joint.

So What?

Flexibility is important because it allows for freedom of movement and can help prevent injury during activity. Flexibility is specific to each joint, so having good lower body flexibility doesn't mean the upper body is the same. As we age, flexibility decreases and can make everyday activities a challenge.

Now What?

There are two testing protocols that can be used to measure flexibility: the back-saver sit and reach and the shoulder stretch. Both tests are identified as optional by the FitnessGram[®] Scientific Advisory Board. Measuring flexibility can help emphasize the fact that multiple factors play into being fit and healthy, particularly when it comes to functional health. Choose the test item that best suits your program needs, or is required by your state or local school system.

See pages 2 and 3 for an overview of the protocols for the back-saver sit and reach and the shoulder stretch, along with safety considerations, scoring, and tips for success.

Back-Saver Sit and Reach

What does it measure? Flexibility

Why is it important? Allows you to participate in a wide range of physical activities, reduces injury, low back pain, and stress.

How is it done?

1. Remove shoes.
2. Square hips by extending both legs straight into the box.
3. Bend right leg, placing foot flat on floor at a fist length away from left leg.
4. Straighten arms with hands on top of each other, fingers even, and palms down.
5. Reach forward with back straight and head up. Repeat 4 times and hold the position of the fourth reach for at least 1 second.
6. Repeat with the other leg.

Safety considerations:

1. Do not allow students to reach beyond 12 inches.

Scoring:

1. Number of inches on each side to the nearest ½ inch reached, to a max score of 12 inches.

Tips for success:

1. Students should have time to warm up and stretch prior to test administration.
2. Hands should reach forward evenly.
3. The trial should be repeated if the hands reach unevenly or the extended knee bends.

Shoulder Stretch

What does it measure? Upper arm and shoulder flexibility

Why is it important? Flexibility is important for all joints and muscle groups in the body to allow for a wide range of motion.

How is it done?

1. Reach right arm over right shoulder and left arm up behind the back for right hand.
2. Record if student is able to touch fingers or not.
3. Repeat reaching left arm over left shoulder and right arm reaching up behind the back for left hand.
4. Record if student is able to touch fingers or not.

Safety Considerations:

1. Stop assessment if student experiences significant discomfort or pain.

Scoring:

1. Indicate whether student is able to touch fingers on the right and left side with “Y” (yes) or “N” (no) for each side.

Tips for success:

1. Instruction tip: Perform this test with partners. Partner can note whether or not fingers touch.
2. Use this stretch to teach that flexibility is joint specific and that flexibility is needed throughout the body.

Shoulder stretch one-pager provided as a public service by HealthMPowers (www.HealthMPowers.org)

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