

River Valley Tae Kwon Do Fitness Challenge

Executive Summary

After observing that fitness requirements were weighted more heavily in promotion decisions than traditional Tae Kwon Do testing—i.e. it's currently possible to pass rank tests without, for instance, completing a successful board break, but it's not possible to be promoted without passing the fitness test—a task force was established to revise them. Through the process of developing graded benchmarks based on publically available fitness data we explored the role of fitness and its connection to the goals of our school. As such, this presentation is not a revision to existing fitness requirements, but rather a total overhaul of how we integrate fitness into our practice at all levels and how this supports the ideals that make Ji Do Kwan such a valuable pursuit.

Fitness standards were last revised in 2014, and none of the 3 students who completed Il Dan tests since that time were able to pass every required element (2/3 passed half). These metrics were not adjusted for age or sex and all of the students were women in their early-20's to early 40's. Extensive research showed that performance varies significantly by age and sex. This research also yielded a multitude of benchmarks correlating to existing fitness milestones.

We extended these benchmarks to encompass fitness tasks that:

1. could generally be performed in the *dojang* during class with minimal loss of TKD training time
2. related explicitly to improving TKD functional movement and
3. could be tracked over time to help develop not only a sense of student accomplishment, but also develop a culture of fitness in the school.

Although our benchmarks are based on scientific normed data, we acknowledged that we could not know for certain that the standards were valid for promoting TKD performance without excluding potentially Dan-level performing practitioners. For this reason, in addition to avoiding weighing fitness more heavily than the actual performance of TKD, **we suggest removing the fitness requirements other than the ability to perform to the appropriate level for rank.** Instead, **we recommend benchmarks** that will be used for students to measure themselves against (and each other) in the continual striving for perfection of the self.

Our school values tradition—passed down from Mr. Choi to teacher to student—but we have a few precedents for modifying existing traditions or adding new ones. For example our head instructor's own teacher added a fitness element to his Il Dan test. Approaching a potential change to any tradition creates a natural tension. We recognize that the teacher has a degree of latitude to promote TKD in the way that best accomplishes the goals of TKD within the framework established by Mr. Choi, especially when this change is demonstrably superior to pre-existing conditions. The fitness element has been one of transformation for

many. Given this in addition to a greater emphasis on fitness throughout the ranks **we recommend a discrete Transformation Challenge** at the II Dan rank to recognize the transition from Gup-level to Dan-level practitioner. This will be a challenge of personal meaning, which may incorporate fitness elements, and is agreed upon by teacher and student. This is similar to the creation of the self-defense combinations. Students will have to document their progress and reflect on their transformation in a short essay.

Reframing the role of fitness in River Valley Tae Kwon Do will create a culture of lifelong fitness and promote positive peer pressure and healthy competition without creating arbitrary or unrealistic metrics to define success or failure. Building fitness into the fabric of our classes—the heart of our school—will benefit all by making fitness one of the tools we use in our TKD practice, rather than a task to check-off a list before advancing to the next rank.

Revised Statement on Fitness Standards and Eligibility for Dan Ranks

Moving from fitness requirement to fitness benchmarking

- Must be able to perform Tae Kwon Do in a manner appropriate for level.
- Relevant suggested benchmarks for fitness activities will be provided (see additional documentation).
- Fitness elements will be worked into the TKD class structure as appropriate¹.
- A culture of personal fitness challenge and improvement will be developed throughout the curriculum
- Fitness events will no longer outweigh Tae Kwon Do in promotions, assuming ability to perform at appropriate level for rank

Transformation challenge

- II Dan rank candidates will develop a personalized challenge in consultation with teacher to prepare for transition to Dan rank².
- Students will keep track of their progress through appropriate record-keeping. This may include a journal, a spreadsheet, or a blog, and it will be reviewed by their head instructor(s) and chosen additional black belt advisor.
- Students will submit 500-word essay (or an equivalent effort in another medium, such as video) describing their journey: *“How did I transform through my challenge?”* or *“What was the biggest challenge I faced?”* or *“Why am I ready to be a black belt?”*
- The transformation challenge and essay must be completed before testing for II Dan.

¹ E.g. push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, box jumps, horsestance challenges (who can hold the longest), burpees and other body-weight movement, cardio intensive intervals.

² May include fitness, leadership, teaching, meditation or other forms of self-improvement

Fitness Benchmarks

Developing well-rounded ability for lifelong fitness

	Jumping	Balance	Flexibility	Upper Body	Core Strength	Cardiovascular
3rd Gup	2x box jumps, a minimum of 25% of your height	Balance ball, 60 seconds	Sit-and-reach flexibility test: Acceptable Level	Push ups: Acceptable Level	Plank, 45 seconds	Jump rope, 5 minutes
2nd Gup	2x box jumps, a minimum of 30% of your height	Balance ball, 90 seconds	Sit-and-reach flexibility test: Good Level	Push ups: Good Level	Plank, 60 seconds	Jump rope, 10 minutes
1st Gup	2x box jumps, a minimum of 35% of your height	Balance ball, 120 seconds	Sit-and-reach flexibility test: Excellent Level	Push ups: Excellent Level	Plank, 75 seconds	1.5 mile run: Excellent Level
1st Dan	2x box jumps, a minimum of 40% of your height	Balance ball, 120 seconds	Sit-and-reach flexibility test: Outstanding Level	Push ups: Outstanding Level	Plank, 90 seconds	1.5 mile run: Outstanding Level 300 meter dash: Outstanding Level

Sit-and-Reach (inches)

	18-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		56-65		>65	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Outstanding	22	24	21	23	21	22	19	21	17	20	17	20
Excellent	20	22	19	21	19	21	17	20	15	19	15	18
Good	19	21	17	20	17	19	15	18	13	17	13	17
Acceptable	18	20	17	20	16	18	14	17	13	16	12	17
Poor	17	19	15	19	15	17	13	16	11	15	10	15

Note: 15 inch is at the foot level

Push Ups - Continuous Motion - 1 Minute - Males

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	55	50	43	39
Excellent	50-54	41-49	35-41	29-38
Good	46-49	36-40	28-34	21-28
Acceptable	38-45	30-35	22-27	16-20
Poor	37	29	21	15

Push Ups - Continuous Motion - 1 Minute - Females

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	40	30	23	23
Excellent	30-39	25-29	19-22	19-22
Good	26-29	20-24	12-18	12-18
Acceptable	20-25	13-19	8-11	8-11
Poor	19	12	7	7

1.5 Mile Run - Males (min:sec)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	10:16	10:47	11:44	12:51
Excellent	10:17-11:41	10:48-12:20	11:45-13:14	12:52-14:24
Good	11:42-12:51	12:21-13:36	13:15-14:29	14:25-15:26
Acceptable	12:52-14:13	13:37-14:52	14:30-15:41	15:27-16:43
Poor	14:14	14:53	15:42	16:44

1.5 Mile Run - Females (min:sec)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	12:50	13:42	14:30	15:56
Excellent	12:51-14:24	13:43-15:08	14:31-15:57	15:57-16:58
Good	14:25-15:26	15:09-15:57	15:58-16:58	16:59-17:54
Acceptable	15:27-16:33	15:58-17:14	16:59-18:00	17:55-18:49
Poor	16:34	17:15	18:01	18:50

Advanced Fitness Benchmarks for Dan Levels

Chin Ups - Males

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	11	10	8	5
Excellent	9-10	8-9	6-7	3-4
Good	7-8	6-7	4-5	2

Chin Ups - Females

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	5	4	3	2
Excellent	4	3	2	2
Good	3	2	2	1

Dumbbell Snatch - Males (percent of body weight with single arm x 3)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	38	33	29	25
Excellent	33	29	25	22
Good	29	26	22	20

Dumbbell Snatch - Females (percent of body weight with single arm x 3)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	27	22	21	18
Excellent	24	20	18	16
Good	21	17	16	14

300 Meter Dash - Males (seconds)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	53.0	53.1	64.8	74.9
Excellent	58.9	59.0	72.0	83.2
Good	61.8	62.0	75.6	87.4

300 Meter Dash - Females (seconds)

Level	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Outstanding	63.9	77.4	84.6	101.7
Excellent	71.0	86	94.0	113.0
Good	74.6	90.3	98.7	118.7