

Healthy Fitness Zone[®] Standards Overview

FITNESSGRAM is unique, and widely accepted, because the fitness assessments are evaluated using criterion-referenced standards. An advantage of criterion-referenced standards, over percentile norms, is they are based on levels of fitness for good health. The amount of fitness needed for good health differs between boys and girls and it also varies across age. The FITNESSGRAM Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ) standards have been developed to take this into account.

Nationally recognized experts on the FITNESSGRAM **Scientific Advisory Board** (see www.fitnessgram.net for a list of members) evaluate research, assess best practices and adjust the HFZ standards, calculations, and protocols to match the best science available. With more than 30 years of experience, this renowned board is dedicated to ensuring that **FITNESSGRAM remains the best tool** for using fitness assessments, reporting, data analysis, and communication to support fitness education.

The FITNESSGRAM program classifies fitness levels using discrete zones to allow for more personalized feedback. The two primary zones are the **Healthy Fitness Zone** and the **Needs Improvement (NI) Zone**; however, for aerobic capacity and body composition two distinct NI zones are used to make further distinctions in fitness. The use of three zones makes it possible to provide more effective prescriptive messages to youth since the zones are based on clear differences in potential health risks. Descriptions of the zones are provided below:

1. **Healthy Fitness Zone** The goal in FITNESSGRAM is for children to achieve the Healthy Fitness Zone on as many assessments as possible. Because only modest amounts of activity are needed to obtain health benefits, most students who perform regular physical activity will be able to achieve a score that **will place them within or above the Healthy Fitness Zone** on most FITNESSGRAM test items. If children are in the Healthy Fitness Zone they are considered to have sufficient fitness for good health.
2. **Needs Improvement (NI)** indicates that if the student continues to track at this level there is the potential for future health risks. However, this potential is **possible**, not probable. Increased activity as well as eating a healthy controlled diet could delay or reverse this potential risk. Children in the Needs Improvement Zone receive messaging on their FitnessGram reports explaining how they should strive to move into the HFZ.
3. **Needs Improvement - Health Risk** indicates that if the student continues to track at this level there is a clear potential for future health problem (**a more probable risk**). The need for increased activity and eating a healthy diet is more urgent for students in this category than those at Needs Improvement. Children in the NI-Health Risk Zone receive messages warning them of probable risk if they continue tracking at this level. The use of three zones allows clear indicators of risk (NI-Health Risk) and clear indicators of good fitness and low risk (HFZ).