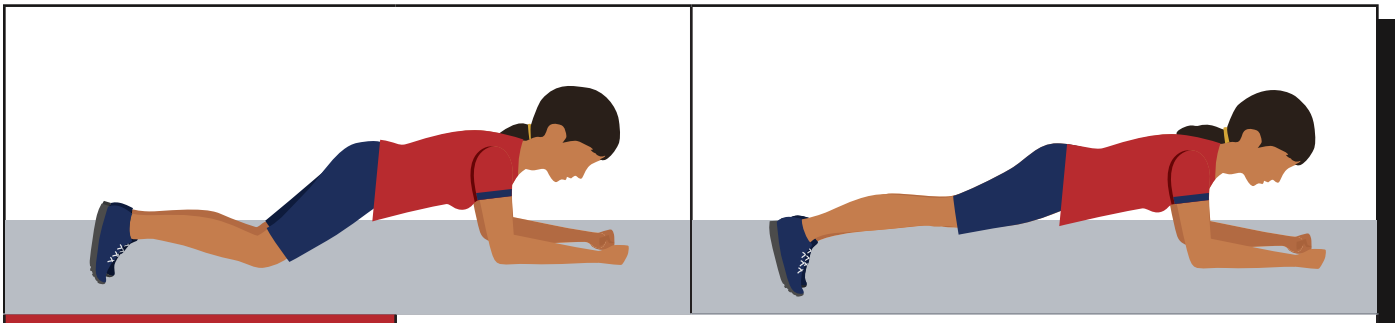
Test Protocol

Plank



Purpose	This test measures core/abdominal muscular strength and endurance.
Goal	To hold a proper plank position for as long as possible
Equipment	▪ Mats (optional) ▪ Stopwatches (1 per pair) or a single shared visible timer for the whole group ▪ Scorecard and pen or pencil, OR tablet/laptop with digital scorecard setup
Space and Setup	Line participants up in rows with enough room for partners to view shoulders, hips, and heels.

Safety Considerations

- Students with an active or recent elbow or shoulder injury, a spinal condition (such as a recent vertebral fracture or a spondylolisthesis flare-up), an unrepaired abdominal hernia, or recent abdominal surgery should follow their physician's specific activity clearance.
- Tell students to stop and notify you if they feel pain, dizziness, or shortness of breath.
- If you use mats, make sure they are placed on a stable, non-slip surface.

How to Administer the Test

1. **Explain the test.** Tell students they will be doing the plank test, which measures how long your abdominal, or core, muscles can stay strong. The goal is to hold the position with proper form for as long as possible.
2. **Demonstrate proper form.** Show the correct position and point out the common form breaks.
   - **Starting position:** Participants place their forearms flat on the ground or on the mat with elbows directly beneath the shoulders, and knees starting on the ground.
   - **Proper form:** On go, students quickly raise their hips into a straight line from shoulders to heels and hold this position. The head stays in a neutral position, core and glutes are engaged, and shoulder blades are down. Hips should not sag or lift too high.
3. **Position students.** Have students kneel and place their forearms on the mat.
4. **Begin the test.** Say "Ready, go." Partners start their stopwatches, or everyone begins timing with a single shared visible clock. Students quickly lift into the plank hold position.
5. **Monitor the hold.** Partners watch for form and give 1 warning if a student's hips or shoulders sag or rise too high. Circulate and spot-check pairs to ensure proper form.
6. **End the test.** Partner stops their timer (or notes the shared clock's reading) the moment their student can no longer maintain proper form after the warning.
7. **Score the test.** Record the total time each student held the plank in seconds.

Give Warning or End Hold if...

- Hips sag toward the floor.
- Hips rise too high, breaking the straight body line.
- Shoulders sag or shift excessively.
- Head or neck position collapses out of neutral.

Read Aloud Script

The plank test measures how long your abdominal, or core, muscles can stay strong. The goal is to hold a proper plank position for as long as possible.

For this test, you will place your forearms flat on the mat with your elbows directly beneath the shoulders and hold your body in a straight line from shoulders to heels. Keep your head in a neutral position, core tight, glutes engaged, shoulder blades down, and do not let your hips drop or lift too high. Continue holding the plank until you can no longer maintain proper form. Ready? Go.

Modifications, Adaptations, and Alternative Tests

For students with an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, follow the modifications specified in that plan. Coordinate with the student's special education team as needed, and document any modification used alongside the student's score. The adaptations below address common scenarios but do not override plan-specific guidance.

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing	Use hand signals to signify start, warning for improper form, and stop. Consider a visual timer so the student can track their own hold time.
Students who are blind or have low vision	Provide additional verbal detail when explaining the test. With permission, you may need to provide hands-on guidance to help the student understand proper form. Consider providing verbal updates on time every 10 seconds.

Modifications, Adaptations, and Alternative Tests

Students with intellectual or developmental disabilities	Extra demonstration, visual cue cards, peer modeling, and/or additional practice repetitions can be useful for students who need more processing time. For students with sensory sensitivities, consider using hand signals instead of a verbal start and/or proctoring the test privately.
Students who cannot hold a standard plank	Offer a modification that reduces the load through the shoulders and core. The knee plank option is more challenging than the incline plank — choose the level that lets the student hold proper form. ▪ **Knee plank:** The student's forearms and knees are on the mat instead of forearms and toes, keeping a straight line from knees to head. ▪ **Incline plank:** The student's forearms rest on a stable elevated surface (bench, step, or sturdy box), with feet on the floor. A higher surface makes the hold easier.
Students who use a wheelchair or cannot easily get to the floor	**Consider the seated push-up hold:** The student sits in a stable chair or their wheelchair, places their hands on the armrests or seat, and extends their arms to raise their body out of the chair, holding the raised position for as long as possible.