

A close-up photograph of a hand firmly gripping a dumbbell. The background is a vibrant gradient of red and blue, creating a dynamic and energetic atmosphere. The lighting highlights the texture of the hand and the metallic surface of the dumbbell.

TEST YOUR STRENGTH

SHIRA ISENBERG

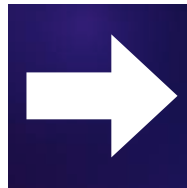
with ANDREW (AVISHAI) WEISS COMT, DPT



MOBILITY

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Are you as strong
as you need to be
to age gracefully?
This mobility self-
assessment will
give you a clue as
to where you're
holding... and
what you can do
to maintain your
strength.



BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

The 14 exercises in this mobility self-assessment are divided into five categories — stabilizing core, lifting, pushing, going from sitting to standing, and single-leg balancing — because these are the essential abilities crucial for maintaining independence

and daily function as you age. (The first one is the most critical because you need strong core muscles to stay steady while walking, running, bending, twisting, and reaching.) You'll notice that there are "form checks" for every move; that's because proper form is essential to prevent injury.

Safety Disclaimer: This tool is for informational purposes only and does not replace professional medical advice. Consult your healthcare provider before attempting any new physical activity. Participation is entirely at your own risk, and results are estimates based on your self-reported performance. Do not perform any assessment that targets an area of weakness or causes pain. These exercises may be especially challenging if you are older than 65 or very physically inactive, so do not attempt without the supervision and assistance of a professional.



CATEGORY

1

STABILIZING CORE

- » Bird-Dog Hold
- » Plank Hold Test
- » Straight-Leg Raise Test



BIRD DOG HOLD

DIRECTIONS

Start on all fours, placing hands directly under shoulders and knees under hips. Try to make your spine neutral. Hint: Imagine there's a bowl of soup on your back that you don't want to spill.

Pull in your belly button to engage your core, then lift the opposite arm and leg (e.g., right arm, left leg). Hold position parallel to ground, keeping back flat and hips at the same level.

Lower when fatigued. "Meaning, you're tired — it feels like you can barely finish the last movement. That's the signal it's working," says Andrew. Repeat on the other side.

STANDARDS

Hold time with excellent form

Beginner

0–15 seconds each side

Average

20–30 seconds each side

Good

40–50 seconds each side

Excellent

60+ seconds each side

FORM CHECK

- Don't arch or twist the back.
- Don't lift leg above hip level; keep the lifted arm and leg parallel to the ground.
- Ideally, ask someone to observe you doing this exercise, or at least use a mirror, to make sure you're in a straight line from your outstretched hand to your outstretched foot.

STOP! IF...

- Can't keep hips level
- Any back pain

PLANK HOLD TEST



DIRECTIONS

Lie down on your stomach. Prop up your upper body using your elbows, ensuring they're under your shoulders with hands in front of you. Tuck your toes under, lifting your knees off the floor.

With stomach pulled in and core engaged, hold position, keeping your body in a straight line from head to heels.

Lower back to the floor when fatigued or no longer able to hold in good form.

STANDARDS

Under age 65

Beginner 20-40 seconds

Average 40-60 seconds

Good 60-90 seconds

Excellent 90-120 seconds

Ages 65+

Beginner 0-25 seconds

Average 25-40 seconds

Good 40-60 seconds

Excellent 60-90 seconds

FORM CHECK

- Heels, hips, and shoulders should align. Resist sagging.

STOP! IF...

- Excessive shaking, wobbling, or rolling
- Any back pain
- Wrist or elbow discomfort
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

STRAIGHT LEG RAISE TEST



DIRECTIONS

Warning: Do not attempt if you have a lower back injury.

Lie on the floor on your back, arms at your sides and legs straight in front of you. Keeping legs straight, lift both legs together to a comfortable height. Back should stay on the floor.

Lower your legs together, with control. Repeat and continue until fatigued or no longer able to maintain good form.

Note: If keeping legs straight is too challenging, start with bent knees and progress to straight legs.

STANDARDS

Beginner

3–5 reps

Average

8–10 reps

Good

12–15 reps

Excellent

20+ reps

FORM CHECK

- Control the movement throughout; do not swing or use momentum.

STOP! IF...

- Back starts arching
- Lower-back strain or pain



CATEGORY

2

LIFTING

- » Bicep Curl
- » Wall Slides



To test bicep strength

BICEP CURL

DIRECTIONS

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Hold a weight in each hand, wrist straight and palms facing upward.

With arms down at your sides, elbows close to the body, bring the weights up toward the shoulders. Then bring them back down, fully extending the elbow, and repeat.

You can either do both arms at once or one arm at a time.

If you don't have weights, use:

- 1-liter water bottle (2.2 lbs filled)
- Large can of vegetables (1–2 lbs)
- Bag of rice (5–10 lbs depending on size)

STANDARDS

Good form is more important than heavy weights. Start with lighter weights to practice form. Test the weight with a single careful rep first.

Standards are per arm, for 8–12 reps.

Men

Under 40

Beginner: 8–12 lbs

Average: 12–18 lbs

Good: 18–25 lbs

Excellent: 25+ lbs

40+

Beginner: 5–10 lbs

Average: 10–15 lbs

Good: 15–20 lbs

Excellent: 20+ lbs

Women

Under 40

Beginner: 5–8 lbs

Average: 8–12 lbs

Good: 12–15 lbs

Excellent: 15+ lbs

40+

Beginner: 3–6 lbs

Average: 6–10 lbs

Good: 10–12 lbs

Excellent: 12+ lbs

FORM CHECK

- Don't swing or rush; control the movement.

STOP! IF...

- Sharp pain in biceps, shoulders, or elbows
- Numbness or tingling
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Unable to maintain proper form



ANDREW SAYS:

My clients tell me wall slides are one of their favorite exercises. It's a move that doesn't just evaluate your mid-back strength; it helps you work on posture and combat the chronic rounding of the back and shoulders that we do all day.

Getting into the right position is essential. That's where most of the work happens. When a client is leaning against the wall, I tell them, "Put your hand in that hollow space behind your back — that's the space you need to remove."

For some people, it's hard to just get into that position, with the back fully against the wall, even before adding in the arms. Some clients can get there but can't get their hands to touch the wall. It's a progression — start where you're at and work on holding for 5 seconds at a time, then 10, and so on. Keep progressing until you're able to move the arms to do the full exercise. When clients tell me they finally got their hands all the way back, it's a real moment of pride for them.

DIRECTIONS

Lean against a wall with your feet about a foot out from the wall. Your lower back, upper back and the back of your head should touch the wall. (Tuck, don't lift chin; try to hold a "double chin" position to get the back of your head to touch the wall.)

Pull your mid-back against the wall: Contract your core, pulling your rib cage down and pushing your lower back into that hollow space. Get as much contact as possible between your wall and the back. Your head and upper back are going to want to come off the wall — resist this.

Bend your arms, making a 90 degree angle at the elbow, and press the backs of your hands against the wall. Slide your arms up the wall while maintaining contact with the wall: head, upper/middle/lower back, back of hands. Slide down to the original position, controlling the movement throughout.

STANDARDS

Beginner

Can achieve contact with head and full back with arms at sides for 20+ seconds

Average

Can achieve contact with head, full back, and arm in 90° position against wall for 20+ seconds

Good

Can perform 3-5 controlled wall slides maintaining all contact points throughout the movement

Excellent

Can perform 8-10 controlled wall slides with perfect form

FORM CHECK

- Keep back flat against the wall.

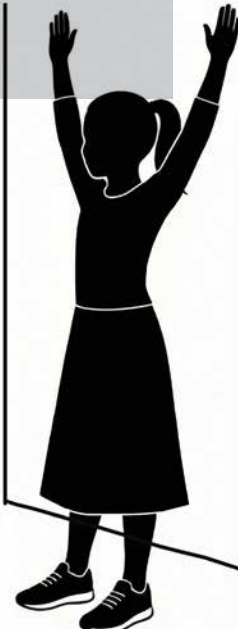
STOP! IF...

- Shoulders start hiking up or you feel pinching in shoulders
- Neck starts pushing forward
- Elbows lose wall contact
- Can't maintain steady breathing



WALL SLIDES

To test mid-back strength





CATEGORY

3

PUSHING

- » Chair Dips
- » Kickback
- » Incline Pushup
- » Chest fly



To test triceps strength

CHAIR DIPS

DIRECTIONS

Warning: Do not attempt if you have shoulder, elbow, or wrist injury.

Sit on the edge of a sturdy chair, hands gripping the seat beside your hips, fingers facing forward. Slide your hips off the chair, keeping feet flat and knees bent at 90° (easier) or legs extended (harder).

Bend elbows and lower body in a controlled movement until elbows reach about a 90° angle. Press back up, keeping the movement controlled. Repeat until you can't maintain good form.

FORM CHECK

- Make sure elbows are bending. Don't keep arms straight and just move your body forward and back; your body should be dipping down, then up.

STANDARDS

Beginner

Fewer than 5 reps

Average

5–15 reps

Good

15–25 reps

Excellent

25+ reps

STOP! IF...

- Sharp pain in shoulders, elbows, or wrists
- Can't keep elbows close to body
- Numbness or tingling in arms

DIRECTIONS

Grab a water bottle, soup can, or small bag filled with books. Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent and stomach pulled in.

Hinge forward at the hips until your torso is about 45° to the ground. Keep your elbows tucked close to your sides at a 90° angle.

Using control, extend your arms, one arm at a time, straight back until they are fully extended, squeezing your triceps at the top. Slowly lower back to starting position. Repeat until you can't maintain good form.

STANDARDS

Using a 1- to 3-pound object, per arm

Beginner Fewer than 8 reps

Average 8–15 reps

Good 16–25 reps

Excellent 25+ reps

Using a 5- to 10-pound object, per arm

Beginner Less than 6 reps

Average 6–12 reps

Good 13–20 reps

Excellent 20+ reps

FORM CHECK

- Keep upper arm pinned to your side; only move forearm.
- No swinging; control your movements.

STOP! IF...

- Shoulder or neck strain
- Any sharp pain
- Losing balance



KICKBACK

To test triceps strength

INCLINE PUSH-UP

To test strength of pecs

DIRECTIONS

Find a sturdy surface like a table, kitchen counter, bed frame, or couch. (The lower the surface, the harder the push-up.)

Place your hands on the edge of the surface, slightly narrower than shoulder-width apart. Step back so your body forms a straight line from your head to your heels.

With your stomach pulled in, bend at the elbows and lower your chest toward the surface. Press back up to the starting position. Repeat until you can't maintain good form.

STANDARDS

Using a countertop

Beginner Fewer than 8 reps

Average 8–15 reps

Good 16–25 reps

Excellent 25+ reps

Using a sturdy couch or low table

Beginner Fewer than 6 reps

Average 6–12 reps

Good 13–20 reps

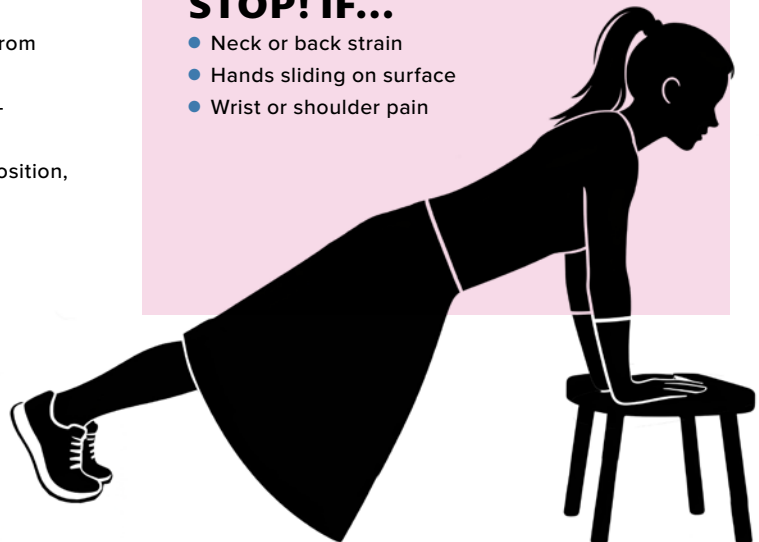
Excellent 20+ reps

FORM CHECK

- Your body should form a straight line from head to heels.
- Keep your shoulders down and back — not shrugging.
- Ensure head and neck are in neutral position, not lifted or dropped.

STOP! IF...

- Neck or back strain
- Hands sliding on surface
- Wrist or shoulder pain



CHEST FLY

To test strength of pecs

DIRECTIONS

Lie on your back with knees bent, feet planted on the floor. Hold a water bottle or light weight in each hand (standard 16.9 oz/500 ml bottle). Bring arms up so they're right above your chest and slightly bent at the elbows.

With control, lower arms in a wide arc toward the ground, keeping elbows bent. (Don't actually touch the ground.) Return to starting position, with control. Repeat until fatigued.

STANDARDS

Beginner

5–8 controlled reps

Average

10–12 controlled reps

Good

15–18 controlled reps

Excellent

20+ controlled reps

FORM CHECK

- Keep back flat on the floor.
- Make sure shoulders stay down.

STOP! IF...

- Back arches off floor
- Arms become shaky
- Shoulders hike up
- Shoulder pain





CATEGORY

4

SITTING TO STANDING

- » Sit-to-Stand Test
- » Reverse Lunge to Stand
- » SRT (Sitting Rising Test)

SIT-TO-STAND TEST

DIRECTIONS

Sit on a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor. Cross your arms over your chest.

Stand up without using your hands. Slowly sit back down with control (i.e., don't plop down). Repeat as many times as possible in 30 seconds.

STANDARDS

Beginner

Fewer than 15 reps

Average

15–20 reps

Good

21–25 reps

Excellent

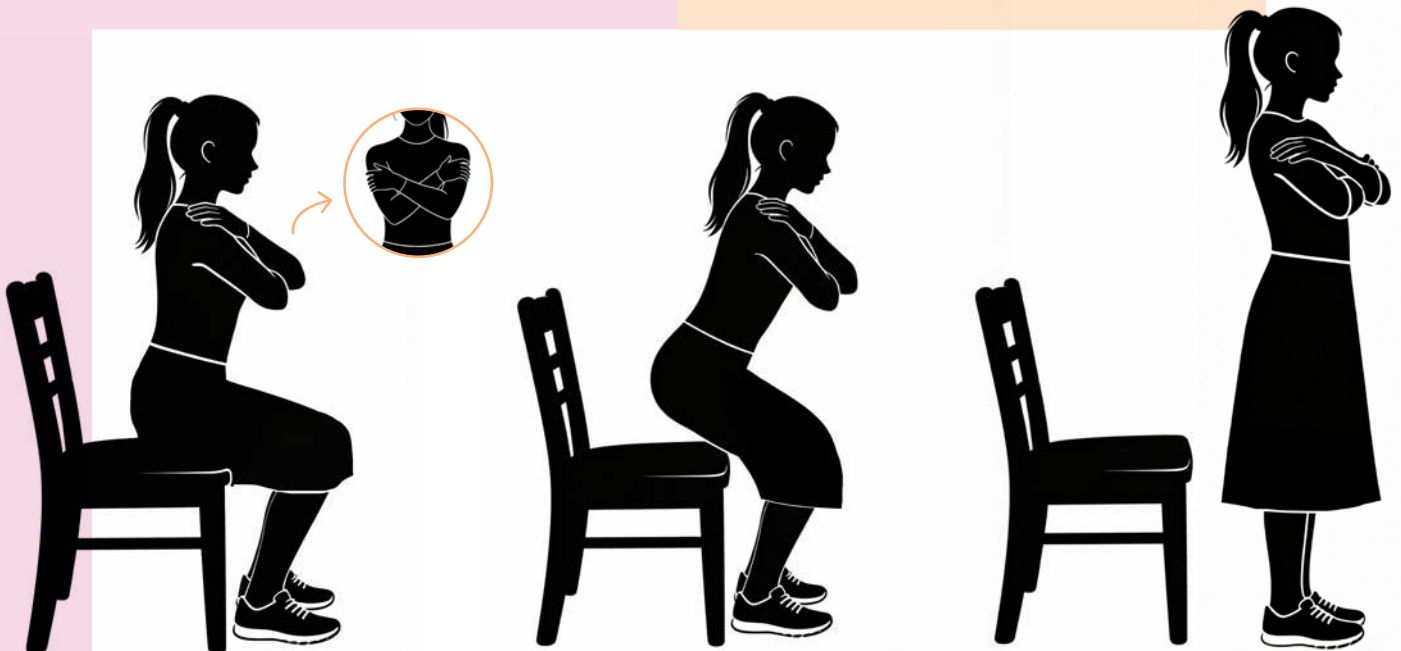
26+ reps

FORM CHECK

- Keep back straight throughout.
- Pull in your stomach to engage your core.

STOP! IF...

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Knee pain or instability
- Need to use your hands for support



REVERSE LUNGE TO STAND

DIRECTIONS

Stand tall with feet hip-width apart. In a controlled, smooth movement, step one leg back into a deep lunge, lowering your back knee to touch the floor.

Be sure to keep your chest up and back straight. Arms can be crossed over the chest (harder) or on the hips or outstretched for balance (easier).

Now use the muscles in your front leg to lift your body back up to standing position (without relying on your hands). Repeat on both sides.

STANDARDS

Beginner

Can't stand up without using both hands or other support

Average

Need one hand for support to stand

Good

Can stand up with slight struggle or wobble

Excellent

Can stand up smoothly from a deep lunge on both sides, no wobbling

FORM CHECK

- Keep torso upright, not leaning forward.

STOP! IF...

- Knee or hip pain
- Instability or dizziness
- Loss of balance





Sitting-Rising Test

DIRECTIONS

Step 1

From a standing position, cross one leg in front of the other and sit down on the floor without using hands or knees for support.

Step 2

Stand back up from the sitting position without using your hands, knees, or any other support. (*Note: Most people cannot return to standing position without using a hand or knee for support, so don't hurt yourself trying. Even if you use one type of support, you'll still score in the "excellent" category.*)

Scoring

Each step is worth five points. For every support you use in either sitting or standing — whether it's putting down your hand or forearm, getting on a knee, or using the side of a leg — deduct one point. For excessive wobbliness in either part of the exercise, deduct 0.5 point.

Example

Total possible points	10
Put hand on ground for support before sitting down	-1
Propped knee up before standing	-1
FINAL SCORE	8

This is a standardized, scored test developed by Brazilian physician and professor Claudio Gil Araujo.

STANDARDS

Ages 20–39

Below Average <5 points

Average 5–6 points

Good 7–8 points

Excellent 9–10 points

Ages 40–59

Below Average <4 points

Average 4–5 points

Good 6–7 points

Excellent 8–10 points

Ages 60+

Below Average <3 points

Average 3–4 points

Good 5–6 points

Excellent 7–10 points

FORM CHECK

- Control speed throughout movement; minimize use of momentum.
- Complete movement in one continuous sequence if possible.

STOP! IF...

- Knee, hip, back, or any sharp pain
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Instability or at high risk of falling
- Cannot control descent to floor
- Loss of balance



CATEGORY

5

SINGLE LEG BALANCING

- » Single-Leg Stance
- » Single-Leg Clock Reach

DIRECTIONS

Stand near a wall or counter for safety. With your stomach pulled in and arms relaxed at your sides, lift one foot slightly off the ground. It's okay to raise it a bit up and forward, hovering just over the ground. To increase the challenge, raise the leg higher.

Maintain balance as long as possible on that one leg. Try to keep posture straight and tall throughout. Repeat on the other side.

Tip: Keeping your eyes fixed on a single point straight ahead may help maintain balance.

STANDARDS

Beginner

8–15 seconds

Average

20–30 seconds

Good

30–45 seconds

Excellent

45–60+ seconds

Note: It is not uncommon to have better balance on one leg versus the other.

FORM CHECK

- Keep hip level (no “hiking,” i.e., lifting one hip higher than the other).
- Make sure your standing leg is slightly soft; don't lock your knee.

STOP! IF...

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Pain in the standing leg (knee, ankle, hip)
- Extreme unsteadiness
- Uncontrollable trembling

SINGLE- LEG STANCE



SINGLE LEG CLOCK REACH

DIRECTIONS

Warning: Do not attempt if you find Single-Leg Stance difficult.

Stand near a wall or counter for safety. Imagine you're standing in the center of a clock, with 12 o'clock in front, 3 o'clock to your right, 6 o'clock behind you, 9 o'clock to your left. (You can mark these points on the floor with tape, if it's easier.)

Pull in your stomach and engage your core.

Shift your weight to your left leg and bend the knee slightly ("soft knee"). Raise your right foot and tap lightly on 12 o'clock, then return to center. Continue with the clock points 3 and 6 o'clock, then reach your right leg behind your left one to touch 9 o'clock.

When you reach fatigue or are unable to maintain balance, perform the exercise standing on the right leg.

STANDARDS

Number of controlled reaches without losing balance

Beginner

3 reaches each direction

Average

5 reaches each direction

Good

8 reaches each direction

Excellent

10+ reaches each direction

FORM CHECK

- Move slowly and with control.
- Keep weight centered on the supporting leg even while tapping with the other leg.

STOP! IF...

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Joint pain
- Any sharp or sudden pain
- The supporting knee starts caving in
- Numbness or tingling
- Excessive shaking





DECODING YOUR SCORE

If you scored in the **GOOD** or **EXCELLENT** category, keep up the good work. Continuing your regular strength-training routine will serve you well as you age.

If you scored in the **BEGINNER** or **AVERAGE** range, consider it a sign to focus on that area. It's not a failure — it's useful information. With

your doctor's approval, you can repeat those particular assessment exercises regularly to build strength where it's needed most. A qualified personal trainer can also help you target any weaker muscle groups and create a program tailored to your goals and abilities. And of course, if you feel any pain, seek expert guidance.