



FIREFIGHTER

WORKSHEET

So, You Want to Become a Firefighter?

by Battalion Chief Evan Adolf

Becoming a firefighter is not an easy task.

It takes a great deal of perseverance, patience, persistence, dedication and good old-fashioned hard work to become a firefighter. Nothing in life comes easy; especially when you want to have one of the best careers a person could ever dream to have.

How long will it take to become a firefighter?

That question cannot be answered because it really comes down to “what you give is what you get.” Not every person that starts out to become a firefighter end up a firefighter. For that matter, not every person who enrolls in medical school will become a doctor.

Nobody can guarantee that you will ever become a firefighter. What can be guaranteed is that if you never give up on obtaining your dream of joining the fire service, then your odds of success greatly increase. On the average, I would say it takes anywhere from 3 to 7 years to become a firefighter. I have known people to become a firefighter in 1-year and then there are others that take 10-years.

Once you have decided that becoming a firefighter is your dream, then it is time to put your money where your mouth is and start preparing yourself on a full-time basis.

What topics should I focus on in school? - All of them!

- **English** is important for writing reports and when engaging in verbal communications with citizens who have called for your help. Do you want a firefighter standing in front of you when you're in peril and he talks like a 2nd-grade student?
- **Math** will rear its ugly head when you begin the process of promotions. To drive the fire engine you will be required to utilize the pump panel. This means calculating friction loss, gallons per minute, nozzle pressure and many other mathematical problems. And you don't have a lot of time to figure out the math...Other firefighters are counting on you.
- **Science** has many different disciplines. Trust me; science is used in most everything we do. Anatomy, biology, and chemistry to name a few.



- **Physical Education**...Do you really need an explanation here? OK, here goes! A typical firefighter wears 70 pounds of gear into a fire. If you have a victim rescue you may be dragging a 250-pound man from the second floor to safety. Fire hose has nozzle reaction (math, physics) and water has weight that fills the hose. If you have no physical strength, mental strength or stamina, firefighting may not be for you.

What can you do other than doing well in school? Visit your local fire department and inquire about a volunteer or resident program. Many suburban and rural areas support these programs. Look into a community college and investigate their fire science or other fire service related degrees.

You are entering into a very competitive market. Larger city fire departments will hold an entry-level test to create a hiring list. This process means your name is on a list, but the fire department may never hire from it, and then the list dies in two-years. Around 500 to 2,000 people may show up to take that test. The entry-level test will assess your English, Math, and Science knowledge. It will also test your Physical Ability and Oral Communication skills as a minimum, but if you planned ahead, you're ready! Don't let me scare you away. When you finally do make it, and a fire chief calls you and offers you a job, it will be a great day and the start to a rewarding career. You will soon learn that the learning and training never stops. But you won't care...You will love your new job!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Directions: Using the text above, respond to the following questions using complete sentences.

1. Why is becoming a firefighter difficult ?

2. How long does it take to become a firefighter?

3. Why is it important to focus on English in school if you want to become a firefighter?

4. In what ways do firefighters use math?

5. Why is physical strength an important part of being a firefighter?

6. What are some steps you can take to become a firefighter other than doing well in school?

