

Training Zones & Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

How to Use the RPE Scale

The RPE scale is very easy to use and teaches you to "listen" to your body. To use the scale choose a number and descriptor that best indicates how you feel at a given moment during your exercise session. For example, a perceived exertion level of 5-6, feels "somewhat hard" (Zone 3). When exercising at this RPE, you can think and talk with a partner, although speaking in complete sentences becomes a bit difficult. When exercising at 9 or a "very hard" level, the pulse is very high, and it is very difficult to talk or exercise for prolonged periods of time. RPE is easy to implement and relate to heart rate based training zones if you do not have the support of a coach.

Zone	Common Labels	RPE	Description
0	Rest	0	Doing Nothing
1	Aerobic Recovery	1-2	Very Light to Light - Pace and breathing is easy and relaxed. Can easily hold a conversation.
2	Extensive Endurance	3-4	Fairly Light - Pace and breathing rate increase slightly. Pace remains comfortable; conversation is still possible.
3	Intensive Endurance; Tempo	5-6	Somewhat Hard - Pace is moderate and breathing becomes a bit labored. Conversation still possible, but abbreviated.
4	Intensive or Sub - Threshold	7-8	Hard - Pace is fast and uncomfortably hard. Breathing is deep and labored.
5a	Lactate Threshold	9	Very Hard - Pace is very fast and uncomfortable. Breathing hard and conversation is difficult.
5b	Anaerobic Endurance	9+	Very Very Hard - Pace is challenging and very uncomfortable. Breathing is heavy and much labored.
5c	Speed/Power	10	Maximum - Pace is a sprint effort that is extremely uncomfortable and only can be held for a minute + or -.