

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE)- Managing the Intensity of your Cardio Workouts

What is RPE?

Perceived exertion is how hard you feel your body is working. It is based on the physical sensations a person experiences during physical activity, including increased heart rate, increased respiration or breathing rate, increased sweating, and muscle fatigue. Although this is a subjective measure, a person's exertion rating may provide a fairly good estimate of the actual heart rate during physical activity* (Borg, 1998).

Self-monitoring how hard your body is working can help you adjust the intensity of the activity by speeding up or slowing down your movements. Through experience of monitoring how your body feels, it will become easier to know when to adjust your intensity. For example, a walker who wants to engage in moderate-intensity activity would aim for a RPE Scale level of "somewhat hard" (12-14). If he describes his muscle fatigue and breathing as "very light" (9 on the RPE Scale) he would want to increase his intensity. On the other hand, if he felt his exertion was "extremely hard" (19 on the RPE Scale) he would need to slow

down his movements to achieve the moderate-intensity range.

How to Use the RPE Scale

While doing physical activity, we want you to rate your perception of exertion. This feeling should reflect how heavy and strenuous the exercise feels to you, combining all sensations and feelings of physical stress, effort, and fatigue. Do not concern yourself with any one factor such as leg pain or shortness of breath, but try to focus on your total feeling of exertion.

The rating scale ranges from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no exertion at all" and 10 means "maximal exertion." When engaging in exercise, choose the number on the scale that best describes your level of exertion. This will give you a good idea of the intensity level of your activity, and you can use this information to speed up or slow down your movements to reach your desired range.

Try to appraise your feeling of exertion as honestly as possible, without thinking about what the actual physical load is. Your own feeling of effort and exertion is important, not how it compares to other people's. Look at the scales and the expressions and then give a number.

RPE SCALE

0	nothing at all
0.5	very, very weak
1	very weak
2	weak
3	moderate
4	somewhat strong
5	strong
6	
7	very strong
8	
9	
10	very, very strong Maximal

Source:

<http://www.smccd.net/accounts/mcgill/RPE.html>

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/cs/strengthening/a/030904.htm>