

The RPE scale: Gauging intensity of effort

The RPE scale - Rated Perceived Exertion scale - is a useful tool to help assess the intensity of your effort, without the need for a heart rate monitor, or any other piece of kit.

Use the table below to gauge the intensity of your effort for strength training and cardiovascular exercise.

RPE	Effort	Strength training feels like...	Cardiovascular exercise feels like...
1	Very little effort	Too many reps in reserve to count	Could keep this up for hours
2			
3	Feeling easy	Still plenty of reps in reserve	Still easy to breathe and hold a conversation
4			
5	Moderate effort	4-6 reps in reserve	Breathing more heavily, comfortable but becoming more challenging
6			
7	Starting to feel tough	2-3 reps in reserve	Borderline uncomfortable, becoming short of breath
8	Big effort	1-2 reps in reserve	Short of breath, difficult to maintain level of intensity
9	Massive effort	Could maybe do 1 more rep	Breathing heavily, very difficult to maintain level of intensity
10	Absolute maximum effort	Definitely no more reps in the tank	Impossible to sustain for more than 10 - 20 seconds

RPE scale. Adapted from Zourdos et al., (2016)





References

Zourdos, M. C., Klemp, A., Dolan, C., Quiles, J. M., Schau, K. A., Jo, E., ... & Blanco, R. (2016). Novel resistance training-specific rating of perceived exertion scale measuring repetitions in reserve. *The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research*, 30(1), 267-275.

