

Measuring Training Intensity – A Brief Introduction

To achieve the most from your training you should become aware of your training intensity or how hard you are working. Fitness is achieved by overload followed by recovery and you need the right balance!

There are a number of ways to measure how hard you are training.

Heart rate monitors have become widely used, although there are limitations. (For example you should be aware that heart rate zones should be reassessed periodically). It is useful to use heart rate in conjunction with RPE or Rate of Perceived Exertion. There are several different scales for RPE. The one used below is a 15 point Borg scale. The following table illustrates a relationship between heart rate zones and RPE.

Heart Rate Zone	Zone Description	% of Maximum Heart Rate	% of Maximum Aerobic Power	RPE Level	Perceived Exertion
1 (Level 1)	Recovery	60-65	<50	6-8	Very, very light
2 (Lower Level 2)	Aerobic Endurance	65-75	55-65	8-11	Fairly light
3 (Upper Level 2)	Intensive Aerobic Endurance	75-82	64-70	12-14	Moderately hard
4	Lactate Threshold Training	82-89	69-75	15-16	Hard
5 (Level 3)	Anaerobic Endurance – Lactate Tolerance	89-94	74-90	17-18	Very hard
6	Maximal	94+	90+	19-20	Very, very hard

An exercise based field test is the most accurate way of calculating your Maximum Heart Rate –an approximation is given by using the calculation “220 minus your age”!

Note: Heart rate zones suggested by different texts and organizations may vary.

Measuring Training Intensity – Borg 15 point RPE Scale

RPE Level	Perceived Exertion
6	Very, very light
7	Very, very light
8	Very, very light
9	Fairly light
10	Fairly light
11	Fairly light
12	Moderately hard
13	Moderately hard
14	Moderately hard
15	Hard
16	Hard
17	Very hard
18	Very hard
19	Very, very hard
20	Very, very hard