

RATING OF PERCEIVED EXERTION (RPE)

Learning to Manage Training & Racing Workloads for Optimal Performances

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RPE /Sense of workload/ 20-Point Borg Scale

- 20
- 19 Very, very hard
- 18
- 17 Very hard
- 16
- 15 Hard
- 14
- 13 Somewhat hard
- 12
- 11 Fairly light
- 10
- 9 Very light
- 8
- 7 Very, very light
- 6

RPE is a subjective measure of total sense of work. We don't merely want to consider just a single aspect of how we're feeling during a workout, like how warm we feel or how our legs feel. Rather, we want **to take into account our total sense of workload.**

Consider breathing depth, respiration rate (or steps per breathing cycle), range of motion in upper as well as lower body, rhythm or tempo of strike rate (frequency of foot strikes per minute), perspiration rate, how warm or hot you feel, general sense of effort, etc.

Most of our training should be in the 12-15 RPE range. A marathon must be pursued at 15 RPE or less, whereas a 5k-10k can be raced at 17 RPE.

For most of us in the middle of a bell curve of runners age 25-50, **the above 20-point scale will correspond approximately with our individual heart rates by a factor of 10.** In other words, if I report feeling an RPE of 15, my heart rate will likely be somewhere between 140-160 beats per minute. **Experiment with a heart rate monitor to test your adeptness of subjectively measuring your different workload efforts, your RPE.** In time, you'll become quite adept at RPE.

Accurately knowing ones RPE will assure us of not overtraining or going out too fast in any race of any distance. That's right.

RPE is essential in not making the very common mistakes of overtraining or pacing too fast at the beginning of a race. Why is this so important? Because:

It's better to undertrain by 10% than to overtrain by 1%. The reason is that overtraining or "over" racing will result in health/fitness impairment, and thus impaired athletic performance. We're all pursuing athletics in order to also be healthier and fitter for all of life's various demands.

We want to be able to meet all life's challenges, demands, and opportunities - work, play, good relationships, sport, travel, aging, illnesses and accidents, even chronic disease – with a strong and ready body and mind.