

# Modified Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

**1 NOTHING**  
Nothing at all; no sense of exertion or challenge

**2 MINIMAL**  
I barely feel it; I will get bored before I get tired

**3 EASY**  
I feel it but it's not hard; I could do a *lot* more

**4 SOMEWHAT HARD**  
I can complete the task with some effort; but I could still do more

**5 HARD**  
I am struggling to complete the task; could *maybe* do 1 or 2 more

**6 VERY HARD**  
I can complete the task, but not more

**7 TOO HARD**  
I can do some but not all of the task

**8 IMPOSSIBLE**  
I cannot do this

## 1 NOTHING

### Examples

- Mimicking a biceps curl without actually holding a weight, or holding a weight that poses no challenge whatsoever.
- A casual stroll.

Breathing: normal, easy.

## 2 MINIMAL

### Examples

- Performing a biceps curl with a weight that is substantially lighter than what you can lift to affect a challenge.
- Normal, unhurried walking

Breathing: normal, easy.

## 3 EASY

### Examples

- Similar to MINIMAL, but not *that* easy.
- Walking at a determined pace (not late for the bus, but don't want to miss it).

Breathing: normal or near-normal.

## 4 SOMEWHAT HARD

### Examples

- Completing 13 reps of a 10-rep set; time to progress to a greater load (5-10% more).
- Jog-walk-jog; fast walking; equivalent bike or machine intensity

Breathing: slightly increased; quick recovery.

## 5 HARD

### Examples

- Completing 10 reps of a 10-rep set, maybe eeking out 1 or 2 more reps; a good working range and ready or almost ready to progress to a greater load.
- Steady-state jogging; fartleks/intervals; equivalent bike or machine intensity

Breathing: labored breathing but not panting.

## 6 Very Hard

### Examples

- Can complete 10 reps of a 10-rep set, but not more; a good working range
- Faster jogging; hill running; HIIT; equivalent bike or machine intensity

Breathing: labored breathing, slightly panting.

## 7 TOO HARD

### Examples

- Can complete 7 reps of a 10-rep set; depending on the goal (fitness, hypertrophy, etc.), stay at present load and wait for adaptation for more reps, or reduce load to complete 10 reps per set.
- Sprinting; running stadium-steps; HIIT - all beyond long-duration sustainable levels; ditto equipment cardio

Breathing: panting by the end; rapid heart-rate.

## **8 IMPOSSIBLE**

- An inappropriate task; reduce workload to an appropriate intensity.
- High-risk; may cause Valsalva maneuver; may cause musculoskeletal injury

### Notes:

- (1) Applies equally to all forms of exercise (strength and cardio);
- (2) 10-rep set is used as an example only; program design may call for a higher or lower rep range.
- (3) Breathing also corresponds to heart-rate response.