



How to use RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion)

RPE is simply a way of measuring how hard you're working based on how you feel. It uses a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is practically no effort at all and 10 is the absolute hardest you could possibly go. It's a useful tool because you don't need any gadgets, just honest self-awareness.

Here's how the scale breaks down in practical terms:

RPE 1–2: Very Easy

You could do this all day. Breathing is completely normal and you could hold a full conversation without any effort. This is a gentle spin to loosen the legs - recovery pace.

RPE 3–4: Easy / Steady

This is your bread-and-butter endurance pace. Breathing is a little deeper but comfortable. You can chat freely in full sentences. It should feel like you could keep going for hours. Most of your long ride should sit here.

RPE 5–6: Moderate / Tempo

Now it's starting to feel like work. Breathing is noticeably heavier and conversation becomes more clipped - you can talk, but in shorter sentences and you'd rather not. You're aware you're pushing but it's sustainable for a good while.

RPE 7–8: Hard / Threshold

This is a strong, focused effort. Talking is limited to a few words at a time. Breathing is heavy and you're concentrating on maintaining the effort. You could hold this for maybe 10–20 minutes but you'd be glad to stop.

RPE 9–10: Very Hard / Maximum

RPE 9 is close to flat out - you can barely speak and you're counting down the seconds. RPE 10 is an absolute all-out sprint where you couldn't go any harder. We won't be spending much time here.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of RPE

The best check-in is simple: "Could I hold a conversation right now?" If yes and it's easy, you're around RPE 3–4. A few words only then you're at RPE 6–7. Can't talk then that's RPE 8+.

Be honest with yourself. The temptation is always to push harder than prescribed, especially on good days. On easy days, easy really does mean easy, if you finish feeling like you could easily do another hour, you've succeeded.

RPE can shift day to day. If the same effort feels harder than last week, your body is telling you something. Listen to it and adjust.