

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

It is all too often that I see people in the gym lifting weights without any struggle and minimal effort. These are also the people that see limited to no results in the gym. It is not enough to just show up to the gym. You need to show up to the gym with purpose and knowledge of how to reach your goals.

The Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale is an easy way to rate your workouts. This scale was originally developed by Gunnar Borg in the 1970's based on a 20 point scale and was later modified to the 10 point scale that many people in the fitness industry use today. This useful scale is listed below:

- 0 = NOTHING AT ALL
- 0.5 = VERY, VERY LIGHT
- 1 = VERY LIGHT
- 2 = FAIRLY LIGHT
- 3 = MODERATE
- 4 = SOMEWHAT HARD
- 5 = HARD
- 6
- 7 = VERY HARD
- 8
- 9
- 10 = VERY VERY HARD (MAXIMAL)

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that weight training should be performed at 65-90% of your maximum heart rate for healthy individuals. This correlates to 6.5 - 8 on the RPE scale. A lighter RPE of 5.5 - 6 is appropriate for individuals who are just starting an exercise program that are unconditioned.

To break it down in simple terms, weight training should always be hard for healthy individuals. Do you leave the gym thinking.. "that was an easy workout today." Well, you might want to evaluate your workout goals. Is your goal to spend more time at the gym or to produce an increase in strength and reduce body fat? I assume the majority of us don't go to the gym to hang out. So the next time you workout you should ask yourself if you need to work harder to reach that RPE of 6.5 - 8. The weights you select should be hard so that your body will adapt and change.

Take care everyone and keep progressing with your fitness goals! If you ever have questions with your exercises, always feel free to e-mail or call our clinic.

Sincerely,

Josh Kernan, PT, DPT, CSCS

Reference:

Borg GAV. Borg's Rating of Perceived Exertion and Pain Scales. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1998.