3 · PERCEIVED EXERTION

RPE SCALE

Rate of Perceived Exertion

RPE stands for Rate of Perceived Exertion.

In simple terms, it is a method for measuring the intensity of a physical activity based on how hard it feels to you, in that exact moment.

A subjective scale, commonly from 1 to 10, is used to rate the effort.

Many people know it as the "Borg scale", named after its inventor Gunnar Borg, who originally developed a 6 to 20 scale to relate effort to heart rate. Today, in the fitness world, the modified 1 to 10 scale is used almost exclusively because of its simplicity and immediacy.

KEY CONCEPT

The key idea behind RPE is self-regulation: instead of rigidly following a preset load or speed, you adapt your training to how your body feels on the day, optimising every single session.

RPE	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
1-2	**Minimal effort**	Equivalent to standing or a very slow walk.
3-4	**Light effort**	An active warm-up or a brisk walk. Breathing is steady.
5-6	**Moderate effort**	You can feel the effort but could keep this pace for a long time. You can still hold a conversation.
7-8	**Hard effort**	Breathing becomes laboured and talking gets difficult. This is the ideal working zone for hypertrophy and strength gains.
9	**Very hard effort**	You feel you have at most one rep "left in the tank". You are at the limit of your ability for that day.
10	**Maximal effort**	You could not do another rep or hold the pace one second longer (muscular failure). To be reached rarely and with caution.