

# HOW HARD ARE YOU WORKING?

Using the rate of perceived exertion to measure training intensity



**Original Research**  
Singh, F., et al.  
Monitoring different types of resistance training using session rating of perceived exertion. *International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance* 2:34-45, 2007.

PROBABLY THE MOST CRITICAL THING ABOUT TRAINING IS TO EFFECTIVELY GAUGE YOUR TRAINING INTENSITY. RPE MIGHT BE THE PERFECT TOOL FOR THAT.

When you hit the gym, you know it takes effort. In fact, that is what it is all about. But how do you measure your effort? You can measure the weight you lift, the sets and repetitions you perform, and the rest intervals that you observe. But you cannot directly measure the sweat you put into each training session. However, knowing the effort you are putting into each session could be helpful; for example, if you are overtrained, your training sessions might feel more difficult than usual even if you are using the same weights, sets, and other variables. In regard to endurance exercise, scientists developed what is called the rate of perceived exertion (RPE), a scale that can assess how hard you feel you are working. Research has shown that the RPE is a valid and reliable indicator of exercise intensity at any moment. A modified version of the RPE is called the session RPE, where you rate the intensity of your entire workout as a whole. The problem is that session RPE has been shown to be valid during endurance exercise, not weight training. This brings up the question whether session RPE can be used to monitor the intensity of weight training.

**Power Key:** rate of perceived exertion, training intensity