

How to Measure the Intensity of Your Workout

By varying the intensity of each exercise session, you can avoid injury... but what's high intensity, and what's low intensity? Here's a guide on how to measure it, so you can make the most of your workout!

Heart Rate

The higher your heart rate, the harder you're working! Intensity is usually measured as a percentage of your maximum heart rate. For optimal benefits, you want to exercise anywhere from 50% to 90% of your max heart rate. 50% is milder intensity, and 90% is high intensity.

To find your max heart rate: take 220 and subtract your age. *Tada*, a rough estimate!

For example, if your max heart rate is 190bpm and your heart rate during exercise is 160bpm, then you're working at 84% of your max heart rate. Stay within the 50-90 range for best and safest results!

Rate of Perceived Exertion

It can be tricky to measure your heart rate during exercise if taking your pulse interferes with the activity. Instead, take note of how difficult your workout feels every time you exercise and after a while, you'll figure out what amount of activity will give you the intensity you want. You can do a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being super difficult), or try a simple scale of smiley face to frowny face!



Talk Test

This is the easiest way to measure your exercise intensity if you're doing cardio!
Can you talk and exercise at the same time?

If you can...	Then you're probably exercising at...
Keep up a steady stream of chatter	Low or mild intensity
Speak one sentence at a time	Moderate intensity
Can't keep up a conversation	High or vigorous intensity

References:

Fahey, Thomas D., and Paul M. Insel. *Fit and Well: Core Concepts and Labs in Physical Fitness and Wellness*. Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield Pub.1994. Print.

"Measuring Physical Activity Intensity." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4 Feb. 2015. Web. 25 May 2015.

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