RPE chart

For personal trainers and online coaches. Lifting: the reps-in-reserve RPE scale. Cardio: the 0–10 effort scale. Print it, or keep it on your phone.

1. Lifting: RPE by reps in reserve (RIR)

RPE	Reps in reserve	What it feels like
10	0	Maximal. No more reps possible with this weight.
9.5	0	No more reps, but a slightly heavier weight was possible.
9	1	One more rep was possible.
8.5	1–2	Definitely one more rep, maybe two.
8	2	Two more reps were possible.
7	3	Three more reps were possible.
5–6	4–6	Moderate. Several reps left.
3–4	–	Light effort.
1–2	–	Little to no effort.

2. Adjust the weight between sets

Give a target range, for example RPE 6–8. For every 0.5 above the range, take 2% off the weight. For every 0.5 below it, add 2%.

Set rated (target 6–8)	Next set
RPE 10	–8%
RPE 9	–4%
RPE 6 to 8	Keep the weight
RPE 5	+4%

3. Example weekly targets

From an 8-week study program (Helms et al., 2018). Adjust to your client.

Week	Target RPE
1	5–7
2–3	6–8
4–5	7–9
6–7	8–10
8 (taper)	6–8

4. Cardio: the 0–10 effort scale

Score	Intensity	How it feels
0	Sitting	Resting.
2–4	Light	Comfortable.
5–6	Moderate	Can talk, but not sing.
7–8	Vigorous	Can't say more than a few words without pausing for breath.
10	Maximal effort	All out.

New clients: track RPE for a few weeks before you program by it. Check a score now and then: do a set short of failure, rate it, then repeat the weight to failure and compare. **Clients on heart-rate medication** (such as beta-blockers): use RPE rather than heart-rate zones, and follow their clinician's limits.

Sources: Zourdos et al., 2016, J Strength Cond Res; Helms et al., 2016, Strength Cond J; Helms et al., 2018, Front Physiol; WHO 2020 physical activity guidelines; CDC, How to Measure Physical Activity Intensity (2025). The Borg RPE 6–20 and CR10 scales are licensed by BorgPerception and are not reproduced here. Free to use and share · trainblock.app