

Perceived Exertion Scale

A method used to monitor and adjust intensities for senior clients when performing certain exercises that raise the heart rate (other than wearing a heart rate monitor) is the BORG Scale of Perceived Exertion, the standard in the senior fitness industry.

It is **especially important if the older adult is taking any medications that affect the heart rate and blood pressure.** The BORG

Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale is a perception-based monitoring tool. It is a self-rating system, in which participants evaluate how much effort or exertion they are using during activity, based on how they say they feel.



I wanted to simplify the original format (see below), to make it a little easier to remember. In general, for most senior workouts you want to be around Level 1-5: light to somewhat hard. As you'll see below, working at a level 10 isn't recommended. For longer, slower workouts, stay at Level 5 or lower.

Level 1: I'm comfortably watching TV and relaxing

Level 2: I'm pretty stable and could maintain this pace all day

Level 3: I'm feeling fine, but am breathing a bit harder

Level 4: I'm sweating a little, but feel good enough to carry on a conversation effortlessly

Level 5: I'm feeling a little less comfortable, starting to sweat, yet can still talk easily

Level 6: I can still talk, but am slightly breathless

Level 7: I can still talk, but I don't really want to. I'm sweating a lot now and wonder if this is apparent to others

Level 8: I can barely talk in a conversational tone and can keep this pace for only a few seconds more

Level 9: I feel if I don't stop now, I may pass out

Level 10: I have to stop or suffer the consequences

Disclaimer: It is important to note that while heart rate can be used to guide exercise intensity, the prescribed heart rate should supersede the need to sustain a sufficient duration during exercise if it is too fatiguing for the individual.

The BORG scale may be best used with experienced clients. Beginners may not have a true feel for the actual intensity at which he/she performs. By monitoring the senior's perceived level from the beginning of the training course, the levels become clear for that individual. Depending on the health status and ability level, this scale may be adjusted accordingly.