

Levels Of Perceived Exertion Intensity by Paul Plakas



This list gives a value to how hard you are working, relative to your own fitness level. The first six levels are considered active living intensity. They are how you exist in most hours of the day in your environment. The key is to spend more time at levels 4 and 5 and less time at levels 0 and 1. Research shows that body fat levels are lowered more from your active living intensity rather than from exercise. We generally only workout one hour per day, but we are active living the other 23 hours.

The next five levels focus on your exercise intensity. Exercise intensity is what will make you fit. With more intensity you can get away with less workout time, maybe 30-40 minutes. With longer workouts – 60 minutes plus -- you can work at lower intensity levels.

Level 0

Laying on the couch watching television, reading or listening to an iPod

Level 1

Sitting at the table eating, doing a puzzle or playing board games.

Level 2

Light housework, taking out the garbage, dusting or putting dishes in the dishwasher.

Level 3

Walking as a stroll, light gardening, potting a plant or watering flowers.

Level 4

Moderate housework or gardening, picking up toys, vacuuming, mowing the grass or weeding.

Level 5

At this intensity you can feel your heart working. Examples are aggressive housework and gardening (like digging and raking the grass), carrying the laundry basket upstairs, or chasing the kids in the yard.

Level 6

Easy exercise -- you feel like you can do the activity for a long time. For example, power walking, yoga, Pilates and biking with the kids.

Level 7

Moderate intensity exercise. At this level your heart is beating steady and firmly, such as walk/run intervals or jogging at a steady state that feels comfortable.

Level 8

Hard exercise. You could continue to exercise but it feels so good to stop. Most people run races or compete in sports at this level.

Level 9

Near maximum heart rate and muscular fatigue. In one to two minutes you will have to cease the activity from exhaustion. Doing intervals to this level followed by a short period of recovery for multiple sets will make you really fit.

Level 10

Maximum heart rate and total muscular failure. Complete exhaustion, 100% effort. Very few people can go here because it hurts. It's the "pain zone". This is where you see the devil. Athletes go this hard but can tolerate the intensity. It takes desire and mental toughness. Not recommended that you go here more than two workouts per week.