

# RPE & RIR Strength Training Guide

A quick-reference guide to understanding effort and reps in reserve during strength training

Tammy Slauenwhite | GO FIT LIFE Endurance Coaching & Education

tammy@gofitlife.ca | gofitlife.ca | 902-553-0310



**RPE** = Rate of Perceived Exertion, your level of effort



**RIR** = Reps in Reserve, reps you have left before failure

RPE	RIR	Best used for / example
<b>1-2</b> very light	Many RIR, 6+	Warm-up sets, active recovery, joint mobility, little to no rest needed between sets
<b>3-4</b> easy to moderate	5+ RIR	Technique work, endurance work, foundational strength, prep and early base periods, shorter rest between sets
<b>5-6</b> moderate to hard	4-5 RIR	Working sets to build strength, endurance, or muscle; moderate rest between sets
<b>7</b> hard	3 RIR	Challenging working sets for strength, muscle, or power; more rest needed
<b>8</b> very hard	2 RIR	High-effort work for strength, muscle, or power; requires more rest between sets
<b>9</b> extremely hard	1 RIR	Near-max strength work, test prep, under supervision, long rest periods
<b>10</b> max exertion	0 RIR	1 RM testing or maximum performance assessment, under supervision



**Reference Note:** Estimates are approximate, not physiological measures.  
Source: Helms ER et al. (2016). *Strength & Conditioning Journal*, 38(4), 42-49.