

# Adapting High-Intensity Interval Training Programs To Walking

Numerous high-intensity interval training research studies have explored jogging, running and cycling for exercise. Walking programs may be readily developed based on the findings of these studies.

The programs below adapt the intensity of intervals for walking, using guidance from the Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (see Figure 3). All five of these HIIT examples draw on research-based interval programs, but personal trainers should modify them according to the fitness level of the individual. Remind clients to complete an appropriate warm-up and cool-down with every walking workout.

## 1. High-Intensity Aerobic Interval Walking

**Protocol.** Complete up to 10 high-intensity walking intervals lasting 4 minutes each, interspersed with 2-minute relief walking intervals.

**Intensity.** Perform the 4-minute high-intensity intervals at a Hard (15 RPE) to Very Hard (17 RPE) intensity level, and perform the relief interval at a Light (11 RPE) level. Use walking speed or treadmill incline (or a combination of both) to vary walking intensity.

**Duration.** About 1 hour.

Source: Perry et al. 2008.

## 2. Sprint Interval Walking

**Protocol.** Complete 4–6 sprint walking intervals lasting 30 seconds each, interspersed with 4.5 minutes of light walking at a self-selected pace.

**Intensity.** Do the sprint walks at a near-maximal walking intensity, which would suggest in the range of Very Hard (17 RPE) or slightly harder (18 RPE). Complete the self-selected 4.5-minute walking recovery period at a Very Light (9 RPE) level.

**Duration.** 20–30 minutes.

Source: Burgomaster et al. 2008.

## 3. Step-Wise Interval Walking

**Protocol.** Start at a relatively easy walking workload for 5 minutes of exercise, then increase intensity about 15% for 4 minutes and continue to increase intensity every 4 minutes. This program can be halted at a particular intensity level or after a specific duration; it should be followed by a cool-down walk.

**Intensity.** Initial walk intensity should have an RPE of 11. Then increase the intensity roughly 1 RPE with each subsequent 4-minute stage by increasing walking speed or treadmill incline, or by a combination of the two. For example, this program starts at an RPE of 11; after 4 minutes the intensity becomes a 12 RPE; after another 4 minutes the intensity becomes a 13 RPE; and after another 4 minutes the intensity becomes a 14 RPE. Continue until a specific time or intensity level is achieved.

**Duration.** Follow ACSM (2014) guidelines, which recommend 20–60 minutes of continuous cardiorespiratory exercise.

Source: Jacobs & Sjodin 1985.

#### 4. • Near-Maximal Interval Walking

**Protocol.** Perform a 5-minute near-maximal intensity walk, followed by a 5-minute recovery walk; repeat.

**Intensity.** The near-maximal walking interval is around 17 on the RPE scale. The recovery interval is between 11 and 12. Use walking speed or treadmill incline to vary the intensity.

**Duration.** Follow ACSM (2014) guidelines, which recommend 20–60 minutes of continuous cardiorespiratory exercise.

Source: Gormley et al. 2008.

#### 5. Supramaximal Interval Walking

**Protocol.** Complete 7–10 sprint walking intervals lasting 90 seconds, interspersed with 30 seconds of walking at a self-selected pace.

**Intensity.** Do sprint walks at a very challenging but sustainable walking pace, which would suggest a Very Hard (17 RPE) intensity. Complete the self-selected 30-second walking recovery interval at about a Very Light (9 RPE) level.

**Duration.** 20–30 minutes.

Source: Gosselin et al. 2012.

6 **No Exertion At All:** This would be analogous to sitting and relaxing.

7 **Extremely Light:** This is very easy standing movement.

9 **Very Light:** This is similar to casual walking.

11 **Light:** This is comparable to the intensity of a light warm-up.

13 **Somewhat Hard:** This is a workout intensity that feels mildly challenging.

15 **Hard:** This is a workout intensity that feels difficult.

17 **Very Hard:** This is a very demanding workout intensity.

19 **Extremely Hard:** This is a rigorous intensity that cannot be maintained.

20 **Maximal Exertion:** This is an all-out exercise exertion.

6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Nothing	Extremely light		Very light		light		Somewhat hard		hard		very hard		Extremely hard	<b>Maximal Exertion</b>