

How to Use the "Talk Test" When Exercising

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Forget the expensive heart rate monitors. Forget taking your pulse. And, forget all of the other equipment that people buy to tell them how hard they should [exercise](#). Instead, just use the "Talk Test". The talk test is a simple and extremely accurate method to determine how hard you're [exercising](#) and estimate your training heart rate. Here's how it works.

Difficulty: Easy

Instructions

things you'll need:

- A pair of comfortable exercising shoes
- Exercise clothing
- A watch with a second hand or digital readout

- 1 Before you begin any exercise program, it's always a good idea to check with your [family](#) physician. If you haven't had a physical examination during the past year, schedule one that includes an electrocardiogram if you're over the age of fifty.
- 2 Determine your training heart rate. The simplest way to calculate your training heart rate is by using the Karvonen formula:
$$220 - \text{age (in years)} - \text{resting heart rate} \times .70 + \text{resting heart rate} = \text{average training HR}$$

For instance, for a 35 year old man with a resting heart rate of 60 beats per minute, you would calculate his training heart rate as:

$$220 - 35 \text{ yrs} - 60 \text{ BPM} \times .70 + 60 \text{ BPM} = 148 \text{ BPM}$$
- 3 Now, go for a brisk walk with a friend and strike up a conversation about anything--just as long as you can carry on a conversation. After 15 minutes, stop and take your heart rate using a digital watch or watch with a second hand.
- 4 If your exercising heart rate is too low, bump up the exercise intensity and continue your conversation. After 5 or 10 minutes, stop and take your heart rate again. Repeat the process until you have "calibrated" your exercising heart rate against your ability to carry on a conversation.
- 5 Once you've arrived at the proper match between your recommended exercising heart rate and your ability to carry on a conversation, try to remember the feeling and use it to gauge your average exercise intensity.

Tips & Warnings

- If you have any history of medical problems, speak with your family physician before engaging in an exercise program.

- If you're over the age of 50, get an electrocardiogram (EKG) to rule out any heart-related problems.
- Begin exercising slowly and gradually increase the pace while you continue to talk with your exercise partner.
- Avoid starting out too quickly. Gradually increase the intensity.