Conditioning Work: Pacing

Training Guide · https://www.fitnessacademy.com/help-center/conditioning-work-pacing/

Overview

Pacing is a skill. Knowing how hard to push, when to hold back, and how to distribute your effort across a workout is the difference between getting fitter and just getting tired. Most people default to one speed: as hard as possible. That works for short pieces. It falls apart in a 28 minute aerobic session or a 7 round carry workout where the goal is quality, not survival.

Every conditioning piece in the program includes a pacing indicator. It tells you the intent of the workout so you train the right system at the right intensity.

Why Pacing Names

We use pacing names instead of RPE numbers for conditioning because they are easier to follow in the moment. "Forever" tells you exactly what to do. "RPE 5" does not. The RPE values listed below each category are there as a reference if you want them, but the name is the instruction. Follow the name first.

For a deeper look at how RPE and RIR work for strength training, see the full article on RPE and RIR.

The Four Pacing Categories

Forever

- **When to use:** Longer conditioning pieces (20-40 minutes) or aerobic base sessions.
- **Feel:** You could hold this pace for an hour or more. Warm, moving, but never stressed. Full conversations are easy. If you are breathing through your mouth consistently, slow down.
- **RPE:** 4-5 out of 10
- **Heart rate:** Zone 2 to low Zone 3 (roughly 120-140 bpm)

- **Common mistake:** Going too fast because it does not feel like a workout. The point is sustained aerobic development. This is the foundation that makes everything else in the program work better. Trust the pace.

Steady

- **When to use:** Medium to long conditioning pieces (12-25 minutes), continuous or interval based.
- **Feel:** The hardest pace you can maintain for the entire piece without meaningful drop off. Round 1 and the last round should look the same. Not easy, but controlled.
- **RPE:** 6-7 out of 10
- **Heart rate:** Zone 3 to low Zone 4 (roughly 140-160 bpm)
- **Common mistake:** Starting too fast and hoping you can sustain it. If your last few rounds are significantly slower than your first, you started too hard.

Push

- **When to use:** Medium conditioning pieces (8-20 minutes) with no built in rest. You manage your own pacing.
- **Feel:** Hard and sustained. There is no scheduled recovery. You decide when to slow down, when to push, and how to distribute your effort across the piece.
- **RPE:** 7-8 out of 10
- **Heart rate:** Zone 4 (roughly 155-175 bpm)
- **Common mistake:** Treating Push like Sprint. Push is a grind. You are managing sustained discomfort, not going all out in bursts. If you need to stop completely and recover, you went too hard.

Sprint

- **When to use:** Short conditioning pieces or intervals with built in recovery periods.
- **Feel:** Hard in bursts. You are pushing into real discomfort, but the rest periods are long enough that you can recover between efforts. Each effort should be near-maximal knowing rest is coming.
- **RPE:** 8-9 out of 10
- **Heart rate:** Zone 4 to Zone 5 (roughly 160-180+ bpm)

- **Common mistake:** Not recovering during rest periods. Sprint pieces give you rest for a reason. Use it. Drop your heart rate, control your breathing, then go again.

Combined Pacing Targets

Some pieces use a combined target like Steady-Push or Push-Sprint. This means the intensity sits between two categories. Start closer to the lower end and allow yourself to push toward the higher end as you settle in. The name tells you the intent.

Conditioning Workout Types

Each week includes five conditioning pieces. Two are classic conditioning. Three are specific workout types that each target something different.

Classic Conditioning (2x per week)

Mixed modal work at Steady or Push pace. AMRAPs, rounds for time, EMOMs, chippers. These build general work capacity, muscular endurance, and cardiovascular fitness.

Interval (1x per week)

Hard efforts with built in rest periods. Sprint pacing. Develops your ability to produce power repeatedly under fatigue.

Structural (1x per week)

Carries, holds, loaded walks. Steady pacing. Heavy and deliberate. Builds grip strength, trunk stability, and durability under load. Not about the clock.

Forever (1x per week)

28+ minutes at Forever pace. Aerobic base work in Zone 2. Conversational effort. Develops the aerobic foundation that supports recovery between efforts, recovery between sessions, and long-term cardiovascular health.

Each type appears once per week on a dedicated day. The pacing label on each piece (Forever, Steady, Push, Sprint) matches the categories described above. 30 unique conditioning pieces across each 6-week block. No repeats.

Key Points

The pacing name is the instruction. Follow it. If you are unsure, ask yourself: "Could I hold this for the whole workout?" If yes, you are in Steady territory. If not, you are in Push or Sprint.

Full effort at the prescribed pace. Forever at full commitment to Forever pace still feels easy. That is the point.

It will feel harder as you go. A 30 minute Forever piece that starts feeling easy might feel moderate by the end even if your pace has not changed. This is normal. The pacing target describes how you start, not how it feels at the finish. Only adjust if your movement quality breaks down or you cannot maintain the pace.

Heart rate ranges listed above are approximate and vary by individual.