

Running by Feel

Even with all the technology at our fingertips, the smart watch on your wrist and the little computer in your pocket, nothing beats a perceptive runner. The numbers they give are useful to be sure. Your weekly mileage, the dew point and wind direction, are all factors that have an impact on your run and they can certainly be measured. But the way these factors, and more, come together - that can only be quantified by feel. No device can accurately give the full picture of you.

That's why it's important to teach yourself to be a perceptive runner. It takes practice to know how to run by feel, but a system has been developed to communicate the concept.

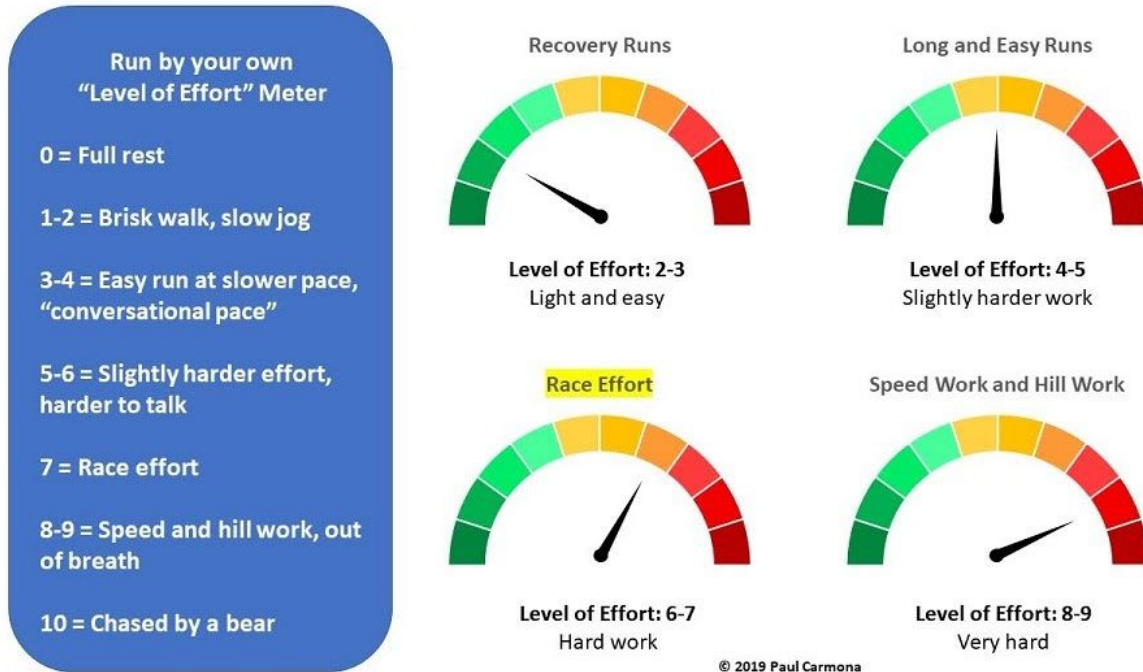
The original scale, called Rating of Perceived Exertion, was developed by Gunnar Borg, a Swedish psychologist in the 1960s. The Borg scale used a 6 to 20 point system, which was chosen to roughly mirror your heart rate. The idea being that a 6 is equivalent to no exertion and 20 is maximal exertion, which is similar in general approximation to a 60 and 200 average HR.

In the years that followed the concept was adapted to a scale spanning from 1 to 10 and it now goes by a few different names: Rate of Perceived Effort (RPE) or Level Of Effort (LOE) are two such options. No matter what name you use, this system can benefit anyone training or racing, because it is custom built for YOU and it adapts to any given circumstance.

This scale takes into account any and all variations, be it environmental, weather conditions, course, mental or personal physiology. For example, if the humidity is much higher than normal. If you're running on a hilly route versus flat ground. Or if you had to work late and only had 5 hours of sleep before your morning run. Each of these circumstances will result in a different outcome for your pace, heart rate and endurance. The numbers on your watch are a useful guide, but it's how you feel, your Rate of Perceived Effort, that gives the full picture.

I encourage you to practice honing your run by feel skills. Try to ignore your devices and be a perceptive runner. Don't gauge your run by the pace you think it "should" be. Use the

RPE/LOE scale as a road map. The picture below shows where on the scale you want to be for each run, workout and race. It's up to you to match that to your training and racing calendar.



* Race Effort here refers to either a half or a marathon. That is an endurance based race, so Level 6-7. Whereas a 5k race would fall more into the pure speed realm, which would land it in the Level 8-9 range.