



Talk Test & RPE (Rating of Perceived Exertion) Guide

The **Talk Test** is a simple and effective way to gauge your **effort level while riding**, using your ability to speak as an indicator of how hard you're working. It aligns closely with the **Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)** scale, which helps cyclists understand their intensity levels **without needing a heart rate monitor or power meter**.

Talk Test & RPE Guide

Effort Level (RPE 1-10)	Talk Test Description	Training Zone & Ride Type
1-2 (Very Easy)	Can talk easily in full sentences, can sing.	Recovery rides, warm-up, cool-down.
3-4 (Easy to Moderate)	Can hold a conversation comfortably.	Endurance/base training rides (e.g., Sunday Social, SB early season).
5-6 (Moderate to Hard)	Talking becomes difficult; can say short sentences.	Tempo efforts, rolling terrain, moderate climbing (e.g., Outbacks, late season SB rides).
7-8 (Hard)	Speaking is difficult, only a few words at a time.	Threshold intervals, sustained climbing, strong group pulls (e.g., late season Outbacks intervals, fast sections of SB 100 and 160).
9-10 (Very Hard to Maximum)	Can't speak; fully focused on breathing.	Sprinting, hill repeats, VO2 max efforts.

How to Use the Talk Test on EBTC Rides

- **Endurance rides (SB 60/100, Sunday Social):** Stay in the **3-4 RPE range**—you should be able to **comfortably chat** with fellow riders.
- **Outbacks & Tempo Training:** Expect to be in the **5-6 range**—talking should feel **labored but possible in short phrases**.
- **Hill Repeats & Intervals:** Push into **7-8+ RPE**, where **speaking becomes very difficult**, and breathing is heavy.

Using the Talk Test ensures riders are training at the right intensity to meet their goals while maintaining sustainable efforts throughout a ride. This method helps **self-regulate pace, improve endurance, and build fitness effectively**.

For best results, try checking in with yourself every few minutes to confirm you're riding at the right effort level!

About the Author



Kevin Rokosh is a multiple provincial and national Masters cycling medalist. Taking what he's learned both as an elite cyclist and a Cycling Canada certified coach, Kevin helps adult cyclists get ready to ride charity events, gran fondos and become successful bike racers too.

You can read all about Kevin's E•P•I•C Season Coaching System™ at: [EpicSeasonCoaching.com](https://www.EpicSeasonCoaching.com). Find him on Instagram [@EpicSeasonCoaching](https://www.instagram.com/EpicSeasonCoaching), LinkedIn at [KevinRokosh](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevinrokosh), and the Facebook page [www.Facebook.com/EpicSeasonCoaching.com](https://www.facebook.com/EpicSeasonCoaching.com).

Make your training numbers pay off!

Check out the coaching programs that Kevin offers: the ES Academy, Epic Rider and Podium Racer. All the details are at www.EpicSeasonCoaching.com/cycling-coaching-programs. ***Make every season EPIC!***

