

Repetitions in reserve and useful effort

Learn to describe effort without needing to test failure.

01 / Understand the starting point

Repetitions in reserve, or RIR, estimates how many additional repetitions you could complete with the same technique. It is not a pain rating, and it is not exact when you are new to lifting.

02 / Make the useful distinction

Begin with a deliberately manageable load. Stop when movement quality becomes uncertain. Beginners can practice leaving several repetitions available before working closer to their limit.

03 / Put it into practice

Compare your estimate with the next session: could you add a controlled repetition while keeping the same setup? Use this feedback to calibrate effort gradually. No maximal test is necessary.

04 / Review and adapt

Record RIR alongside load and reps. Failure is optional for general training, not proof that a set counted. For heavy lifts, preserve sufficient rest and use appropriate supervision and safety equipment.

Original education and planning material. Sources support the general context; sample schedules and worksheets are editorial applications, not tested individual prescriptions.

Put the guide to work.

A worked example, then your own next step.

A practical example

Goblet squat: 2 sets of 10, estimated 3 RIR, stable depth and breathing. Next time repeat the setup and try 11 if all remains controlled; avoid simultaneously adding load and reducing rest.

Your decisions

What task or goal do I want to improve?

What is my starting point and what remains uncertain?

Which detail changes my next useful action?

What would make the action easier to repeat?

When will I review it, and what would require earlier help?

Use the platform

Training: compare programs and technique guides. Daily: generate a session or arrange a week. Planner: calculate targets and select meals. Progress: record completed work. Learn: return to clinical reading when symptoms need professional assessment.

Your working record.

Printable worksheet; use the companion CSV for an editable version.

Exercise	Resistance	Repetitions	Estimated RIR	Technique cue

Evidence and original clinical reading

<https://acsm.org/resistance-training-guidelines-update-2026/>

This original workbook is free to keep and use. The source provides background reading; examples are practical frameworks to adapt. Individual medical and nutrition needs require suitable professional advice.