20-Minute Erg Workouts

12 indoor rowing sessions of 20 minutes or less, with warm-up and cool-down included

THE ROWING TUTOR

Every session here fits inside 20 minutes, including the warm-up and cool-down. They run from easy to very hard. Pick the session that suits how you feel and what you have time for.

How to read the sessions

- **Warm-up:** easy rowing at r18–20, RPE 2–3, building towards the session's rate in the last minute.
- **Cool-down:** paddle at r18, RPE 2. If your breathing has not settled when the time is up, keep paddling.
- **Rest** means light paddling or sitting still, and it comes between pieces. In `3x4:00/1:00`, row 4 minutes three times with 1 minute's rest between. Go straight from the last piece into the cool-down.
- **Rate** is strokes per minute, written r20 for 20 strokes a minute.
- **RPE** is how hard the work feels from 1 to 10. RPE 3 is easy enough to hold a full conversation. RPE 10 is everything you have.

The workouts

Workout	Structure	Effort	Who it suits
1. Easy 20	3:00 warm-up; 15:00 continuous; 2:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 3–4, r18–20	Beginners, easy days, the day after a hard session
2. Technique Reset	3:00 warm-up; 4x3:00/1:00, one technique point per piece; 2:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 3, r18	Anyone tidying up their stroke, or coming back after a break
3. Steady Bursts	3:00 warm-up; 14:00 continuous with 10 harder strokes every 2:00, six bursts in all; 3:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 3–4, r18–20. Bursts RPE 7, r26–28	Newer rowers ready for some harder strokes, or anyone feeling flat
4. Busy Day 15	3:00 warm-up; 10:00 continuous; 2:00 cool-down. **Total 15:00**	RPE 5, r20–22	Anyone short of time who still wants a firm, steady row
5. Rate Ladder	4:00 warm-up; 12:00 continuous: 4:00 at r20, 4:00 at r22, 4:00 at r24; 4:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 4 rising to 6	Rowers learning to control their rate and keep the stroke long
6. Low-Rate Power	5:00 warm-up; 3x3:00/1:00, long strong strokes; 4:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 6–7, r18–20	Rowers who rush the slide, or who want more from each stroke
7. Threshold Fours	4:00 warm-up; 3x4:00/1:00; 2:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 6–7, r22–24. Hard but controlled	Regular rowers building towards a 2k or 5k
8. Pyramid	4:00 warm-up; 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 2:00, 1:00, with 1:00 rest between; 3:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 7, r22–24. The 3:00 will feel long	Regular rowers who want variety at a hard, sustainable effort
9. Minute On, Minute Off	5:00 warm-up; 6x1:00/1:00; 4:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 8, r24–28. Hard from about the third piece	Regular rowers who are ready for proper intervals
10. 30/30s	5:00 warm-up; 10 rounds of 0:30 hard, 0:30 light paddling at r18; 5:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 8, rising to 9 in the last rounds, r26–30. Very hard	Experienced rowers. Not for your first months on the erg
11. 2k Pace Rehearsal	5:00 warm-up, with two bursts of 10 strokes; 3x2:00/3:00 at 2k pace; 3:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 8–9, r28–30. Uncomfortable by the end of each piece	Rowers with a 2k result who are preparing for another
12. 10-Minute Time Trial	6:00 warm-up; 10:00 as far as you can, evenly paced; 4:00 cool-down. **Total 20:00**	RPE 8–9, r26–30. A test in all but name	Experienced rowers who want a progress marker. Log the metres

Being honest about the hard ones

Workouts 9 to 12 are short, but they are not easy. Expect to be breathing hard, to want to stop, and to need several minutes to recover. Because the warm-ups are short, start the first piece under control and let the effort build.

- **Before you try them:** you should be able to row steadily for 20 to 30 minutes.
- **How often:** as a rule of thumb, no more than two of workouts 7 to 12 in a week, with an easy session or rest day after each.
- **Slowing down is fine.** If your stroke falls apart, ease off by a second or two per 500m, or stop the piece early.
- **Do not chase the rate.** If the rate goes up and the pace does not, your stroke has got short.

Safety

This pack is general training guidance, not medical advice. See your GP or a physio before you try the hard sessions if you have a heart condition, high blood pressure, a back or joint problem, are pregnant, or are coming back from illness or injury.

Stop straight away if you get chest pain, dizziness, faintness or unusual breathlessness. If chest pain does not settle quickly, call 999. Do not row through sharp pain in your back, knees or wrists.

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