



## Do you recommend that clients wear pedometers or heart rate monitors?

### Why or why not?

**I require each of my clients to purchase a heart monitor and wear it when we train together.** Here's why:

1. We both wear a Polar F series model so I can monitor heart rate without having to take the client's pulse, grab his wrist or stop him from exercising.
2. I always check a client's resting pulse at the beginning of the session to determine whether my plan for the day matches her current resting state.
3. The heart monitor shows the client his average heart rate, maximum heart rate, calories expended and percentage of calories coming from fat. This information educates the client as to what activities or positions burn the most calories, the concept of anaerobic threshold (AT), how it feels to train at or above the AT and how to determine rest periods between sets.
4. The heart monitor helps me make better choices in program design. I can tell when a client has adapted to a particular mode or intensity and when it's time to change it up. The monitor also presents a clearer picture of the relationship between volume and intensity. As intensity increases, volume will decrease. As the client's fitness improves, I slowly add back volume while maintaining intensity.
5. For a competitive athlete, the monitor helps dial in the correct amount of

time and intensity for our pregame warm-up or evaluate postcompetition performance.

6. A monitor helps motivate a client by recording her daily caloric expenditure and weekly totals. It also educates her about her own body's physiology.
7. Monitors are cool.

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**Pedometers and heart rate monitors are tools that fitness professionals can use to help clients determine activity and intensity levels in their programs.** These tools serve a useful purpose by providing objective measures in exercise programs. When used properly, they can give clients constant reminders of exercise frequency (pedometers) and intensity (heart rate monitors). That being said, I do not rely on them as the best means of assessing activity and intensity. I am not a big fan of relying on numbers, and I teach a combination of methods, including common sense, to keep track of exercise.

First, let me talk briefly about my use of pedometers. Pedometers are a great way to make people aware of how often they move during the day. Many clients believe

they move more than they actually do, and pedometers help clear up those misconceptions. However, many clients do not use pedometers properly, and they become fixated on the "10,000-step rule." Then, if they do not complete the 10,000 steps, they feel bad about themselves. This is not motivating in the long run. Also, many pedometers are based on a "standard." I have yet to meet or work with a "standard human being." For these reasons, I choose to use pedometers only to make people generally aware of their activity levels. I prefer that my clients measure their activity in time and intensity instead.

Intensity is another important factor that clients often underestimate. Many believe they are overworking or working harder than they are. I have used heart rate monitors to make them aware of their heart rate during exercise. Plus, I do recommend that my post-cardiac-rehab clients and diabetic clients use a good monitor during cardio workouts as a constant reminder of fluctuations in heart rate. I also tell these clients not to get too attached to the numbers, and I teach them to use RPE (rating of perceived exertion) along with heart rate. It is important in these populations to use *both* methods, given the higher risk of cardiac events and the effects of medication on heart rate. As a general rule, I do not use heart rate monitors for most people.