



The Absolute Best Interval Timer (and you can make it yourself)!

I am a big fan of interval training, I have used interval training methods with my clients for a long time now and it's something that I'm sure will be a part of my training programs for a long time to come. Interval training can be extremely effective when you use the right combinations of work to rest ratios but you must be sure to closely monitor these ratios during your sessions and herein lies the problem for many people. You see, a number of people have told me that they have a lot of trouble monitoring their rest breaks for their interval training due to the conditions of the activity they are performing. For example...

Sprinting:

When doing an activity like sprinting it is extremely tough to keep an eye on your watch. If you sprint on foot then it's hard to focus on your watch without stopping your arm swing and in turn messing with your running mechanics. If you sprint on a bike then it's not a great idea to be looking down every few seconds as the risk of crashing increases greatly with every split second your eyes are off the road, bad idea!

Punching/Kicking or Wrestling:

It's a pain on the butt to have to turn to look at the clock when you are trying to give your all in an intense set of intervals at any time, let alone when you are doing something technical like striking a target or wrestling a person. Stopwatches don't usually fit around boxing gloves and not every training room has a clock with a huge second hand on it (and friends may soon get tired of having to stand and time you every week).

Bodyweight Exercises:

For simple bodyweight exercises it's pretty easy to time yourself but some bodyweight exercises do not allow you to keep an eye on a timer be it clock or stopwatch. Imagine doing things like Body-Flow Neck Rolls and trying to keep an eye on the clock, it just doesn't work (yes I've tried it).



The Solution

Here it is, the ultimate timer for interval training that will solve all your woes, perhaps I should give it a cool name and start an infomercial for the Matt Jones ISO Health Super Amazing Interval Timing Mechanism (then again, perhaps not)! Forget fancy gadgets, all you have to do is sit down with a tape recorder, a stopwatch and a loud voice. If your voice is meek and mild then feel free to call in the help of a loud mouth friend. I myself spent many of my formative years in a household where most people spoke Polish and every word was about 100 decibels louder than that of a jet engine, hence my voice was more than loud enough to undertake this little project all by myself.

Step 1: Work out the intervals you want to structure your program around and the duration you want the session to go for.

Step 2: Set the tape to start recording and use the stop watch to track your intervals while you shout into the tape recorder giving yourself a 5 second count down for the stopping and starting of each interval. If you are struggling for motivation during training you may even want to shout out some motivational words to yourself or play the Rocky 3 classic "Eye of the Tiger" in the background.

Step 3: Once you've got your intervals on tape all you have to do is bring a walkman or portable stereo with you to your training session and you're all set, press play and let your shouting voice be your guide! This style of timer is terrific when training hard as you can just concentrate on the work at hand rather than diluting your effort by glancing over at the clock every few seconds. Use this method for anything you like and you may even want to make up a few different tapes for different interval sessions such as having one for Tabata's, one for 1:3 work to rest ratios, etc. All you high tech types could even look at converting this format to cd or mp3 format. Adjust whether you use headphones or a stereo depending on the activity you're training in. You can take your stereo to the park for a session of Tabata sprinting or



take your headphones to your gym for when you're on the stationary bike, I'm you can figure out all the options available to you.

Just remember to be a little considerate of other people, I'm sure the family having a picnic at the local park doesn't want to hear a stereo blasting your voice as it shouts intervals out to you, in such cases headphones would be a far better option.

It may take a few minutes of your time to put your tape together but once you have it done you'll be set for a long time. I'd advise making a couple of copies though because a great deal of frustration will arise if you happen to lose a tape that you've just made. You'll find the tape timer especially handy for Tabata's as the work and rest periods need to be so closely monitored due to the short duration of each bout. I know that this idea is an extremely simple one and some people may think it's nothing to get excited about but trust me, anyone who has performed numerous Tabata sessions or tried to time themselves through a set Clubbell Mills or good old fashioned Burpees will appreciate just how handy the home made tape timer is. It'll even make your sets of timed kettlebell snatches much less tedious. Give the tape timer a try; I'm sure you'll be glad you did. It works great, it's much cheaper than most fancy timers out there and most of all, everyone seems to love the sound of their own voice!