

# The Hard-Easy System

## Introduction

By Brian Clarke © 2020

**The Hard-Easy System** is based on the premise that *workouts* are the fundamental ability-building units of a training program. In other words, you have to do workouts in order to improve your racing ability. Otherwise, why train? You might as well just go out and race.

- In our system, every workout is made up of two fundamental ingredients: effort and energy. You can't do a workout without exerting an effort, and you can't exert an effort without encountering your sensations of running energy.
- Your body is a separate entity from your thinking, ego-self. Your body sends messages to your mind in the form of physical *sensations*, such as pain, abundant energy, or audible breathing.
- You are capable of directly experiencing your sensations of effort and energy during a workout. Effective training decisions are based on an understanding of these physical sensations. You don't need complex instrumentation.

Thus, you can learn to train effectively by paying attention to your sensations of effort and energy, and thereby learn how to read your body. Some say it can't be done; I believe this course can impart the necessary skills and knowledge.

**Your Learning Project** in this course is to use the hard-easy system to understand the following:

- **The steps in the training process** (what has to happen in order to improve your ability).
- **The perennial training *pitfalls*** (mistakes in thinking and practice that lead to injury, illness, and exhaustion).
- **The major training *principles*** (ideas that experience indicates are true about training and racing).
- **The basic training *problems*** that have to be solved for progress to be made (for example: how to *optimize* the effort of every workout so you build racing ability without injury, illness, or exhaustion).
- **Important training *relationships*** between factors affecting your decisions (e.g., the *faster* you run at the beginning of a workout, the *greater* your risk of injury).

**Our Conceptual System.** This course will teach you a systematic way of thinking about your training so you can make effective training decisions. This way of thinking is fundamentally *conceptual*. It's based on words with precise meanings.

Learning to use the words in this system is like learning a new language made up of common words, with uncommon meanings. The course has a lexicon of important analytical concepts you must master to pass the quizzes and graduate with honors.

In order to learn a new concept in our system you'll need to memorize the exact set of ideas pertaining to that concept, without confusing those defining ideas with another word or concept.

For example, "pace exertion" has four essential ideas (essential refers to an idea, without which the word has a different meaning):

- a) The effort necessary
- b) To sustain a pace
- c) From moment to moment
- d) During a bout of (running, jogging, or walking) exercise.

You'll not only have to parrot that definition, but use it to think about your own exertion, without confusing it with other concepts such as *workout effort*, which initially seems the same as pace exertion, but is a very different concept.

Thus, "workout effort" is the effort of a workout as a whole. As such, workout effort can only exist *after* a workout has ended, instead of *during* the workout, which is a defining mark of pace exertion (see idea (d) above).

The concept "pace exertion" will enable us to *structure* workouts that build racing ability; the concept "workout effort" will enable us say whether an exertion structure was *optimal* (i.e., not too hard or too easy, but just hard enough for injury-free training and improved race performance).

**Scales.** The course makes extensive use of *scales* to describe most of the measurable phenomena within your running experience.

- A scale is a full range of five or six measurable levels, generally from lowest to highest, smallest to largest, or slowest to fastest.
- For example, the ***pace exertion*** scale has six, lowest-to-highest levels: mild, light, steady-state, threshold, ragged-edge, and maximum.
- In other words, your exertion (the effort needed to sustain a pace from moment to moment during a run) can be scaled (measured) on the pace exertion scale.
- By contrast, ***workout effort*** will be measured on the following scale: very-easy, easy, moderate, hard, very-hard, and all-out. In other words, two concepts; two scales.

The scales not only describe the range of specific concepts, but they also describe the full scope of the training and racing process.