

Cardio Training Cheat Sheet

HR zones, interval protocols, and weekly targets that actually work.

Heart-Rate Zones (use max HR $\approx 208 - 0.7 \times \text{age}$)

Zone	% Max HR	Feel	Use it for
Z1 Recovery	50–60%	Easy chat	Active recovery, warm-up
Z2 Aerobic base	60–70%	Nose-breathing pace	Fat oxidation, endurance
Z3 Tempo	70–80%	Conversational with effort	Sustained work capacity
Z4 Threshold	80–90%	Short sentences	Lactate threshold
Z5 VO $\blacksquare$ max	90–100%	All-out, brief	Top-end conditioning

Weekly Cardio Targets

- **General health:** 150 min Z2 + 2 short Z4/5 sessions.
- **Fat loss (alongside lifting):** 3 $\times$ 30–45 min Z2 + 1 $\times$ intervals.
- **Conditioning:** 2 $\times$ Z2, 2 $\times$ intervals, cap intervals at 20 min work.

Interval Menu (pick one per week to start)

Protocol	Work	Rest	Rounds	Total
Classic Tabata	20 s all-out	10 s	8	4 min
30/30	30 s hard	30 s easy	10–14	10–14 min
VO $\blacksquare$ 4 $\times$ 4	4 min @ Z5	3 min easy	4	28 min
Hill repeats	60 s uphill	walk down	8–12	~20 min
Bike sprints	15 s max	45 s easy	10	10 min

No-Equipment Cardio Swaps

- Brisk walk on incline $\rightarrow$ Z2 base
- Jump rope (or fake-rope) $\rightarrow$ intervals anywhere
- Stair runs $\rightarrow$ hill repeat substitute
- Burpees / shuttle runs $\rightarrow$ conditioning finisher (5–10 min)

Rules of Thumb

- If you can't hold form, the interval is too long. Cut it.
- Hard days hard, easy days easy. Don't live in Z3 grey zone.
- Recover full breath between hard intervals — not full HR.
- Walking counts. 8–10k steps/day is the floor, not a goal.

Ready for the full system?

This sheet is one slice of **The Recomp Blueprint** — a 25-page program with macros, training splits for any equipment, recovery + sleep protocols, and a 12-week roadmap.

Get it for \$7 $\rightarrow$ recompblueprint.com