

What is the Difference between Extensive Tempo, Intensive Tempo, and Continuous Tempo?

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The three forms of tempo are primarily used to develop the aerobic energy system. Each form of tempo is distinguished from the others by its intensity and duration. Here is a brief explanation of each of the three forms of tempo training:

Continuous Tempo: Longer, slower runs performed at 50-70% of maximum heart rate or 55-75% of maximal effort. Continuous tempo runs enhance muscle and liver glycogen storage capacities and aerobic capacity. Continuous tempo runs should be a staple for runners competing in the 800m or higher.

An example of continuous tempo would be a 5km run @ 60% maximal heart rate.

Extensive Tempo: Repeated running bouts performed at 60-80% of maximum heart rate or 65-85% of maximal effort. Extensive tempo runs enhance the ability to cope with lactate. Extensive tempo is often used as a form of recovery among sprinters. Because of this fact, it is often useful to perform extensive tempo on grass or other soft surfaces.

An example of extensive tempo would be 10 x 200m @ 70% maximum heart rate with 45 seconds recovery.

Intensive tempo: Repeated running bouts performed at 80-90% of maximum heart rate or 85-95% maximal effort. Intensive tempo runs produce high levels of lactate and lay the foundation for development of anaerobic energy systems. Intensive tempo is often used as a gateway to speed endurance and special endurance.

An example of intensive tempo would be 8 x 150m @ 85% maximum heart rate with 2 minutes recovery.