

Zone 2 Cardio Training — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Zone 2 Cardio Training course and gives you the structured exercises, worksheets, and templates to move from understanding into consistent, trackable practice. Complete each section after finishing the corresponding course module — the sequencing matters because later exercises build on calculations from earlier ones.

The Science of Aerobic Zones

Anchor the key physiology concepts to your own experience and identify where your current training sits on the intensity spectrum.

Exercise: Zone Identification Self-Assessment

Think about your last 4 weeks of physical activity (any type — running, gym, walking, sport). For each session you can recall, estimate which zone it was in using the five-zone framework and the talk test description from Lesson 1. Answer the prompts below honestly before looking at your results.

- How many of your recent sessions would you now classify as Zone 3 (grey zone) rather than Zone 2? What clue tipped you off?

- Describe a time you felt like you worked out hard but made little fitness progress. In light of the zone science, what might explain it?

- What metabolic change are you most motivated to develop through Zone 2 training — and why (fat oxidation, insulin sensitivity, cardiovascular health, longevity)?

- Write one sentence that explains Zone 2 and LT1 in plain language — as if you were explaining it to a friend with no fitness background.

Worksheet: Personal Zone Map

Complete this worksheet to build your five-zone HR map. You will use it throughout the 12-week program. First estimate HRmax using the Tanaka formula, then fill in each zone boundary and the corresponding RPE and talk-test descriptor.

My age

HRmax estimate (Tanaka: $208 - 0.7 \times \text{age}$)

Zone 1 HR range (50–60% HRmax)

Zone 2 HR range (60–70% HRmax)

Zone 3 HR range (70–80% HRmax)

Zone 4 HR range (80–90% HRmax)

Zone 5 HR range (90–100% HRmax)

My MAF ceiling (180 " age)

My chosen Zone 2 ceiling (use Tanaka or MAF — circle which)

Primary Zone 2 modality I plan to use

Checklist: Module 1 Readiness Checklist

- I can define all five aerobic training zones from memory
- I understand what LT1 (first lactate threshold) means and where it sits on the zone map
- I can explain in plain language why Zone 2 drives mitochondrial biogenesis
- I have calculated my personal Zone 2 HR range using at least one formula
- I understand why Zone 3 is called the grey zone and why elites avoid it
- I know my primary Zone 2 modality and have access to a heart rate monitor or will use talk-test method

Measuring Your Zone 2

Practice the measurement methods and calibrate your Zone 2 targets against real-world sessions before committing to a 12-week program.

Exercise: Calibration Session — Talk Test and HR Together

Perform one 30-minute Zone 2 calibration session using your calculated HR ceiling. Every 5 minutes, pause briefly and perform the talk test (speak a full sentence). Record your HR and talk-test result at each interval. Use the prompts below to reflect after the session.

- At what heart rate did the talk test first become uncomfortable (sentence no longer fully comfortable)? How does this compare to your formula-derived Zone 2 ceiling?

- Did your HR naturally drift upward even though pace stayed constant? If so, at what minute did you first notice drift and by how many bpm?

- What felt hardest about staying in Zone 2 — physical discomfort, boredom, external factors, or something else?

- Based on this session, will you adjust your Zone 2 ceiling up or down from the formula estimate? By how many bpm?

Worksheet: Zone 2 Baseline Benchmark Log

Record your first three Zone 2 benchmark sessions using this log. These three data points form your baseline for measuring progress at Week 12.

Session 1 — Date

Session 1 — Modality (run/cycle/row/other)

Session 1 — Duration (minutes)

Session 1 — Target Zone 2 HR ceiling (bpm)

Session 1 — Average HR (bpm)

Session 1 — Average pace (min/km) or power (watts)

Session 1 — Aerobic decoupling % (if available in device app)

Session 2 — Date

Session 2 — Modality

Session 2 — Duration (minutes)

Session 2 — Average HR (bpm)

Session 2 — Average pace or power

Session 3 — Date

Session 3 — Modality

Session 3 — Duration (minutes)

Session 3 — Average HR (bpm)

Session 3 — Average pace or power

Resting HR Week 1 average (bpm)

HRV Week 1 average (ms, if measured)

Checklist: Measurement Toolkit Checklist

- I have access to a heart rate monitor (chest strap preferred) or will use talk test as primary method
- I have completed at least one calibration session and recorded average HR and pace
- I know how to find aerobic decoupling (Pa:HR) in my device app or have noted I will skip this metric
- I am measuring resting HR at least 3 mornings per week
- I have set up a basic log (paper, spreadsheet, or training app) to record each Zone 2 session
- I understand why pacing by feel (Zone 3) instead of by HR produces inferior aerobic adaptation

Building Your Zone 2 Program

Design and commit to your personal 12-week Zone 2 plan, with session scheduling, volume targets, and progress checkpoints.

Exercise: Personal 12-Week Plan Design

Using the Phase 1/2/3 framework from Lesson 9, design your own 12-week Zone 2 plan. You do not need to fill in every day — map the weekly structure and total minutes per week for each phase, then identify your preferred sessions and rest days.

- How many Zone 2 sessions per week is realistic given your current schedule, and on which days? List them.

- What modality will you use for your longest weekly Zone 2 session — and why did you choose it over alternatives?

- Where will you schedule your planned deload weeks, and what will you reduce (duration, frequency, or both)?

- What is your 12-week goal: a specific pace at your Zone 2 HR ceiling, a resting HR target, or a weekly volume target?

Worksheet: Weekly Training Structure Planner

Fill in your planned training structure for each of the three phases. Use this as a living document — update it if life changes your schedule.

Phase 1 (Weeks 1–4) — Sessions per week

Phase 1 — Duration per session (minutes)

Phase 1 — Total weekly Zone 2 minutes

Phase 1 — Deload week number

Phase 2 (Weeks 5–8) — Sessions per week

Phase 2 — Duration per session (minutes)

Phase 2 — Total weekly Zone 2 minutes

Phase 2 — Deload week number

Phase 3 (Weeks 9–12) — Sessions per week

Phase 3 — Duration per session (minutes)

Phase 3 — Total weekly Zone 2 minutes

Phase 3 — Will I add Zone 4 intervals? (yes/no)

If yes — Zone 4 protocol (e.g. 4x4 min at 90% HRmax, weekly)

Primary modality

Secondary modality (for variety or injury backup)

12-week goal metric and target value

Checklist: Program Commitment Checklist

- My 12-week plan is written down with weekly volume targets for all three phases
- I have identified which days are Zone 2 sessions and which are rest or strength
- I have planned deload weeks and know how I will reduce load (duration or frequency)
- I understand the 10% volume increase rule and have checked my planned progression does not violate it
- I have a minimum-effective-dose fallback plan for busy weeks (e.g. 2 x 30 min instead of 3 x 45 min)
- I have set a 12-week benchmark goal that is specific and measurable

Real-World Application and Long-Term Progress

Apply Zone 2 principles to your specific environment and commitments, and set up the tracking habits that sustain long-term progress.

Exercise: Constraint Mapping and Contingency Planning

Every training program faces real-world disruptions — heat waves, travel, illness, work spikes, poor sleep. Complete this exercise to pre-solve the most likely disruptions before they derail your Zone 2 habit.

- List the two or three most likely disruptions to your Zone 2 training over the next 12 weeks and write one specific contingency response for each.
- If temperatures regularly exceed 28°C in your location during your planned training period, what session time, modality, or pacing adjustment will you use?
- How will you handle a week when you can only complete one Zone 2 session instead of your planned three — and still maintain training continuity?

Worksheet: 12-Week Progress Tracking Log

Record one row per week summarising your Zone 2 training. Review this log at Weeks 4, 8, and 12 to assess progress and adjust the plan. Do not pre-fill totals — complete each row at week end.

Week number

Total Zone 2 minutes completed

Number of sessions

Average pace at Zone 2 HR ceiling (run) or average power at Zone 2 HR (cycle)

Average HR across Zone 2 sessions this week

Resting HR average this week (bpm)

HRV average this week (ms, if tracked)

Aerobic decoupling % on longest session

Notable adjustments (heat, illness, missed sessions)

Subjective energy and motivation (1–10)

Checklist: Long-Term Progress Habits Checklist

- I am logging each Zone 2 session with date, duration, average HR, and pace or power
- I review my pace-at-HR trend monthly and note whether it is improving, flat, or declining
- I measure resting HR at least 3 mornings per week and track the weekly average
- I have read the five most common Zone 2 mistakes and can name at least three from memory
- I know how to distinguish a legitimate plateau (flat pace-at-HR for 6+ weeks) from normal week-to-week variation
- I have a plan for what comes after the 12-week base block (e.g. introducing Zone 4 intervals, increasing volume, entering an event)

Your Action Plan

1. Calculate your Zone 2 HR range using the Tanaka formula ($208 - 0.7 \times \text{age}$) and cross-check with the MAF method ($180 - \text{age}$); write both numbers down and post them somewhere visible
2. Acquire or confirm access to a heart rate monitor — chest strap preferred for accuracy; set up your device to display current HR during workouts
3. Complete one 30-minute Zone 2 calibration session this week, using talk test every 5 minutes to validate your HR target against real effort
4. Log your Zone 2 baseline: average HR, average pace or power, and resting HR for the week — this is your Week 1 benchmark
5. Write your 12-week plan on paper or in a spreadsheet with weekly volume targets, scheduled session days, and deload weeks marked
6. Begin Phase 1 of your plan (3 sessions/week, 30–40 min each); commit to slowing down whenever HR exceeds your Zone 2 ceiling regardless of how easy it feels
7. Set a monthly calendar reminder to review your pace-at-HR trend and compare against your Week 1 baseline
8. After Week 4 deload, reassess your Zone 2 HR ceiling using a second talk-test calibration session and update targets if needed
9. At Week 12, complete a Zone 2 benchmark session at the same conditions as Week 1 and calculate your pace improvement percentage
10. Decide on your next training block: continue adding Zone 2 volume, introduce one Zone 4 interval session per week, or register for an endurance event as an accountability anchor

