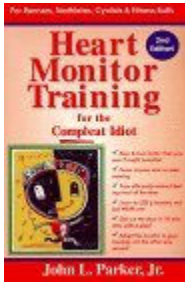


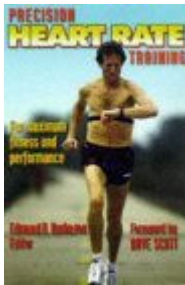
# *Which book is best for describing how to use a heart rate monitor?*

After reading several articles about how to use a heart rate monitor, a couple of years ago I decided to read two books that might be more thorough than an article. I chose

*Precision Heart Rate Training* by Edmund R. Burke, Phd., and *Heart Monitor Training for the Compleat Idiot* by John L. Parker Jr.



Even though both books give the basics of how to use a monitor, runners will soon discover, as the authors acknowledge, there is a learning curve to mastering a monitor. It's not too difficult to determine the percentage of your maximum heart rate, which you'll need to do to follow the training guidelines, but then it gets more difficult. For instance, your heart rate goes up when it's hotter outside and goes down when it's cooler. How do you compensate? What about hills? Going up one spikes the heart rate and going down one slows the rate. What do you do? Both books give you insights on how to handle the changes.



First, I believe Burke's book comes closer to helping a runner determine the correct maximum heart rate with its formula compared to Parker's. Plus, it is a plus for Burke's book to have respected running guru Roy Benson devote his expertise in the book's running chapter. Burke also includes chapters for walkers, cyclists, in-line skating, circuit training and what he calls multi-sport training. I like that these sports are covered, and runners shouldn't feel shortchanged. Parker, though devoting most of the book to running, also offers chapters for swimming, cycling, cross-training, triathlons, duathlons and general fitness. He also supplies 12-week workout programs for the novice to the advanced. Burke also supplies workouts for various levels, but he relies more on effort and the mileage is more or less up to you. As you advance, the mileage is expected to increase.

I tried both training methods, and showed more improvement following Burke's book. Why? I haven't a clue except, as I said, I believe Burke's book is better at being closer to helping determine the maximum heart rate, plus I liked his training routine better. And having the correct maximum heart rate gives a runner more accurate percentages to use during training runs. Many runners, of course, train by perceived effort, though both books contend that most runners fail to keep their easy days easy by doing that. That, in turn, might prevent them from training as hard as they should on the harder days. Dave Scott, a five-time Ironman champion, says in the forward that he relies on a heart rate monitor. I figure if it's good enough for him, then a monitor might work for many others.

So, which book to use? I think either one would be a good source, though my favorite was Burke's. His book was published in 1998 by Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc. Parker's second edition book was out in 1998 by Cedarwinds Publishing Company. No doubt there are newer books available, but these two probably cover the subject as well as anyone.