

Feel the beat, not the burn: Study shows your favorite playlist can help you train harder and longer

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New research from the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) shows that letting exercisers choose their own music can boost endurance by nearly 20%—without making the workout feel any tougher. The findings have practical benefits for both athletes and everyday exercisers.

Participants who pedaled to their own self-selected tracks (around 120–140 beats per minute) lasted an average of nearly 6 minutes longer before reaching exhaustion compared to riding in silence. That's the key finding from a new study [published](#) in the journal *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*.

Lead researcher Andrew Danso from JYU's Center of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body and Brain explains the real-world impact. "Self-selected music doesn't change your fitness level or make your heart work dramatically harder in the moment—it simply helps you tolerate sustained effort for longer. It may be an incredibly simple, zero-cost tool that lets people push further in training without feeling extra strain at the end. Our findings suggest that the right playlist may make tough sessions feel more doable and more enjoyable."

In the study, 29 recreationally active adults completed two identical high-intensity cycling tests (at about 80% of their peak power). One test had no music; the other let participants pick their own songs. With music, they cycled for 35.6 minutes on average versus 29.8 minutes without (a clear 20% improvement).



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Favorite music boosts quality training time

Importantly, even though they exercised longer and burned more total energy, their heart rate and lactate levels at the finish line were the same in both conditions. In other words, the music helped them "stay in the pain zone" longer without making the pain feel worse. The findings have clear practical applications for athletes, coaches, and everyday exercisers.

"Many people struggle to stick with hard training because it feels exhausting too quickly," says Danso. "Our research shows that letting people choose their own [motivating music](#) may help them accumulate more quality training time, which could translate to better fitness gains, improved adherence to exercise programs, and possibly more people

staying active."

From a broader societal perspective, the study highlights how [music](#) could play a role in tackling inactivity-related health challenges. Longer, more tolerable exercise sessions may help reduce risks linked to low fitness.

More information: Andrew Danso et al, Feel the beat, not the burn: Effects of self-selected music in time-to-exhaustion cycling, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* (2026). [DOI: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2026.103116](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2026.103116)

Provided by University of Jyväskylä

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