LOOKING TO POWER up your workout? Rather than buying new tennis shoes or a heart-rate monitor, you can use your senses to add exercise oomph—without spending a cent.

Use Your Nose
Next time you hop on your bike, try dabbing a few drops of peppermint essential oil on your wrists. Smelling peppermint can help you ride harder and faster, upping your caloric burn by 15 percent. A study conducted at Wheeler Jesuit University found that athletes who sniffed mint ran faster, gripped stronger, and pumped out more push-ups.

The scent of jasmine can boost performance, too. When bowlers in a study wore a mask emitting the scent of jasmine, their scores improved. “We think these two scents jolt the reticular activating system, a part of the brain that makes you feel more alert,” says Alan Hirsch of the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago.

Taste the Power
A pep-o-mint Lifesaver might salvage a lackluster workout session. “Chewing on minty gum or a Lifesaver can have the same effect, since taste and smell are so closely connected,” says Hirsch.

Turn Up the Volume
Why do so many gym rats have ibuds in their ears? The sound of music blocks nerves from signaling body fatigue and perception of effort, explains Costas Karageorghis of Brunel University in London. You can boost your effort by up to 10 percent and your endurance by up to 15 percent by listening to upbeat tunes, particularly songs with 120-140 beats per minute.

Feel the Earth Move
Get the sense of touch into the act by taking your routine outside. “Thanks to wind and terrain changes, which you feel against your body and under your feet, your heart rate is on average 5 to 10 beats per minute higher,” says John Porcari of the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. “You burn 10 to 15 percent more calories.”

Exercising outside has other potential benefits. Not only are several senses actively engaged in a natural environment, but your mind is also diverted by the constant change of scenery—leading to less boredom, more enjoyment, and, consequently, a better workout.

STIMULATING SONGS

- Lady Gaga, “Paparazzi,” 116 beats per minute (bpm) or “Just Dance,” 119 bpm
- Rihanna, “Please Don’t Stop the Music,” 122 bpm
- La Roux, “Bulletproof,” 123 bpm
- Black Eyed Peas, “I Gotta Feeling,” 129 bpm
- A. R. Rahman and the Pussycat Dolls featuring Nicole Scherzinger, “Jai Ho (You Are My Destiny),” 139 bpm

Source: Costas Karageorghis, Brunel University, London