

MATT OGUS

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SIXPACK

SHREDDING PROGRAM

**HOW TO SHRED FAT & BUILD A LEAN,
MUSCULAR PHYSIQUE**

Introduction to My Story

I remember the first time I tried to get shredded. It's a funny story full of trial and error, but mostly embarrassment.

In the summer of 2010, I decided that I wanted to do my first ever bodybuilding show. I'd been lifting for four years and, from what I understood at the time, all I had to do was change my training so that it could be geared towards fat loss - meaning tons upon tons of sets and reps. As far as diet, I was going to minimize my consumption of carbohydrates. Instead, I was going to eat "a lot" of protein and fats, because consuming a lot of protein, apparently, was very important, and I heard that if you consume a lot of fats (instead of carbs) you'd force your body to burn fat. Where'd I get this information? In various articles and blog posts on the internet. And everything on the internet is correct.

I started my "diet", somewhere around 175 lbs and in about 12 weeks, I stepped on stage to showcase my tanned physique after I had successfully dieted down to around 180 lbs.

Wait a minute...

Oh yes. I guess I made a typing mistake there. I *gained* weight into my bodybuilding show. I bulked, when my every intention was to get shredded. I literally looked better before I began my preparation for the show than the day of. Male bodybuilders typically try to show up on stage at or around 5% bodyfat, lean, full, and hard, but I was easily 13-15% bodyfat, thick, soft, and spilled. Oh and, by the way, I'm just guessing these body weights, I didn't actually weigh myself throughout the entire process. I didn't really take progress pictures either, so that might explain how I couldn't tell that I was actually gaining fat, and not losing it.

Why am I telling you all this?

I want you to know that I'm just like you. In fact, I'm willing to bet that many of you currently have a better understanding of nutrition and training than I did at the time that I did my first bodybuilding show.

What I was missing, and what so many of us today are missing, is a *system* for fat loss. We're so distracted by click-bait, fancy blog titles, and viral facebook pictures or videos, thinking "Since this has 1000+ shares, I better read it and believe it!"

We see articles boasting "Clean Eating", or "5 Foods that Make you fat", and we tend to look at things in black and white. We internalize this misconception that there are inherently good foods and bad foods, as if food quality is the only thing that matters, and without any sort of consideration for our daily calorie or macronutrient intakes. We think "bad foods", regardless of quantity, wreck a good diet, and we think "good foods" magically solve a bad diet or make you "healthy," or are incapable of making you gain fat. We mistakenly look at foods in isolation from each other, and one-dimensionally, instead of looking at the grand context of a diet in its entirety, and thus we miss the point.

My goal with this book and program is of course, point blank, to get you results. I'm here to deliver you through a transformation. I'm here to help you get **LEAN**.

But that's not my only goal. I'm also here to teach you the priorities when it comes to training and nutrition. It's one thing to mindlessly follow a generic meal plan that has you losing fat, but it's another thing to know and thoroughly understand what exactly causes fat loss and how you can adjust each variable to increase, maintain, decrease, or even reverse your weight loss. I'll also be equipping you with practical tools and techniques to help you go about your fat loss phase, because we know sustaining fat loss or a lean physique can get difficult, especially without them.

I can't even begin to tell you how incredible it feels when you have the curtains drawn back and the simple, bare naked truth revealed. For most of you, it's going to suddenly hit you once you're one or two weeks into this program, you're finally losing body fat, day after day, week after week, and seeing the physique you desire be chiseled out in front of your very eyes. The physique you will have is an achievement in and of itself, but the power and control you will possess as the architect is something out of this world.

It's this feeling of self-empowerment that compelled me to want to share my training and dieting strategies with the world through my Youtube channel and other social media. I have a feeling that with the results you'll be achieving, many of you may do the same. I'm looking forward to seeing your progress and transformations.

A Common Story

A typical experience for many who desire six pack abs sounds something like this: They get a gym membership. They do tons of ab exercises and endless sessions of cardio while heavily restricting their diet to lose fat. Clean eating combined with low calories. Most find themselves getting burned out quickly. If they even succeed in lowering their body fat levels and maybe even achieve their goal of getting a six pack, they're usually hit with the realization that they completely neglected the rest of their physique. They're not satisfied with the end result.

Many people rebound hard and gain a ton of weight back, realizing that their methods of getting this six pack weren't really maintainable in the long run. For those who don't rebound uncontrollably, many enter a "bulking phase" and end up gaining a lot of bodyfat quickly in an attempt to put on muscle. Many of them are locked inside this vicious cycle of bulking and cutting, back and forth, never really achieving or maintaining a physique that they're satisfied with and proud of.

This is why the majority of guys you see at commercial gyms don't walk around at 8-12% body fat year-round. This is why most people who frequent gyms look relatively the same from year to year. Most people who show up to the gym don't lack the effort. They lack the know-how.

The Myths (That we won't be buying into)

Unfortunately, following conventional nutrition and training wisdom found all over the internet and facebook makes it really hard to get the physique you want. It's hard to get and stay lean when you think the most important piece of fat loss is meal frequency - eating every 2 to 3 hours, or "clean eating" - a vague, undefined, and often times hypocritical style of eating only foods that aren't processed (I say hypocritical because apparently whey protein, which is a processed food, is completely okay).

You're told how important it is to eat before, during, and/or after working out. Magazines and blog posts spout about how carbs are the enemy and fats are your best friend, or vice versa. There's always one nutrient or food that you need to avoid and another one that is magical, and that you must consume in endless quantities. In magazine or website, you'll often find several conflicting articles and viewpoints. No wonder people have no idea how to lose fat!

To build muscle, we're constantly being prescribed "one weird trick". We're shown the training routines of experienced professional bodybuilders whose steroid protocols allow them to be able to handle such high volume workouts, 5 or 6 days a week. Beginners attempt these routines, spending tons of energy but making very little progress.

I could write an entire book just listing all of the common fitness myths, let alone one that busts them. Keep in mind that the vast majority of fitness advice that you read in magazines or see online is placed there to eventually get you to spend money. While some advice may be helpful, advice generally isn't required by law to be helpful or backed by science.

Instead of going on and on, telling you what not to do and what advice to ignore, let's now focus strictly on what you should do.

How to Achieve Lean Muscularity

To attain a truly impressive physique, you need to have a combination of leanness (low body fat percentage) and muscularity. The three main inputs in this equation are going to be strength training, nutrition, and cardio, with the two that you'll be adjusting the most being nutrition and cardio.

Strength Training - the constant

It is absolutely imperative that you strength train to get the defined and powerful physique that you want. Building muscle comes from progressive overload - a gradual increase of stress placed upon your body and muscles during training. When you train specifically for progressive overload (building strength), muscle gains will naturally follow. Cause and effect.

Building muscle is a byproduct of building strength, so remember that the purpose of your workouts is to make or maintain progress on whatever you're doing inside of those workouts, not to just do the motions or "exercise".

Sets, reps, exercise selection, workout frequency, progression models, rest periods, and more will be covered in detail later on.

A common mistake people make is to turn all of their training into "pump work" or "toning work". They do higher reps for everything and often neglect and/or end up losing a lot of strength in the 4-10 rep range. While there is a time and place for higher reps, it shouldn't be the entirety of your training.

For the most part, your strength training program doesn't require a massive overhaul to get you into "fat loss mode" nor does it require much change once you've set it into motion. After you've begun the program laid out for you, you can almost "set it and forget it", allowing you to put all of your focus on the lifts themselves. Your effort will be best spent trying to top your previous workout's lifts, or if you're much further along in your fat loss phase and very lean, you'll be trying your hardest to maintain your lifts. If you maintain your lifts, you'll maintain muscle.

We'll be focusing on just major key lifts to build and maintain your muscle and strength throughout your fat loss diet. We'll take a moderate approach to volume so that you'll be able to maintain strength as much as possible throughout your fat loss phase, while not feeling like your running yourself into the ground.

Many of you will be surprised by how much strength you'll be gaining while on this fat loss program. If you're a novice, or coming back from a long period off, I can almost guarantee you'll be gaining strength and muscle while losing fat. Even those who may consider themselves intermediate lifters will experience strength gains and may even find themselves building muscle if they've been training sub-optimally. Everything works much better when you've got your priorities straightened, simplified, and tracked.

That said, if fat loss isn't decided by how you train, what does decide it?

Nutrition - Fat loss while Building or Maintaining Muscle

A sustained caloric deficit (the state in which your body is burning more calories than it's consuming) is required for fat loss. The easiest and most impactful way to control your energy balance - and gear it towards fat loss - is to control how many calories you're consuming through tracking what you eat.

The best fat loss diet is one that makes a caloric deficit as effortless and sustainable as possible, while maximizing muscle retention. This means consuming adequate amounts of fats, carbs, and protein that facilitate top-notch gym performance but still keeps you at a deficit of calories so that you can lose body fat.

The media has irresponsibly confused people into thinking that you lose body fat for other reasons, but at the end of the day we have good ol' science - and calories are still king.

Cardiovascular Exercise

Cardio has received quite a bit of undeserved bashing as of late, and many people falsely think that doing cardio automatically leads to "losing gains" (losing muscle). That is untrue. Most often, average people do cardio to burn fat or to get in shape, but they are unaware that their food intake must be manipulated as well, or at the very least, held constant. It's not abnormal for a person to unknowingly eat more food thus increase their caloric intake more and more as they do longer and more frequent cardio sessions (because of their increased appetite).

While doing cardio for fat loss is hopeless or at least extremely ineffective when you're not tracking your caloric intake, if you are tracking your caloric intake, cardio surely has its benefits.

Cardio is a very helpful tool in creating, sustaining, or increasing a caloric deficit for fat loss. Cardio also increases your body's ability to use fat as a source of energy.

When we inevitably reach fat loss stalls or slowdowns while on a certain caloric intake and cardio output, and want to continue moving forward, we usually have two main choices:

1. Decrease caloric intake

2. Increase Cardio output

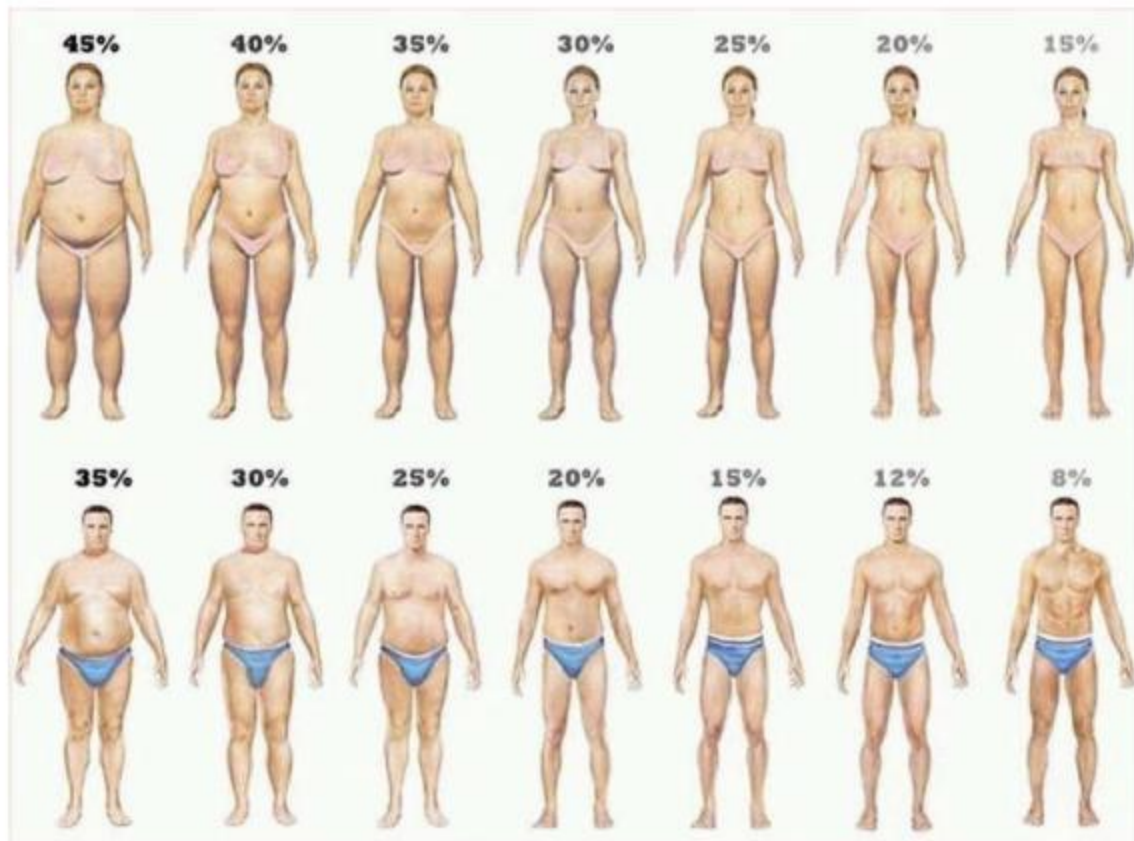
Which should you do? Decrease your calories or increase your cardio? We'll cover this in depth. You'll thoroughly understand your options and it comes down to mainly preference and adherence: what you figure you'd enjoy most (or hate the least) and what you feel will keep you on target (and what actually does keep you on target in hindsight). For some people, they hate doing cardio so they'd be better off decreasing their calories more frequently than increasing cardio, and for other people vice versa. I'll be giving you easy-to-follow guidelines to follow so that you take a balanced approach and don't overdo it in the cardio department.

Inversely, cardio is not required for losing fat and you could achieve it through manipulating nutrition alone, but for most people you'll be left consuming quite a few less calories per day than if you were doing some cardio too. My recommendation is to do at least some cardio per week, for better diet adherence. If not that, than at least for the health and exercise benefits.

Varying Levels of Bodyfat

Now that you know the main pillars of fat loss and lean muscularity, the question is:

What body fat percentage should you be aiming to get down to?



This is going to depend on several factors, but for most men, we're looking to get down to the 8-12% body fat range.

Some people can comfortably get down to 6-8% body fat with little to no resistance. Others may find that losing weight gets really rough once they get below 10% body fat.

For most men, unless it's for competition, a photoshoot, or some other really important reason, you might not want to get down to 6% body fat or lower. It gets harder and harder to maintain, not to mention you increasingly lose strength, your natural testosterone drops, and you become increasingly hungry, food focused, and quite often anti-social the lower you take your body fat.

Everyone is going to have their own "set-point" (a comfortable point of leanness and strength) and their particular goal of body fat to reach at the end of a fat loss phase.

You have to decide for yourself your own goal body fat level. For most people who find themselves well overweight with a lot of body fat, just getting down to 12-15% body fat is incredible and life changing. For most of you, I'd probably recommend aiming to get down to 8-12% body fat. Some of you may want to get completely shredded and hit near 6% body fat, and that's okay too, that's your decision.

For some of you, this may be the first time you'll ever have gotten lean. For others, you may be pushing towards getting leaner than ever before. Whichever it is, you will gain insight and body feedback on what is realistic for you to achieve and maintain (and for how long). Let me also note that as you gain experience with the system and methods we'll be going over, getting leaner or staying leaner for longer tends to get easier each time you go on a cut.

Let's take a look at what some of the goal levels of body fat can look like. We'll use me (the author) as the example. Keep in mind that we all store fat differently. Compared to me, many men store body fat more in their abdominal regions. I tend to store fat fairly evenly throughout my body parts, with more in my butt and back and less in the abdominal region.

20% Body Fat



For some of you, this will be a goal level of bodyfat. For others it may just be the beginning. While this may look like the physique of someone who is “bulking” keep in mind that the average American male is above this level of bodyfat. If you’re currently 30% bodyfat or higher, then you should feel extremely proud of yourself if, or should I say, when you bring yourself to this stage.

My ab genetics really come into play here as most men at 20% body fat would not have visible abs. I can pull off this look fairly well because of my genetics and especially since I’ve been lifting for about 8 years here in this picture, but most men do not have the muscle mass to be able to.



15% Body Fat



This stage in your fat loss is sometimes an interesting “middle ground”, at least it is for me. You’re strong, quite often stronger than ever, but you’re not quite as defined as you’d like to be. Many without a structure and plan to their nutrition have a hard time getting past this threshold.

Once again, most people will not have abs as cut out as me here.

12% Body Fat



Here is where things start to get fun. You begin to have increased definition and your midsection starts to really trim up. A separation in the chest begins to get more pronounced and without a shirt on, even though you are weighing less and less each week, people seem to think more and more that you actually lift. In the right conditions and in the right lighting, you can even convince people to think you’re even leaner than you really are. No striations yet, but they’re coming.

10% Body Fat



Things are starting heat up. Overall, you're really starting to shape up. Particular body parts may look really defined while others may still be blurred with body fat (my back for me). Striations may start to show in particularly gifted body parts. Though shirts may be a little bit looser now, when you take your shirt off, people notice. With a pump, you look really impressive, and since you're not too lean yet, you still have good strength and muscle size. The face starts to chisel up, and for most of you, your midsection will start to reveal what's underneath.

8% Body Fat



Congratulations if you make it to this level! You'll have a nice tight midsection and visible definition all over. You'll have a really "hard" look to your muscles and people may even say that you look "dry." Details really start to show in areas that used to seem average or unimpressive to you. You'll showcase more vascularity and without a shirt on you look incredible.



Your legs will show definition, and you won't be afraid to wear those retro short shorts out in public. If you don't own any, you'll probably find yourself buying some. Your face continues to sharpen with lines more angular and pronounced. Goodbye chubby cheeks. Hello photographers.

This state is an excellent goal, and about as far as most of you should take your fat loss phase. It may be best to stop when you get here and enjoy summer. For most people, this body fat level isn't easy to hold, I don't recommend that you try to stay at this level for the entire year.



6% Bodyfat



Goodnight sweet Prince. You look like a completely regular person in clothes, perhaps even on the slim side, but once you take them off, you look like a Greek god. You can see muscle definition, separation, striations, and individual muscle fibers. You can see a fully etched out six pack and obliques. There's vascularity in more places, including places you've never seen it before, perhaps in your lower abdomen and legs. Your jaw and cheekbones should look more serious than ever and eventually it will look sunken in a bit.

You are photoshoot ready; well within striking distance for competitive bodybuilding or physique shows in terms of leanness. In the right lighting and from the right angles, you can create the illusion of looking much bigger than you really are. Take as many photos and do as many photoshoots as your storage spaces can handle because staying at this level of leanness is very difficult.

I don't recommend that you aim to get to this level of conditioning without a good reason or two. I personally don't think "I just want to see if I can do it" cuts it as a good enough reason, but it's a decision up to you. At 6% body fat or lower, most people are generally at unhealthy low levels of body fat; generally healthier the lower you go and the longer you stay there. For most people, getting to this level of body fat or lower temporarily decreases your testosterone levels, your sex drive, and your desire to socialize with others. The leaner you get, the worse it gets. You become more irritable, short-tempered, and food focused. The longer you stay at 6% or leaner the worse you will feel. It is not a level of body fat that I recommend you to try to stay at for too long, let alone year around.

That said, having reached this state a few times myself, it can come with many potential benefits if you capitalize on them quickly and appropriately.



So to recap, I recommend that most of you aim to get down somewhere in the 8-12% body fat range. If you're moderately to heavily overweight, I recommend getting down to 15-20% respectively, staying there for a little while (I'll be covering diet breaks later on), and later continuing on to the 8-12% realm.

By now, you have a general idea of what the game plan looks like. You know that you'll be following a training program focused around building strength. You know that nutrition is the most important piece of this fat loss puzzle and that cardio can be a very helpful tool that you'll probably be utilizing. You also have an idea of the goal level of body fat you're aiming to achieve.

You're probably wondering now, What are my macros? How many calories should I be aiming for? How much cardio?

We'll be covering all of this! But first, a quick chapter on the tools and the mindset necessary for healthy, successful, and sustainable fat loss.



Tracking Progress

The Bodyweight Scale

We are going to be very specific with how we measure our bodyweight. There is only one way to do it correctly, and many ways NOT to do it. If you don't have one, purchase a high quality digital scale that measures to the tenth of a pound (or kg). I recommend checking [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) reviews and getting a scale that is within your budget that also has the highest ratings. Any of these scales with 4.5 or higher ratings would do <http://amzn.to/2r7uKUP>

You will weigh yourself daily, first thing in the morning, nude, after using the bathroom, before eating or drinking anything. You will record this number. It doesn't have to be exactly the same time every day but that's the best case scenario. If you don't have to drop a stool, don't force yourself.

It's normal that your weight will fluctuate from day to day, even following the above conditions. A 1-2% fluctuation in bodyweight is completely normal. What you ate the prior day, sodium intake, bowel movement (or lack of), hormonal fluctuations, menstrual cycle, and more affect your bodyweight. If your weight fluctuates, then why weigh yourself at all? Because we're not looking at any one particular morning weigh-in. We're looking at 7 day averages and comparing those with each other. Your average weight during week 1 versus your average weight during week 2, and so on. Your weekly average smoothens out those daily fluctuations and helps us tell whether you're reaching your goal fat loss per week.

To get your weekly average, just add up your weigh-ins for 7 days and divide the total by 7. Begin and end each week's weigh-ins on specific days. It helps to record your weigh ins either in a physical or digital notebook, a mobile phone app like "Happy Scale", or using a spreadsheet program on the computer. I generally recommend to use Microsoft Excel or Numbers (Mac). These programs have easy functions where you can get the average of a list of weight-in's. If you're old school you can just use a notebook! You can write your macros in that notebook too.

The Tape Measure

Body measurements can help us measure fat loss and muscle gain in ways that the scale cannot. Beginners, novice trainers (that's most of you), and even you who consider yourself intermediates, listen up. Although tracking your bodyweight is crucial and mandatory for maximum control of your transformation, your bodyweight alone doesn't always paint the entire picture of your body composition (your muscle to fat ratio).

Especially for those who are very untrained, rapid muscle gain and sometimes weight gain, can occur while simultaneously losing fat at a caloric deficit. Sometimes this fat loss is "masked" when you're just looking at the scale weight.

An example might be a 5'7", 160 lb male at 20% bodyfat who has never lifted weights or done any intensive sport in his life. He's got 15-20 lbs of fat he'd like to lose. He wouldn't mind looking more muscular too, of course. He, like most men, happens to store a lot of fat in his abdominal region. He begins lifting weights and hitting his macros. The first week or two seem to be going great, fat loss/weight loss according to the scale is occurring wonderfully. Then all of a sudden it seems to be slowing down (as the muscle-building begins). His waist measurement might be decreasing every week, but he might not know it if he's not tracking it. And if you're measuring your waist consistently and accurately and its going down every week, who cares if your weight isn't budging, or even if it's going up a bit! You're losing fat where it matters, and you can probably notice that you're looking better too.

Take weekly or bi-weekly body measurements. When it comes time to do your weekly or bi-weekly analysis to determine if you need to make any dietary adjustments (module 7), you'll look mostly at your average weekly weights but also your waist and other body measurements. The newer you are to lifting, the more these measurements are going to come in handy. They are also a useful metric to determine long term growth in particular muscles groups.

- Measuring your waist is highly recommended. I'd go as far as saying its mandatory for anyone who happens to store
- fat in their midsection. That's most of you. If you store a significant amount of fat in other places such as your legs,
- your arms, or your hips, make sure to measure those body parts too.



(Shoutout to my friend Andy Morgan for the inspiration for this Infographic)

The 9 Key Body Measurements in regards to body fat are shown above. Weekly Waist Measurement (#6) is mandatory, the rest are optional but highly recommended, especially if you store fat in other places. Chest, arm, and leg measurements are also awesome to have down the road for the purpose of tracking muscle gains.

- Measure on the same day every week, in centimeters rounded to the nearest 0.1 cm
- Do it under the same circumstances: Same time, in the morning, after using the bathroom, after weighing yourself, before eating or drinking
- Measure each body part flexed/tensed
 - Don't measure your midsection sucking your gut in, instead tense it like you were flexing your abs or getting ready to get punched in the gut.
 - Flex your bicep like you were doing it for the camera, make that measurement as wide as possible
- Measure your waist (#6) either 2 inches or two fingers below your navel (belly button), whichever is easier for you to measure consistently from week to week
- Do your measurements yourself since you can't rely that you'll always have someone else to help you.
- Measure the thickest part of your leg
- Measure the chest around the nipple line, wrapping your tape measure around your entire upper torso while keeping it as parallel to the ground as possible (this measurement measures
- Optionally you can measure the circumference around your shoulders/upper torso, but that's not really a very helpful measurement as an indicator for fat loss since fat generally isn't stored as much in the upper torso. If you do it, do it to measure your shoulder, upper chest, and upper back gains



Here is a link to a MyoTape body measurement tool. <http://amzn.to/2qoBLO6>

Remember, measure everything to the nearest 0.1 cm!

Things we WON'T be relying on to track progress

- JUST the Mirror
 - Your mind plays tricks on you, plus the look of your physique is constantly changing from day to day based on the time of day, what you ate, how many carbs and sodium, how much food bulk, stress, sleep, etc.
- The amount of likes you get on Instagram pictures
- Determining and tracking your Bodyfat percentage
 - There are several different ways to do it (underwater hydrostatic dunk tanks, calipers, DXA scans, bodpods, handhold devices, etc, but there are accuracy and consistency issues with all of them. They can be off by multiple body fat percentages, whether up or down. For example, if you grabbed a portable body fat analyzer that commercial gyms often keep handy (one of those handheld things) you might get a reading of anywhere between 8% and 23% if your body fat was actually around 15%.

Here is the Standard Error of Estimate (SEE) assigned to each type:

- Body-fat caliper measurements are very inaccurate if performed by most practitioners (~5%) and still inaccurate when used by experts (~3%)
- Handheld devices that you'll find in commercial gyms: 5-8%
- US Navy Equation: ~3%
- Underwater Dunk Tank: ~3%
- DXA scans: ~1-2%
- BodPod: ~3%

Several of these are very inexpensive and inconvenient. The others are gosh darn inaccurate. It's not worth even bothering. If it lends any weight, I've successfully undergone multiple incredible fat loss phases and gotten absolutely shredded several times (in 2013 and 2016) and I haven't had my body fat percentage checked since 2011 (6 years as of my writing this).

On a week to week basis, checking your body fat isn't a tool that we are going to use towards making any sort of nutritional decision. If you do spend money to get your body fat checked, do it with a grain of salt, and only do it to get an estimation of the starting and/or ending point to your cut. If you absolutely have to, I either recommend doing the US Navy equation (free), which you can find online via google or spending the money and doing a DXA scan if a lab that does them is nearby you.

Remember, tracking your scale weight and tracking your waist measurement (and possibly other measurements) are what we will be focusing on to help us determine and make progress.

Measuring Your Food

Measuring your Food

Measuring and tracking the food you eat is the most important part of any and every successful diet. Liquids can be measured accurately by weight or volume but we'll be measuring nearly all of the foods we eat using a food scale. Packaged goods processed with standardized manufacturing can typically be tracked using the labels on the boxes or containers they come in. Foods that you can't track should be consumed as infrequently as conveniently possible.

The Food Scale

We'll be measuring foods by weight in grams. We won't be measuring food by volume because it isn't as consistent or reliable. 100 grams of chopped apple is always 100 grams of chopped apple, whereas 1 cup of chopped apple can vary in how much apple you're actually getting depending on how large or small the chunks of apples are.

It's best to weigh foods in their raw states (if you plan on cooking them). This is because when you cook food, whether you're baking it, microwaving it, or grilling it, the longer you cook, the more moisture (and weight) you're losing. Just another variable that you can't easily track. Might as well err on the side of consistency, so for most of your foods, if not all, weigh them before cooking. That said, there may be circumstances, or specific foods, that you decide to weigh after cooking. Say, your parent comes home with a rotisserie chicken, or cooks up 10 lbs of chicken breast or tilapia for you in bulk. You'd end up weighing these foods cooked, before consuming them or before packaging them into zip-lock bags. Just know that you're sacrificing a little bit of accuracy for sanity there.

To track your food, and thus your calories and macronutrients, you'll need a tool. You can find nutrition data in books but if you're reading this, you'll probably use the internet. Fortunately there are so many online food databases out now, many available in both website and mobile app. I personally have been using MyFitnessPal for years. I also have used Fitday and CalorieKing before (2011). MyMacros and LiveStrong are also apps that seem to be widely used.

A word of caution. Just because a food input is there in a database, doesn't necessarily mean it's 100% correct. Every day, these websites/apps get better and better, with more food inputs, and incorrect inputs are fixed. But they aren't necessarily perfect, they rely on users to create new food inputs and help fix wrong ones. When just starting out, you'll want to be 100% sure that you're using correct inputs, especially with the foods you'll be eating regularly, so it may be helpful to cross-check your food inputs with the other apps, or a website like [NutritionData.com](https://www.nutritiondata.com). Any time that something looks fishy, you'll want to cross-check it. Eating a new food that you've never had before? Or eating out at a restaurant and not sure which "Bone-In Rib Eye" to pick on your food tracking app? Cross-Check it. And when it comes to fat loss, if you're having trouble picking between one input and the next and you're in a hurry, pick the one that says it has more macros/calories.

Untrackable Foods:

For the most part, these are foods you probably want to avoid or minimize the frequency and quantity of consumption of because you most likely have no idea what the macros are. The lasagna at a mom and pop Italian restaurant, the twice baked fully loaded potato at a steak restaurant, or the (fried) fish and chips (French fries) with the tartar dipping sauce that you don't plan on weighing.

Home baked goods like your grandmother's secret apple pie or your dad's potato salad or non-chain-restaurant meals are usually much harder to track since you don't know what ingredients and what quantities of ingredients are going into them. The more butter, cheese, oil, or other fat or sugar heavy ingredients that are in it, the more variability and the more wrong you could be with an estimation of the macros you consume. The more wrong you are, the more you're not actually hitting your macros (but instead most likely going way over). Whether you're guessing the quantity of a certain food and inputting that into your tracking app, or you're just free-ball guessing the macros, you're never going to be as accurate as weighing and tracking each ingredient that goes into a meal.

This isn't to say you should avoid going to restaurants with family. I do it all the time when I'm cutting. Many restaurants, including many fast food restaurants like McDonalds, are pretty standard with their portion sizes. Other chain fast food restaurants like chipotle are somewhat standard, but sometimes macro inputs need to be adjusted when your server gives you more or less than standard. As with anything, experience increases over time.

If I go out while on a very serious shredding diet, I typically just order simple meals that are just a few foods and not a cocktail of ingredients. I love getting a nice steak, some chili or a baked potato, and a salad or other vegetable (without butter) when I eat out with family. Just get grilled or flamebroiled foods instead of fried ones. Ask for no added butter or oil. Ask for dressing on the side. Ask what ingredients (specifically oils/butters) are in certain entrees that look appetizing. It's really not a big deal to do this and there need not be any stigma attached to it. If someone has a problem with how you want to eat, that's their problem, not yours.

The more accurately you can account for precisely what goes into your mouth, the more direct control over your body composition you will have. When you're tracking macros and your weight loss stalls, the first thing you do is make sure you're being accurate and precise with your macro tracking. The less accurate and precise you are with tracking the macros inside the foods you eat, whether by laziness, inexperience, using an inaccurate myfitnesspal food input, or the unknown factor of eating out, the less direct control you have over your fat loss.

Let me say this before continuing.

Be as accurate and precise with measuring and tracking your macros as (sanely) possible for the most reliable results.

The Right Mental Approach

The Right Mental Approach

What is the correct mental approach to take when trying to lose fat?

Should you weigh every single grain of rice that goes into your mouth?

Should you avoid every food that people consider “dirty” or “bad”?

The correct mental approach is the one in which you best balance three concepts:

Accuracy: “The quality or state of being correct or precise”

Flexibility: “The quality of bending easily without breaking” or

“The ability to be easily modified”

Consistency: “Steadfast adherence to the same principles, course, form, etc.”

I’ll translate what this means for your fat loss phase:

Accuracy

By measuring the quantities of the foods we’re eating, we’re able to keep track of the key components of food that affect weight gain and weight loss. These are Fats, Carbs, and Protein. In essence, we’re tracking the total grams of fat, carbs, and protein that we’re consuming in a meal and in a given day. By tracking our food, we can aim towards specific caloric and macronutrient targets to get a desired result - in this case, fat loss.

Pros of being extremely accurate

The more accurate we are at hitting the precise caloric and macronutrient goals, the better. The less accurate you are with weighing your foods and thus hitting macronutrient targets, the more variability and unpredictability you’re adding - resulting in less control of your body composition.

For those who want to take the most-scientific-as-possible approach to fat loss, 100% accuracy is the way to go.

Cons of being extremely accurate

Being extremely precise with every gram of food that you put in your mouth can be stressful and taxing on your willpower. You wouldn’t be able to allow yourself to eat out at restaurants nor let others cook for you unless you knew exactly what was in the foods and/or weighed it yourself.

Flexibility: The ability to modify your food choices and diet setup while still achieving the goal all the same.

Pros of being Flexible

Flexibility and sanity tend to go hand in hand. For many people, eating with family whether at home or out is a very important part of life. A flexible approach towards fat loss would recommend not missing out on the important things in life, while still being relatively accurate with hitting your target macros. Losing weight requires a caloric deficit, therefore dietary restriction in any case, but dietary flexibility is a key trait that helps individuals who lose weight keep it off.

Flexibility can mean swapping certain foods for others if you're following a strict meal plan, adjusting your macronutrient targets on certain days to plan for a trip or a big meal out tonight or tomorrow, or lowering your fats for a day because you're planning on eating frozen yogurt later on with friends (and thus raising your carbs for the day). Being flexible, if and when necessary, is your hidden Ace, a tool to use to help you consistently hit macro/caloric goals which will help you attain the lean muscular physique you're after. You want to be as flexible as necessary to reach/while reaching your goals.

Cons of being being "Too Flexible"

At some point, flexibility blends into the realm of what I'd like to call "Not actually hitting your macros." I'll cover appropriate types and levels of flexibility later, but in general, the higher you allow your flexibility level to be, the less accurate you are and therefore the less direct control over your fat loss you have. For some people, this might include eating out much too often, or perhaps eating out and ordering a pasta dish that might be much harder to track compared to something simple like a plain baked potato, broccoli without butter, and a plain grilled chicken breast. You really risk not being accurate if you start eyeballing foods and guesstimating the macros or ordering dishes at restaurants with completely unknown levels of fats. If you are inaccurate on a regular basis your results become more unpredictable. If and when progress stalls, the first thing you'll want to look at is if you're being accurate or not, and if you're not, fix that first.

Consistency

Where your caloric intake is at consistently matters most. Accuracy in tracking our food (and body measurements) helps us take a logical, science-based approach at hitting the caloric deficit and the right macros for optimal gym performance and muscle retention. Flexibility helps us enjoy life and stick to the game plan day in and day out. And since nothing happens overnight, consistency is where the magic happens.

Accuracy, Flexibility, and Consistency Tied Together

By now you can see how well these three overlap. We know that accuracy when it comes to tracking our food and macros is very important, but often for many of us, spending too much focus and energy on being 100% accurate can derail success. When you give yourself no room for flexibility, dieting becomes more difficult, and you're more apt to say "screw it" and go completely off your diet. It's common for people to bounce between stages of complete diet adherence and zero diet adherence. On the flip side, when you're mentally okay with not being 100% accurate all of the time, while still striking in the appropriate ranges, you're more likely to be making consistent progress, and more likely to keep it.

There are going to be different levels of accuracy necessary for different people in different stages of their life. There are times when I personally do not restrict myself whatsoever, and will eat anything I want, however much I want, within a given meal. There are other times when I might be eating the exact same foods and in the same quantities every day for a week or more. Sometimes I'll go out twice in one day, but I'll try to eat mindfully and not consume too many calories over what I'd like to. All of these depend on my goal and my current state.

Good Foods VS Bad Foods

Good Foods Vs Bad Foods

Having flexibility and variety with your food choices is incredibly useful for dieting. To show us why, look no further than the typical way most people diet. Granted, they don't take a scientific approach (most people don't actually weigh their foods nor track their macronutrients and calories), but the example can still serve our purpose. A lot of people who diet will completely eliminate almost every food choice available to them and only eat a select 5 or 6 "healthy foods" such as chicken, brown rice, and broccoli. They'll eat these same exact foods day in, day out, which depending on how little variety you're getting, can lead to nutritional deficiencies. Maybe they have planned cheat days, or maybe not, but when they do come around, they're often so indulgent that a lot of the fat loss progress they may have made gets swept away. The fat gain from binging or having uncontrolled cheat days can often cancel out fat loss from several days or weeks where you "ate good." The clean eaters who don't have cheat days regularly

Seeing foods as good or bad isn't the best way to have a healthy long-term relationship with food. In our society, foods are typically labeled as "bad" when they have little or no micronutrient density (vitamins and minerals). The label has been given to processed foods, fried foods, and other calorically dense foods. It's an unfair title because as humans in today's society, we don't just eat one single food, but a diet full of many. We can say whether a diet looks healthy or unhealthy, but not individual foods.

Another interesting way to look at food and explain it to those who believe in "good" versus "bad" is to imagine that you are on a desert island. You have shelter and drinkable water but absolutely no food and you're about to starve. A boat comes by and a pirate offers you either a box full of oreos or the same box full of fresh celery (or spinach or kale).

We can all agree that society would call celery a "healthier" food than oreo cookies, but if you chose the celery, you'd die a much sooner death than had you chosen the oreos. Choosing the "good food" would have provided you with hardly any more time to live and choosing the "bad food" might have kept you alive for X more days or weeks. We can't judge foods by their names nor their (usually undeserving) reputations. Individual foods have individual micronutrient and macronutrient makeups that come into play, and we need both macronutrients and micronutrients to survive and thrive.

One serving of ice cream that you have for dessert and that you fit into your daily macros is incredibly different than consuming 2 full tubs of ice cream every weekend (beyond your caloric maintenance) while you binge watch Netflix. You may have heard this before but "The poison is in the dose." You need a little bit of context because in one scenario, the amount of ice cream is completely fine and keeps you aligned with your goals, but in the other, it's just too much. You can't just say all ice cream, or any food, is bad.

A healthier relationship with food is one where you try to include as much good foods as possible into your diet rather than focusing just on staying completely away from "dirty" foods. This means placing focus on incorporating plenty of whole foods, high fiber foods, and fruits and vegetables that have the micronutrients you need for all of your body's requirements. But once you've reached your necessary intake of vitamins and minerals, it's not like you get extra bonus points for eating more of them.

And what's funny that I must point out, is that quite often, even those who rabidly avoid "bad foods" and stick to eating only a select handful of "good foods" can be missing out on certain micronutrients and be deficient because they're not focused on including a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Quite often, people who focus solely on eating clean foods develop eating disorders such as orthorexia. It's ironic that the intent is to be healthy, but many of us approach our diet with so many unhealthy and irrational restrictions. We fear that eating one bad food or one bad meal will ruin our entire health, or that once you get started, you're going to snowball into a frenzy of non-stop eating of "dirty foods." With that mentality, that might just happen. But just like you can't get in shape in one week after years of being out of shape, how healthy your diet is isn't determined by just one meal or one day of eating. Eating one nutritious and balanced meal doesn't magically mean you have a good diet after eating only McDonald's hamburgers and fries for months. And vice versa.

Eating a small portion of your daily calories from "bad foods" will have no negative effect if you're getting in all of your required fiber, vitamins, and minerals for the day.

Metabolic Positioning and Psychological Preparedness

Metabolic Positioning and Psychological Preparedness

Before moving forward, I want to address an issue that may apply to some of you. Most of you will be able to jump right in, follow the guidelines of this program, and find fat loss success. Most of you are in a great position both metabolically and psychologically. Some of you, though, might not have it that easy.

For those who have already been dieting prior to beginning this program, especially the leaner you are and the longer and more aggressive that diet was, and especially for those who have been doing tons of cardio, you may want to put a "diet break" between where you are now, and the start of Six Pack Shredding. As I'll explain later, it is very helpful to break a big fat loss goal into smaller parts separated by breaks. I typically recommend diet breaks or phase changes every 12-15 weeks of continuous fat loss.

Simple science: fat and muscle both require energy simply to maintain, so the less of either that you have, the less calories you burn at rest. A pound of muscle will typically burn around 6 calories per day while a pound of fat will burn around two calories per day. If you lose body fat without gaining muscle at the same time, which is very common, your RMR (resting metabolic rate) will decrease (even more so if you lose significant amounts of muscle while dropping body fat). Also, as a survival mechanism, as you lose more weight, get leaner, do more and more cardio, and get deeper into a fat loss phase, your metabolism adapts to a varying degree to burn less calories than it normally would at your given amount of current body tissue (muscle and fat) in a different metabolic position.

2-3 day refeeds and diet breaks (explained later) will help with minimizing and reversing some of the effects of metabolic adaptation. For some of you who were already dieting and were on really low calories, eating more food may even spur greater rates of fat loss. For a handful of you, I'd recommend having a 1-3 week diet break before even beginning this program.

I explain the "what" and "how" in more detail later, but a diet break is essentially where you aim to consume the amount of food that has you maintaining your current bodyweight. Typically, you also decrease the amount of cardio that you're doing too,

I recommend you take a 1-3 week diet break before beginning if:

- You've already been cutting and having steady fat loss (0.5% to 1% bodyweight per week) for 4-8 weeks or more
- You're currently heavily undereating and experiencing a weight loss of around or greater than 2% of your bodyweight per week, especially if this was multiple weeks in a row
- You're currently doing 5 or more days of extra cardio per week (300 or more calories per session) By "extra", I mean on top of what you would do recreationally for sport or personal enjoyment. My recommendation gets stronger longer you've been doing this.

The longer you've been cutting, the leaner you currently are, the lower your current calories already are, and the more cardio you're currently already doing, the higher my recommendation is for taking a longer (2-3 week) diet break. This will help position your metabolism into a better place for fat loss, and it will make this program run much smoother. If your metabolism was heavily compromised before beginning and you skip this 2-3 week diet break and you don't experience typical levels of fat loss doing this program exactly how it was written, it could possibly be because you ignoring these recommendations.

If you can say "yes" to any of the above bullet points, do yourself a favor and take a full 2-3 week diet break. If you've already been dieting for more than 8-10 weeks and losing 0.5-1% of your bodyweight per week during that period, take a 3 week diet break. If you're under already into a cut but not at the 8 week mark yet, I'd plan a diet break somewhere between week 12 and 15 of total

If you've been "trying" to lose fat without success just prior to beginning this program (or for the last 5-10 years for that matter) you can probably start this program right where you stand. But, as you probably can guess I'd say, if recently you've restricted your calories (in any form, including a crash dieting) or exhibited some significant weight loss, putting a 1-2 week diet break before beginning this program will probably increase *its* results and *your* long term results.

Aside from the metabolic adaptations of prolonged caloric restriction, there's also a psychological toll taken on you. Willpower comes and goes on a daily basis but in the bigger picture it can decrease the longer you've been dieting and the more you restrict yourself. A diet break can serve to replenish your willpower and continue fat loss.

I'd say more than 90% of you reading this can begin this program immediately. But for maybe 2 out of 20 of you, I'd suggest starting with a diet break. For perhaps 1 out of 20 of you, I'd *highly* suggest you commit yourself to your long term success and take a 2-3 week diet break before beginning this program.

How?

For those taking a diet break before beginning this program, simply cut your current amount of cardio in half or more and aim for maintenance calories. You'll figure out how to calculate your calories and macronutrients in the next section.

The reason I'm including this section is to help you manage expectations, to help you with your short term and long term success, to show you that I care about you, and to encourage you to care about yourself. It's not just about how much fat you can lose in the short term. It's about being able to lose fat and keep it off. It's about losing fat as efficiently and effectively as possible. And it's also about doing so in the most healthy manner possible.

Quite often when I was doing one on one coaching, I'd begin people's fat loss phases with up to a month or two of maintenance calories, depending how restricted they previously were and for how long. As frustrating as it may have been for many of them, taking that one step back allowed them to take many, many more steps forward. Those that refused to work on their metabolic capacity are generally still able to get results, just not as much as they potentially could have, and usually not as healthily.

Many individuals experiment with themselves or have a bad experience with a program or another coach before switching coaches or switching programs, already weeks or months deep into caloric restriction, eating much less calories than they used to, dieting on a much less calories than they could've gotten away with, frustrated at the stall in fat loss. For a lot of private one-on-one clients (people who already understand and manipulate macros for fat loss), I and many other respected coaches in the industry won't immediately throw private clients into fat loss phases without having them do a diet break or an "offseason" or a lean gain phase first.

Clients who refuse to take a diet break whether before or during a paid coaching period are quite honestly the clients that are the hardest to work with. These individuals want results now at the cost of their health and long term results. We often avoid taking on clients who refuse to put their health first, as these clients are the greatest potential liabilities. I don't particularly prefer working with individuals who won't accept responsibility for themselves, and that includes their metabolisms, the metabolisms that they come to us with.

Everything we do in this program, we approach from a behavioral/lifestyle and overall health point of view. We're talking physical health as well as mental/psychological. Let's go over one more major concept that will help serve your long term goals.

Less Food is Not Necessarily Better

Less Food Is Not Necessarily Better

Your fat loss success isn't about how much weight you can lose in a short 2-4 week period. It's not about how little food you can eat per day. Crash dieting is usually a temporary solution because you end up at a lower bodyweight for just a very short period of time. You don't sustain it, and many people physically don't look any better (from an aesthetic stand point) and some tend to look worse despite the weight loss.

A major key to your fat loss success is eating as much food as possible while still dropping weight. Often when people realize a caloric deficit is how your body loses weight (unfortunately, often in the form of "let's just eat little to nothing," people can get excited and want to really push the envelope with how little they can manage eating. Do not do that. You must keep in mind that your body has a limit to how much fat it can burn in one day. When you cut your calories too much, you begin to risk losing muscle, and eventually you do lose muscle, and more and more of it the greater you push that caloric deficit (and the longer you're on it).

You enter into risky territory. Your workouts (if you're lifting at all) begin to suffer and if you're not keeping up your training intensity, you will lose muscle. Those who diet aggressively and don't strength train or exercise intensely at all, put themselves in a really bad position for muscle loss and not being as satisfied with their physique at the end of the fat loss compared to if they had weight trained. Fortunately, most of you won't have to worry about that, since you will be lifting weights. Just remember, the more food you're eating, the better your workouts will be, and the more strength and muscle you'll be building (or retaining).

Another reason you don't want to cut calories too drastically, is that you're giving yourself less room to cut calories later on when you need to, to continue progressing. On an extreme caloric deficit, you may lose fat faster at first, during the first 4-6 weeks, but not in the long run. You end up setting yourself up for a much more likely binge and rebound because your hunger goes through the roof and you begin to feel the other effects that the hormonal changes have on you. There always comes a time when you have to lower calories to continue losing weight, but if you can continue your fat loss progress on higher calories, with less negative affect on your sex drive, hunger, and irritability, and end up losing more fat in the long run, why make huge calorie slashes?

So now you know what theme we're taking towards our fat loss. We want you at a measured and sustainable caloric deficit, eating mostly a variety of healthful foods but without overly restricting your food choices. We'll be using the food scale and the bodyweight scale so that we can measure and track our caloric deficit, so that we achieve fat loss while building or retaining as much strength and muscle as possible, while eating as much food as possible. We're in this for the long-game, not the short-game.

Now the moment you've been waiting for... Figuring out your macros. One important thing to understand is that it's not just about finding a magic set of fats, carbs, and proteins. It's about finding out what they do for you over the span of days and weeks and adjusting them if and when necessary necessary to put and keep you on the right track towards your goal.

First step: calculate your macros.

How a Caloric Deficit Works

Losing Fat, Simplified:

You must burn more calories than you consume. You need to be in a sustained caloric deficit. All you need to lose body fat is a diet that accomplishes that. How you accomplish that, and what specific foods you decide to eat, and when, are all personal preference. I'll be walking you through proven strategies that have worked for me and countless others. By eating in ways that are enjoyable and satiating for you, you'll be able to diet with much less effort and negative impact than had you let the diet control every aspect of your life.

We're very fortunate that our bodies follow basic laws of science. While taking an advanced college course in nutrition would surely help you understand the molecular composition of a carbohydrate, you don't need to know those details to lose fat. We'll be focusing on the most important concepts and things that you can put into action today to get you towards the physique you want.

It's time for action.

By the end of this chapter, you'll know how much fat loss per week to aim for and you'll have calculated your starting calories and macronutrients.

How a Caloric Deficit Works

The most crucial thing to understand when it comes to gaining weight or losing weight is energy balance. You eat foods which contain energy in the form of calories. When you consume more calories than you burn throughout the day, the net effect is a surplus of calories that are stored and held onto for later usage. One pound of adipose (fat) tissue contains roughly 3500 calories.

Since there are 7 days in the week, you could theoretically assume that a 500 calorie deficit each day for 7 days would result in 1 lb of fat loss. And vice versa, if you gained 1 lb of fat in a week, you could assume an average caloric surplus per day of 500 calories.

Yes. It really is that simple. Theoretically.

That said, don't get too hung up on these numbers.

Last vital piece of information before we move on:

The calories in each macronutrient:

There are 4 calories in a gram of protein.

There are 4 calories in a gram of carbohydrate.

There are 9 calories in a gram of fat.

Alcohol is the fourth macronutrient.

There are 7 calories per gram of alcohol but there are no daily goals for it.

How Much Fat Loss Per Week?

I recommend that you aim to lose 0.5% to 1% of your bodyweight per week. So far a 300 lb male, you'd be aiming to lose 1.5 to 3 lbs per week at the start of your diet. A 200 lb male would be aiming to lose 1 to 2 lbs per week. A 150 lb male would aim to lose 0.75 to 1.5 lbs per week.

Don't get too freaked out if you lose over 1% of your bodyweight on the first week. It's not uncommon for men to lose 2-4 lbs during the first week of dieting due to water weight and decreased food bulk. It eventually should stabilize giving you a clearer picture of what your actual weight loss is looking like.

For maximum muscle retention and maximum strength gains, aim for the 0.5% bodyweight loss goal for each week. If you're a bit more concerned with maximum fat loss compared to strength gains, aim for the 1%. That said, shooting for something between 0.5% and 1% will help you minimize muscle and strength loss. For most beginner to lower-intermediate lifters, you should be able to build strength while on this level of a deficit (up to a certain point of leanness), and for you rank novices or those coming back to the weights after a long layoff, you will most likely build muscle too.

For most of you, your fat loss should start off with you hitting weeks of losing around 1% of your bodyweight per week. As time goes on, week by week that number goes down. You might lose 1.0% the first week, 0.9% the next week, and then 0.8%, and then 0.7%, and so on. As long as you're losing between 0.5% and 1% of your bodyweight per week, you're doing awesome and you shouldn't change anything.

If you're breezing through your fat loss and you're approaching 10% bodyfat, you may want to consider to start losing fat closer to 0.5% of your bodyweight per week. Once you get close to 8% bodyfat and certainly if /when you surpass it, you might consider aiming for between 0.25% to 0.5% bodyweight loss per week. This slower rate of weight loss should help you retain more muscle and strength as you get closer and closer to your ripped and lean physique. The numbers on the scale aren't changing a huge amount but every single pound or even half pound of fat lost from your body shows a noticeably significant change to your physique.

Finding Maintenance Calories

The first step for fat loss is calculating what your maintenance calories theoretically are. This would be the number of calories consumed that would result in no change in bodyweight. There are dozens of formulas and online calculators for doing this, and it's also something you can roughly find out for yourself by accurately tracking your bodyweight and caloric intake for 2 weeks and analyzing the results.

Instead of that, we're going to attempt to jump straight into a caloric deficit, and make adjustments later on if and when necessary.

Ready, Fire, Aim.

Estimating your Caloric Maintenance

Start by taking your Bodyweight in Pounds and Multiplying it by 10

200 lbs x 10 = 2000 calories

Next Multiply that by the appropriate "Activity Multiplier."

The Activity Multiplier

It is a scale from 1.3 to 2.3.

Lifestyle/Activity Level	Multiplier
Sedentary, desk job, "slow metabolism"	1.3-1.6
Lightly Active	1.5-1.8
Active	1.7-2.0
Very Active, "very high/fast metabolism"	1.9-2.2

We're assuming that we're already factoring in that you train with weights multiple times per week. We're looking at the other factors.

Factors in the Activity Multiplier:

-How strenuous your job/occupation is

-NEAT (non-exercise activity thermogenesis: activity that you wouldn't necessarily consider exercise, such as walking to and from work and home. This is also subconscious activity (fidgeting, your posture, and so on)

-Age (the older you are, the less calories you burn to a small degree)

-Bodyfat Percentage: Factorable to a small degree. You burn slightly more calories at rest (key word, slightly more) the leaner you are at any given bodyweight.

-Knowledge of Self: If you feel like you know for a fact, perhaps without actually having weighed food and tracked calories, that you have a "fast metabolism," you'd rank yourself higher on the scale, and vice versa if you feel like you gain weight just looking at cake

Picking your Activity Multiplier

Don't worry about getting this perfectly right. The most important thing to do is to just pick a number and get started. Spend no longer than 2 minutes on this.

Start in the middle of the road with a 1.8 multiplier and adjust up or down based on where you rank with the factors. Think about it in terms of how you compare to the general population.

Are you someone who seems to put weight on really easily if you're not carefully watching your diet? Do you also have a desk job? If so, park your activity multiplier lower on the lower end of the scale.

To gain weight does it seem like you have to eat everything under the sun? Do you also fidget a lot and you've always been a bit hyperactive? Put yourself higher on the multiplier scale.

If you feel like you have a somewhat slower than average metabolism but you have an extremely strenuous job, or if you have a slightly above average metabolism but a non-physical job, or if you aren't sure where to put yourself, I'd recommend to go with a 1.8x multiplier.

Our 200 Lb male example would now look like this:

$$200 \times 10 = 2000$$

$$2000 \times 1.8 = 3600 \text{ calories maintenance (theoretical)}$$

Let's say you're a 175 lb male who has a desk job and an "average" metabolic rate.

$$175 \times 10 = 1750$$

$$1750 \times 1.5 = 2625 \text{ calories maintenance (theoretical)}$$

Initiating the Deficit

To initiate your caloric deficit, you need to set your calories below your level of maintenance. I recommend starting with a daily consumption of 500 calories less than what you calculated as your theoretical maintenance. This will begin you at a theoretical weight loss of 1 lb per week. This may be less than your goal target fat loss per week but stay with me. We'll make changes to your macros and calories after we've been applying them long enough to see what they initially do for you.

Also, if you're not doing any cardio at the moment, start doing 1 low-intensity steady state cardio session, burning 400 calories.

Our 200 lb male example with an estimated caloric maintenance of 3600 calories would set his daily intake to 3100 calories.

Our 175 lb male with an estimated caloric maintenance of 2625 would set his daily intake to 2125 calories.

If a caloric deficit is all about burning more calories than we consume, what about just consuming maintenance calories and doing cardio to create the deficit?

Cardio Alone for Fat Loss

Cardio Alone for Fat Loss

You recall that roughly 3500 calories equates to 1 lb of fat. For our 200 lb male example to lose 1 lb of fat per week without restricting his food, he'd have to do, give or take, 7 hours of medium intensity cardio per week just to accomplish this. Eventually the fat loss would taper down, and to continue eating the same quantity of food and calories and continue to lose fat at the rate he wants, he'd have to continue adding more and more cardio. Keep in mind, for those weighing less than 200 lbs, it would theoretically be even more cardio than 7 hours of cardio (think closer to 8 if you weighed 160 lbs), and if you decided to do lower intensity cardio (like walking) instead of medium intensity cardio, go ahead and double the amount of time to burn the same number of calories.

You can see how it could become unpractical to try to achieve all your fat loss from just cardio. It's much better to rely on your nutrition to help you cover the majority of your caloric deficit. But that said, if you have the time to do it, cardio can be an extremely helpful tool for fat loss, aside from it's plentiful health benefits. As a rule of thumb, you should probably be doing some variation of cardio (low, medium, or high intensity) at least once a week, year round. I'd suggest 2-3 times a week as a good (and free) health insurance policy. It might mean 2-3 hours of walking your dog per week, 2-3 thirty minute medium intensity cardio sessions a week, or 1 day of hill sprints and 1-2 sessions of low/medium intensity cardio later on in the week. "Metabolic workouts" and interval style circuit weight training are also great for cardio.

What's a good beginning point?

If you're doing zero cardio right now, begin by doing 1 session of 300 calories worth of cardio, at a low to moderate intensity on a low impact machine at your gym.

Most of today's gyms have calorie burning trackers built into their machines. I'd recommend cycling, the elliptical, or a glider. The stair-master is an okay choice, but maybe don't do it the day before a leg day. Incline walking/jogging on the treadmill is okay too, but it's a bit more impactful on your joints compared to cycling, the elliptical, and the glider. Treadmill sprints might be your thing, but I'd be careful to monitor how your joints feel and to avoid doing sprints on the pavement. You don't want your cardio to negatively affect your joints, your energy during your lifting sessions, nor your recovery. More on HIIT cardio (High Intensity Interval Training Cardio) later.

What if you're already doing cardio?

If you're currently doing 4 or more cardio sessions per week for the goal of fat loss (assuming a 400kcal burn per session), drop the number of sessions down to 2 (400kcal) sessions per week. If this applies to you (and you've been dieting and doing a lot of cardio for months or more), I hope you've read and considered my recommendation to taking a diet break before beginning this program.

Calculating Your Macros

Calculating your Macros

Protein

Set your protein intake to be between 0.8-1.3 grams of protein per lb of bodyweight. Once you set it, just keep it there for the duration of the diet.

I'd recommend the leaner you are, the higher to set your protein.

If you're 35% body fat or higher, go with the 0.8x multiplier

If you're 25-35% body fat, go with the 0.9x multiplier

If you're 16-25% body fat, go with the 1.0x multiplier.

If you're 15-12% bodyfat, go with the 1.1x multiplier.

If you're 12-9% bodyfat, go with the 1.2x multiplier.

If you're 8% bodyfat or lower, go with the 1.3x multiplier.

Ex: Our 200 lb male, assuming he's around 12% bodyfat:

$200 \times 1.2 = 240$ grams of protein

(240 grams of protein \times 4 calories per gram = 960 calories from protein)

Ex: Our 175 lb male, assuming ~20% bodyfat:

$175 \times 1.1 = 192.5$ grams of protein... Rounded up to 195g of protein.

(195 grams of protein \times 4 calories per gram = 780 calories from protein)

Other Factors to Consider when setting your protein intake

Are you legitimately strapped for cash? On a budget?

Aim for the lower end of the protein scale.

What if you are a vegan and getting in protein is very difficult?

I highly recommend a plant-based protein powder and/or soy protein to help you hit your protein intake. That combined with high protein food sources include legumes, seeds, grains, cashews, and vegetables like chickpeas, black beans, etc.

What if you prefer carbs instead of protein?

Go with something lower on the scale.

Fats

Set your fat intake to be 15-25% of your caloric intake, with a minimum of 0.25g/lb bodyweight.

Our 200 lb male with cutting calories of 3100:

$$3100 \times 0.25 = 775 \text{ calories from fat}$$

$$775 / 9 \text{ calories per gram of fat} = 86.1 \text{ grams of fat}$$

Rounded to the nearest 5g = 85 grams of fat

Our 175 lb (desk job) male example who is on cutting calories of 2125:

$$2125 \times 0.25 = \sim 531.25 \text{ calories from fat}$$

$$531.25 / 9 = \sim 59 \text{ grams of fat}$$

Round up to 60 grams of fat

Important Question: How low is too low fat?

Let's say you're someone who has a desk job and you don't burn through that many calories throughout the course of a day.

Let's pretend your cutting calories are 1800 and you prefer to eat more carbohydrates than fats, so you want to put your fats at 15% of your calories.

$$1800 \times 0.15 = 270 \text{ calories}$$

$$270 / 9 = 30 \text{ grams of fat}$$

ATTENTION...

Remember that there's a minimum intake for fat set at 0.25g per lb of bodyweight. At 175 lbs, this individual's minimum fat consumption is 43.75g, or 45g of fat rounded up. He will go with 45g of fat even though the calculation suggested 32.64 grams of fat.

Why do we have a minimum fat intake set?

Fat, like protein, is a necessary part of our diet as an essential nutrient. You need fat for hormone production. You could run into some serious problems from consuming too little fats for too long.

Why then would you go with the lower fat intake of 15% of calories?

As shown from the last example of the 175 lb male, not everyone will be able to set their fats as low as 15% of their total calories. But for those whose caloric intakes are high enough, affording to set fats at 15% of calories may be possible and possibly beneficial. The benefit of setting your fat intake to 15-20% of your total calories is that you give yourself more room for carbohydrates which for most people will lead to better gym performance, and thus better muscle retention. This means more strength and muscle gain for novices, and more strength gain or strength retention and muscle retention for those who have a few years of training already under their belt.

Why would you set your fat intake at 25% if you can afford to set it to 20% or 15%?

Certain individuals whose taste buds lean towards fattier meats (steak or salmon compared to chicken breast) may elect to go with setting their fat intake to 25% of their daily calorie expenditure. Often the most limiting macronutrient when it comes to everyday life is your target amount of fats for the day. Even with pushing most of your calories to later in the day, the easiest macro to blow are fats. If and when you go to a restaurant without already knowing exactly what you wanted to get, assuming you set aside calories for the occasion, you're usually stuck trying to pick from a narrow list of entrees for one that doesn't cause you to go over your allotted fats for the day. Assuming you're one to hit macros perfectly, setting your fats higher allows for more options, in and out of restaurants. That said, we will discuss later strategies for eating out that will help make life a bit easier and dieting more effortless.

Setting your Carbohydrate Intake

Your carbs are set according to the remaining number of calories after you've set your fat and protein. Remember that there are 4 calories to 1 grams of protein or carb and 9 calories to 1 gram of fat.

Cutting Calories - Protein Calories - Fat Calories = Carbohydrate Calories

Our 200 lb male example who we set protein at 240 grams and fat at 85g:

3100 calories - 960 protein calories - 775 fat calories = 1365 carb calories

1365 calories from carbs / 4 = 341.25 grams of carbohydrates

Round to 340 grams of carbs

Initial Cutting Macros For our 200 lb Male example:

85 grams of fat

340 grams of carbs

240 grams of protein

(3085 calories) ... ← *Different from 3100 calories because of rounding*

Quick Tip: On the Internet or in written conversation, you'd notate this as 3100 kcal, 85/340/240. That's the most common way to write it. Fat/Carb/Protein.

Our 175 lb desk-job male example who was at 195g of protein and 60g of fat:

2125 calories - 780 protein calories - 540 fat calories = 805 carb calories

805 calories from carbs / 4 = 201.25 grams of carbohydrates

Round to 200 grams of carbs

Initial Macros for our 175 Male Example

60 grams of fat

200 grams of carbs

195 grams of protein

(2120 calories)... ← *different from 2125 calories because of rounding*

Now that we've figured out your cutting macros, all that's left is to start hitting them! But first, let's set up your refeed day.

A Brief Overview of Refeeds & Diet Breaks

Over the course of a prolonged diet, it's helpful to periodically take breaks so that you remain in control of your diet and to prevent you from straying from it, breaking down and binging, or quitting completely. You may have already heard of the most common type of diet break, the "refeed day".

Some diet breaks are longer than others and different people will utilize different types of diet breaks. The leaner you are and/or the longer and more aggressively you've been dieting, the more critical and helpful diet breaks can be.

Here are the 3 types of diet breaks we'll be utilizing, along with whom they are most helpful for.

Single Day Refeeds	Weekly for most people under 20%; not necessary, but optional weekly or bi-weekly for those over 20% body fat (females over 30%)
2-3 Day Refeeds	Helpful for those sub 12% body fat (sub 20% females)
1-3 Week Long Diet Breaks	Every 12 weeks of a long-term fat loss diet Every 6-10 weeks of a long contest prep diet

All of these diet breaks are forms of "carb cycling", which in the simplest definition means the cycling of carbohydrates.

(Single Day) Refeeds

Single Day Refeeds

A short-term version of a diet break that many of you will be utilizing is the refeed day. A refeed is typically a single day; a 24 hour period of higher calories, usually at your maintenance level of calories, and generally created from an increase in carbohydrates. It's an incredibly helpful tool for adhering to a diet and it may even help with your gym lifts and retaining muscle. How and why?

Leptin is a key hormone responsible for the regulation of body fat. When you diet, and the longer you diet, leptin levels decrease, reducing energy expenditure and increasing your appetite. Refeeds help boost leptin levels, right? Here's the plot twist. It used to be thought that having a single refeed day would prevent or drastically reduce metabolic slowdown during extended diets but that is not so. Unfortunately, a 24 hour refeed is not enough time to have a significant effect on reversing metabolic adaptation or significantly increasing leptin levels. So what *can* a 24 hour refeed day do? A refeed day can somewhat hinder the severity of metabolic adaptation if having it decreases the overall caloric deficit for the week, but if the other days of the week are adjusted appropriately for the creation of the refeed day such that the weekly caloric intake is still the same, you won't have much affect on reducing the metabolic slowdown. To put it simply, if you slow down your fat loss through the addition of a refeed day, you typically will experience less metabolic slowdown. But that's common sense. Less caloric deficit equals less fat loss equals a higher metabolic rate.

So... Why have a single refeed day if it doesn't even do what most people who use them thinks it does?

In one word... Adherence.

Adhering to your fat loss diet is the biggest key to fat loss success and refeeds are an incredible tool in your arsenal. Even if theoretically you could achieve your fat loss goal faster without having them (through a greater weekly caloric deficit), you'll have a variably lower *chance* of reaching your goal.

Over the course of a diet and over the course of successive days of a caloric deficit, your "dietary willpower" decreases. The jury is still out whether this scientifically happens or not, but it definitely "feels" like your will power decreases over the span of a day, and over the span of a diet. The reason people have refeed days is for a sense of relief. It's a psychological break from your diet. It's a way of resetting your stores of willpower by giving yourself a little reward. Look at it like the celebration of a milestone.

Great job! Seriously! You lasted 6 days of a caloric deficit, have a break!

Typically, people on harsh and restrictive diets reward themselves with "cheat days." They can come in many shapes and sizes, but typically it might be a meal, a couple meals, or an entire day or weekend of eating foods and quantities of foods you wouldn't normally be able to fit into your macros. They're usually super high caloric surplus days that, for many people, completely erase the fat loss that occurred during the week. Many people end up putting on more fat than what they lost during the week. Entering into a cycle of "clean eating" during the week" and "dirty eating" during the weekend, this can create or reinforce a bad relationship with food for those with obsessive personalities.

Using refeeds, we'll achieve the psychological break that a cheat day provides, without the fat gain.

Water Weight and Refeeds

Another interesting benefit of having a refeed is that it can "reveal" fat loss. Not go to myth busting again, but people typically discredit refeeds with helping them have increased fat loss, since for a lot of people, they see new low weigh-ins the day or days after having a refeed. What's actually happening is the expelling of water weight. Cortisol levels can be out of whack and increase during a caloric deficit, causing the body to carry water abnormally. Refeeds can reduce cortisol levels and help "whoosh" (as Lyle McDonald puts it) the water weight away. That, in and of itself, can be incredibly psychologically rewarding... to see a big decrease in weight on the scale. It can also cause visual differences, from the drop in water weight, that can be equally as rewarding.

Who Should do Single Day Refeeds?

If you're 12% bodyfat or over (females 20% body fat or over) I recommend using single day refeeds. If you're well over 20% bodyfat (females over 30%), your refeeds are optional. Once you get down to to 20% (females: 30%) or below, do your weekly refeeds.

If you're leaner than 12% bodyfat (females under 20%), I recommend trying 2-3 day refeeds (covered later).

Setting up your Refeed Day

Our current macros are set up for a theoretical 3500 calorie deficit over the course of the week. If a refeed is essentially your calories at caloric maintenance, all you have to do to create a refeed day is add 125 grams of carbs (500 calories) to one day of the week. When you place a refeed into your week without changing the other days, you're theoretically bringing the caloric deficit down to 3000 calories for the week. To counteract this and keep the weekly deficit at a theoretical ~3500 calories, we'll subtract about 80 calories, or 20 carbs, from each of the 6 deficit days.

$$500 \text{ Calories} / 6 \text{ Deficit Days} = 83.3$$

Rounded down to 80

To demonstrate what this looks like, let's look at our 200 lb male example from before.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

3085 calories

85 grams of fat

340 grams of carbs

240 grams of protein

After (With 1 Refeed):

6 Low Days: 3005 calories 85 grams of fat 320 grams of carbs 240 grams of protein	Refeed Day 3585 calories 85 grams of fat 465 grams of carbs 240 grams of protein
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Let's also look at our 175 lb male with a desk job example.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

2120 calories — (14,840 kcal weekly)

60 grams of fat — (420g weekly)

200 grams of carbs — (1,400g weekly)

195 grams of protein — (1,365g weekly)

After (With 1 Refeed):

6 Low Days: 2040 calories 60 grams of fat – (540 kcal) 180 grams of carbs – (720 kcal) 195 grams of protein – (780 kcal)	Refeed Day 2620 calories 60 grams of fat – (540 kcal) 325 grams of carbs – (1300 kcal) 195 grams of protein – (780 kcal)
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Placement of Your Refeed Day

There are a few different ways to strategically place your refeed. It will depend on your preference and your personal experience with experimenting with different quantities of food placed in different places throughout the day. For most people, when it comes to gym performance, you'll probably want to place a lot of your refeed carbohydrates in the meal or meals preceding the toughest workout of your week, or the workout which contains the muscle(s) that you want to prioritize, or lifts that you most want to build or maintain. You'll want to consume carbohydrates post workout too. I'd recommend at least 20% of your carbohydrates to be consumed in each.

But what if you train in the morning, fasted? Well here it depends. You can experiment with refeeding the day *before* your hardest/prioritized workout for possible benefit to the fasted workout. You'd probably want to place most of the carbs in the evening of the refeed day rather than earlier on.

Another recommendation would be to put your refeed on one of your more social days, whether it be Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. What's the day of the week that there's the highest likelihood of you going out to dinner with friends or family? Put it on that day. If it happens to be the same as a workout, especially your hardest or highest priority workout, even better.

One key warning, be sure to have a refeed day and not to let it turn into a cheat day. Even if you go out to eat, make sure you're still hitting your macros. Following a meal plan will be extremely helpful for those who are either new to tracking macros or unexperienced in "freestyling" their macros.

In these next two sections, I'll be covering 2-3 day refeeds and 1-3 week diet breaks. 2-3 day refeeds apply mostly to those who are sub 12% bodyfat, and 1-3 week diet breaks will apply to those who are dieting for longer than 12 weeks. If these don't apply to you or if you want to keep the momentum going, you can skip right on through to the next chapter "How to Hit Your Macros" and come back to read these later.

📄 2-3 Day Refeeds (For the Lean)

2-3 Day Refeeds

Unlike 1 day refeeds, 2-3 day refeeds may have the potential to reverse some of the metabolic adaptation that occurs because of dieting. Typically, I recommend 2-3 day refeeds for those who are under 12% body fat, where metabolic slowdown becomes more of a concern with every percentage of body fat that you drop.

Just like a 24 hour refeed day, it's important to actually hit maintenance calories on these days. Having 2-3 days in a row of a moderate caloric surplus will surely help blunt metabolic slowdown, but then again the whole goal is fat loss, and you'd likely end up with a net of 1 day at a deficit for the week. It might take you 7 weeks just to lose 1 lb at that rate.

Having 2-3 days in a row of (true) maintenance calories will not cause any fat gain, and over the course of an extended diet, in the real world, will net greater fat loss on average than if you were to diet straight without any refeeds. You may notice a slight increase of body weight from these three days but it is not fat if you're hitting a proper maintenance level of calories. The possible weight increase will come from a combination of one or more of the following: fuller glycogen stores, more food bulk, higher water consumption, and more water weight.

Two Refeed Days Per Week - Strung together as a "2 day Refeed"

To set this up correctly, similar to the one day refeed, you need to have your weekly caloric deficit to be covered inside of the days that are deficit days. If you want to have a 2 day refeed of every Friday and Saturday and you've set yourself up to lose 1 lb of weight per week, your 3500 calorie deficit must be covered in 5 days instead of 7. Create the refeed days by adding 125 grams of carbs to to each day (and its recommended that you place them back to back). Your low days must have a deficit of 700 calories each if you're going to have 2 days at maintenance (refeed). We solve this by simply decreasing carbs on the low days to make up for how much we added on the high days.

To demonstrate what this looks like, let's look at our 200 lb male example from before.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

3085 calories — (21,595 kcal weekly)

85 grams of fat — (595g weekly)

340 grams of carbs — (2,380g weekly)

240 grams of protein — (1,680g weekly)

After (With a 2 Day Refeed):

<u>5 Low Days, each at:</u>	<u>2 Refeed Days, each at:</u>	<u>Weekly Total</u>
2885 calories	3585 calories	21,595 kcal
85 grams of fat	85 grams of fat	595g fat
290 grams of carbs	465 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to "before")	2,380g carbs
240 grams of protein	240 grams of protein	1,680g of protein

The math involved with this was simple. All we had to do was add 125 carbs to each of the 2 the days we wanted to turn into refeed days, and subtract 50 carbs from the 5 other days.

We take 2,380 which is the weeks worth of carbs and subtracted $465 \times 2 = 930$, which are how many carbs the refeed days make up. $2,380 - 930 = 1450$, and that's how many carbs the 5 low days should equate to. 1450 divided by 5 is 290. This person's five low days will have 290 grams of carbs each day.

Let's also look at our 175 lb male with a desk job example.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

2120 calories --- (14,840 kcal weekly)

60 grams of fat --- (420g weekly)

200 grams of carbs --- (1,400g weekly)

195 grams of protein --- (1,365g weekly)

After (With a 2 Day Refeed):

<u>5 Low Days, each at:</u>	<u>2 Refeed Days, each at:</u>	<u>Weekly Total:</u>
1920 calories	2620 calories	14,840 kcal
60 grams of fat	60 grams of fat	420g fat
150 grams of carbs	325 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to "before")	1,400g carbs
195 grams of protein	195 grams of protein	1,365g protein

Again, simple math. All we had to do was add 125 carbs to each of the 2 the days we wanted to turn into refeed days, and subtract 50 carbs from the 5 other days. Same amount of total carbs per week, just distributed differently.

Another more complex way of looking at it: We take 1,400 which is the weeks worth of carbs and subtracted $325 \times 2 = 650$, which are how many carbs the refeed days make up. $1,400 - 650 = 750$, and that's how many carbs the 5 low days should equate to. 750 divided by 5 is 150. The five low days will have 150 carbs.

Three Day Refeeds

A three day refeed may have the potential to offset metabolic adaptation even more than a two day refeed. If you plan on having a 3 day long refeed per week, a hypothetical 3500 weekly caloric deficit would need to be covered in 4 days with your low days set for an 875 calorie deficit. A bit more aggressive as you can see.

To demonstrate what this looks like, let's look at our 200 lb male example from before.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

3085 calories --- (21,595 kcal weekly)

85 grams of fat --- (595g weekly)

340 grams of carbs --- (2,380g weekly)

240 grams of protein --- (1,680g weekly)

After (With a 3 Day Refeed):

<u>4 Low Days, each at:</u>	<u>3 Refeed Days, each at:</u>	<u>Weekly Total:</u>
2705 calories	3585 calories	21,575
85 grams of fat	85 grams of fat	595g fat
245 grams of carbs	465 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to "before")	2,375g carbs
240 grams of protein	240 grams of protein	1,680g protein

The math involved with this was simple. All we had to do was add 125 carbs to each of the 3 the days we wanted to turn into refeed days, and subtract about 95 carbs from the 4 other days. Same amount of total carbs per week, just shifted around.

We take 2,380 which is the weeks worth of carbs and subtracted $465 \times 3 = 1395$, which are how many carbs the refeed days make up. $2,380 - 1395 = 985$, and that's how many carbs the 4 low days should add up to. 985 divided by 4 comes out to about 246.25 but let's round down).

Let's also look at our 175 lb male with a desk job example.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

2120 calories --- (14,840 kcal weekly)

60 grams of fat --- (420g weekly)

200 grams of carbs --- (1,400g weekly)

195 grams of protein --- (1,365g weekly)

After (With a 3 Day Refeed):

<u>4 Low Days, Each At:</u>	<u>3 Refeed Days, Each At:</u>	<u>Weekly Total:</u>
1740 calories	2620 calories	14,820 kcal
60 grams of fat	60 grams of fat	420g fat
105 grams of carbs	325 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to "before")	1,395g carbs
195 grams of protein	195 grams of protein	1,365g protein

Again, simple math. All we had to do was add 125 carbs to each of the 3 the days we wanted to turn into refeed days, and subtract 95 carbs from the 4 other days. Same amount of total carbs per week, just distributed differently.

Another more complex way of looking at it: We take 1,400 which is the weeks worth of carbs and subtracted $325 \times 3 = 975$, which are how many carbs the refeed days make up. $1,400 - 975 = 425$, and that's how many carbs the 4 low days should equate to. 425 divided by 4 is 106.25 but we will round that to 105 grams. The four low days will have 105 grams of carbs each.

"I feel like my carbs and calories are too low if I do a 3 day refeed every week. What can I do about that?"

It's going to come down to adherence most of all. If having 3 day long refeeds every week causes you too much stress during the four low days, you should perhaps stick to having 2 day refeeds. Or, perhaps just looking at how low your calories or carbs have to be on the four low days is enough to make you say, "No thanks, Matt!"

Another way of implementing 3 day refeeds is to do so outside the bounds of a weekly schedule. You can string together 7 to 11 deficit days between each 3 day refeed. This would allow your low days to be slightly higher calorie/carb than what they'd be if you did a 3 day refeed weekly, assuming we're aiming for the same theoretical deficit and the same total calories within each time window we're comparing.

To give you an example of how that would play out, let's say you're doing a 3 day refeed after 11 deficit days. The goal of a theoretical 7000 calorie bi-weekly deficit ($7000 = 2 \text{ weeks} \times 3500 \text{ deficit per week}$) would need to be spread out over 11 days. This comes out to about a 635 calorie deficit on each those low days. Since we've already calculated what your macros are with a 500 calorie deficit per day, we'd just have to subtract around 135 calories worth of carbs (33.75 but we'll round up to 35 grams of carbs) from each of your 11 consecutive low days, and add 125 grams of carbs to the 3 days you want to make refeed days.

To demonstrate what this "11/3" schedule looks like, let's look at our 200 lb male example from before.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

3085 calories --- (21,595 kcal weekly and 43,190 bi-weekly)

85 grams of fat --- (595g weekly and 1,190g bi-weekly)

340 grams of carbs --- (2,380g weekly and 4,760g bi-weekly)

240 grams of protein --- (1,680g weekly and 3,360 bi-weekly)

After (With a 3 Day Refeed):

<u>11 Consecutive Low Days, each at:</u>	<u>3 Refeed Days, each at:</u>	<u>Bi-weekly Total:</u>
2945	3585 calories	43,150 kcal
85 grams of fat	85 grams of fat	1,190g fat
305 (340 minus 35)	465 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to "before")	4,750g carbs
240 grams of protein	240 grams of protein	3,360g protein

Lastly, let's look at our 175 lb male with a desk job who wants to follow an "11/3" low day to refeed schedule. Last chart in this chapter, I promise.

Before (Daily Cutting Macros without Refeeds):

2120 calories — (14,840 kcal weekly and 29,640 kcal bi-weekly)

60 grams of fat — (420g weekly and 840g bi-weekly)

200 grams of carbs — (1,400g weekly and 2,800 bi-weekly)

195 grams of protein — (1,365g weekly and 2,730 bi-weekly)

After (With a 3 Day Refeed):

11 Consecutive Low Days, each at: 1980 calories 60 grams of fat 165 grams of carbs (200 minus 35) 195 grams of protein	3 Refeed Days, each at: 2620 calories 60 grams of fat 325 grams of carbs (added 125g of carb to “before”) 195 grams of protein	<u>Bi-Weekly Total:</u> 29,640 kcal 840g fat 2,790 carbs 2,730g protein
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So we’ve covered both the 11/3 and the 4/3 methods of 3 day refeeds. Which is right for you? It depends. If you had to pick one or the other, I’d start with the 11/3 method and then switch over to the 4/3 method as you got leaner. The leaner you get, the more often I recommend having 2-3 day refeeds. This recommendation only applies to those already very lean and who are trying to get absolutely shredded, like stepping on stage to compete kind of shredded.

You might be wondering, “But wouldn’t that take my calories really low on the low days?” To answer that, yes and no. Here’s some perspective. If you’re at the point where you’re nearly shredded and wanting to get absolutely shredded, your calories are already going to be relatively much lower than what they’d be during a bulk and with 5-10 percent more body fat on your frame. But, we’re also going to be aiming at a smaller deficit than if you were much heavier; you have less fat to lose.

The leaner you get, the less fat loss you should aim for per week as a percentage of your total bodyweight. The leaner you get, the smaller the deficit you should be aiming for, if you want to maximize muscle and strength retention. The leaner you get, the more patience, discipline, and self control you need to continue losing fat because it gets really, really tough.

A summary of 2 day and 3 day Refeeds:

To keep it simple, refer back to the chart on who the different types of diet breaks are right for. The more you are overweight, the less I recommend refeeds until you get to a lower body fat level. Men over 20% and women over 30% can utilize weekly or bi-weekly refeeds on a completely optional basis. Once you get under that point, I would recommend a weekly single day refeed for adherence purposes.

My basic recommendation if you are relatively lean already (men under 12% and women under 20%) is to have 5 low days followed by 2 refeed days, per week. I recommend stringing these refeed days together to maximize the potential for reversing some of the metabolic adaptation that dieting causes. If, however, separating refeed days suits your fancy and maximizes your adherence, go for that, you’ll just be missing out on the potential benefit that stringing them together offers. You might want to just stick to 1 refeed per week if you’re not going to string two together. And lastly, if having refeed days at all somehow messes up your adherence, don’t do them.

Once again, let me reemphasize before moving on that you will see the best results if your refeed days are actually at maintenance level calories. Imagine it like stopping in place for just a moment to regain energy, if you will, and then resuming to take steps forward again. If these refeeds turn into moderate to heavy caloric surplus days, however, it’s like you’re taking steps back. This is why we hit specific refeed day macros and don’t do all out cheat days.

1-3 Week Diet Breaks

1-3 Week Diet Breaks

You may wonder why you'd want to take a 1-3 week long diet break, especially if you feel you have the will power to blast through months upon months of dieting without needing one. Similar to the 24 hour refeed days and 2-3 day refeeds, 1-3 week diet breaks are incredibly useful tools for some people to reach long-term diet success.

As a general guideline to maximize sustainable fat loss and long term success, if time allows, every 12-15 weeks of a caloric deficit aimed at 0.5-1.0% bodyweight lost per week should be followed with a 1-3 week diet break. These are just rough suggestions. The longer you've dieted and the longer you still have to go to reach your fat loss goal, the longer you'd want a diet break before continuing that diet.

A 1-3 week diet break has a significant impact on reversing metabolic adaptation, as well as ensuring a higher rate of overall diet success. It's a period of time where you'll likely get a boost in gym performance as well as a boost in your sanity and well-being. During these 1-3 weeks, you will not be utilizing refeed days, since every day will essentially be put at or near maintenance calories.

A theoretical way to put yourself into a diet break would be to look at how much fat your diet currently has you losing and approximate how much of a deficit you are in weekly and per each low day. If you've been losing 1 lb per week most recently, you've got about a 3500 weekly calorie deficit, probably spread over 6 low days if you're having one refeed day per week. That's about a 580 calorie deficit per each low day. I would recommend for this individual to cut his cardio in half, and increase calories on the low days to fill in the rest of the deficit. For example, let's continue to assume a 3500 calorie deficit per week. If you were doing 4 thirty minute medium intensity cardio sessions per week and you cut it down to 2, that might be equivalent to reducing the deficit by roughly 600-800 calories. The rest of the 2700-2900 calories would be spread over the 6 low days, adding 450-480 calories per day.

Is there a simpler way to hop onto a diet break?

What if I'm currently not losing any weight (it seems)?

The simplified, ballpark suggestion is to increase daily low day calories by 300-600 and drop cardio by 50%. The more aggressive the fat loss currently is and the larger the individual and their maintenance calories, the greater the calorie increase.

You will probably observe a little increase in weight

Why not keep cardio the same or remove it completely?

If you're planning on continuing your fat loss after the diet break and hopping back on the same macros and level of cardio as you were doing previously, you want the transition to be smooth and almost effortless. That's why I recommend cutting your cardio in half instead of removing it completely. Plus, keeping cardio in there will help you remember that you're still in a big picture fat loss phase. You might currently be on a diet break, but the cardio will help serve as a reminder in several ways to not derail yourself. It will probably help remind you to hit your macros and keep your diet in check too.

The reason we're lowering cardio a bit during a 1-3 week diet break is twofold. One, it helps us keep the change in daily calories a little more moderate. And two, it's to provide a physical and psychological relief that may even help reduce cortisol.

Why not just raise low days up to what the refeed days are?

This seems practical but during the course of a diet, metabolic adaptation to a varying degree occurs. Throughout a diet, especially if refeed days are kept where they are at the start, as low day calories are dropped over time, the caloric intake on individual refeed days tend to rise above what your true daily caloric maintenance is. You might ask, "Wouldn't this add fat?" A refeed day in isolation (or multiple refeed days) surrounded by enough lower calorie days won't add a fat in the bigger picture because of the fact that your metabolism works in a continuum, and not in single 24-hour periods. But string together 1-3 weeks of "single day refeeds" (without adjusting those refeeds to true maintenance) and you'd be setting yourself into an almost guaranteed caloric surplus. As you can see, setting yourself into a diet break, isn't as simple as just setting every day to refeed day calories.

Do you keep your refeed day?

Since you've raised your carbs on all your low days, there's no need for a refeed day. Chances are it's right around what the other are anyway (probably just a bit higher.) Get rid of it — turn it into what all the other days are.

What if you lose weight?

Similar to what a single, 2, or 3 day refeed can facilitate, a lot of people who begin a diet break, especially if they never had refeeds or it had been a while since they've had one, observe an immediate drop in body weight. The "whoosh" effect — the revealing of fat loss from the shedding of water weight.

If you notice, though, that your weigh ins continue to decrease day after day, don't worry. Just add 5-10 grams of carbs to your daily intake and see what happens. If weight loss continues, continue adding 5-10 grams of carbs whenever that happens. You want to simply add small amounts of carbs until your weight basically maintains. Do your best to keep your weight at maintenance for 1-3 weeks, however long of a break you decide to take.

What if you gain weight?

Many people experience a slight increase in bodyweight when beginning their diet break, even though they're consuming maintenance calories. This is from increased glycogen, food bulk, water weight, etc. After an initial small increase that should span one to a few days, there shouldn't be an upward trend in weight gain. If weight continues to increase on average, just lower your carbs by 5-10 grams. And then again if it continues to happen. You want to get yourself to a point where there might be fluctuations in your bodyweight, but on the level of calories you're at, you're maintaining your weight in the bigger picture. Hit your 1-3 weeks at maintenance calories and then continue your cut!

The Fundamentals of Flexible Dieting

The Fundamentals of Flexible Dieting

Being flexible within the confines of a structured approach will help you consistently hit a caloric deficit and reach success. Flexibility will allow you to bend to your specific preferences, bend around your circumstances, and once in a while, bend to your cravings, all without breaking (binging or momentarily or permanently giving up on your diet).

Now just because you *can* eat basically any and all of the foods choices that you might want to and still hit your macros, that doesn't mean that you should. There are certain basics that we will be following that are proven to increase the chance of success.

The 80-90%/10-20% Rule

Aim to consume 80-90% of your calories from whole, unprocessed foods. The remaining 10-20% are discretionary calories that can come from wherever you like, processed or unprocessed foods. This might be a small candy bar, a serving of your favorite ice cream, or a couple servings of pop chips.

For most whose caloric target is under 3000 calories, I'd recommend aiming for the 90/10 ratio of whole food calories to discretionary calories. For those who have to hit over 3000 calories I'd recommend more leeway towards the 20% discretionary calories. Ultimately this is your choice. Whether you eat 80%, 90%, or 100% whole unprocessed foods, you'll get the same fat loss success as long as you're hitting your macros.

Some people have metabolisms that burn through so many calories per day (4000 and up) that consuming 80% of their calories from whole foods gets difficult because of the amount of food volume. These people might want to allow themselves even more than 20% discretionary calories if they have trouble stomaching all the food required for their goals.

For most of you, just aim for 80-90% of your calories to come from nutrient dense, whole foods.

The key here isn't necessarily finding your sweet spot (whole/discretionary calories ratio), though it may help, but it's about having the flexibility and freedom to make the choices that will help keep you consistently hitting your macros. For many people who enjoy having some dessert or a cookie here and there, eating 100% whole foods all of the time can quickly wear away at their willpower and support an unhealthy relationship towards food. Other people might not have this problem. Give yourself the flexibility to eat up to 20% of your calories from food sources that might be considered "naughty," and your chances of binging on these same foods, or giving up on your diet, are reduced.

Variety

Whether you eat a wide variety of foods all the time, or you trade food choices in and out from week to week or month to month, variety helps serve a few different beneficial purposes. A wide variety of fruits and vegetables helps ensure you're getting all of the vitamins and minerals that your body needs for proper function and health. Having a variety of foods can also help keep a diet exciting enough to remain consistent.

Fiber

Fiber is nature's broom. It's essential for gut health and nutrient absorption. To keep it simple, aim for a minimum of 10 grams per 1000 calories consumed. If you're consuming 80-90% of your calories from whole food sources, you shouldn't have a problem with that.

The more calories you consume, the more fiber you ought to as well, but consuming too much fiber can also give unwanted consequences. From a big bloated belly to actually having a negative impact on nutrient absorption. To stay away from that, don't go beyond a fiber intake that's 20% of your total carbohydrate intake for the day. So if you're cutting on 200 carbs, you might not want to go much over 40g of fiber.

No Caloric Beverages or high calorie condiments

Any drinks with calories in them should be cut out of your diet. They're not restricted necessarily (no foods are completely restricted), they're just the easiest things to decide not to eat because the satiety from drinking your calories via high calorie beverages is much, much, MUCH less than the satiety from eating your calories. For most people who are overweight, simply converting from regular soda to diet soda trims off thousands of calories consumed in a month/year. And don't worry, unless you have the inherited genetic disorder called phenylketonuria (pku), which occurs in between 1 in 10,000 to 15,000 newborns, diet soda is completely harmless to you. Research has not demonstrated that diet soda is harmful. In fact, zero calorie carbonated soda can be very helpful for those dieting as it can provide satiety. That said, if you're drinking more than a 2-liter of diet soda a day, you may want to cut back a little bit.

Meal Frequency

Meal Frequency

There is no universal answer to the question “How many meals should I eat per day?” The answer is that it depends. Everyone has their particular preferences. Everyone has a certain work/school and sleep schedule that they follow. People who work a 9-5 and have to gym either super early or in the evening are probably going to have a different eating and training schedule compared to a student on summer break who wakes up at noon every day and trains at 1 PM.

The fitness supplement industry has done a great job at spreading many myths, including the myth that you have to eat several small meals throughout the day to keep the metabolism running at “high speed”. (This definitely helped/helps them sell more protein powder and supplements!) The idea was based on the thermic effect of food (TEF). When we consume food, it takes energy in the form of calories to digest the meal, and people wrongly assume that the more separate feedings you have, while holding calories constant, the more calories you from “stoking the furnace” more often.

It sounds a bit logical and perhaps even like common sense, but the scientific research has actually shown the reverse to be true. The thermic effect of food is larger when consumed as a single meal versus broken up into smaller meals. In one study, a 750 calorie meal eaten in 10 minutes had a higher TEF than six 125 calorie meals every half hour. The thermic effect was 2% higher. In the grand scheme, this difference of 16 calories is most likely negligible. Whether you consume six 400 calorie meals, or three 800 calorie meals, the TEF is just about the same [1].

What matters most is finding that particular meal schedule that works best for you, but also having the flexibility to stay on track when that meal schedule doesn't line up perfectly. Fortunately for us, it doesn't really matter how many meals you eat per day. What matters is the daily/weekly caloric deficit. That said, there are pitfalls to trying to eat too many or too few meals per day.

The spectrum ranges from eating 2-3 meals per day to 7-8 meals per day. While these meal schedules may best suit some people, the vast, vast majority of people will fall somewhere in the middle. Not everyone can physically stomach all of their daily calories in 1-3 meals. And for those that can, there's the risk of becoming over obsessive with the idea and feeling of becoming completely stuffed. Some people, myself included, over-glorify their “big meal(s)”, making them so voluminous that they can become extremely time consuming, especially for those who eat slow like I do. And if not just time consuming, they can reinforce an unhealthy relationship with food, one where you become overly attached to stuffing yourself silly. Yes, it's important and helpful to have satisfying, and potentially filling meals while cutting, but you don't want them to be the primary focus of your day.

However many meals per day you enjoy having is up to you. Balance is usually found in the middle, with 3-6 meals per day. They don't have to be all the same size. If you absolutely can't make up your mind, I usually recommend starting with 4 meals per day for most people on a cut, with protein spread out over the course of the day.

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Pre, Peri, Post-Workout Nutrition

Pre-workout, Peri-workout, and Post-workout Nutrition

Let's talk about the food you consume surrounding your training sessions, or what is called "peri-workout" nutrition. This term is often used in two different ways. It's more proper way: to describe food consumed *before, during, and after*. It's more common use: to describe food consumed *during* a workout.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, the fitness industry as a whole has done a pretty good job at overplaying the importance of peri-workout nutrition at the cost of downplaying, or in many cases, completely forgetting to mention the importance of daily total macronutrient and calorie intake.

You'll see people so confident they've nailed their pre and post workout nutrition end up looking exactly the same year after year because they're so focused on the little stuff rather than the big picture. People rushing home doing 90 on the freeway to get in their post workout carbs and protein without having ever tracked a single macro and no idea of their daily macro or calorie intake.

If this sounds like you, don't beat yourself up. I was in the same boat for years. No joke. That's why I'm so passionate about this. Let's look at some of the common arguments for peri-workout nutrition as well as what the research suggests, along and my recommendations.

Pre-Workout Carbs and Protein

Carbohydrates are the primary energy source for activity and adequate consumption when it comes to daily intake quite often leads to better gym performance. Some common mistakes that people make:

- Consuming too many carbohydrates too close to their workout
- Not eating for too long a time and getting fatigued early in a workout
- Consuming foods that don't agree well with your stomach

I personally have had uncomfortable workouts (GI distress) for an accumulated total of years, thinking that I had to consume a ton of carbohydrates (typically oats or potatoes totaling 60-100 carbs or more) 1-2 hours before my workouts (back in the day before I even counted macros).

What works best will vary from person to person. Some people will benefit from certain amounts of pre-workout carbohydrates more than others. Pre-workout and post-workout carbohydrate and protein consumption becomes more necessary the longer it has been since your last meal. That said, here are some different options that may work for you. I recommend doing what seems to produce the best gym performance but also best fits your lifestyle and schedule. This list is in order of what is most likely to produce the best effect on muscle hypertrophy. Remember, what may theoretically be most "optimal" isn't always what's best for you in the long-term. Any of these options can be utilized to get practically identical results, so stick with what keeps you on top of your diet while having you kick butt in the gym.

Option 1.

“Best Case Scenario”

1-2 Hours Pre-workout:

A shake of roughly 15-20% of your daily protein intake and 10-20% of your daily carbohydrate intake. For most people that's 20-40 grams of (whey) protein and carbs between 1 to 2 times that amount. 25 grams of protein and 50 grams of carbs usually is fine. Pick a quickly and easily digestible carbohydrate source like white rice, rice cakes, fruit (bananas, grapes, dates, peaches, etc), or cereal.

Option 2.

3-4 Hours Pre-workout:

A moderate sized meal, roughly 20-35% of your daily carbohydrate intake. Roughly 20-30% of your daily protein intake in this meal.

Option 3

4-6 Hours Pre-Workout:

A large meal, roughly 25-45% of your daily carbohydrate intake and 25-35% of your protein intake. You may want to get in leafy vegetables and fiber to hold you over and keep you full.

Though the protein recommendations may come out to be greater than 20-40 grams of protein for you, which is approximately the dose necessary to maximize acute anabolic response, you don't have to worry about "protein going to waste." Protein takes time to digest and it circulates through the bloodstream [1]. In a study by Bird and colleagues, it was found that resistance training to failure can cause your anabolic response to protein feedings to increase up to 24 hours.

Training Fasted:

A lot of people feel like they have the best performance training fasted in the morning. Many of these individuals enjoy eating a possibly large meal late at night that they feel ensures them a solid training session the morning after.

But isn't training fasted catabolic?

Compared to fed training, yes fasted training is inherently (more) catabolic by nature due to potentially lower levels of amino acids flowing through your body, but the flip side is that when given a post workout meal (carbohydrate, protein, leucine mixture) fasted training yields a greater intramyocellular anabolic response than fed training [2]. This highlights the importance of total daily macronutrient intake over where they happen to be placed throughout the day relative to training.

For those who train fasted, but not typically within the first couple hours of waking, if you haven't already, you may want to consider experimenting with Option 1 to confirm that gym performance is truly better fasted versus with a small meal (a shake) 1-2 hours prior to training. This goes especially for those who train fasted while on a caloric deficit.

My personal experience is that when I'm in a caloric surplus and/or over 12% body fat, training fasted within the first 3-4 hours of waking gives me the best gym performance. The higher body fat I am, the bigger the surplus I'm in, the longer I can seem to go without eating and having equally great gym performance training fasted.

When I switch over to a caloric deficit, I still have the best gym performance fasted at first, but as I get leaner (sub 8% body fat) I've found that my best gym performance comes from doing option 1 or 2.

Start somewhere and experiment around. If you feel a bit fatigued too soon in your workouts, and you don't think sleep is the reason, try eating a little more and/or a little closer to your workout. If you feel a bit hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) or like there's a war being waged in your stomach during your workout, that may be a sign you ate too much too soon in relation to your workout.

I usually recommend taking your current or preferred eating schedule and working around that, adjusting up or down the quantities of food in regards to the placement of your workout, to really hit that sweet spot in terms of timing and quantity of nutrients for optimal gym performance.

Post-Workout Carbs and Protein

Post-workout carbohydrate's main argument is the concept of glycogen replenishment. We hear that we "empty" our glycogen stores inside of our muscles during our training sessions and that it's very important for us to "refill" them, with a post-workout meal rich with carbs, typically. The reality is that in 9 out of 10 cases, if you're training properly for the goal of muscle hypertrophy, at most, you might be depleting target muscles up to 40% of their glycogen levels [2]. Typically, you'll have full glycogen replenishment within 24 hours for those muscles, not to mention, most people aren't going to work that same muscle again for 2-7 days.

Next is the argument for spiking insulin in what's referred to as "the anabolic window." With some exceptions, the majority of studies looking at changes in muscle mass and strength don't show a difference between groups who've consumed carbs and protein immediately after exercise versus groups who've consumed carbs and protein not directly after training. [4] Brad Schoenfeld, an expert in the field of muscle hypertrophy, has been known to describe the anabolic window as less of a window and more like a barn door. Also, as a side note, protein in the right quantities can spike insulin by itself to the same level that carbohydrates do.

The idea of getting in protein as quickly as possible after your workout is a common one. There's a reasonable argument for it, and it definitely helps supplement companies make a lot of money. But it typically takes hours to digest and absorb protein. There's going to be protein and amino acids circulating your blood stream constantly throughout the day if you're eating anywhere from 3 to 6 meals spread out through the day. If you have a normal eating pattern, you probably don't need to stress about getting in protein immediately post-workout (within 1 hour of training), as the effect on muscle hypertrophy is very small at best [5].

That said, the importance of post workout carbohydrates and protein increases the longer it has been since your last feeding. If you train fasted, there's more benefit and incentive to consume a meal sooner rather than later. With the possible benefit of maximizing muscular adaptations, it's also not hard at all to consume a protein shake or meal (like Option 1) within 1-2 hours pre-workout and post-workout [2].

Once again, go with what fits your lifestyle and schedule, best allows you to hit your macros, and perform well in the gym.

Nutrition *During* your Training Sessions:

For most people with a normal 3-6 meal per day eating schedule, consuming carbohydrates or protein (including BCAA's) during training is unnecessary. There's already glucose and amino acids flowing through the blood. Especially if you're cutting, I would recommend saving your calories and macros for more satisfying meals than consuming whey and/or gatorade (or other simple carbs) during a workout.

For those training really early in their morning fasted, there may be rationale to consuming BCAA's at a dose of 0.09 g/lb (0.2 g/kg) 5 to 15 minutes pre-workout. If digestion isn't an issue, taking whey protein (which contains BCAA's) is likely to give the same effect. If you planned on performing HIIT cardio right after a workout, the time between might also be an appropriate placement for BCAA's [3].

My recommendation for most people: While cutting, don't eat during your workout. Save your macros.

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Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting (“IF”) is not a required or necessary part of this fat loss program, but it may be a very helpful tool for many people. In fact, I think it’s something that everyone should try out, at least to see whether they like it or not.

What is intermittent fasting?

IF is essentially a blanket term for not eating for a certain period of the day, besides when you’re sleeping, obviously. Utilized, it’s an eating schedule. Nothing more, nothing less. You could also call it “Time Restricted Eating”. Instead of permitting yourself to eat from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to bed, IF involves consuming your calories typically within a 6-10 hour time window. For most people, it comes in the form of skipping breakfast and having your first meal of the day later on, perhaps 4-8 hours after waking (or more).

What this does:

1. You eat larger, more satisfying meals rather than smaller, more frequent meals.
2. Frees up a portion of your day to focus on work, socializing, school, family, or anything else besides food.
3. Can provide certain people with more productivity and better workout performance (others will be unaffected or may even see a decline)
4. Provides you with a nifty label that you can share with friends that makes you sound cool. “I’m Intermittent Fasting, guys!”

There are several reasons people think “IF” is magical. Here are a few of them.

- 1) Many people start doing it at the same time that they start tracking macros and calories for the first time and initiate a caloric deficit.

And for those that don’t track their food consumption, many people end up consuming less calories when they remove their breakfast meal from their day. The name of the game, as always, is the caloric deficit. Many people falsely attribute the fat loss success to the Intermittent Fasting, when it really was all about the caloric deficit, if fat loss occurred.

- 2) For those who have tried high frequency meal plans (eating every 2-3 hours), eating larger and more satisfying meals can help a lot of people hit their macros on a consistent basis. Getting a nice big meal in that you actually enjoy and that fills you up increases your chances of being able to stick to your diet. That’s what fat loss comes down to, consistently achieving a caloric deficit.

3) Marketing and testimonials. Lots of people are getting results and claiming that IF is the reason why. While it may have helped with adherence, the only reason people lose weight is because of a caloric deficit, regardless of how many meals a day they eat or when they eat these meals. Sexy sells, and what sounds sexier than "Intermittent Fasting?" (Okay... I can actually think of a few things)

Now that I've beaten IF down to a pulp, here's the kicker.

I actually do it.

A lot.

It's 2:32 PM right now as I type this and I haven't eaten anything yet. I might not eat until 5 or 6 PM, we'll see. And I bet a huge percentage of the people who follow me on social media assume that I eat every 2-3 hours.

Probably not what you were expecting, right?

Is there a physical reason I do IF? Does it burn more fat or put on more muscle? Nope.

It just seems to work with my schedule pretty well. And that's really the only reason (and it's a huge one) why you might enjoy it too (or hate it). I also happen to train better fasted or semi-fasted than not. I've hit my biggest lifts ever (squat 500, deadlift 600, strict Overhead pressed 260, etc) fasted.

I don't do it all the time, nor do I really intentionally plan it out, it sort of just happens. I got into a groove that just works. I've done IF more days than not for the past 3-4 years. I've dropped body fat while skipping breakfast, I've put on body fat and muscle while skipping breakfast. Neither result had anything to do with me skipping breakfast. Also, Intermittent Fasting doesn't even necessarily have to include skipping breakfast, you could eat during the first 6-10 hours of the day and begin your fast starting then and throughout the night.

There are a lot of different options to an IF schedule. Let me give you some examples of how IF can be utilized.

Typical Person who works a 9-5 Job, Example 1a:

Wake: 8:00 am - drinks coffee and water, goes to work.

Lunch Break: 12-1 PM - First Meal of the day

(Optional Meal: 3-4 PM)

Gym: 6-7:30 PM

Dinner: 8:00 PM

(Optional Dessert: 10PM)

Bed: Midnight

For this individual, this could be 2-4 meals. It could be a huge lunch and a medium sized dinner. It could be a huge dinner and a small lunch. It could be moderate lunch, a small pre-workout meal, a moderate post-workout dinner, and a small dessert. It could be any combination of proportions in any number of meals you can imagine that would help a person stick to their macros and maintain a caloric deficit.

Typical Person who works a 9-5 Job, Example 1b:

Wake: 5 AM - Drinks water and coffee

Gym: 6-8 AM

Breakfast: 8:30 AM

Work: 9 AM-5 PM

Lunch: 12-1 PM

Dinner: 6 PM

Bedtime: 9 PM

This would be my go to IF schedule if my work schedule was 9AM to 5PM. I've enjoyed this training and eating schedule because I have friends who work 9-5's and they can't train later in the evening.

College Party Lifestyle on Summer Break/Night Owl:

Wake & Breakfast: 12 PM

Gym: 2-4PM

Post-Workout Shake + Carbs: 4PM

Dinner: 7 or 8 PM

Bed: 3-4 AM

Works From Home, Self-Employed:

Wake: 8 AM - Drink plenty of water

Gym: 10-12PM or 12-2 PM (gyms are typically less busy around this time too)

Post Workout Shake (+ Optional Carbs): 12 PM to 2 PM (depending on when you gymed)

Large Lunch: 3PM

Large Dinner: 6-7PM

(Optional Dessert 9-10PM)

Bedtime: Midnight

For those not bound inside the confines of a 9-5, and you want to do IF, this is the eating schedule I'd recommend.

My personal eating schedule when I "accidentally" IF:

Wake: 8-9 AM - Drink plenty of water - Start working when I'm productive (Try to consume a shake)

Gym: 12-3PM

Post Workout Shake + Rice Cakes: 3PM

GIGANTIC DINNER: 4 or 5 PM (A HUGE DINNER)

Dessert and/or shake: 7-9 PM

Bedtime 10-11PM (I typically enjoy getting 9 hours of sleep)

I write "*accidentally* IF" because typically I'd prefer to get a breakfast shake and rice cakes (my preferred pre workout) 2-3 hours before my gym session. I recommend two larger meals per day plus snacks over one gigantic meal plus snacks to hit your macros if you're taking the IF route.

It may take some time to get used to skipping breakfast and pushing your fast further into the day. You may initially experience more hunger than normal. One psychological tweak I use is that I remind myself that that feeling usually correlates with fat loss. Also, that the hungrier I am, the better my next meal later on will taste! That said, after a few more days of consuming calories later on in the day, morning hunger should neutralize a little bit.

You might have preconceived notions that you're going to be significantly weaker if you train without having eaten breakfast. While I typically recommend consuming carbohydrates (preferably a meal of carbs and protein) 1-3 hours prior to lifting (how much depending on how close to the workout you eat), you might be pleasantly surprised by how well you can perform fasted. Many of you might find that your performance is even better than previous workouts when you used to consume a pre-workout meal. Many people describe a level of focus that they just don't have in their fed workouts.

But how many meals should I consume per day while intermittent fasting?

As I said before, it doesn't really matter as long as you hit your macros and have protein somewhat spread over the day. To keep it simple, if you can't make up your mind... just start with 2-3 major meals, supplementing with whey around those meals if necessary to hit your protein intake.

Final Say on Intermittent Fasting

You don't have to do it. You can try it if you like. There's a decent chance you may really love it. I do.

If you've struggled with hunger issues, adherence to a diet, food focus, or just hate eating small meals frequently, I recommend giving it a go.

Carb Backloading

Like intermittent fasting, carb backloading is not required or necessary for fat loss, but many people can find it preferential. Simply put, carb backloading is the positioning of most of your carbohydrate intake towards later on in the day, usually in the evening. For those who feel that consuming carbs early on in the day makes them feel sluggish or tired, putting those carbs in the evening, closer to bed, might be more preferred.

Instead of eating nothing throughout the early parts of the day, you'd consume meals consisting of protein, fiber, fats, and small or trace amounts of carbohydrates. How much fats you put in those earlier meals is up to you. All that really matters is adhering to a diet that has you at a net caloric deficit. So fit your macros however best accomplishes that. Here's an example of what carb backloading might look like.

Example 1:

7-9 AM Breakfast: Protein + Veggies (Fats Optional) - A low carb egg (white) omelette with spinach, bell peppers, onion, cheese or no cheese. Or a Kale/vegetable whey protein shake (Optionally with banana and berries in it)

12 PM Lunch/Snack: Mostly Protein + Veggies; Protein Shake or chicken salad and maybe a serving of fruit

2-4PM: Gym

4-6 PM: Post Workout - High Carb meal with protein. Rice and Chicken or Sweet Potato and Ground Turkey. Veggies
Optional

8-10 PM: High Carb Meal with Protein + Hitting the rest of Fat Macros - Sweet Potato, Steak, Vegetables

Example 2 (Someone who works a 9-5)

8 AM Breakfast OR SKIP: Protein + Veggies (Fats Optional) - A low carb egg (white) omelette with spinach, bell peppers, onion, cheese or no cheese. Or a Kale/vegetable whey protein shake

12 PM Lunch/Snack: Mostly Protein + Veggies; Protein Shake or chicken salad

3PM: Protein Shake + a fruit

5:30-7:00 PM: GYM

7:30: Big Dinner + Dessert (If it fits) - Lots of Japanese Sweet Potato, a salad, Brussel sprouts, grilled chicken, some Greek Yogurt with fiber one brownies and granola (if it fits your macros).

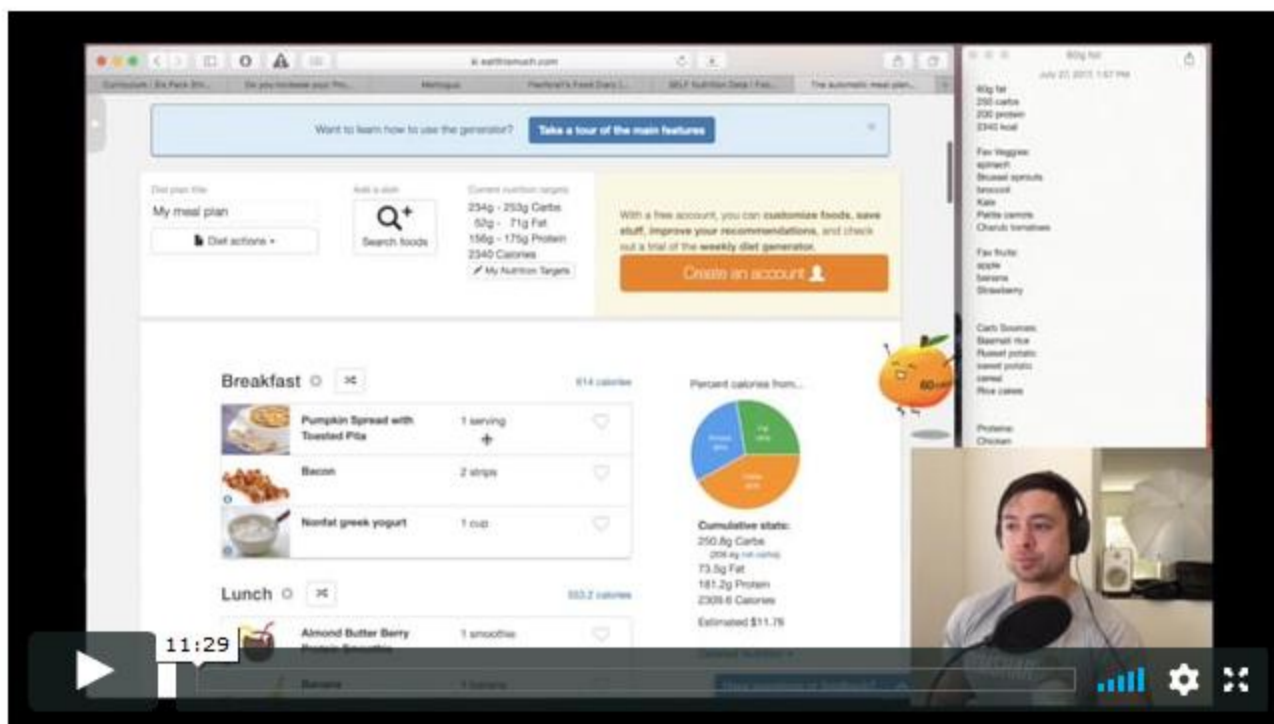
For some people, intermittent fasting may help them maintain their caloric deficit. For others, carb backloading might be something they stumble upon that works for them. For others, a combination of the two might be something they can stick with. And for the rest, carb backloading and intermittent fasting may be things they don't utilize, only "accidentally" doing them when life gets in the way. Any scientific benefit that one eating schedule may have over another, if at all, has limitations when it comes to practical significance because adherence is the foremost important factor when it comes to dieting success. That makes the number of meals you consume per day just a personal choice.

One last recommendation is to try your best to stick to whatever meal schedule you end up finding out that you like the best. This will help you have less fluctuations in your weigh-ins and more day-to-day consistency with your lifts, mood, and so on.

📄 Creating Your Meal Plan

By now you have your starting macros. Your next step is to begin hitting them on a daily basis, in conjunction with weighing yourself daily. Often when people are told to go and hit certain macros, they have absolutely no clue where or how to begin. It's really easy for someone with experience to eat freely and track their macros as they go throughout the day, but many people who are new to macros want or feel they need a meal plan to get started. This was certainly the case for me back in 2011. I'm going to show you how to create your own meal plan based on your current macros. The main tool we'll be using is [Myfitnesspal.com](https://myfitnesspal.com) (I recommend its mobile app too) and another cool resource is EatThisMuch.com.

The videos below will show give you a clear understanding of how to create a meal plan and just as important, how to alter it if/when necessary.



Remember, creating and using a meal plan is completely optional. Create and use one if it serves you, for as long as it serves you. Don't forget that a meal plan is only a structured way to hit macros. When your macros need to be changed, you have to make adjustments to the foods in your meal plan so the meal plan matches your new macros. If you get to the point where you get tired of a meal plan and would rather free-style from meal to meal and day to day, that's fine. For many people, a meal plan is simply a stepping-stone to a more relaxed and ad-hoc approach of hitting macros.

Damage Control: Going Over/Under Macros

Special celebrations, spontaneous dinners, weekend trips, and vacations are all a part of life. You want to be able to partake in things that you truly enjoy while still hitting your fitness and nutrition goals. It may take a little bit of work, but it's not too hard and it can be done. In this chapter I'll go over some strategies which answer frequently asked questions to help you stay on top of your diet while life gets thrown at you.

Note: These are real life situations that people continuously find themselves in. Just remember, you have to make the choices that both fit your plan (your caloric deficit) and your overall health (not just physical but mental, emotional, and psychological). Before I even go on, I'll just say that in most cases, if and when you slip up, it's usually best to not dwell on things, not punish yourself, and to just start following the normal plan (your normal calories/macros) immediately.

Hitting Protein and Calories

In simple situations where it doesn't seem like you'll hit your macros perfectly, the next best thing is to hit your protein target and your calorie target. If you ate vegetables, hit your fiber, and even eat mostly wholesome foods throughout the day, even better. You don't have to hit your macros perfectly every day. You'll likely get similar great results just from hitting protein and a calorie goal. Hitting macros perfectly is great and easy when you're running off a meal plan and its recommended if you're trying to really maximize gym performance, and muscle and strength building/retention. When its convenient, hit macros, but when that's impossible or inconvenient and its more convenient to just hit calories and your protein target, hit your calories/protein.

Borrowing Macros as Damage Control

You get a phone call. It's your best friend John who you haven't seen in a year! He's in town and invited you and the old crew out for sushi, but you're dieting. Heck, you only have 25 carbs for the rest of your day, or worse, you're completely out of macros! WHAT DO YOU DO?!

The concept of "borrowing" macros is where you take some macros from a day or multiple days in the future to use right now.

This can happen premeditated or as damage control. In the case above, it would be premeditated - you have the option to hit your macros, but you also have the option to "borrow" and go over your macros a bit as long as you decrease the equal amount from a future day (can be spread across multiple days).

Borrowing can be done as damage control - for example, if you know you went over your targets or if you realize, after the fact, that you consumed many more calories than what you thought existed in the foods you ate. One way to keep yourself on target and on pace would be to lower your calories/macros over the next day or couple of days to "cushion" yourself a bit for the day that you went well over your macros. This isn't something you'd want to intentionally do often. If you're still getting great fat loss results despite frequent borrowing, that's perfect, but if you're constantly playing with damage control while not getting great results - you might be being "too flexible" and benefit from a bit more structure or simply better choices.

How much should you decrease macros if you go “way over” for a day or two?

It's going to depend. There is no true answer for this. My best answer is to just go back to your regular macros/calories.

How you think about food and how it affects your long term results is what matters most. Thinking it's totally okay to go completely off the leash and way over your macros and doing it often reinforces the habit of... wait for it... NOT hitting your macros! That's slipping back into a black/white mentality, albeit a different one. Remember, the best case scenario for fat loss is enjoying life *WHILE* hitting your macros (or protein/calories) - or at least relatively close to them, close enough to get you the results you want. If you're not getting the results you want - the first thing you'd do is tighten up and actually hit the macros you set for yourself, then assess your accuracy and precision in tracking (weighing your food, etc) - afterwards, once you're 100% sure you're hitting your macros, you'd lower your macros if necessary.

I don't believe black and white thinking or framing damage control as “punishment” is the best method or mindset to go with here. If you didn't go over your macros by a ton of calories (perhaps up to 10-15% over), it probably won't feel very tough to drop the following day by that many calories, or to spread that over a couple days. For example, say you're cutting on 2000 calories, but on Wednesday you went and hit 2250 calories, it's probably not too hard to decrease Thursday's calories by 250 (in the form of fats and carbs) or to decrease Thursday and Friday by 125 each.

The key here is to only do “damage control” if it's

- 1) SMALL and infrequent
- 2) What you WANT to do, and
- 3) doesn't negatively affect your ability to hit future normal macros/calories

If you went well over your goal calorie intake, by well over 20% - believe it or not, I think you'd actually be best off not trying to recoup the entirety of that “loss”, even if you think you're in a healthy emotional and psychological place to do so. What I mean is, say your intake for cutting was 2000 calories and you think or know you hit 3000, 4000, or more calories; that's definitely not something you would want to make up for in just one day, and in many cases, it would be even really difficult to make up for it over 2 or 3 days. In that situation, I might take 1-3 days of 10% less calories, if any, but mostly just try to get myself back onto the original gameplan. Remember, we want to keep things so you stay on your diet in the long run. Part of this is how we *think* and treat ourselves in regards to food.

A session of massive overeating is an unideal scenario, most of us don't want or intend for it, but it could happen. Before jumping straight to a solution, you might want to take a look at *why* that happened. Were you intoxicated? Were you eating specific foods that you simply can't stop eating? Are you completely shredded (super low body fat) and your hunger/appetite is through the roof? Was that a one time thing or does that happen often? Often it can be chalked up to a one time thing, but if it's a serious medical issue, this is beyond my scope and I recommend seeking professional counseling from an eating disorder specialist. There are many resources online such as <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com> that can help you find professional help. Alternatively, if you're super lean, increased hunger and decreased ability to become satiated is a completely normal side effect - it's your body saying “Yo get some body fat on you!”

Like I said before, usually the best case scenario is to just hit your normal macros, in any situation. Even when you slip up. Damage control is okay if you can get yourself back to hitting your normal macros again. If constantly playing damage control hurts your ability to hit your macros... you should just focus on hitting your macros. Psychologically, manipulating macros for damage control isn't for everyone. Only do it if it benefits you long term.

Saving/Lending Macros for a future event

The short version of what I'm about to say: it's okay to decrease your intake for a day or a few leading up to a day or a few where you know or think you're going to go over your macros/calories, but you can't truly do pre damage control for all out eating (binging) sessions or extended periods of time of overeating (aka bulking).

When you know a big event is coming up where you'll be going out to dinner and you know the foods involved and the quantities you want to eat will probably put you over a typical day's macros/calories, you can elect to "save up" macros for X amount of days leading up until that special meal or day. There's really no set rules or protocol on this. Typically, this might be done if you were going on a weekend trip where you wouldn't have as much control over your food choices - or where you know you'll be surrounded by amazing tasting food.

With most things, we want to take a conservative to moderate approach, something between 50-200 calories per day for 1-3 days might be an appropriate way to "save up" a buffer zone for a day where you plan on going over by that amount.

Keep in mind that we're trying to stay away from the old black and white, do or die way of thinking and those kinds of habits. It's not about starving yourself so you can binge for an entire day or weekend. You still want to practice a healthy level of self control, while still enjoying yourself, food, and the people around you. In fact - remember that's what matters most. Enjoying the time with the people you're out eating with - not just necessarily the food. (Not to mention, your body is MUCH less limited in its ability to easily stack on body fat than it is in its ability to easily shred it off... so don't think that a few days of lower or even very low calories can make up for multiple days of all out eating. The human body is VERY good at making it easy to put on body fat and hard to take it off.)

Quite often, if it's just one meal, you can usually take an Intermittent Fasting style approach and/or just substitute protein shakes for the other meals of your day and be able to fit that restaurant meal or your grandma's dinner into your calorie (and maybe even calorie + protein) target for the day.

Say you know you're going out of town Saturday and Sunday, and that you'll be eating out with family 1-3 times per day for each of those days. The most optimal thing to do, of course, would be to hit your macros perfectly on those days, but we know that sometimes life gets in the way, or heck, you might just decide that you aren't going to be tracking anything that weekend. First, my recommendation would be to, if your family isn't eating a group breakfast and/or lunch, approach those days Intermittent Fasting style - electing to skip breakfast and/or lunch or having just protein shakes or a lean protein for those meals instead. Essentially backloading your calories. Don't eat lavish side meals all by yourself. If you're going to eat big and enjoy yourself unrestricted, do it at the big family dinner. Common sense, right? Most of all, enjoy the purpose of get-togethers, the people.

If you are engaged in eating 2-3 meals per day out in restaurants with your family, I'd suggest pacing yourself accordingly. Perhaps eat light for the first two meals (mostly just lean protein and vegetables), and then order one entree that sounds great for dinner. By the way - nobody said to or is forcing you to finish all of the food on your plate. There's no meaning if you do or don't finish your plate, besides the one in your head that you believe in. Remember - the main point of eating out with family is enjoying your time with family. Let that be the focus.

These are real life situations that people continuously find themselves in. You have to make the choices that best suit your overall health (mental, emotional, psychological) on top of the ones that help you adhere to your plan (your caloric deficit and fat loss). Sometimes people are too rigid on themselves, sometimes people aren't strict enough. You're not a bad or a weak person if you don't hit your macros perfectly all the time, nor does hitting them perfectly automatically make you a strong or a good person. Life is complex so do what serves as a good balance between minimizing stress and unnecessary effort or complexity and maximizing results - not just your short term results but your long term results... and don't let that be limited to just your physique.

Cardio Explained

What kinds of cardio are there?

We usually categorize cardio into the level of intensity. Light, moderate, and high intensity. Light and moderate intensity cardio are usually done in a steady state, though varying intervals of intensity can also be implemented if that's what you enjoy doing. In this program we'll be referring to 3 primary forms of cardio and their abbreviations: LISS (Light Intensity Steady State Cardio), MISS (Medium Intensity Steady State Cardio) and HIIT (High intensity Interval Training)

High intensity cardio is typically done in intervals. Think sprints. Moderate intensity cardio is essentially endurance training. Low intensity cardio is the lowest impact and has the least possible interference with your weight training, but it generally takes longer to complete the goal caloric burn.

What types of cardio you do and in what form or on which machines will be left highly to your personal preferences. Another thing to consider is the level of impact of the particular choice of cardiovascular activity you choose. Cycling and the elliptical are typically lower impact on your joints than jogging and running, and even incline walking [1]. They also involve less eccentric motion and therefore impact weight training less (you're constantly pushing the concentric phase of motion when cycling versus when jogging, where you have to decelerate/cushion the impact of each step on the floor, especially exaggerated when downhill running). High intensity intervals, even on a machine, will cause more potential interference on training and recovery than medium or low intensity cardio.

Other considerations include using a machine versus doing cardio in real life. Jogging the streets or the hills outside may provide more pleasure and psychological relief than incline walking or jogging at the gym but its likely to place higher impact on your joints and thus has a greater potential to negatively affect your training. Pounding the pavement will be higher impact than running on grass or a soft surface.

Same thing goes for treadmill sprints which offer a softer impact than sprints on the street or at the track. However, experiencing nature, being outdoors, or pounding pavement might be your thing and the benefits they give you mentally and emotionally may outweigh the possible interference with training and recovery. You have to weigh out the pros and cons and accept responsibility for whatever decision you make, because there really is no right answer.

If outdoor activity or experiencing nature is very important to you but you also want to maximize your training in the gym (which maximizes muscle growth and retention and strength gain and retention), I recommend taking walks outside if you have the time. If you absolutely find that you HAVE to do some form of high intensity cardio outside, I might suggest hill sprints on a grass field or some sort of bodyweight circuit or tabata cardio.

If you're lucky enough to own a reliable, high quality calorie expenditure/cardio tracking device that you plug all your data in and it monitors your heart rate, you can surely use that to track your cardio expenditure.

My recommendation is to either own or find one single cardio machine at the gym that you love using. If you're able to use it for both low intensity and high intensity cardio, all the better. Typically, you can enter your weight and age into these machines and they estimate your caloric expenditure. This figure may not be completely accurate but that really doesn't matter. What does matter is that you're controlling the input of exactly how many calories of cardio you do on this one machine per session as well as how many sessions you do per week. Doing this while tracking your macros, you'll have deliberate control over your energy balance.

Cardio is usually most effective when placed as far away from resistance training sessions as possible. I typically recommend cardio to be placed on your non workout days. However, you should be careful when and where you place certain types of cardio, especially cardio that is overly strenuous on the muscles you might be training in the next day or couple of days. Most LISS won't have any affect, but MISS and HIIT surely can. MISS and HIIT, including being done in the form of stairs or sprints, can cause quite a bit of fatigue and require recovery all on their own, so it's typically not the best idea to do them the day before a leg day, immediately prior to hitting legs, or the morning of an evening leg workout.

1. Gergley, J.C., Comparison of two lower-body modes of endurance training on lowerbody strength development while concurrently training. Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 2009. 23(3): p. 979-87.

LISS (Low Intensity Steady State)

Low Intensity Steady State Cardio (LISS):

On a scale of intensity from 1-10, we're talking about a 2-4. This is typically cardio done for 30-60 minutes per session. Most males will burn an additional 30 to 40 calories, more or less, in a ten minute period doing cardio at a light intensity versus what they'd burn otherwise, doing light everyday activity like driving their car or making their bed. Depending mostly on your weight but also other factors, that will mean in 30 minutes, most males can expect to have burned an additional 95 to 120 calories. These numbers are *additional* calories burned on top of your BMR and NEAT. Your cardio machines at the gym as well as your cardio tracking heart-rate monitor watches and devices take this into account and typically spit out total calories burned, not just *additional* calories burned.

Since its easier and more realistic, we will be tracking *total* calories burned per cardio session and not *additional* calories burned.,

How many calories should I aim to hit per session?

- There is no magical number here, what matters most is the *TOTAL* amount of cardio (calories) done *PER WEEK*
- If you're completely new to cardio, start with one 300 calorie session per week. This can be adjusted lower or higher based on preference and need.
- Usually 300-500 calories per session is what I recommend for most. (2-2.5 calories per pound of bodyweight). I personally find 400 calorie sessions are a sweet spot.
- Go by PREFERENCE. You might like the idea of more frequent cardio sessions per week in shorter bouts, or vice versa.

I recommend performing this on your favorite cardio machine at the gym. I really enjoy using the glider machines, which are a bit like elliptical trainers but usually have a little more range of motion and are usually a bit smoother.

LISS can usually be performed any day, any time. Off days or workout days. Before or after training, or a little bit of both. Or maybe in the morning if you train in the evening, or vice versa. Typically, I enjoy performing LISS prior to upper body workouts, as I find that I have no negative impact to my weight training. When it comes to LISS adjacent to lower body workouts, I'd usually recommend performing at least the majority of it post-workout, instead of pre-workout.

MISS (Medium Intensity Steady State)

Medium Intensity Steady State Cardio (MISS):

On a scale of intensity from 1-10, we're talking about 5-7. Typically most males will burn an additional 75 to 100 calories, more or less, in a ten minute period doing cardio at a moderate intensity versus what they'd burn doing light everyday activity. Depending mostly on your weight but also other factors, that will mean in 30 minutes, most males can expect to have burned an additional 225 to 300 calories. Once again, these numbers are *additional* calories burned. We will be keeping track of and manipulating *total calories burned* per cardio session, as stated on the machine of our choice or the device of our choice if we happen to be using that instead. Remember, consistency is key here.

Typically, most males can burn 400 calories doing cardio at a moderate intensity in around 25-40 minutes. A general recommendation for those training for strength and/or hypertrophy is to cap yourself at one hour max of MISS a week. This one hour maximum, if hit, should be broken down into multiple sessions, a maximum of three ~20 minute sessions or two ~30 minute sessions. For simplicity and consistency, focus on total calories burned and hitting a calorie target versus hitting a certain time.

Your MISS can be performed in the form of LISS+MISS intervals, if desired. It's also another way to spread out your recommended maximum of 1 hour MISS per week.

MISS interval Examples:

1-2 minutes at 50-60% / 1-2 minutes at 60-70% max heart rate

2 minutes at 50-60% / 1-2 minutes at 60-70% / 1 min at 75% max heart rate

If you do a combined LISS/MISS interval session, with half of it being LISS and half of it being MISS, if it took you 30 minutes to complete the session's calorie goal, you'd make a mental note that you did 15 minutes of your recommended maximum of 1 hour of MISS per week.

HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training)

High Intensity Interval Training - HIIT Cardio:

High intensity cardio is the most taxing and can typically only be performed for short intervals unless you're a high level anaerobic athlete. You net more calories burned from a shorter period of time [1], but at the cost of higher risk of interference with training [2]. If weight training, strength gain and retention, and muscle gain and retention are your priorities, limit your number of HIIT sessions per week to 1-2 maximum. Hitting legs 2-3x per week while doing 2-3 or more HIIT sessions per week is a recipe for overtraining and injury. Stay within the max recommendations.

HIIT can be performed in many different fashions, the most common being on a cycle machine, elliptical, or treadmill. The most important thing is that you pick a form of cardio or a specific machine that allows you to go exert your full effort. Some machines are better or worse than others for HIIT, and preference will play a big role too.

Burning sensations and extreme discomfort should be expected when doing HIIT.

HIIT Protocol:

- 5 minute warmup at intensity level 2-4.
- 15-20 seconds all out 100% MAXIMUM effort
- 45-60 seconds at intensity level 2-4.
- Repeat for a total of 10 rounds
- Continue on machine doing LISS/MISS until target calories are hit.

Let the goal target calories be the same that you typically aim for in your LISS/MISS sessions

If it's your first time doing HIIT and/or you're out of cardiovascular shape, I recommend starting with 5 rounds, and working your way up to 10 rounds, adding 1-2 rounds per HIIT session, until you reach 10

It is of the utmost importance that you exert ALL OUT effort on each and every sprint interval. This means giving it everything you have.

HOW TO:

The easiest way to time these intervals is to look at the time on the machine you're using and begin the intervals starting at the 5 minute mark. To do that, put your treadmill/elliptical/cycle onto a much faster/difficult setting as the seconds tick towards the minute mark, so that *on* the minute, you begin your interval. Then, hit a 15 second sprint, keeping your eye on the time displayed on the machine. As soon as you see the 5:15 second mark, begin clicking the appropriate button to decrease the speed/intensity back to a pace that you can coast at without a ton of effort (like the warmup intensity). Keep repeating this pattern, on the minute, every minute until you've completed the goal number of intervals. If you're following the 15/45 scheme, five intervals would be completed at 9:15 and 10 intervals would be complete at the 14:15 mark. Continue doing low and/or medium intensity state cardio on this machine or another until your goal calorie target is achieved.

Some machines have built-in interval programs that can be very handy and programmed exactly how the protocol is meant to be done. Some machines will have interval programs that aren't set up optimally for how we intend on doing HIIT; you're better off following the "how-to" above. A lot of heart-rate monitor cardio tracking devices also come with HIIT programs and timers that you can utilize. Lastly, there are also plenty of HIIT and interval training apps for your mobile device, both free and premium, that you might find useful. Still, my preferred and recommended method is the "HOW TO" in the previous paragraph.

1. Burgomaster, K.A., et al., Similar metabolic adaptations during exercise after low volume sprint interval and traditional endurance training in humans. *Journal of Physiology*, 2008. 586(1): p. 151-60.

2. Balabinis, C.P., et al., Early phase changes by concurrent endurance and strength training. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 2003. 17(2): p. 393-401.

📄 Adjusting Macros 101

Calculating your macros was step one. Hitting your macros while tracking your bodyweight was step two. Adjusting your macros if/when necessary is step three.

For the overwhelming majority of human beings without metabolic disorders or other serious health conditions, hitting your macros (while monitoring and controlling your exercise output) works perfectly for weight loss, weight maintenance, or weight gain, every time, as long as those specific macros are the ones necessary for reaching your goal. Since nobody, at least in this universe, gains body tissue from anything besides a caloric surplus and nobody loses body tissue from anything besides a caloric deficit, you can trust that if your macros (and therefore your calories) are on point, your body composition will follow accordingly. Simple Cause and effect.

Unfortunately, just calculating what your macros *should be* isn't good enough. You have to put them into *action* while tracking your bodyweight and adjust them if/when necessary. There's no guarantee that the macros you start with will "work" for you right off the bat. A lot of stubborn people lose hope quickly if they don't lose weight the first week or two. I've found some people go as far as saying "macros don't work (for me)!" That's like saying, "Gravity doesn't work!" or "Algebra doesn't work!" Fortunately, these things "work" whether you understand them or not. Do your best to understand them, but also trust the process. If you're hitting your macros perfectly for 1-2 weeks and not losing weight, you just have to adjust your macros.

How long should you hit your macros before making adjustments?

For most people, I recommend following your initial calculated (estimated) macros for at least 2 weeks before making any changes. This way you can gather at least 14 weigh ins; hitting and seeing what 14 days of the same macros do for you as far as energy balance and fat loss. After some simple math you'll be able to see what your average weigh ins for weeks 1 and 2 were.

Date	Weight	Average	Weight Lost	% Bodyweight Lost
January 1	181.2	(Starting Weight 181.2)		
January 2	181.4			
January 3	181.0			
January 4	179.8			
January 5	179.4			
January 6	179.6			

January 7 179.2 **Week 1 Average: 180.21.0 lb** **0.55%**

January 8 179.4

January 9 179.8

January 10 179.0

January 11 179.2

January 12 178.8

January 13 178.6

January 14 178.4 **Week 2 Average: 179.01.2 lb** **0.67%**

Are there any exceptions?

If there's an obvious trend going on, such as weigh-ins increasing day after day for days on end, that could be a sign that you messed up big time on calculating your initial macros, and/or that you're extremely inaccurate with your food tracking. These are generally atypical situations, but they happen. More often than not, we're not actually being precise with our food, or we're consuming calories that went untracked.

For example, some people will use a spoon to measure peanut butter. The jar might say the serving size is a teaspoon or x amount of grams. So you think "oh, well this looks like a teaspoon!" and you scoop 50-100% more peanut butter than what actually consists of 1 serving.

Start by analyzing how accurate you are with hitting your target macros, looking for points of error. If you're 100% sure you're hitting your macros, then you may want to make a macro target change before the suggested 2 week trial period.

How often should you adjust your macros?

There's no set rule here, but one thing that's for sure is you don't want to make random changes when none are necessary.

As you weigh your self each morning and hit your macros day after day, you take your weekly weight averages and adjust macros if/when necessary on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Adjustments are to be made only if weight loss stops or to put or keep you inside the target weight loss goal of 0.5% to 1.0% of your bodyweight per week. My general recommendation is to coast through with no changes if you're inside the range of your target weight loss goal. The further away you are from the goal, the bigger the adjustment to macros.

What if you're building muscle while losing fat?

Body recomposition (building muscle while losing fat) is possible, and very likely in untrained or detrained individuals who hop on this training program. If you're brand new or relatively new to training or coming out from a long layoff (detrained), you may experience such rapid muscle gains that result in a maintenance or even an increase in bodyweight, despite potential fat loss.

Similarly, consuming adequate protein for the first time ever or introducing a completely novel stimulus (like going from very high rep or bodyweight training to heavier resistance training, like in this program) can cause a situation where fat loss can be masked by muscle gain if all you're relying on is the scale.

This is where body measurements come into hand. If weight loss doesn't seem to be happening, you'll want to look at your particular body measurements where a lot of fat is stored, mostly your waist. For some people, this may also include the legs, arms, and or upper torso. There's a chance you are losing body fat despite your weight not going down too much (or at all).

For most everybody who has been training for longer than 6-12 months though, we'll be relying on your weigh ins and your weekly average weigh ins quite heavily. They'll give us the biggest picture of whether or not to change your macros.

In all honesty, your calculated (estimated) macros don't really matter. They're just a starting point. What you do with them matters.

If you followed the guidelines, for most of you, your starting macros will have you losing weight. If they don't initially, it's not a big deal. We'll adjust them accordingly based on the situation at hand.

The best possible outcome of hitting your macros is this ideal situation: Achieving the goal rate of weight loss of 0.5 to 1% of your bodyweight per week. If your weight loss is inside this range, you shouldn't make any changes to your macros or cardio.

That said, there are **3 Alternate Outcomes**:

- **Maintaining Your Weight**
- **Gaining Weight**
- **Losing too much weight**

With all of these scenarios, there are several factors to look at and consider when deciding to make a change to your macros or cardio. Generally, a change to macros is usually done under the assumption that you're actually hitting them within a +/- 5 grams.

What to do when you Maintain Weight

When You Maintain Weight (“When Nothing” Happens)

Changing your initial macros:

So you hit your beginning macros for two weeks, and you compare week 1’s average weigh in with week 2’s average weigh in. You find out that they’re the same, and you’re really confident you weighed yourself and your foods perfectly.

Don’t panic, just drop 100 calories from each day or 700 total calories from the weekly caloric intake. including your refeed day(s) if you started your diet with them. Drop 100 calories from each day by taking away 25 carbs from each day of the week.

Changing your macros further down the road:

If you’re losing less than but pretty close to 0.5% bodyweight per week, I recommend keeping your macros the same. If that’s not enough for you or you prefer keeping yourself between the 0.5 to 1% bodyweight per week, simply drop 500-700 calories from the week’s intake. This can be done by lowering carbs from just the low days, or lowering fats from all days.

The leaner you are, the smaller adjustments you should make. The higher body fat you are, the larger adjustments you can make on your caloric intake.

Example 1a (someone without refeeds):

Someone without refeed days on 70f/275c/185p (2470 kcal per day and 17,290 kcal per week) may elect to drop carbs to get him or her self back into weight loss. They decide to drop their calories by roughly 100 calories per day (~700 per week). All they need to do is drop 25 carbs per day. They would adjust their intake to 70f/250c/185p (2370 kcal per day and 16,590 kcal per week).

Example 1b:

The same person above may want to make a change to their fats this week rather than carbs. They want to drop their calories by roughly 100 calories per day (~700 per week). They would take their macros from 70f/275c/185p (2470 kcal per day and 17,290 kcal per week) to 60f/275c/185p (2380 kcal per day and 16,660 kcal per week). Lowering their fats by 10 grams equals out to 90 calories per day. Close enough to 100.

Example 1c:

The same person above may want to make a change to both carbs *and* fats. They want to drop their calories by roughly 100 calories per day (~700 per week). They would take their macros from 70f/275c/185p (2470 kcal per day and 17,290 kcal per week) to 65f/260c/185p (2365 kcal per day and 16,555 kcal per week).

What if you do have one or more refeed days per week?

If you're making a carbohydrate drop and you have refeeds, just lower calories (carbs) on your low days. You'd be focused on making adjustments to weekly total calories, since, if you're not changing fats, you wouldn't be touching your refeed days.

Example:

Let's look at our 175 male with a desk job example. Let's say he's running 5 low days at 60/150/195 and 2 refeed days at 60/325/195. He's hit a period of stalling weight loss so he decides to drop 500 calories from his weekly total. That's just 100 calories from each of his low days (25g of carbs). New macros are 5 low days at 60/125/195 and 2 refeed days at 60/325/195.

Example 2:

Let's look at our 200 lb male example. He's on 6 low days of 85/320/240 and 1 refeed per week at 85/465/240. He decides to lower his calories by 700 per week. That's about 115 calories per low day and about 30 grams of carbs per low day. New macros are 6 low days at 85/290/240 and 1 refeed at 85/465/240.

Example 3:

Let's look at a slightly harder example.

We have someone who's pretty darn lean at 165 lbs doing 11 consecutive low days and 3 day refeeds.

Low days are at 55/225/225 (2295 kcal) and high days are 55/375/225 (2895 kcal). Do the math: $(2295 \times 11) + (2895 \times 3)$. That's a bi-weekly total of 33,930 kcal. Let's say he wants to lower the weekly total by 500 kcal, which bi-weekly would be 1000kcal. That means he needs to lower his bi-weekly carb total by 250. A 250 carb decrease spread out over 11 days is about 25 (22.7 but we'll round up) carbs per day. New Low day macros: 55/200/225

Friendly reminder #1: you want your fats to be between 15-25% of your daily caloric intake

You'll typically make more frequent changes to your carbs than to your fats since you have less wiggle room for your fats because they start relatively lower than carbs as a percentage of total calories. My recommendation is to have around three 10-20+ gram adjustments to carbs for any 5-10 gram adjustment to fats.

General rule of thumb: make around 3 adjustments to carbs before you lower fats

If you put your fats really low to start with, for example - 15% of your daily caloric intake, you might be left with no room to change fats at all. If you put your fats somewhat moderate around 20% of your intake, you'll have room to lower them, but by not a whole lot. If you started yourself with fat at 15% or 20%, when lowering fats, I'd recommend lowering them in small 5g increments like in example 2.

If you put your fats even higher at around 25% of your daily intake, you have even more room to be able to drop your fats when weight loss stalls. You can also make larger 10 gram drops of fat if preferred.

Friendly reminder #2, you want a minimum of 0.25g of fat per lb of bodyweight.

For health reasons we have a recommended minimum fat consumption. A 200 lb male wouldn't want to go lower than 50 grams of fat per day, a 175 lb male wouldn't want to go lower than ~44 grams of fat per day, and a 150 lb male wouldn't want to go lower than ~38 grams of fat per day.

Over the course of the entire diet, you have the wiggle room between where you initially start and the minimum requirement of fat. But that doesn't mean you *should* be consuming the minimum amount of fat. Save that for certain scenarios, the extremely lean, physique competitors, or towards the end of the diet, etc. Stay between the 15 to 25% range of total calories.

And no, don't worry about hitting or maintaining a certain exact percentage, just make macro adjustments if and when necessary based on the guidelines given in this chapter.

What to do if you Gain Weight

Don't Worry, it's not the end of the world

Gaining weight when you're trying to lose it can be very frustrating. If it happens at the start of the diet, it is usually because of one or two main reasons. It can be because the initial macros might have been too high, whether by a slight mathematical mistake (less common) or just the result your individual unique metabolism (more common). Secondly, unexpected weight gain often comes from not tracking all of your foods or doing so incorrectly. You might be forgetting to track condiments, using incorrect myfitnesspal/diet app inputs, or eyeballing foods instead of actually weighing them. In a few cases, some people mess up horribly when calculating their starting macros.

If you're losing weight steadily and then experience gradual and substantial weight gain, it's usually because of one reason. You probably, unknowingly or not, have been going over your macros. Maybe you thought you're an expert so you stopped weighing your oats and you just eyeball them (big mistake). Or there might be one or more major ingredients in your daily meals that you're forgetting to track or weighing incorrectly or inputting incorrectly into your diet tracking tool. For example, you might be consuming a full fat feta cheese as part of your dinner salads, but for the past week, you've been accidentally inputting into myfitnesspal and tracking "fat-free feta cheese". It pays to just double check that what you're eating matches what you're inputting, and vice versa.

Lastly, weight gain occurs when you knowingly consume food beyond your macros, if you binge eat, or increase your sodium and food bulk.

The vast majority of people who start this program, calculate their macros how they're supposed to, and hit those macros how they're supposed to, will immediately experience weight loss. However, a small percentage of people will end up in an unforeseen caloric surplus, simply because that's just how their metabolism is - slower than average.

Changing your Initial Macros

Let's assume you're measuring your food perfectly and tracking every macro that goes into your mouth. You're not bingeing and you're hitting your macros. If there's a consistent trend of weight gain from the start of this program to week 1's average weigh in, and/or week 1's average weigh in to week 2's average weigh in, we need to make a pretty significant macro adjustment. When you're trying to lose weight and you're losing it fine, you can often go 1-2 weeks before sitting down and even considering whether you might need to change macros or not. But, if you're noticing obvious weight gain, we want to nip it in the bud a bit sooner.

If you're just starting the diet and seeing weight gain, take your starting weight (or average starting weight if you have that) and compare it to your week 1 average weigh-in.

- **If your weight increases by 0.1 - 0.4 lbs in a week, drop 2000 calories from your weekly intake**
 - **That's a 285 kcal drop per day (spread evenly across the week, low days and refeed days alike)**
- **If your weight increases by a half pound or more, drop 3,500 calories from your weekly intake. That may mean dropping 500 calories from each day, including refeed days. You might create that drop entirely from carbs - 125 of them per day, or a combination of fats and carbs - like dropping fats by 10 grams and carbs by roughly 100 grams.**

Example 1:

Let's use our 200 lb male example, and say he starts with 7 low days of 85/340/240 which is 3085 kcal per day. His day 7 weigh-in says 200.8 lbs, but his weekly average is (I'm making this up) 200.4 lbs. He'd drop 2000 calories from his weekly intake, which is about 285 kcal per day.

His options:

- He could lower his carbs across all days about 70g...
- He could lower fats by 5g and carbs by 60g...
- He could lower fats by 10g and carbs by 50g...
- He could lower fats by 15g and carbs by 40g...
- Or he could lower fats by 30g so that he wouldn't have to touch his carbs...

Example 2:

Using our 200 lb male example, say he starts with 6 low days of 85/320/240 and 1 refeed per week at 85/465/240 (weekly total: 21,615kcal) and it appears he's gained about 1 lb from the start of his diet to day 7, where he's finally got a week's worth of weigh-ins. Not that it matters, but let's say he ended up at 201 lbs and his average weigh-in for the week was 200.6 lbs.

First he would double-check that he's been weighing and inputting everything correctly. Maybe he forgot to log peanut butter, so it turns out he just went way over his macros. If he doesn't find any human error that explains the weight gain, he would make an adjustment to his macros. He would drop 3,500 calories from his weekly intake by simply dropping 500 calories per day. His old weekly intake was 21,615 kcal and his new weekly intake is 18,115 kcal.

His options:

- He could lower his carbs on all days by 125g.
- He could drop fats by 10g and carbs by 100g per day, for a drop of 490kcal which is as close as you can get to 500 while keeping the numbers multiples of 5.
- He could drop fats by 10g and carbs by 80g (500kcal total)
- He could drop fat by 15g and carbs by 90g (495kcal total)
- Our 200 lb guy might be wondering if he could just lower fats to achieve the 500 kcal drop in daily calories. That would mean dropping fats by 55g to 30g, which actually makes it really hard to fit a lot of different kinds of foods into your macros and also is below both the recommended % of fat and below the minimum amount of fat he should be consuming for health reasons.
- The minimum amount of fat is 0.25g per lb of bodyweight (200 divided by 4 is 50g), and the recommended percentage of fats should be between 15-25% of your total calories, (His daily average intake is about 2588 kcal, and 15% of that is about 388 kcal. Convert that into grams of fat and you get about 43 grams of fat).

There are quite a few options this guy can take. Go based on your eating preferences and what you feel gives you best gym performance, while of course staying within the recommended guidelines for fat (15-25% of your calories) and of course not going below the recommended minimum (0.25g per lb bodyweight).

If you're someone like myself who doesn't really care about added fats (peanut butter, avocado, butters, almonds/nuts, etc) but, say you really love rice and potatoes, then stick with slightly lower fat and higher carb. At the same time, make mental notes of how you respond to varying levels of fats and carbs so that over time you can gain more information about yourself. Through multiple cutting phases over time, you might find that you lose fat best with, say, 60 grams of fat and more carbs versus 85 grams of fat and less carbs (assuming equal total calories).

What if You're Losing Weight Too Fast?

Ideally we're aiming for a rate of weight loss between 0.5 to 1.0% of your bodyweight per week. In some cases you might aim for more than that, like when you're running close to a deadline (wedding, photoshoot, etc). Rapid fat loss is achievable, but you place yourself at a greater risk of losing muscle and strength, especially the longer you hold this aggressive deficit.

A less aggressive deficit also leaves more "room in the tank" for macronutrient adjustments down the road when fat loss stalls. You can only lower calories so much. Another term for this is "milking out fat loss". You might achieve more short term weight loss from lower macros and a bigger initial deficit, but by eating as much food as possible while still staying in the goal weight loss range, you afford yourself greater long term weight loss, improved overall body composition, and more strength retention.

- If your weight loss per week is between 1.1 to 1.5% of your bodyweight, increase your carbs across your low days by 5%.

Ex: a 200 lb'er is losing around 3 lbs per week, so he increases his carbs from 300 grams to 315.

- If your weight loss per week is greater than 1.5% of your bodyweight, increase your carbs across your low days by about 10%.

Ex: a 225 lb male finds himself losing around 4.5 lbs per week, so he takes his carbs from 325 to 355 grams.

As you can see, if you continue to lose more weight than what is 0.5 to 1.0% of your bodyweight, you continue to increase your carbs across your low days to put you closer to that goal weight loss rate. The benefits of doing this are numerous and your overall transformation will be even better and more impressive.

📄 Adjusting Cardio (Instead of Macros)

We learned earlier how it's really not a good idea to create and sustain a caloric deficit through just cardio alone. But what about the opposite? Can we create and sustain a caloric deficit through nutrition alone? The answer is definitely yes. But you probably want to include some cardio for a few reasons.

Including cardio can help you eat a little bit more throughout your diet. It also can help mobilize lower body fat a little bit. As long as you're staying beneath the maximum cardio recommendation, feel free to add in more cardio.

When and how much?

Typically, I recommend 2-3 macronutrient changes (one per weight loss stall) for every sizeable change in cardio. By sizeable, I mean adding in another cardio session (usually around 400kcal), whether it's in the form of LISS, MISS, or HIIT (remember the 2 HIIT per week maximum recommendation).

An example of what this can look like

You start diet with X grams of fat, X grams of carbs, X grams of protein, and 1 cardio session (400kcal) per week...

Example Journey:

- 3 weeks of fat loss
- Weight loss stalls so you decrease carbs (Macro Adjustment Number 1)
 - 2-3 weeks of fat loss
- Weight stalls so you decrease carbs (Macro Adjustment Number 2)
 - 2-3 weeks of fat loss
- Weight stalls so you decrease fats (Macro Adjustment Number 3: you could have added cardio here if you wanted)
 - 2 weeks of fat loss
- Weight stalls so you add 1 cardio session
 - 2 weeks of fat loss
- Weight loss stalls so you decrease carbs (Macro Adjustment Number 1)

So on and so forth

*This is just an example of what could happen and isn't necessarily what your fat loss or any particular person's fat loss is going to look like.

Strength Training for Shredding

Training is often the neglected aspect of a shredding plan. You could be on the smoothest caloric deficit in the world, but if you're not training properly, or at all, there's a good chance you won't be blown away by your muscularity and definition (or lack of) towards the end of your shredding diet. Intelligent training should be the constant in your fitness journey - whether you're cutting or not. The macros and short term nutrition goals simply dictate whether you're adding muscle (and body fat) or decreasing body fat (and retaining muscle).

Since we're on a cut, the volume (think - total working sets and/or total working reps) should be lower than when you're on a maintenance or surplus level of calories. There's quite a bit of wiggle room for the individual and the total volume of your lifting should reflect the trifecta of:

- 1) What's necessary (how much you need to maintain or build strength)
- 2) what's practical (how much time you can spend in the gym per session or week)
- 3) what you can recover from (when you're on a caloric deficit, your recovery ability is reduced)

Ideally, we want you training somewhere above the minimum amount required to facilitate the adaptations we want (muscle and strength gain/retention) but, of course, well below the maximum level of volume that you can recover from.

Key Exercises to Maximize Efficiency

We'll be focusing on building strength in primary movements such as the benchpress, squat, deadlift, overhead press, pullup/chinup, and rows - but we'll also be applying a moderate amount of volume to exercises such as curls, triceps extensions, rear delt flies, and calf raises, with an ample serving of side lateral raises to maximize the aesthetic goal that many or most of you have. Rep ranges are specifically arranged based on the exercises and what appears to work best in my experience and observation, based on your level of development (beginner/intermediate/advanced).

While most cutting programs you buy come with just one program (Lol), I'm giving you three. This is because different lifters require different amounts of training volume based on their lifting experience (think total years and/or intelligent years) and other individual factors. Does it make sense that I (someone who has been lifting for over 10 years, most of which were intelligent years) should use the same lifting plan as a beginner? Not at all. My training requirement is much, much higher, not to mention the beginner should be following different progression models than me, since he or she can likely milk out linear gains, and an advanced lifter - by definition, can't (thus requiring more sophisticated or slower progression models).

Which Program is right for you? Here are some guidelines:

If you've been lifting for less than 2 years total or less than 1 year intelligently, go with the beginner/novice routine.

If you've been lifting for 2-5 years total or 1-4 years intelligently, go with the intermediate routine

If you've been lifting for over 5 years total, or over 3-4 years intelligently, you may go with the intermediate or advanced routine

When you pick one program, I recommend sticking to it for the entirety of your (12 week) diet.

More details will be found when you click on the individual routine you desire to hop on.

Beginner/Novice Routine

Workout A



Workout B



To pack on as much size and strength as quickly as possible, the primary goal of absolute beginners and novices should be progressive overload while establishing great form on major key lifts. This stage involves linear progression. No need for complexity. Many people who have been lifting for years are hardly stronger than they would've been had they just done this program for 4-6 months. Focusing on building your strength is key for building muscle and the lean muscular physique.

For your squat, benchpress, overhead press, and deadlift, you will likely be adding weight to the bar every week. There are two primary workouts that you'll hit, alternating from one to the other, every lifting day. Start with the minimum number of sets for at least a week or two to make sure you have enough time to fit all of your exercises into your gym session.

Workout A:

- Squats: 3 sets of 5
- Benchpress: 3 sets of 5
- Bentover Row: 3 sets of 8-10
- Triceps Pushdowns: 2 sets of 8-12
- Barbell Curls: 2 sets of 8-12
- Barbell or DB Shrugs: 2 sets of 8-12
- Back Extensions: 2 sets of 8-12
- (Optional: Abs)

Workout B:

- Squat: 3 sets of 5
- Standing Overhead Press: 3 sets of 5
- Deadlift: 1 set of 5
- Weighted Chin-ups: 3 sets of 6-8 Or Pulldowns 3 sets of 8-12
- Close Grip Benchpress or Dips: 2 sets of 8-10
- Dumbbell Curls: 2 sets of 8-12
- (Optional: Abs)
- Face pulls: 2 sets of 12-15

Week 1:

Monday: Workout A

Wednesday: Workout B

Friday: Workout A

Week 2

Monday: Workout B

Wednesday: Workout A

Friday: Workout B

(And repeat)

Alternatively, if your schedule allows, you can lift every other day.

Program Notes:

What weight should I start with?

Those who are still in the novice stage but aren't necessarily rank beginners might have an idea of where their strength currently lies on many of the lifts. When it comes to the 5's, for the sake of progression and utilizing solid form, pick a weight that's 20% less than what would be your 5 rep max.

We want you to start at a point that you can progress from. Something that is challenging, but not so much that you hit failure on your first workout or first handful of workouts. Pick weights that allow you to complete all prescribed reps, especially the sets of 5, with clean form.

Some people throw good form out the window because they feel like they're giving more effort by using cheat reps or getting a couple more reps with bad form or momentum. This is an illusion of strength, an illusion of "more effort". It actually takes more effort (mental and physical) to maintain better form. It's understandable that the last rep or two of your set might look a little sloppier than your first, but never let that kind of form become your everyday standard.

Using good form is key to both your safety and your gains. Good form also will allow more progression. So it may be tempting to let good form slip for an extra rep or two, or for a little bit more weight, but you're really just cheating yourself. Don't let your ego get the best of you.

What if you're a rank beginner and have no idea where to start?

If it's literally your first time doing one of these exercises, let your warm up and work-up set(s) help you determine your working weight. Start with the bar or something really light and using controlled sets of 5 reps, add 5-10 lbs per set until you hit a set that feels a bit challenging, like you only could have done 2-3 or so more reps for that set. Start with that weight for your first workout. As long as you're putting in your absolute effort into those reps,

Warming Up

Warming up is critical for maximizing performance and avoiding injury. There is a difference between your warm-up and your "work-up" or "acclimation sets". Typically we group all these things together, but just know that when it comes to a particular exercise, you first warm up and then you work your weight up towards your working sets. Also, you might find it beneficial to warm up the your shoulders and elbows before hitting benchpress. Wall slides and shoulder rotation exercises along with light cable triceps extensions should do the trick.

Warm up properly with very light weight and high reps for a set or two before working your weight up. As you work your way up, decrease the reps so you're not wasting energy on unnecessary volume. The more reps you feel like doing in order to warm yourself up, the lighter the weight you should use.

This may look like the following:

Warmup for Squats:

General Lower Body Warmup

Bodyweight or light goblet squat x10 reps,

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps

95 lbs x5 reps

115 x 3 reps

135 x 5x5 (*WORK SETS*)

Warmup for Flat barbell Benchpress

General Upper Body Warmup

Flat DB Press: 10's x10 reps

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps

75 lbs x 5 reps

95 lbs x 3 reps

115 x 3x5 (*WORK SETS*)

Warmup for Barbell Curls:

5 lb Dumbbells x 10 (a lot of gyms don't have 10 lb barbells)

20 x 4-6

45 x 3 sets of 8-12

The heavier the exercise, the more compound it is, the earlier in a workout you are, and the more advanced you are in your training career, the more sets, typically, you'll do on your way towards your working weight. Some exercises you might prefer having more warm up sets for and others less. My warmup on biceps and back movements are somewhat quick; just a light warm up and an acclimation set or two, but I like to do a more extensive warm-up for my pushing movements, tricep exercises, and squats and deadlifts. Also, if I have already performed compound movements, my warm ups for the isolation movements hitting the muscles used during the compounds are usually pretty brief since those muscles usually already have blood flowing through them (e.g. Biceps after back movements, triceps after push movements)

Getting up to some heavy squats for me these days looks like:

Bodyweight x 10

Bar x 8

135 x 8

225 x 6

275 x 5

315 x 3

345 x 2

375 x 1 or 2

405 x 5 x 5

Rest Periods:

Rest as long as necessary to be fully prepared for the next planned set, if time allows.

For maximum performance and progression, here are some basic guidelines of how much time you may need between work sets, as a beginner:

3-4 minutes between compound 5x5 sets

1-2 minutes between the higher rep, isolation movements

For warm up sets, I typically will rest around 30-45 seconds between the first ones (the bodyweight and bar-only sets) and gradually work it up to 2-3 minutes just before beginning my first work set. Here's what that may look like for you.

General Lower Body Warmup

Bodyweight or light goblet squat x10 reps (Rest 30 seconds)

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps (Rest 45-60 seconds)

95 lbs x5 reps (Rest 60-90 seconds)

115 x 3 reps (Rest around 2 minutes)

135 x 5x5 (*WORK SETS*) (Rest 3-4 minutes between sets)

What to do if you're in a hurry, use supersets or alternating sets

Supersets are where you hit one exercise and then immediately without rest, hit another. You rest after you've hit a set of both exercises.

Alternating sets are basically the same thing, except with a bit of rest between each exercise. You might hit a set of curls, rest for 30 seconds to a minute (perfect for when equipment is spread out) and then hit a set of triceps pushdowns, rest for 30-60 seconds, rinse and repeat.

Super-setting or utilizing "alternating sets" on agonist and antagonist muscles and movements can be a great way to pack in more training volume into a limited time window. I wouldn't recommend doing this on your squat, bench, deadlift, or OHP (overhead press) since we're really trying to progress our strength in those movements, but super-setting or using alternating sets for, say, curls and triceps pushdowns, or curls with cable crunches, or triceps with shrugs or hyperextensions can be fine. I recommend alternating sets over supersets, and you typically don't want to pair like-movements or the same muscles together, especially if your goal is progressive overload.

When it comes to isolation movements, I've found that utilizing alternating sets really, really helps me pack my training volume into a smaller time window versus straight sets and taking traditional resting periods. I also find that doing alternating sets sometimes improves my performance of my isolation movements because I'm getting in a little more rest between sets of a given exercise. For example, when doing straight sets of dumbbell biceps curls, I might be tempted to hit my next set of curls with less than 2 minutes of rest before it, but when I hit a set of triceps before between my sets of curls I usually get around 3 minutes between the sets of curls, improving my performance on them.

If you're *extremely hurried* (just finished squats and you get a phone call and you suddenly have 20-30 minutes less to lift), you have a choice to make. My recommendation would be to prioritize progression of your main lifts. Get as much of those done as possible, and do your isolation lifts if time allows. The other option, could be to drop the number of sets from 5 to 3 on your major lifts and/or pair major lifts with higher rep lifts in the alternating set fashion. Just know that doing so often will decrease your strength progression on the main lifts. If you're doing supersets or alternating sets, make sure not to pair like-movements. Don't pair benchpress with triceps, don't pair pull-ups with biceps, and also, don't hit biceps before your rows or pull-ups, and don't hit triceps before your OHP or benchpress.

Progression on the 5's

There are a few reasons why we stick to 5 rep sets for our main lifts for beginners. As a newbie, when you start going over 5 reps with working weight on technical lifts such as squats or deadlifts, form can often start breaking down. This may not be a huge deal for biceps curls (and you'd still want to have good form on them) but when it comes to technical lifts that carry a much larger risk for injury, you want to be doing things right, and building up good motor patterns. As a beginner, you want to reinforce good form, set after set. To build up the training volume, we perform multiple sets of 5.

At first you'll notice huge breakthroughs in strength just from

The goal is to increase the weight used on the major lifts each and every week. If you complete all reps and sets on your squat, benchpress, deadlift, or overhead press, the next time you do that exercise, go heavier. Complete beginners can usually safely increase their benchpress and overhead press by 5 lbs per session, squat by 5 to 10 lbs per squat session, and deadlift by 10 to 20 lbs per deadlift session. It's permissible to make as large of a weight jump as you can physically handle while maintaining good form. Since I'm not there to watch you here are my recommendations, also erring on the side of good form over bad form.

Initial weight increases:

Benchpress, Squat, and Overhead Press: 5 lb jumps per session

Deadlift: 10 lb jumps per session

This initial plan equates to increasing your squat and deadlift by 30 lbs every two weeks, and your benchpress and overhead press by 15 lbs every two weeks. That said, you'll eventually come to a workout where you can't complete your prescribed reps. This will typically happen first with your overhead press, then your benchpress, then your squat, and lastly your deadlift.

Resetting your weight

If you are unable to complete the reps attempted on a staple exercise, try again the next time you do that workout. If you fail yet again, drop the weight of that lift by 10% and attempt to move forward from there. Round down if necessary (e.g. If you failed 225x3x5, subtracting 10% would equate to 202.5lbs. If you don't have microplates, round down). Work your way back up as you normally would, in 5 or 10 pound increments. If and when you reset your deadlift for the second time, work your way back up using 5 lb increases.

People fear it, but resetting (decreasing the weight) will allow you to continue to build strength and eventually surpass what you once couldn't lift. Another reason to reset your weights is that it's also not a good idea to constantly lift to failure or beyond failure on major compound lifts. As you progress through a workout, naturally your fifth set will be much harder than your first. You typically want to have 1 rep left in the tank on most of your sets of heavy 5's. You'll see nowhere in this program anything about assisted reps or cheat reps. You will build more strength and therefore more muscle by not lifting specifically for the goal of failure. We're lifting with the goal of lifting a progressively heavier weight each workout.

Resetting your weight will give you an opportunity to clean up your form, get more efficient at the exercise, and nail down several sessions of this improved form. Then, when you're back up to the weight you recently failed at, you'll actually have more strength than before to surpass the "plateau".

Microplates

Though they're not necessary, they can be incredibly useful. Not all gyms carry 2.5 lb weights, and if they do, they're usually the smallest weights they have that you can put on a barbell. This means that the minimum weight increase you can make is 5 lbs to barbell movements (one 2.5 per side). Microplates are plates that can allow jumps smaller than 5 lbs, as they can come as small as a quarter pound (allowing for as little as 0.5 lbs to be added).

A fun and effective way to incorporate microplates into this program is to start using them when you reset your weight on a lift.

Here is a link to the microplates that I own: <http://amzn.to/2qOT3Hh>

Let's say you fail the benchpress at 120 lbs 5x5. You try it again and this time you get past it, but fail on 135x5x5. You try it again and fail again, so you reset your weight to 120 lbs. If you own 1.25 lb microplates, begin making 2.5 lb increases in bar weight. You'll most likely get to a heavier weight before requiring a reset as compared to having made 5 lb jumps. The other benefit is that you'll be reinforcing better form from having spent more workouts at a "lighter" weight before getting back to the weight that previously stumped you.

Now, if you own a more varied set of microplates, including 0.25 lb, 0.5 lb, 0.75 lb, and 1 lb plates, like these <http://amzn.to/2qOT3Hh> then after your first (or second) reset, you can make 4 lb jumps until reset, and then 3 lb jumps until reset, and then 2 lb jumps until reset, and then 1 lb jumps until reset, and even 0.5 lb jumps until reset.

Progression on the other movements (Double Progression Method)

Your progress on your single joint movements will be much slower than on your 5's exercises. You will mostly be utilizing the double progression method on these bad boys, since you can't just add weight every single session.

Triceps Pushdowns Example:

- Session 1: 50 lbs x 12, 12, 12 ---- (Add weight, decrease reps per set)
- Session 2 : 55 lbs x 8, 8, 8
- Session 3: 55 lbs x 9, 9, 8
- Session 4: 55 lbs x 9, 9, 9
- Session 5: 55 lbs x 10, 9, 8
- Session 6: 55 lbs x 10, 10, 8
- Session 7: 55 lbs x 10, 10, 10
- Session 8: 55 lbs x 11, 11, 11
- Session 9: 55 lbs x 12, 12, 10
- Session 10: 55 lbs x 12, 12, 12 ---- (Add weight, decrease reps per set)
- Session 11: 60 lbs x 8, 8, 8

The above is just an example, you might find yourself progressing faster or slower on a particular isolation movement. If you can simply aim for 1-2 more reps per workout, you're headed towards progress.

When it's time to move on...

For those running this routine as a beginner or novice, I recommend staying on it for at least the entirety of your cut. You may be tempted to move to the junior or intermediate routine as soon as you end your cut, but I'd recommend staying on the novice routine to continue milking out linear gains while you're on maintenance and a caloric surplus.

The novice stage for most lifters typically lasts up to 4-6 months. During this stage, it really pays off to lift as simple and straightforward as possible, focusing on progressive overload and linear gains. Eventually, though, you just can't keep adding weight to the bar each session, no matter how small the increment, despite doing reset after reset.

It's time to move on to an "intermediate" program when:

- You've milked out all linear gains - you keep resetting but can't surpass a certain point on most of your major lifts
- You've utilized microplates to further milk out the linear gains (not necessary but very helpful)
- 3 sets of 5 isn't enough volume or variation to keep you progressing on your major lifts

Intermediate Routine

Workout A



Workout B



Workout C



Intermediate Shredding Routine

This is the routine that a vast majority of you will be on. Whereas proper training can get a beginner through the novice phase in about 4-6 months, the intermediate phase of lifting can typically last for years. If you've already milked out all of your linear gains, this is the program for you. If you're not sure whether you should do the intermediate or the advanced routine, use the intermediate routine.

Workout A:

- Squat: 4-5 sets of 5
- Bench: 3 to 5 sets of 5-6
- Bentover Row: 3 to 5 sets of 8-10
- Triceps Pushdowns: 2 to 3 sets of 8-12
- Barbell Curls: 2 to 3 sets of 8-12
- Shrugs: 2 or 3 sets of 8-12
- (Optional: Cable Crunches: 2 to 3 sets of 10-12)
- (Optional: Face Pulls: 2 to 3 sets of 10-15)
- (Optional: Standing Calves 3 sets of 5-6 OR seated calves: 3 sets of 8-12)

Workout B:

- Weighted Chin-Ups: 3 sets of 4-6 (or pulldowns: 3 sets of 8-10)
- Incline Bench: 3 sets of 6-8
- Deadlift: 2 to 3 sets of 3 or 2 to 3 sets of 5 (alternate back and forth)
- Dips: 2 sets of 8-10
- Dumbbell Curls: 2 sets of 8-12
- Lunges or Reverse Lunges: 2 sets of 8-12
- Side Lateral Raises: 3 or 4 sets of 10-15
- (Optional: Reverse Fly's: 2-3 sets of 12-15)

Week 1:

Monday: Workout A

Wednesday: Workout B

Friday: Workout C

Week 2

Monday: Workout A

Wednesday: Workout B

Friday: Workout C

(And repeat)

(Alternatively, if your schedule and recovery allows, you can lift every other day)

Program Notes:

Make sure to read the program notes in the previous chapter, which may help provide some foundation for this program.

What weight should I start with?

Since you're not a newbie here, you have a good idea of where your strength lies for many of these lifts. Do yourself a favor and start with around 80%-90% of what your normal working weight is, and aim for the lower end of the sets range, if applicable. (Example: the bentover rows say 3 to 5 sets of 8-10. For your first workout, go for 3 sets and not 4 or 5.)

As I mentioned in the previous section, if you're used to using crappy form, switching over to better form may initially result in what feels like less strength and you might perform less reps at first with any given weight. Just remember that using solid form is an investment into your future strength and physique. Do you want to the best lean, muscular physique possible for yourself?

Think of it like this; training intensely with crappy form would be like getting 75 points per workout, whereas training intensely using solid form is like getting 100 points per workout – except you only get 50 points now and you get the other 50 points months later. You might be more tempted to take the 75 points now because that's more than 50, but if you have plan on reaching your full potential and having real strength and as much muscle as possible, you know which route to take.

Progression on the Main Lifts

The purpose of this program is to continue to milk as much gains as possible on our big lifts, while getting in sufficient hypertrophy work on all of our other muscles. The primary objective is to increase our squat, benchpress, and deadlift, but in addition these, our incline bench, weighted chin-up, and bent over row. Increasing these lifts will ensure full body strength and muscularity, providing a solid foundation.

Whereas before, we focused mostly on linear progression of the main lifts, we now will be using varying rep ranges, as well as double progression method on certain lifts where before we were only using linear progression.

Here, we begin applying a little more volume to the major lifts compared to the beginner/novice routine. The reason is that the cost for adaptation is greater; strength will increase as a byproduct of overloading your muscles and generating hypertrophy. The stronger you get, the more work required to create a sufficient enough overload to continue gaining strength.

Let's look at how we will be increasing some of our lifts.

Increasing the Squat

You'll notice we squat twice per week. On one workout you're doing sets of 5, on the other you're doing sets of 8. We're assuming that you're starting with roughly 80-90% on your major lifts, so we have room to grow. That means 80-90% of your 5 rep max for your sets of 5 and 80-90% of your 8 rep max for your sets of 8. We don't have to get the numbers perfectly, just think "what could I do for the heaviest set of 5 or 8 possible?" Subtract 10-20% and start from there.

For squats on workout A, start with 4 sets of 5 with the weight you figured earlier. The next time you do workout A, do 5 sets of 5. The next time you do workout A, increase the weight by 5 lbs and do 4 sets of 5. So on and so forth.

The same thing goes for squats on workout C. Start with 3 sets of 8. Then hit 4 sets of 8. Go for yet another (yes, believe me) workout where you hit 4 sets of 8 before increasing the weight and bringing it back down to 3 sets unless you have microplates. If you have microplates, you can add weight every time you achieve 4 sets of 8. If you don't have microplates, make sure you get 2 workouts of 4 sets of 8 before adding weight. You should be able to progress for quite a while, alternating between high and low reps for while without having to change the reps up.

Increasing the Deadlift:

Similar thing goes for the deadlift. We're increasing the volume compared to the novice routine. Since you deadlift once a week, you'll be alternating between hitting sets of 3 on one week and sets of 5 on the other.

For the 3's weeks:

Once again, we're assuming you've milked out linear gains via the novice program and you're starting here with 80-90% of what you're capable of. Start with 2 sets of 3. The next week hit 3 sets of 3. The next week, add 5 lbs and hit 2 sets of 3. So on and so forth. You should be able to continue like this for quite a while. If and when you come to a failed workout or two in a row, take a reset by stripping 10% and starting there on your next sets of 3's deadlift workout. If you're later forced again to reset, begin utilizing microplates.

You should be able to progress your deadlift sets of 3 for faster and for more uninterrupted time compared to your deadlifts for 5's, similar to how you'll be able to progress your squatting sets of 5's faster and longer than your squatting sets of 8's.

For the 5's week:

Start with 2 sets of 5. The next time hit 3 sets of 5. Add 5 lbs and go for 2 sets of 5. So on and so forth. Do this until you can't continue, then reset (strip 10% and work your way back up), and begin using microplates if you have them for 2.5 lb increases instead of 5 lb increase. If you don't have microplates, complete two workouts at 3 sets of 5 before adding weight and going back down to 2 sets of 5. If you're forced to do a reset while using microplates and making 2.5 lb jumps, take the reset and start completing two workouts at 3 sets of 5 before adding another 2.5 lbs and going to 2 sets of 5.

Increasing the other Compound Movements - The Escalating Method:

Here's how I recommend approaching progression on the benchpress, incline benchpress, and other compound movements with a set range in addition to a rep range. First start with the bottom of the rep range and add weight when you've gone through the entire set range. What the heck am I talking about?

Let's look at the flat benchpress. It says 3-5 sets of 5-6 reps. Start with 3 sets of 5. Then go for 4 sets of 5. Then 5 sets of 5. Add 5 lbs and go back to 3 sets of 5. Continue doing this until you find yourself having to reset your weight.

After you reset your weight, you'll begin using the 6 reps part of the 5-6 rep range. With your reset weight, start with 3 sets of 5. Then 4 sets of 5. Then 5 sets of 5. Now, instead of adding weight, go for 3 sets of 6. Then 4 sets of 6, then 5 sets of 6. Then raise the weight and go back to 3 sets of 5. Remember, add sets and then add reps. Continue using the full rep and set range in this manner.

Progression on the isolation movements and compound movements without set ranges will follow the uncomplicated double-progression method.

KEY TIP FOR CONTINUING PROGRESS ON SQUATS AND DEADLIFTS - The Escalating Method):

When you've run this program and undergone 3-4 squat and deadlift resets using the default progression scheme, you may decide to move onto the intermediate/advanced routine. However, I'm sure there are some of you who may particularly enjoy this full body routine and want something that will allow them to continue their progression further without having to change routines.

To continue progress on squats and deadlifts, simply open up the rep range a little bit, add another set to the deadlifts, and utilize The Escalating Method:

Workout A: (Heavy) Squats: 4-5 sets of 4-5

Workout B: Deadlifts: (Heavy) 3-4 sets of 3-4 / (Hypertrophy) 3-4 sets of 7-8

Workout C: (Hyper) Squats: 3-4 sets of 7-8

Workout A (Heavy) Squats: Begin with a reset or around 90% of the maximum weight you could handle for a working set of 4. Start with 4 sets of 4. On the following weeks hit 4 sets of 5, then 5 sets of 4, then 5 sets of 5. Then add 5 lbs and go back down to 4 sets of 4. Rinse and repeat.

Workout B (Heavy Deadlifts): Begin with a reset or around 90%. Start with 3 sets of 3. On the following weeks, hit 3 sets of 4, then 4 sets of 3, then 4 sets of 4, then add 5 lbs and bring it back down to 3 sets of 3. Rinse and Repeat

Workout B (Hyper Deadlifts): Begin with 90% or so of your 7-8 rep max. Start with 3 sets of 7. On the following weeks, hit 4 sets of 7, then 3 sets of 8, then 4 sets of 8. Then add 5 lbs (or 2.5 lbs if you own microplates) and go back to 3 sets of 7. Rinse and repeat.

Workout C (Hyper) Squats: Start with 3 sets of 7. On the following weeks, hit 4 sets of 7, then 3 sets of 8, and then 4 sets of 8. Then add 5 lbs (or 2.5 lbs if you own microplates) and bring it back down to 3 sets of 7. Rinse and repeat.

You'll really know it's time to move on to the intermediate/advanced routine when you've hit a few resets on this... if you BEGIN using the escalating method WITH 90% of your normal weights.

Progression on the other movements (Double Progression Method)

Your progress on your single joint movements will be much slower than on your compound lifts. You will mostly be utilizing the double progression method on these bad boys, since you can't just add weight every single session.

Triceps Pushdowns Example:

- Session 1: 50 lbs x 12, 12, 12 ---- (Add weight, decrease reps per set)
- Session 2 : 55 lbs x 8, 8, 8
- Session 3: 55 lbs x 9, 9, 8
- Session 4: 55 lbs x 9, 9, 9
- Session 5: 55 lbs x 10, 9, 8
- Session 6: 55 lbs x 10, 10, 8
- Session 7: 55 lbs x 10, 10, 10
- Session 8: 55 lbs x 11, 11, 11
- Session 9: 55 lbs x 12, 12, 10
- Session 10: 55 lbs x 12, 12, 12 ---- (Add weight, decrease reps per set)
- Session 11: 60 lbs x 8, 8, 8

The above is just an example, you might find yourself progressing faster or slower on a particular isolation movement. If you can simply aim for 1-2 more reps per workout, you're headed towards progress.

Warming Up

Warming up is critical for maximizing performance and avoiding injury. There is a difference between your warm-up and your "work-up" or "acclimation sets". Typically we group all these things together, but just know that when it comes to a particular exercise, you first warm up and then you work your weight up towards your working sets. Also, you might find it beneficial to warm up your shoulders and elbows before hitting benchpress. Wall slides and shoulder rotation exercises along with light cable triceps extensions should do the trick.

Warm up properly with very light weight and high reps for a set or two before working your weight up. As you work your way up, decrease the reps so you're not wasting energy on unnecessary volume. The more reps you feel like doing in order to warm yourself up, the lighter the weight you should use.

This may look like the following:

Warmup for Squats:

General Lower Body Warmup

Bodyweight or light goblet squat x10 reps,

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps

95 lbs x5 reps

135 x 5

185 x 3 reps

225 x 5x5 (*WORK SETS*)

Warmup for Flat barbell Benchpress

General Upper Body Warmup

Flat DB Press: 10's x10 reps

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps

85 lbs x 6-8 reps

115 lbs x 3-4 reps

145 x 1 or 2 reps

165 x 3x5 (*WORK SETS*)

Warmup for Barbell Curls:

5 lb Dumbbells x 10 (a lot of gyms don't have 10 lb barbells)

20 x 6-8

45 x 3-4

70 x 3x8 (WORK SETS)

The heavier the exercise, the more compound it is, the earlier in a workout you are, and the more advanced you are in your training career, the more sets, typically, you'll do on your way towards your working weight. Some exercises you might prefer having more warm up sets for and others less. My warmup on biceps and back movements are somewhat quick; just a light warm up and an acclimation set or two, but I like to do a more extensive warm-up for my pushing movements, tricep exercises, and squats and deadlifts. Also, if I have already performed compound movements, my warm ups for the isolation movements hitting the muscles used during the compounds are usually pretty brief since those muscles usually already have blood flowing through them (e.g. Biceps after back movements, triceps after push movements)

Getting up to some heavy squats for me these days looks like:

Bodyweight x 10

Bar x 8

135 x 8

225 x 6

275 x 5

315 x 3

345 x 2

375 x 1 or 2

405 x 5 x 5

Rest Periods:

Rest as long as necessary to be fully prepared for the next planned set, if time allows.

For maximum performance and progression, here are some basic guidelines of how much time you may need between work sets, as a beginner:

3-4 minutes between compound 5x5 sets

1-2 minutes between the higher rep, isolation movements

For warm up sets, I typically will rest around 30-45 seconds between the first ones (the bodyweight and bar-only sets) and gradually work it up to 2-3 minutes just before beginning my first work set. Here's what that may look like for you.

General Lower Body Warmup

Bodyweight or light goblet squat x10 reps (Rest 30 seconds)

Bar (45 lbs) x 8 reps (Rest 45-60 seconds)

95 lbs x5 reps (Rest 60-90 seconds)

115 x 3 reps (Rest around 2 minutes)

135 x 5x5 (WORK SETS) (Rest 3-4 minutes between sets)

What to do if you're in a hurry, use supersets or alternating sets

Supersets are where you hit one exercise and then immediately without rest, hit another. You rest after you've hit a set of both exercises.

Alternating sets are basically the same thing, except with a bit of rest between each exercise. You might hit a set of curls, rest for 30 seconds to a minute (perfect for when equipment is spread out) and then hit a set of triceps pushdowns, rest for 30-60 seconds, rinse and repeat.

Super-setting or utilizing "alternating sets" on agonist and antagonist muscles and movements can be a great way to pack in more training volume into a limited time window. I wouldn't recommend doing this on your squat, bench, deadlift, or OHP (overhead press) since we're really trying to progress our strength in those movements, but super-setting or using alternating sets for, say, curls and triceps pushdowns, or curls with cable crunches, or triceps with shrugs or hyperextensions can be fine. I recommend alternating sets over supersets, and you typically don't want to pair like-movements or the same muscles together, especially if your goal is progressive overload.

When it comes to isolation movements, I've found that utilizing alternating sets really, really helps me pack my training volume into a smaller time window versus straight sets and taking traditional resting periods. I also find that doing alternating sets sometimes improves my performance of my isolation movements because I'm getting in a little more rest between sets of a given exercise. For example, when doing straight sets of dumbbell biceps curls, I might be tempted to hit my next set of curls with less than 2 minutes of rest before it, but when I hit a set of triceps before between my sets of curls I usually get around 3 minutes between the sets of curls, improving my performance on them.

If you're *extremely hurried* (just finished squats and you get a phone call and you suddenly have 20-30 minutes less to lift), you have a choice to make. My recommendation would be to prioritize progression of your main lifts. Get as much of those done as possible, and do your isolation lifts if time allows. The other option, could be to drop the number of sets from 5 to 3 on your major lifts and/or pair major lifts (besides squats and deadlifts) with antagonist lifts or non-similar higher rep lifts in the alternating set fashion. If you're doing supersets or alternating sets, make sure not to pair like-movements. Don't pair benchpress with triceps, don't pair pull-ups with biceps, and also, don't hit biceps before your rows or pull-ups, and don't hit triceps before your OHP or benchpress.

Resetting your weight

If you are unable to complete the reps attempted on a staple exercise, try again the next time you do that workout. If you fail yet again, drop the weight of that lift by 10% and attempt to move forward from there. Round down if necessary (e.g. If you failed 225x3x5, subtracting 10% would equate to 202.5lbs. If you don't have microplates, round down). Work your way back up as you normally would, in 5 pound or 2.5 lb increments.

People fear it, but resetting (decreasing the weight) will allow you to continue to build strength and eventually surpass what you once couldn't lift. Another reason to reset your weights is that it's also not a good idea to constantly lift to failure or beyond failure on major compound lifts. As you progress through a workout, naturally your fifth set will be much harder than your first. You typically want to have 1 rep left in the tank on most of your sets of heavy 5's. You'll see nowhere in this program anything about assisted reps or cheat reps. You will build more strength and therefore more muscle by not lifting specifically for the goal of failure. We're lifting with the goal of lifting a progressively heavier weight each workout.

Resetting your weight will give you an opportunity to clean up your form, get more efficient at the exercise, and nail down several sessions of this improved form. Then, when you're back up to the weight you recently failed at, you'll actually have more strength than before to surpass the "plateau".

Microplates

Though they're not necessary, they can be incredibly useful. Not all gyms carry 2.5 lb weights, and if they do, they're usually the smallest weights they have that you can put on a barbell. This means that the minimum weight increase you can make is 5 lbs to barbell movements (one 2.5 per side). Microplates are plates that can allow jumps smaller than 5 lbs, as they can come as small as a quarter pound (allowing for as little as 0.5 lbs to be added).

A fun and effective way to incorporate microplates into this routine is to start using them when you reset your weight on a lift after already implementing the varying set/rep range style of progression explained above.

Here is a link to the microplates that I own: <http://amzn.to/2qOT3Hh>

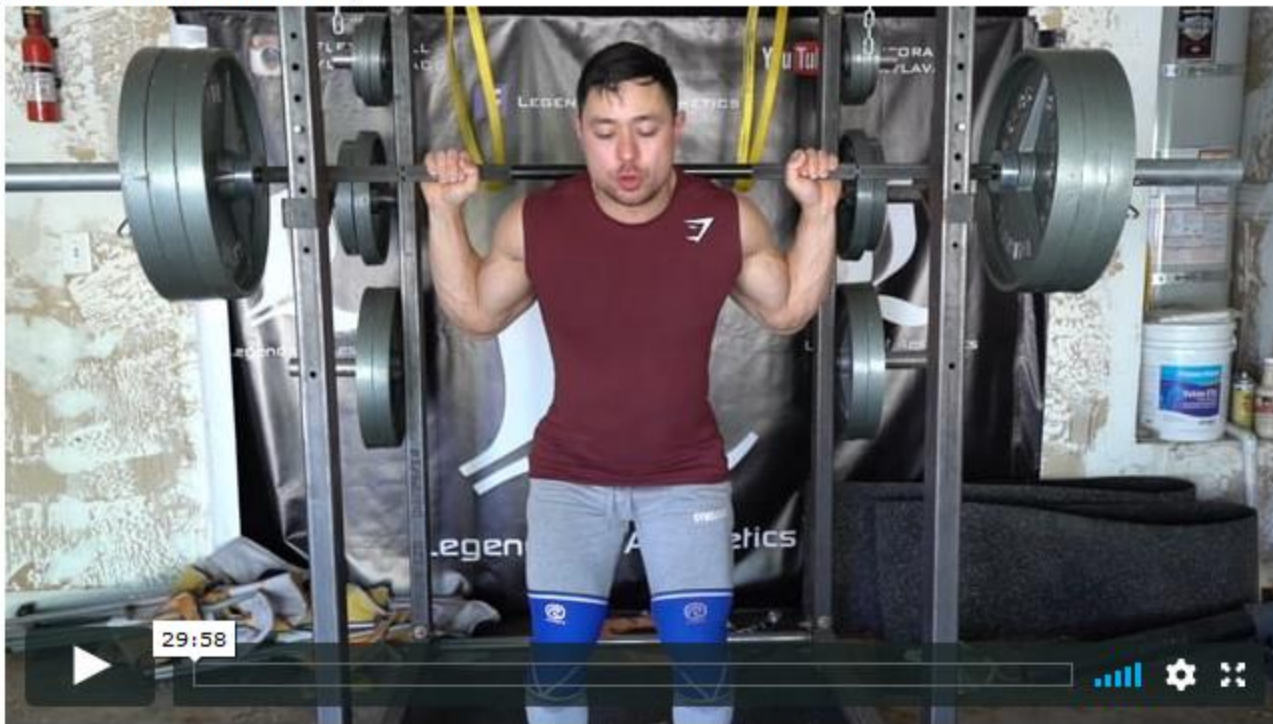
How long should I run this program?

For those using this routine while running a cut, I'd recommend sticking to this routine for the entirety of the cut. Continue to stay on it when you move to maintenance and your lean gaining phase. Strength gains that may have halted because you got to low body fat will soon come back as you reintroduce more calories and eventually put yourself onto a caloric surplus. Milk this program out for as long as necessary until you stop getting results.

Your time on the Junior Intermediate Routine can last anywhere from 6 months to 1-2 years.

Advanced Routine

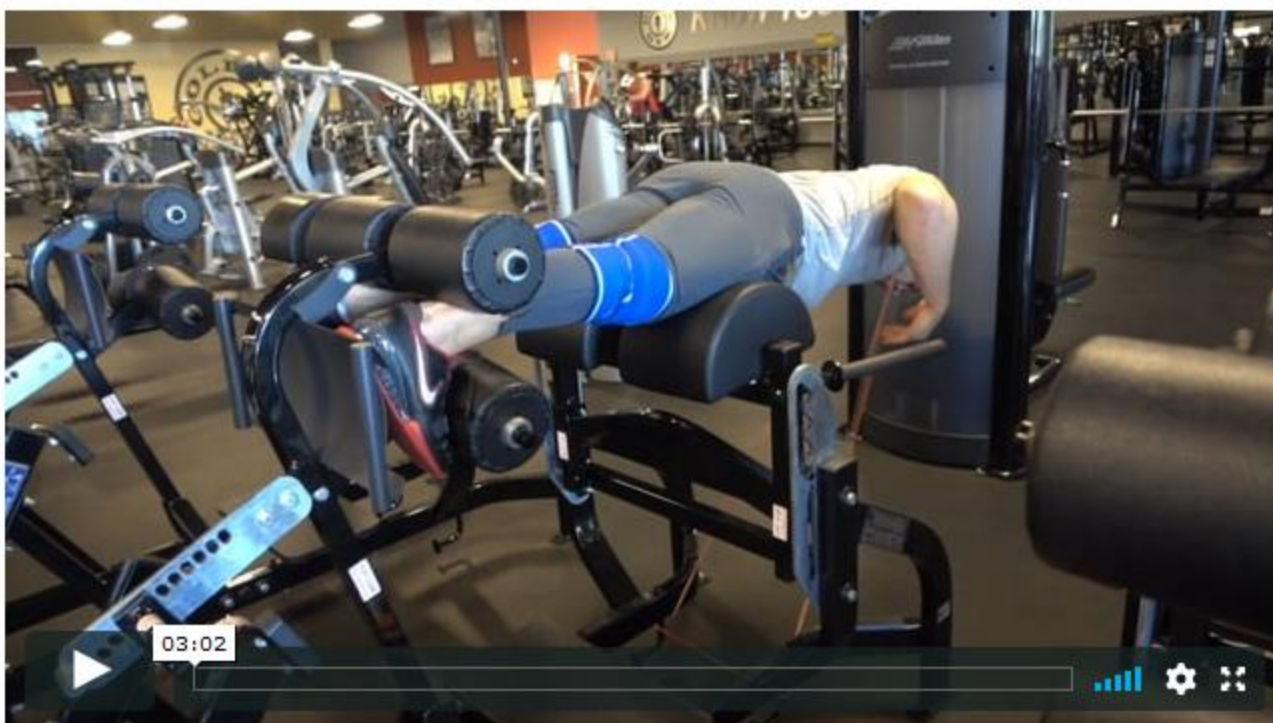
Lower Body Workout A



Upper Body Workout A



Lower Body Workout B



Upper Body Workout B



Lower A	Strength Week	Hypertrophy Week
Squat	3-5 sets of 4-6	3-5 sets of 7-10
Stiff Leg Deadlift, Hip Thrust, or Romanian Deadlift	3 sets of 4-6	3-sets of 8-10
(Reverse Lunge, Bulgarian split squat, Single Leg Press, Lunge, or Leg Press)	(3 sets of 8-10)	(3 sets of 10-15)
Standing Calf Raise	3 sets of 5-6	3 sets of 8-10
Seated Leg Curl (SS/ALT Leg Extension)	2-3 sets of 8-10 2-3 sets of 12-15	2-3 sets of 12-15 2-3 sets of 15-20
Hip Adductor (SS/ALT Hip Abductors)	2 sets of 10-12	2 sets of 15-20
(Seated Calf Raise)	(2-3 sets of 8-10)	(2-3 sets of ~15)
(Kneeling Cable Crunch or other abs)	(2-3 sets of 8-10)	(2-3 sets of 12-15)

Upper A	Strength Week	Hypertrophy Week
Flat Benchpress	3 or 4 sets of 4-6	3 or 4 sets of 8-10
Neutral Grip Pulldowns OR Weighted Pull-up/Chin-up	3 sets of 8-10 3 sets of 4-6	3 sets of 12-15 3 sets of 8-10
Incline Press, Barbell or Dumbbell	3 sets of 6-8	3 sets of 10-12
Chest Supported Row	3 sets of 8-10	3 or 4 sets of 12-15
Tricep Pushdowns	2-3 sets of 8-10	2-3 sets of 12-15
Curls - BB, DB, cable, or machine	2-3 sets of 8-10	2-3 sets of 12-15
Side Lateral Raises	3-5 sets of 10-12	3-5 sets of 15-20
Face Pulls or rear delt flyes (SS/ALT Chest Flyes)	2-4 sets of 10-12 (2-4 sets of 10-12)	2-4 sets of 15-20 (2-4 sets of 15-20)

Lower B	Strength Week	Hypertrophy Week
Deadlift - Conventional, SLDL, or SUMO	3-4 sets of 4-6	3-4 sets of 8-10
Front Squat, Leg press, Bulgarian Split Squat, Single Leg Press, or Reverse Lunge	3 sets of 6-8	3 sets of 10-12
(Glute Ham Raise or Reverse Lunge*)	(3x8 / 3x10*)	(3x8 / 3x12-15*)
Seated Calf Raise	3 sets of 8-10	3 sets of 12-15
Leg Extension (SS/ALT Lying Leg Curls)	2-3 sets of 12-15 (2-3 sets of 8-10)	2-3 sets of 15-20 (2-3 sets of 12-15)
Hip Abductor (SS/ALT Hip Adductor)	2 sets of 10-12	2 sets of 15-20
(Standing Calf Raise)	(2-3 sets of 5-6)	(2-3 sets of 8-10)
(Hanging Leg Raise or other Abs)	(2-3 sets of 10-15)	(2-3 sets of 10-15)

Upper B	Strength Week	Hypertrophy Week
Overhead Press	3-4 sets of 4-6	3-4 sets of 8-10
BB row, DB seal row, DB row	3 sets of 8-10	3-4 sets of 12-15
Flat DB Press or slight incline DB press	3 sets of 6-8	3 sets of 10-12
Medium to Wide grip Pronated Pulldown	3 sets of 10-12	3 sets of 15-20
Preacher Tricep Machine or Overhead Tri	2-3 sets of 8-10	2-3 sets of 12-15
Curls - BB, DB, cable, or machine	2-3 sets of 8-10	2-3 sets of 12-15
Side Lateral Raises	3-5 sets of 10-12	3-5 sets of 15-20
Face Pulls or rear delt flyes (SS/ALT Chest Flyes)	2-4 sets of 10-12 (2-4 sets of 10-12)	2-4 sets of 15-20 (2-4 sets of 15-20)

*Exercises and sets/reps in Parenthesis () are optional, read below for more info

Possible Workout Schedules:

There are several ways you can run these 4 workouts, more than what's listed below. How you do it won't make a huge difference, and if you can't make up your mind, go with Schedule 1, Variation 1.

Schedule 1 (Monday/Wednesday/Friday/Saturday or Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun):

Variation 1:

Monday: Lower A
Tues: Off
Wednesday: Upper A
Thurs: Off
Friday: Lower B
Saturday: Upper B
Sun: Off

Variation 2:

Mon: Lower B
Tues: Off
Wed: Upper AF
Thurs: Off
Fri: Lower A
Sat: Upper B
Sun: Off

Variation 3:

Mon: Upper A
Tues: Off
Wed: Lower A
Thurs: Off
Fri: Upper B
Sat: Lower B
Sun: Off

Variation 4:

Mon: Upper B
Tues: Off
Wed: Lower B
Thurs: Off
Fri: Upper A
Sat: Lower A
Sun: Off

As you can see, the workouts can be moved around as you see fit. A and B workouts can be switched. Two workouts are hit consecutively whereas the other two workouts are surrounded by off days. I'd recommend placing off days before your toughest workouts, or before the workouts that include exercises where you want the most improvement or strength retention.

Schedule 2 (2 on, 1 off, 2 on, 2 off):

Variation 1:

Monday: Lower A
Tuesday: Upper A
Wed: Off
Thurs: Lower B
Friday: Upper B
Sat: Off
Sun: Off

Variation 2:

Mon: Upper B
Tues: Off
Wed: Lower B
Thurs: Upper A
Fri: Off
Sat: Off
Sun: Lower A

Variation 3:

Mon: Off
Tues: Upper A
Wed: Lower A
Thurs: Off
Fri: Upper B
Sat: Lower B

Once again, the workouts can be moved around as you see fit, and A and B workouts can be switched if desired.

Schedule 3 - Every Other Day:

Monday: Lower A

Tues: Off

Wed: Upper A

Thurs: Off

Fri: Lower B

Sat: Off

Sunday: Upper B

Monday: Off

Tuesday: Lower A

(And so on)

Schedule 4 (2 on, 1 off, repeat) - Advanced only, be very careful to monitor your volume:

Variation 1:

Day 1: Lower

Day 2: Upper

Day 3: Off

Repeat

Variation 2:

Day 1: Upper

Day 2: Lower

Day 3: Off

Day 4: Repeat

A and B workouts can be switched if desired.

Workout Schedule Considerations:

- Most Intermediates should stick with Schedule 1, 2, or 3
- Most Advanced Trainers should stick with Schedule 1 or 2
- Those who cannot lift on certain days of the week should stick to schedule 1 or 2
- Schedule 4 should be approached very cautiously and left to trainers who make a conscious effort to not overdo it — by regulating volume, avoiding failure, etc. If you're the type of person who always wants to do more, more, more... don't do schedule 4.
- Do not do shrugs the day before you do deadlifts
- Don't do abs the day before a lower body workout
- If you feel like deadlifts hit your traps well, don't do shrugs the day after deadlifts (if applicable)
- I don't recommend doing barbell rows the day before squats or deadlifts. If you place your upper body workouts the day before your lower body workouts, don't program barbell rows. If you're hitting barbell rows the day after leg day, or the day after an off day, that's ok.

Program Main Notes:

This workout program focuses on key lift strength, to maintain as much full body muscle as possible (with possible growth in some intermediates), while evenly hitting all of your major muscle groups for a balanced, aesthetic physique, with a special emphasis on your side delts to really make you stand out.

This program includes a range of sets for certain exercises as well as optional exercises. This will provide the necessary volume and exercise variety that advanced trainers may need as opposed to intermediate trainers who don't require as much. I recommend starting this program without doing any of these optional exercises and starting with the lowest number of sets within the set ranges. Start low and work your way up if you see fit, if you have the time, if your progress requires it, and if your recovery allows.

Keep in mind that it generally takes less training volume (think: total number of sets and total working poundages lifted) to maintain strength and muscle than it does to build it. A huge mistake that a lot of highly informed people make when they're cutting is that they really overdo their training volume. It happens to everyone at least once in a while but constant overtraining (which really is constant under-recovering), especially while cutting, can really impact your strength, your mood, and even your adherence to your diet.

The more volume you do, the more recovery necessary, and being on a caloric deficit cuts into your recovery ability. This is why you typically reduce your training volume when on a cut versus when you're on a gaining phase. You ideally still want to have as much volume as you can properly recover from but its better to be slightly conservative rather than erring on the side of doing as much as you possibly can and under-recovering (overtraining). We also want you to focus on your strength and maintaining or improving your squat, deadlift, benchpress and other major lifts. It gets harder and harder to do that if you're doing dozens upon dozens of sets and beating yourself into the ground.

What are the parenthesis “()” for?

Exercises in parenthesis “()” are optional, and the sets and reps for them are also in parenthesis. These exercises are here for more volume and/or exercise selection for those who may desire or require it. I would recommend doing the optional exercises more for advanced trainers (those with 3 or more years of smart lifting).

Starting with the lower body workouts, you'll see that the third exercise for each leg day is in parenthesis. If maintaining or improving your squat and deadlift during this cut is more important to you than having a little bit of extra variety, do more sets of squats and deadlifts and don't do the third exercise in parenthesis (unless you have a ton of time and you're an advanced lifter).

If you decide you want to do the leg press on “Lower A” and it's your first workout, I'd recommend aiming for less sets on the squats so that you have a place you can work up from. Same thing goes for the Glute Ham Raise (GHR) or Reverse Lunge on your “Lower B” day.

You'll also see some Leg curls, leg extensions, hip abductor, and hip adductor exercises put into parenthesis on the lower body days. I include the sets and reps in parenthesis if the set/rep range is different than the required lift. If the optional lift has the same set/rep range as the required lift, I don't include an extra set/rep range in parenthesis.

What does SS/ALT mean?

SS means “Superset”, and ALT means “Alternating Set”. The only significant difference between the two is that with a superset, you typically don’t rest between one exercise and the second, whereas when you’re doing alternating sets, you’re resting evenly between the two (usually a little bit less than a full resting period that you’d normally take).

A superset might look like:

Leg Curl x 12 — no rest — Leg Extension x 12 — Rest 2-3 minutes, repeat

The above done in Alternating Set fashion:

Leg Curl x 12 — 30-60 sec rest — Leg Extension x 12 — 30-60 sec rest, repeat

I typically recommend alternating sets much more than supersets for improved performance.

Can I superset (SS) or alternate (ALT) other exercises?

Absolutely. Biceps and triceps are the easiest muscle groups to pair together.

You could also pair an arm exercise with side lateral raises and an arm exercise with face pulls or rear belt flies. I probably wouldn’t pair a bicep movement with under-grip face pulls though.

When it comes to compound lifts, I’d typically recommend against superseding or alternating them together. Never pair your primary lift of the day with anything else.

How many sets should I do?

There is a range for the number of sets prescribed for a couple different reasons

- Time allowance for lifting weights
- Are you doing the exercises in parenthesis “()”?
 - If you’re doing the optional third exercise on the Lower workouts, aim for less sets on your squats and deadlifts.
- Volume required to progress (the longer you’ve been lifting, the more total sets and volume you require to increase your strength)
- Flexibility for if the weight feels really heavy – do less sets
- Room for if your working weight feels really light – do more sets
- Did you suddenly get a phone call and you have less time to work out?
 - Aim for the lower side of the set range, skip the optional exercises.

If you’re just starting out on this program, go with the lower number of sets first, and then work your way up from there.

Exercise Selection: *Which exercises should I pick?*

As you can see, there is quite a lot of room for individual choice. My recommendations are the lifts I put first in the lists. If you're having trouble picking between one exercise and the next, I recommend going with the ones you're most familiar with. Go with the exercises that you can actually perform with whatever gym membership and equipment you may have access to. Some gyms might not have a leg press, or the one(s) they have really may hurt your lower back. So you'd pick something besides leg press. Most gyms don't have a GHD (Glute-Ham-Developer machine) to perform GHR's (glute ham raises).

Factor in your goals as well as any sort of injuries or nagging pains you may currently have. Go with exercises that don't cause pain. Most importantly, go with preference.

Lower Body Workout Key Points & Considerations:

- Every workout involves some sort of push (squat, lunge or leg press) movement and some sort of hip hinge (deadlift, hip thrust, GHR) movement
- The next priority is a leg curl must be done at least once a week for complete development of the hamstrings (Leg extensions aren't as necessary to do for full quad development)
- Calves are to be hit twice a week, with a bent knee (seated) calf raise being hit at least once and a straight-knee (standing or leg-press) calf raise at least once a week
- I highly suggest performing a unilateral compound leg movement at least once a week, whether it's a lunge variation, a Bulgarian split squat, or a single-leg leg press
- If maximum squat performance is a personal goal of yours, consider front squatting as your secondary movement on your Lower B workout. This will give a performance carryover to Lower A, your squat day. Also, aim for more squat sets on Lower A, and adjust the volume of the rest of the workout if necessary

Upper Body Workout Key Points & Considerations:

- Every workout contains at least: 2 pushes, 2 pulls, bi's, tri's, side lateral raises and rear delts
- We push, then pull, then push, then pull. This will give us the best overall performance versus hitting two pushes back to back and two pulls back to back.
- In regards to your BACK muscles, for full and balanced development, over the course of the training week we want:
 - 1 vertical pull with elbows "tucked" forward (neutral grip pulldowns/pullups)
 - 1 vertical pull with elbows more flared out (pronated medium to wide grip pulldowns)
 - 1 horizontal pull (row) with elbows "tucked" in (DB Seal Row, DB row, close/neutral grip cable row, Barbell row)
 - 1 horizontal pull (row) with elbows wide/flared (chest supported row, Barbell Seal Row, Pendlay Row to upper chest, cable row to upper chest)
- In regards to your triceps, we preferably want:
 - 1 exercise specifically targeting the lateral head (Standing Cable Tricep Pushdowns)
 - 1 exercise specifically targeting the long head (My top two recommendations: Preacher Tricep Machine or the Overhead Cable Tricep Extension whether with a rope, bar, V-bar, or single arm at a time. Other and less favorite recommendations: French Press, JM press, or Lying Triceps Extensions - Skullcrushers are just one specific version of them (I'm not a huge fan, they seem to destroy my elbows over time, and same goes for a lot of people)
- When it comes to Biceps:
 - The supinating Dumbbell Curl covers both functions of the biceps (flexion and supination) and is a great bang-for-buck exercise
 - It can be done on both upper body days if desired. Or you can do it once per week and do a barbell or EZ bar curl on the other upper day.
- Chest:
 - 1 to 2 exercises flat pressing exercises per week
 - 1 to 2 incline pressing exercises per week
- Traps:
 - Deadlifting should cover the trick for a lot of people
 - Optionally hit Shrugs 1-2 times a week (not adjacent to a deadlift day)
 - (I don't do shrugs for those wondering)
- Abs:
 - Placed at the end of your leg days, alternatively they can be done on upper body days, as long as it's not the day before a leg day

Strength and Volume Control for the Six Pack Shredded:

Depending on your starting body fat percentage, most people, especially intermediates, should be able to continue building strength on this program for a variable amount of time and pounds of fat lost. If you continue your fat loss long enough, advanced trainers and intermediates alike will reach a point where increasing strength (while continuing to lose fat) becomes practically an impossibility. For a lot of people, pressing strength will be the first to take a hit. Then the squat. Then the deadlift. Everything else will take a hit between. When strength increase becomes futile, strength maintenance needs to become the goal. It's part science, part art.

Here are some key tips for maximum strength maintenance:

- Avoid hitting failure on heavy compound lifts; leave at least a rep in the tank on most sets. Ideally, the last set of a compound lift should end with just 1 rep left in the tank.
 - Isolation movements can still be trained to failure, specifically and most especially the last set of an isolation exercise.
- Lower your volume: As the diet continues and gets rougher, lower the number of sets you're completing to the lower end of the sets range.
- Keep intensity high: don't skip or avoid the strength work. As long as you follow the program you should be fine here.
 - When you must, lower the weight a little bit to keep yourself within the set and rep range and to avoid hitting failure
- Don't overdo your cardio, especially pre-workout on a leg day. If you're following the cardio guidelines, you should be fine.
- Slow your cut. You'll maintain more strength on a smaller caloric deficit than a larger deficit. That said, regardless of how severe your deficit is, once you get down below 8% body fat, strength loss becomes pretty significant, and especially under 6% body fat. (Still, a smaller deficit can probably help with more strength retention.)
- **MENTALITY!** If you tell yourself when entering the gym that you're going to have a crappy workout and the weights are going to feel heavy as hell, you're going to have a worse workout than entering the gym with a calm, cool confidence that you're going to do your best to nail your program and lift these weights to the best of your ability.
 - Even as strength gains diminish, halt, and perhaps even decline, remember that pound for pound (relative strength) this is most likely the strongest you've ever been. For many of you, you may also be at your absolute strength peak (truly the strongest you've ever been). As you continue your diet, remember to not be hard on yourself. This is just a natural part of everyone's journey. All you can do is your best.

Remember that you'll maintain more of your strength if you're training intelligently and generally leaving at least 1 rep left in the tank on most of your compound movements, especially your presses and your squat and deadlift.

Do you Increase your Protein As you Lose Weight?

Increasing Protein as you Get Leaner

In the beginning, we determined protein intake based on body fat percentage and bodyweight. We picked a higher protein multiplier the leaner that we were. Since we lose body fat during the program, do we need to adjust our protein (increase it)?

No, you keep your protein intake (in terms of grams) the same from start to finish. The initial protein target continues to be the target. Yes, your body fat goes down, but so does your bodyweight. In actuality, as you diet, you're increasing your protein as a percentage of your total calories with each drop in carbs or fats that you take.

Think of it like this. Let's say you're 200 lbs at 24% body fat. You go with the 1.0x multiplier and consume **200g of protein** throughout your diet. Now, you ask, "Do I need to increase the protein as I get leaner?"

In 12 weeks, it would be realistic to lose between 6 and 12% of your starting bodyweight. Let's say you dropped the full amount (200 lbs minus 24 lbs). You're now 176 lbs and around 12% body fat, give or take. If you were to recalculate your macros during this part of your cut (which we don't do, it's not necessary), you'd either multiply your bodyweight by the 1.1 or 1.2 protein multiplier; you're right in the middle of two brackets.

(From Earlier)

If you're 35% body fat or higher, go with the 0.8x multiplier

If you're 25-35% body fat, go with the 0.9x multiplier

If you're 16-25% body fat, go with the 1.0x multiplier.

If you're 15-12% bodyfat, go with the 1.1x multiplier.

If you're 12-9% bodyfat, go with the 1.2x multiplier.

If you're 8% bodyfat or lower, go with the 1.3x multiplier.

176 x 1.1 = 193.6

176 x 1.2 = 211.2

You can see that 200 grams of protein is right about in the middle and that you wouldn't need to change your protein during a cut.

What About Carb Cycling?

While single day refeeds, 2-3 day refeeds, and 1-3 week diet breaks are all technically versions of carb cycling, most people think of carb cycling as having high carb days, low carb days, and sometimes medium or zero carb days throughout a week. The number of combinations and possibilities are almost endless. Due to flashy titles, clickbait, and sensationalist articles, people have been led to believe that simply cycling your carbs in a particular (or any) fashion, alone, spurs fat loss. Forget a deficit, just cycle carbs! (Just Kidding)

Unfortunately, you can't defy the laws of thermodynamics, no matter how you cycle your carbs. With very few exceptions, if you cycle your carbs and you're still in a net caloric surplus inside the confines of a week, or whatever frame of time, you'll be gaining tissue (fat/muscle). If you're in a net weekly caloric deficit, you'll lose tissue (fat and/or muscle).

Don't forget, having a refeed day per week is essentially a 6 low carb day / 1 high carb day version of carb cycling. A 2 day refeed is a 5 low / 2 high version of carb cycling. And 3 day refeeds are 4 low / 3 high or 11 low / 3 high versions of carb cycling.

Instead of having carbs set at 3 or 4 different levels across the week (Zero, low, medium, high), I think having just "low days" and "high days" is a lot simpler for most people.

*The Exception I mentioned was for completely untrained overweight individuals at a caloric deficit who are putting on muscle at a weight gain greater than the weight of the fat they're losing.

What do I do if I'm vegan?

While vegetarians can still consume egg and dairy (and therefore whey), vegans don't. It can be a little harder for vegans who are into weight training to hit their protein goals. Using this as an excuse to get in less protein might not be the best idea because vegans typically need even more protein than non-vegans. This is because many vegan protein sources are typically incomplete (lacking in one or more essential amino acids).

Vegan "complete proteins" include legumes, seeds, grains, and vegetables like chickpeas, black beans, and cashews. You might think, "Oh, I like cashews! I'll just eat a ton of cashews." No, hold up. This doesn't mean that these foods are 100% protein and have zero fats or zero carbs, it just means that the food source has an adequate proportion of amino acids (the building blocks of protein) and can be considered a complete protein.

Vegan protein powders such as soy protein or a plant-based protein powder will be incredibly helpful for reaching your protein goal per day.

Lentils, lentil flour, nuts and seeds, flax, chia and hemp, black beans (I recommend eating it with rice), Ezekiel bread, and oats, are all high protein foods that vegans can take advantage of. Many vegetables such as spinach, kale, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, also have protein that will contribute towards your daily total.

It may be a good idea for some individuals to aim for a slightly higher protein intake if they are a vegan compared to if they are not, based on complete/incomplete proteins