



CRAFTING A
CLASSIC ★ **PHYSIQUE**

CONTEST PREP

Prepared exclusively for rccrdcimmaruta@gmail.com Transaction: 25583TWS

COMPETITOR LIFE

If you're reading this, it's too late. You've already caught the bug and you've decided that you're going to compete. Like any competition, it's easy to get sucked into the lifestyle and become obsessed with perfecting your craft. This is good. It's the biggest variable in success – Passion. If you become truly dedicated to yourself and you set your goals in a smart, calculated way, you will absolutely reach your potential. You cannot waver. You cannot falter. You can't doubt yourself, even if the odds are stacked against you and even your closest friends and family are showing their doubts about your ability to succeed.

A lot changes when you make the shift from working out casually as a hobby to training to win. Even if you consider yourself to be a serious lifter or hobbyist bodybuilder now, it's all about to change. Everything takes on a more serious meaning. The quality of every rep, every meal, and every recovery method starts to matter so much more because you realize that everything you do, no matter how small and seemingly inconsequential, contributes to the whole of your success, and if you are missing something, the whole plan can fall apart.



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COMPETITOR LIFE

If you're ready to live your life like there is no other option but success, you will go far. When you hear people talk about sacrifice for the sport of bodybuilding, it can seem like a line of bullshit until you actually try to prep for a competition. It's not just 12 weeks of prep time – it's years of off-seasons, improving your body and dialing in your mindset and technique, testing your mental toughness. It's suffering through monotony of a strict schedule while everyone else you know seems to be having so much more fun than you are. It's people telling you that you're so lucky, that you're just genetically gifted, completely disrespecting the months and years of hard work, money spent, and meals forced down your throat.

Ultimately, it will all make you stronger, smarter, and more intuitive when it comes to both your body and discovering what you want in life. You'll have to bring all of your prepped meals with you because you have macros you need to hit each day that you've meticulously calculated. Your days are going to become longer so you can fit in your early morning cardio and if you're work a full time job, a training session after work. This is going to become your life. It's going to occupy your mind and body and if you want to be great, it will stay like that for years or even decades.

But it's fun as hell and you won't regret a minute of it. Let's get into it.



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Before you develop your plan, you have to establish your starting point and your objectives. If you have a weight class or weight limitations due to height, you'll need to keep that in mind during your off season. You should begin with the most general goal and work your way down to the specifics.

For instance, if you know you need to gain 20 lbs of lean tissue to be competitive at a show, that should be your number one priority and your training and diet should reflect that objective. If you also know you need to improve your hamstrings, chest, and biceps, your need smaller plans set in place for those goals. If you make great improvements to your weak body parts, but you're still 15 lb underweight to stand next to your fellow competitors, you missed the mark. Get what I'm saying?

You'll need to track your progress meticulously in a few different ways. You should monitor your

- Strength and overall soreness
- Your weight
- The way you look both cold and with a pump.

If you're training hard for long periods of time, you may start to notice yourself getting weaker and staying sore for a few days at a time. You may feel constantly depleted and look flat. In these cases, you'll need to strategically back off the training because this is a good indicator of prolonged over-reaching and lack of adequate recovery. If this is happening, your body weight will stagnate or drop and you'll look stringy.



COMPETITOR LIFE

If you think this is happening to you, you can drop some calories into your system in a calculated way and take a day or two off from training and/or do a “deload” week, where you take your training volume and intensity down to about 60% to allow your body to recover. It might be hard to make yourself train lighter, but you’ll notice a great response when you get back to it.

So, How should you be assessing your physique? With tons and tons of progress pictures. You should take pictures every week, and when you’re getting closer to a show, every day. And I don’t mean duckface selfies. You’re also going to be practicing your mandatories because they are used in bodybuilding to assess a body and deconstruct it into separate muscle groups for assessment.

Depending on your division, you may not have to do these on stage, but it’s a good tool. Take progress pics not only to assess your body, but your ability to pose and control your musculature. Place your pics side-by-side next to professionals and tweak your form.

Let’s take a quick look at your mandatory poses.



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FRONT RELAXED

The name is a misnomer. You shouldn't be relaxed at all. Starting from the ground up, tense your calves and quads, then flex your glutes to flair your legs. Keep some tension on your abs and flair your lats while putting equal tension on your chest, biceps and triceps. You are keeping your entire body tight so that although you look like you're just standing there, the audience can see all of the detail in your flexed muscle.

QUARTER TURNS

You'll display your profile of your physique. Start with your toes points toward the back corner of the room you're standing in. This is going to force you to dramatically twist your body, which will improve the illusion of a tiny waist and broad lats and shoulders. Once you're twisted as far as you can go, breathe out so that your midsection becomes more defined and make sure that your front arm is behind your torso as to not block the view of your waist. Same deal with flexing: from the ground up, keep everything tense and press your front thigh into your back thigh.



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FRONT/REAR DOUBLE BICEP

It's not just about your arms. Again, it's about keeping your entire body tight. The exception here is you can either flex your abs and breathe out, or perform a vacuum, which will give your torso a much longer look. The key here is to keep your elbows slightly above your shoulders and put your thumb between your first and middle fingers when you flex. If you're performing this as a rear double bicep, tilt your body back slightly so that the audience can see your peaks.

FRONT/REAR LAT SPREAD

This can be a tough one for some people. Place your thumbs at the narrowest part of your torso and relax your lats as much as you can, while contracting your chest, glutes, hamstrings, quads, and of course, calves. Many people don't get the full width out of this pose because they can't bring themselves to relax their lats so they can be fully flared and stretched. If you're doing a rear lat spread, lean back a bit for your audience.



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PICKING A SHOW

Once you have identified your imbalances, lagging muscle groups, postural issues, and posing deficiencies, it's time to go to work planning an improvement strategy and choosing a show as a deadline.

You should give yourself enough time to make the necessary improvements, even if that means choosing a show a year out. This can give you an extra off-season to make some big gains so that once you are dieted down, you can face off against other competitors comfortably. I would advise against doing a show just for the experience if you don't have enough time in the gym to have the confidence to feel competitive. On the other hand, don't put it off until so long that you lose your excitement or you may run the risk of never stepping on stage at all.

Assuming you have at least 3-5 years of hardcore training experience, you should choose a show far enough in advance that you have one solid off-season and one 12-16 week cutting phase. Don't worry too much about who else is in the line-up of competitors. If you come in at your very best, it won't matter. I'd rather lose against the most elite athletes in the world over win hand over fist against weak competitors.

I'd also advise that aside from your physique, you do something that stands out, but that isn't over-the-top or off-putting. Unique posing trunks or an outstanding posing routine with interesting music can help the judges remember you if you're new on stage.



COMPETITOR LIFE

OFF SEASON

I have other ebooks on this topic, as well as 1-on-1 training so I won't go too much into this one, but I will say that you should take full advantage of your off-season. Don't try to stay really lean while you're bulking or get worried too much about your body composition. By the same token, don't let yourself get sloppy because it will just make for a harder cutting phase. I would say you should be okay letting yourself get up to about 16% body fat while you're bulking.

Stick to brutal workouts with the basics, and use a few advanced techniques to bring up lagging body parts, and make sure that if you find yourself losing strength you take a week at about 60% intensity. If you don't take a step back for that one de-load week here and there, you could risk your gains for the entire season or worse, you could get hurt and miss a whole season or more.

Check out my Off-season E-book if you want a more in-depth look at bulking strategies.



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COMPETITOR LIFE

CHISELING DOWN THE LAYERS

Now that you've dedicated yourself to putting on the mass, shape and symmetry necessary to craft a classic physique, it's time to chisel down any fat you may have accumulated to reveal all of your hard work. What's the use of all that perfectly shaped muscle if it's covered in a layer of fat? We're going to cover some of the most effective methods for shaving off pounds of body fat without sacrificing any of your hard-earned muscle.

To give you fair warning, typically you will lose just a bit of muscle if you're cutting down to a very low body fat level, but there are tricks you can use to mitigate that problem through nutrition and the speed at which you lose fat. I would suggest going as slowly as you can. If you have a show date in mind, give yourself a significant cutting phase so that you can taper off your calories and slowly bring up your energy expenditure.

Dieting can be torture, but it doesn't have to be. If you follow some basic guidelines and don't make any abrupt changes to your training or nutrition, you will watch your muscle stay intact while you become more and more chiseled and hard. The big thing with cutting is consistency and hard work. It's easy to stay in a "permabulk" but it's much more challenging and rewarding to do a smart cutting phase and a smart bulking phase.



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THE BASICS OF FAT LOSS

They say fat loss is 80% diet and 20% training, but without consistency and planning of both, your progress will most certainly stall. At the core of weight-loss, it's all about calories in vs. calories out. You want to put yourself in a caloric deficit either by reducing your food intake or by increasing your energy expenditure. Ideally, you'll do both.

In order to safely and effectively improve your body composition over time, you need to take this process slowly and find a manageable starting point both in your diet and training. The last thing you want to do is dramatically reduce your food intake and fall into a crash diet black hole. If you make this mistake, your metabolism won't have time to adapt to the new conditions and it may hold onto fat and burn some of your hard-earned muscle. You'll also feel very weak and as a result, lose muscle mass. If you already track your food or eat the same exact thing every day, you should be in a good position to start.

A good rule of thumb is to start with the amount of food you were eating at the end of your bulk. It's a good idea to track your macros so that you know you hit your calories every day and that you don't go over, which will stall progress. It's also great to have a written record of what you ate during your cut so that you can review it and make changes next time.

So how do you diet down? There is no magic trick to it. It's an extremely simple concept. This is it: every week, strategically take away some calories from your total daily intake. It's not hard, but you should have a plan. Give yourself around 16 weeks to cut, especially if you're dieting down for the first time.



THE BASICS OF FAT LOSS

Only take away 100 or 200 calories at a time in an effort to preserve performance and mass, and so that you don't damage your metabolism. Keep your protein around 1g per pound of lean bodyweight throughout the process and mostly take your calories from your carbs and fats. You can choose which energy source to take from, but note that if you do a low carb, high fat diet, you may look a bit flat throughout your cutting phase. Weigh yourself once a week to make sure you're consistently getting lighter.

If you decide to reduce your caloric intake by reducing your fat intake, I recommend dropping fats no lower than 20% of your total daily food intake. This will ensure that you have proper hormone regulation and healthy joints.



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MAINTAINING MUSCLE

As I mentioned, the name of the game here is slow and steady. You want to end up eating as many calories as possible by the end of your prep so your training stays as intense as possible. Don't make big leaps in dropping your food intake or you might find yourself way below your caloric needs.

Nutrient timing becomes increasingly important during prep – pre and intra workout nutrition will prevent catabolism during workouts. You should have a small meal about 45 mins before you train and some sort of carbs during your training to increase your endurance. You should eat a low fat, higher carb and protein meal within an hour of leaving the gym.

In terms of training, there are several schools of thought about pre-contest cardio and weight training. One school of thought suggests that you should raise your reps and do substantial cardio. The other school tends to keep the weights heavy and do moderate cardio. I think both approaches have their merit and it depends on the difficulty of your diet and prep. Here are the simple rules of thumb that should keep you looking jacked as you get closer to peaking.



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THE GOLDEN RULES

FOR TRAINING WHILE DIETED:

- 1) OFF SEASON STYLE TRAINING** - Your pre-contest training should be as similar as possible to your off-season training. If you built your physique with military pressing and barbell rows, you shouldn't suddenly switch to pull downs and cable side raises.
- 2) ADD IN SPECIFICS** - However, as you diet down you may notice that you need more work on certain muscles. Here is an opportunity for you to add very specific movements to make those improvements. You probably won't gain much muscle, as you're in a caloric deficit, but it won't hurt.
- 3) MATCH YOUR OFF-SEASON TRAINING VOLUME** - Your overall training volume should stay about the same. You may find that you can't move the same weights as in the off-season, and that's okay. Just use the heaviest weights you can safely handle and add reps to make up for it. This is where the old myth of "high reps get you shredded" comes from. That's all wrong, but typically you'll have to make up for load with reps so people just think that it's the high reps that are getting you cut.



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THE GOLDEN RULES

CONDITIONING

The faster you burn through calories, the faster you'll shed the excess body fat. With that being said, there are some methods that work better than others for burning energy. The big rule of thumb here is to burn as many calories in the shortest amount of time possible so that you can start recovering for next time – same principle as in weight training and bodybuilding as a whole. Below, you'll find a conditioning protocol that takes advantage of both heavy load bearing conditioning work as well as more traditional cardio work to burn the most calories possible, leveraging your on days and rest days.

If you start to feel weak or exhausted, reduce the frequency of your conditioning work. This means you can either do less work per session until you feel that your weight training is not suffering, or you can cut a day out until you feel better. Don't use this as an excuse to do less. This is about proper recovery. You should be doing cardiovascular conditioning work 3-5 times per week. Give yourself 1 day of complete rest. On that day, all you can do is stretch if needed, eat your meals, and sleep. No weights. No runs. No stairs. Nothing. However, if you're not seeing results after 6 weeks, add in 3 sessions per week of 30 minutes fasted cardio on the stairs or treadmill. I advise drinking an amino product when performing fasted cardio.



THE GOLDEN RULES

UPPER BODY DAYS:

Perform these Exercises in a circuit for 3-5 rounds with as little rest as possible between rounds.

Exercise	Duration
Farmers walks (w/Heavy Dumbbells)	60-90 seconds
Step Ups	20 reps each leg
Plank	60-90 seconds
Sled Push (if available) or deadmills	60-90 seconds

LOWER BODY DAYS:

Exercise	Duration
Stairs or incline treadmill	Medium difficulty, 30 minutes

ACTIVE REST DAYS:

Exercise	Duration
Farmers walks (w/Heavy Dumbbells)	60-90 seconds
Walking lunges (w/Light dumbbells)	60-90 seconds
Goblet squat	20 reps
Plank	60 seconds
Jog	60 seconds



THE GOLDEN RULES

THE FINAL 6 WEEKS

At this point, you should have been dieting for 6+ weeks already, slowly tapering down your calories and increasing your work output. Nothing will change in that regard moving forward. Continue to do increase your conditioning work and slowly taper down your fat and carbs, while matching your protein intake to 1-1.5x your lean bodyweight. You should only be doing steady state cardio 3-5x per week for your conditioning work at this point, but you'll need to increase each session both in intensity and duration. If you've been doing a re-feed every week, you should cut it down to two weeks until you're peeled to the bone. You'll fill back out in the days leading up to the show, so don't worry if you feel small.

Continue drinking about a gallon of water per day and make sure you're taking in enough electrolytes. On a low carbohydrate, you'll struggle to retain water intramuscularly so you'll have to really pound it back. A low sodium diet will be extremely detrimental to your gains and overall appearance. Go ahead and salt your food. It's not something to be afraid of.

Start tanning. Don't burn. Go to a tanning bed and slowly start darkening your skin. Of course, you'll throw some tanner on at the show, but you can get a head start. It will also help you sweat a little bit and keep you flushing out toxins.

In terms of training, you shouldn't change anything if you don't have to. What I mean by that is you should use similar techniques to preserve your muscle as you did to earn it. Jumping randomly to high reps at a lighter weight is not a strategic choice— it's based either out of fear or misinformation. With that being said, your recovery will not be as good as it is in the off-season, so don't try to do heavy sets of 6 or an extremely high training volume if it's going to make you feel like you need to be in a full body cast.



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THE GOLDEN RULES

You want to be able to keep training to stimulate your muscle so that you keep it. This is a very basic rule of thumb that is going to be case dependent on a lot of personal factors, but is a very powerful thing to understand.

You should intuitively reduce your training volume per session so that you can recover, while keeping the weights in that sweet-spot muscle-building range of failing between 6-12 reps. People typically get injured around the 6 week mark because they don't take their recovery time into consideration and practice poor fatigue management. Just be smart and don't push yourself if you don't feel capable of safely performing a workout or exercise. Finally, unless you still aren't lean enough, I'd suggest you stop your cardio sessions a week out, and don't train to the point that you're sore for the final week.

POSING

Around 10 weeks out, you should choose your music and develop a posing routine. Practice it every day. Record yourself. Have friends or an expert judge and critique it. Repeat until you can do it with your eyes closed, in your sleep, on demand with no hesitation. When you develop your routine, keep your strengths and weaknesses in mind and do your best to use poses and transitions that conceal your flaws and emphasize your strong points. For instance, if you have a blocky waist, try to use a lot of twisting and side poses. As for mandatories, we went over them previously, but make sure you have those absolutely on lock. Even if you have the best physique on stage, you can come in dead last if you look like a lost and confused baby giraffe on stage.



THE GOLDEN RULES

— MASSAGE

If you aren't getting regular sports massage, you should start. It can open up tight muscles, bring fullness to flat, bound up areas, and improve muscle function by releasing muscle adhesions. However, you can experience bruising and swelling from sports massage, so at 6 weeks out, stop all massage unless it is an emergency, and talk to your massage therapist about your current situation so he or she is careful not to leave any bad marks or create any undue severe muscle soreness.

However, in the off season and at the beginning of your prep, you can see an exponential improvement in your ability to train and see results by getting regular massage done, especially on areas where you are having trouble maintaining good form due to tightness or pain.

— TANNING

Step one to having a smooth and even tan on stage is exfoliating your skin thoroughly. Use some sort of exfoliating scrub and body wash a week before the show up until a few days before. You should also start full body hair removal about a month before show day so that your skin gets used to being shaved or Naired.

2-3 days before the competition, add a coat of competition tan. If you've got lighter skin, start 3 days out. If you have darker skin, you may only need to start applying 2 days out. Dip the applicator directly in the tanner and spread evenly. You will need some assistance with this. Use a hair dryer to speed up the process. You should shower as usual, just don't use an exfoliating body wash or anything that will rub the tanner off. The next day, apply in the morning and at night. Same thing for the day before the show. In the morning of the show, give yourself a quick rinse to remove any excess tanner.



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To give yourself a light sheen, you'll need someone to oil you back stage. Make sure it is a very light and even layer of oil or you will appear very splotchy. Simply apply with clean hands.

— PEAK WEEK

The ideal way to go into a show is extremely lean and prepared, so all you have to do is drop some water and carb up in time to hit the stage. If you are still trying to lose body fat a day or two out you may not be show ready. Generally speaking, you want be ready two or three days out and just hold your conditioning. You should be carb Depleting for 7-10 days before the show. The idea is to become extremely sensitive to carbohydrates so that when you carb up starting 24 hours before you step on stage, you fill out in an extreme way, so you should drop your carbs down to an almost non-existent level and your training should focus on burning off muscle glycogen.

About a week out from your competition, you can stop salting your food and increase your water intake slightly. Shoot for 1.5 gallons per day. About two days out, you should begin restricting water – only have $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon the day before and 20 oz the day of the show.

The day before your show, do a full glycogen depletion workout in the morning. This means a full body workout until you completely flatten out. Just do high reps at a moderate to light weight for a few sets each body part. It won't take much to deplete your glycogen stores at this point.

The first 12 hours after that, multiply your lean body mass by 6. That will be the amount of carbs you'll need to intake. For the next 12 hours after that, you'll need to multiply your lean body weight by 3 and take in that amount of carbs. Break those carbs up into 6 high carb, low protein meals.



THE GOLDEN RULES

— SHOW DAY

This is it. You made it to show day. The best advice you could get for the day of the show is don't change anything if you don't have to. If you look amazing, trying some sort of fancy trick is, more likely than not, going to ruin it. If you don't look that great and you can tell, you should assess what you did for next time and chalk it up as a learning experience, because chances are you won't be able to make a last minute correction to come in looking crisp and lean.

Assuming you are extremely lean, depleted all your glycogen, and did a carb-up the day before, you're just going to want to keep an eye on the mirror and slowly take in some carbs and fats. In the morning, have some slow digesting carbs and fatty meat, followed by out another meal of slow digesting carbs and protein. Two hours before stage time, you're going to want to have your last high carb meal with about 10-15 grams of fat, which will help the carbs digest slower, allowing you to stay full during hard posing.

When you pump up back stage, you're should start really popping. Your vascularity should be in full effect and any striations should be coming out now that your muscles are full. Now, all you have to do is crush your posing and thank your mom when you accept your trophy.

Remember that this sport is about trial and error, learning and experimentation. Although there is a pretty exact science to getting stage ready, there are so many variables that they can sometimes get hard to manage. My suggestion is to hire a prep coach, even if it's just to keep an eye on you and help you with tough decision-making when it's down to the wire. Once you have a few successful shows under your belt, you'll understand how your body works, how it responds to certain things, and what not to do. If you really want to nail it, keep a journal of all your preps so you can go back and see what worked, what didn't work, and how you can improve your strategy for next time.



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