

THE REFORGED DIET

FLEXIBLE NUTRITION
FOR A BETTER LIFE

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Introduction

I wasn't always the person I am today.

In fact, not too long ago, I was an overweight, depressed guy with thoughts of ending it all.

I was deeply unhappy with how I looked and felt, and I knew something had to change.

That's when I made the decision to start working out, as it seemed the easiest action to do at the time.

At first, I hated it.

The pain during the workouts, and the sweat—it all felt like torture.

But as I continued to push through, something interesting happened.

I started to notice small shifts in my mood and overall well-being.

I slept better, ate better, and, most importantly, I started to feel better.

As the months went by, I started to see physical changes too.

The weight began to melt away after a few months, and with each pound lost, I felt a renewed sense of confidence and purpose.

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Before I knew it, I was hooked on this new way of living.

Over a decade later, I've dedicated myself to learning everything I can about nutrition and fitness... and helping others on their journey as well.

I've made plenty of mistakes along the way, but each one has taught me valuable lessons that I'm eager to share with you.

What This Book Offers You

This book isn't about quick fixes or fad diets.

It's about embracing simplicity and practicality in this busy and chaotic world.

With so many distractions, so much misinformation, and many stressors, it can be extremely hard to eat properly, let alone learn to do so.

Because of this, I want to show you how you can achieve your weight loss goals while still living an enjoyable life.

Inside these pages, you'll find practical tips and strategies that have helped me and countless others simplify the fat loss process.

From understanding nutrition fundamentals to more advanced techniques, I'm here to guide you every step of the way.

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So, whether you're struggling with depression, looking to shed a few pounds, or simply seeking a healthier, happier life, I invite you to join me on this journey.

Together, we'll unleash the power of active fat burning and reclaim control over our bodies and minds.

Let's get into it!

Energy Balance: The Fundamentals of Weight Gain & Weight Loss

In this chapter, we'll delve into the fundamental principles that govern weight gain and loss, with a focus on the role of calories and how we'll approach fat loss in this book.

Now let's get into it!

Calories: The Currency of Weight Loss

At its core, weight loss is a simple equation: calories in versus calories out.

Calories are units of energy found in the foods we eat.

When we consume more calories than our bodies need to maintain their current weight, the excess energy is stored as muscle, water, and fat, leading to weight gain.

Conversely, when we consume fewer calories than our bodies need, our bodies will take from our muscle, water, and fat, resulting in weight loss.

The first law of Thermodynamics is that energy is not created or destroyed, it is only transferred.

As calories are units of energy, they follow this process.

Understanding the Energy Balance Equation

The energy balance equation is the foundation of weight management:

$$\text{Calories In} - \text{Calories Out} = \text{Weight Gain or Loss}$$

To reiterate, if you consume more calories than you burn, you'll gain weight in the form of muscle, water, and fat.

And if you burn more calories than you consume, you'll lose weight in the form of muscle, water, and fat.

It's as simple as that.

Factors Influencing Calorie Consumption

While the energy balance equation is supported by the Law of Thermodynamics, we need to take into consideration the factors that influence calorie consumption.

Factors like activity level, our mental health, mood, environment, and others all influence calorie consumption.

For example, let's say you just finished a long and stressful work day.

You are drained, and have no energy.

You feel brain fog and all you want to do is rest.

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You come home and magically, this Morpheus-like figure is sitting next to your kitchen counter.

He shows you a cheeseburger with fries and a grilled chicken meal with rice & vegetables.

In this scenario, I'm probably choosing the burger, I don't know about you.

This is obviously an insane example, but the foods in our environment can really get us at our weaker moments and can impact calorie consumption.

When you're feeling down or depressed, sometimes, food can be a form of comfort.

In understanding this, my hope is for you to be aware of what can make our diets a bit more challenging.

For more on this, [hop on over to our resources link here.](#)

The Difference Between Weight Loss & Fat Loss

Now that we understand the energy balance equation, I want to let you know that more is not always better.

Since your body uses calories for various purposes (brain, body, hormone, joint health, and more), we need to make sure we have enough calories to fulfill our basic needs, and our daily activity.

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Finding this sweet spot depends on your fitness goals.

For weight loss, the goal is to eat as much as you can while still losing weight.

For muscle growth, the goal is to eat as much as you can while minimizing fat gain and maximizing muscle growth.

We are going to focus more on the fat loss process in this book.

While the terms "weight loss" and "fat loss" are often used interchangeably, they actually represent distinct processes with different implications for health and well-being.

Weight Loss

Weight loss refers to a decrease in overall body weight, which can occur due to a variety of factors, including loss of water weight, muscle mass, and fat mass.

While shedding excess pounds can be motivating and may improve certain health markers, it's important to recognize that not all weight loss is created equal.

Crash diets or extreme calorie restriction, for example, can lead to rapid weight loss but may also result in muscle loss, making long-term weight maintenance challenging.

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These diets focus on weight loss in any way, rather than actual fat loss.

Since dieting is a stressor on your body, significant calorie restriction can have an impact on stress, testosterone levels, lethargy, and a variety of other factors.

We need to make sure we find a sweet spot where we are losing weight without feeling like crap.

I will cover this more in the **Making Adjustments On Your Diet** chapter.

Fat Loss

Fat loss specifically targets the reduction of adipose tissue, or body fat.

Unlike weight loss, which may involve loss of muscle and water in addition to fat, fat loss focuses on preserving lean muscle mass while reducing excess fat stores.

This is crucial for maintaining metabolic health, as muscle tissue plays a key role in calorie burning and overall metabolic rate.

While weight loss can provide short-term results and aesthetic benefits, focusing on fat loss offers numerous advantages for long-term health and well-being.

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By prioritizing fat loss over simply dropping pounds on the scale, you can achieve a leaner, more toned physique while preserving muscle mass and metabolic function.

In addition, targeting fat loss through sustainable lifestyle changes such as balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and stress management promotes an overall healthy relationship with food.

Simply put: by following a steadier fat loss process, you can create a system that is replicable, and easy to maintain.

By mastering the fundamentals of fat loss and adopting a holistic approach to weight management, you can achieve your goals and maintain your results for the long term.

Throughout this book, we'll provide you with the knowledge, tools, and support you need to embark on a successful fat loss journey and transform your life for the better.

Let's dive in!

Nourishing Your Mindset for Weight Loss Success

This journey isn't just about shedding pounds or building muscle.

It's about embracing a new identity and becoming the person you aspire to be.

If you want to be 50 pounds lighter, you'll need to become someone slightly different than who you are now.

Imagine your ideal self—the version of you who feels energized, confident, and empowered.

What does that person eat?

How do they move?

How do they prioritize self-care?

By envisioning your future self, you can align your actions with your goals and pave the way for lasting change.

Embracing Small Steps

Before you completely overhaul your current lifestyle, we need to understand something about change.

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Change doesn't happen overnight: it occurs through consistent, incremental steps that are built into the habits we regularly do.

And in order to build those habits, we need to start by making small, manageable changes to your food choices and eating habits.

Simple wins to start, like swapping out sugary drinks for water or adding a small serving of vegetables to your meals can be HUGE wins to start.

While these small shifts may seem insignificant at first, but over time, they add up to significant results.

Remember, it's not about perfection—it's about progress.

Celebrate every healthy choice you make, no matter how small, and use setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow.

Liquid Calories = Easy Fat Loss Win

When I used to work in a grocery store while studying in college, one of my coworkers asked me about weight loss.

While asking me this, he was drinking a 2 liter bottle of Coca-Cola.

I told him if he changed that 2 liter bottle of Coca-Cola into a 1 liter, or even changed it into a Diet Coke (zero calories), he would significantly drop weight.

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Taking a look at what you drink in your day to day and LIMITING liquid calories can be a huge win to start with.

The 80/20 Rule

You've probably heard of the Pareto Principle.

And when it comes to success on your nutrition journey, this principle has helped me transform my body, while building a healthier relationship with food.

80/20 for nutrition means aiming to make healthy choices 80% of the time while allowing flexibility for indulgences or occasional treats the other 20%.

This approach removes the pressure of strict diets and fosters a balanced relationship with food.

This is called the Flexible Dieting approach.

The Flexible Dieting Mindset

Your nutrition mindset is the cornerstone of your weight loss journey.

By adopting the 80/20 flexible dieting strategy and understanding that fat loss should be pursued as a lifestyle change, you can set yourself up for success.

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Embrace small steps, stay committed to your goals, and never underestimate the power of believing in yourself.

Now with this being said, let's dive into the basics of nutrition.

[For more Nutrition Principles, check out my YouTube Video here.](#)

Nutrition Basics

In the world of nutrition, the three macronutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, and fats—form the foundation of a balanced diet.

Each of these macronutrients plays a unique and crucial role in maintaining our health, providing energy, and supporting bodily functions.

Understanding their importance can help you make informed dietary choices, whether your goals are weight loss, muscle gain, or overall well-being.

The Power of Proteins

Proteins are often called the building blocks of life, and for good reason.

Composed of amino acids, proteins are essential for the growth, repair, and maintenance of body tissues.

Our bodies use 20 different amino acids, nine of which are considered essential because they cannot be synthesized by the body and must be obtained from our diet.

The following are a few benefits of proteins:

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1. **Muscle Building and Repair:** Proteins are vital for muscle growth and repair. Consuming protein post-workout provides the amino acids necessary for muscle growth, muscle retention (when dieting for fat loss), and more.
2. **Enzyme and Hormone Production:** Proteins are involved in the creation of enzymes and hormones. Enzymes facilitate chemical reactions in the body, while hormones act as messengers that regulate various physiological processes.
3. **Immune Function:** Proteins play a critical role in maintaining a healthy immune system. Antibodies, which are proteins, help the body identify and neutralize pathogens like bacteria and viruses.
4. **Satiety and Weight Management:** High-protein foods can help control hunger by promoting a feeling of fullness, which can be beneficial for weight management. Proteins also have a higher thermic effect, meaning the body uses more energy to digest them compared to fats and carbohydrates.

The Role of Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the body's primary source of energy.

They are categorized into simple and complex carbohydrates, each having different effects on blood sugar levels and energy availability.

The following are a few benefits of carbohydrates:

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1. **Energy Supply:** Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose, which serves as the main energy source for the body's cells, tissues, and organs. This is particularly important for brain function, as the brain relies heavily on glucose for energy.
2. **Muscle Fuel:** During physical activity, especially high-intensity exercise, muscles use stored glycogen (derived from carbohydrates) as a quick source of energy. Replenishing glycogen stores post-workout is crucial for recovery and performance.
3. **Digestive Health:** Complex carbohydrates, such as those found in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, are rich in fiber. Fiber aids in digestion, helps regulate blood sugar levels, and promotes a healthy gut microbiome.
4. **Mood and Cognitive Function:** Carbohydrates can influence mood and cognitive function by affecting the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain. For instance, carbohydrates can help increase the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of well-being and happiness.

The Importance of Fats

Fats have often been misunderstood and unfairly vilified.

However, they are essential for various bodily functions and overall health.

The following are a few benefits of fats:

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1. **Energy Storage:** Fats are a dense source of energy, providing more than twice the calories per gram compared to proteins and carbohydrates. The body stores excess energy in fat cells, which can be tapped into during periods of fasting or intense physical activity.
2. **Cell Structure:** Fats are a major component of cell membranes, providing structural integrity and fluidity. They play a key role in maintaining the health and function of every cell in the body.
3. **Nutrient Absorption:** Certain vitamins, known as fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K), require fat for proper absorption. Without adequate dietary fat, the body would struggle to absorb and utilize these essential nutrients.
4. **Hormone Production:** Fats are involved in the production of hormones, including sex hormones like estrogen and testosterone. Adequate fat intake is crucial for maintaining hormonal balance and reproductive health.
5. **Brain Health:** The brain is composed of nearly 60% fat, highlighting the importance of dietary fats for cognitive function and neurological health. Omega-3 fatty acids, in particular, are crucial for brain development and function.

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Energy Density

Now that we have a better understanding of what are proteins, carbs, and fats, I wanted to introduce you to a concept called **energy density**.

Think about the following two meals, containing the same amount of calories:

- Grilled chicken with rice, olive oil drizzled tomatoes, broccoli, and asparagus
- A slice of pizza with bacon on it.

While these two contain the same calories, you get to eat more volume of food with the first meal.

In addition, with the grilled chicken meal being higher in protein and fiber, you will be fuller for longer.

While the slice of pizza may be the most appealing, you would have to eat multiple slices to gain the same fullness feeling you would get from the first meal.

This would mean you would have to most likely consume triple the amount of calories to be satisfied.

Think about these things when it comes to strategically hitting your fitness goals.

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Now with that being said, let's further explore whole foods and processed ones, along with revisiting our 80/20 rule.

Whole Foods (Nutrient-Dense Foods)

Whole foods are typically single-ingredient, low-calorie foods that are significantly more nutrient-dense and filling than junk foods.

These foods consist of some of the following:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean meats
- Eggs
- Egg whites

Junk Foods (Calorically-Dense Foods)

When it comes to junk food, most of these foods are high in both fats and carbohydrates.

Compared to whole foods, these foods are less nutrient-dense and less filling.

These foods typically taste great, but can deter us from our progress if we don't have a plan in place for them.

This is where the 80/20 rule comes into play (from the previous chapter).

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As a reminder, the 80/20 rule is shooting for 80% whole foods in your diet, and allowing for 20% processed or indulgent foods that go slightly off the plan.

You want to make sure that you're getting the nourishment you need in the whole foods, but allow for the occasional dessert or treat on date night or a work event.

This would be a perfect balance of a healthy relationship with food: eating as healthy as possible, but allowing for "planned mistakes" to be made along the way.

Now that we've got the macronutrients and energy density concepts out of the way, let's dive into the good stuff: **The Reforged Diet!**

The Reforged Diet (Level One)

Now let's get into a strategy!

If you're somebody that is just getting started with nutrition and don't want to calculate calories or macronutrients, this is the place to start.

Regardless of whether or not you would like to implement calorie or macronutrient tracking (one of the bonus chapters at the end), this chapter is the foundation of dieting flexibly.

For those with over 50-100+ pounds to lose, if you just follow these guidelines, you're going to see some incredible progress.

In addition, if you're someone that's not currently preparing for a competition or something like a photoshoot, this strategy will work perfectly for you!

With that being said, understanding a few key concepts can make a world of difference.

Number of Meals

Before we get into the gritty details of the strategy, we should dive into a big question:

How many times do you want to eat per day?

Research supports anywhere around 3-6 meals per day work.

For myself, 6 meals a day always stressed me out, and the tiny meals were depressing.

I prefer 3-4 meals per day because it's easy to do and less stressful.

Experiment with these guidelines and adjust as needed based on your individual needs and preferences.

Now with that being said, let's get into the Reforged Diet!

The Building Blocks of A Nutritious Meal

Step One: The Protein Protocol

Protein is one of the most underlooked macronutrients that should be prioritized above the others.

As mentioned above, protein is not only great for muscle growth and retention, but also a variety of benefits.

Here are some of the major benefits of having a higher protein diet:

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- **It helps you stay fuller for longer.** A higher protein intake influences your appetite-reducing hormones while reducing your levels of the hunger hormone, ghrelin.
- **It makes you eat significantly less.** An older study found that consuming only 30% of total calories from protein caused people to eat 400 calories less on average.
- **Digesting protein burns more calories.** While not TOO significant in the grand scheme of things, this is pretty cool.

Now, how much protein do you need?

Typically, a high protein diet that elicits these benefits is around 30% of total calories coming from protein.

For those getting started on this journey, you should ideally work up towards having 25-50 grams of protein per meal.

This equates to around 1-2 palm servings per meal.

Spacing this out for 3-6 meals a day will help you easily hit these protein goals.

Initially, some of us may feel like we are actually eating more than typical.

However, you may be eating less calories on average in the grand scheme of things.

You'll be able to eat more volume of food with less calories.

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That's a win-win in my opinion!

Step Two: Your Fiber Goal

Step two is a simple fiber recommendation that many of us should be able to achieve:

Aim for around 3-5 fist servings of vegetables daily.

Fiber is great for digestion and keeps you fuller on your diet similar to protein.

Just by hitting these simple guidelines would be a solid step in the right direction.

Step Three: Adding Your Add-Ons

Once you've got your protein and fiber sorted, it's time to add some additional nutrients to make a complete meal.

You are going to choose the following options with your meals:

1. **Fats:** Aim for 1-2 thumb servings of fats to add a little extra flavor and satisfaction. As mentioned, quality fats consist of nuts, seeds, and oils.
2. **Carbs:** Aim for 1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs to round out your meal and keep your energy up. As mentioned previously, this will be potatoes, oats, and rice.
3. **Fats + Carbs Combo.** Aim for 1 thumb serving of fats and 1 cupped handful serving of carbs.

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This will provide you a perfect starting point for a pretty balanced meal.

Flexible Dieting In Practice

This strategy applies to both eating at home, and going to a restaurant.

Let's say you go out to eat at a restaurant and want to eat a burger.

You saw the images of this burger on Yelp, and you really want this juicy bacon cheeseburger.

Make the decision to choose the burger, and make your 1-2 sides vegetables.

Basically, what you did here is replace the additional fats and carbs you would get from fries and add fiber to your meal.

This is flexible dieting with a simple example - obviously not the HEALTHIEST meal, but one you can choose in moderation after eating extremely well 80% of the time.

Now that we have the diet strategy down, let's explore the recommendation of hand portions further.

Hand Portion Measurements

We briefly mentioned hand portions in the previous section around the macronutrients (proteins, carbs, and fats) and fiber.

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Let's explore this in-depth to help you understand what this means, and why it works with each macronutrient.

Protein: Measuring with Your Palm

I've already talked about how awesome protein is.

As a reminder, protein is essential for muscle retention, muscle growth, and fullness.

To estimate your protein intake, use your palm as a guide:

- **Palm Portion:** One palm-sized portion of protein is roughly equivalent to 20-30 grams of protein, depending on individual hand size and protein density. This is typically around 100-150 calories.
- **Protein Sources:** Poultry, Fish, Lean Meats, Protein Powder (one scoop = one palm portion)

This provides a balanced amount of protein to support muscle maintenance and fullness.

Fats: Measuring with Your Thumb

Healthy fats play a crucial role in hormone production, brain function, and nutrient absorption.

To estimate your fat intake, use your thumb as a guide:

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- **Thumb Portion:** One thumb-sized portion of fats is roughly equivalent to 7-10 grams of fat, depending on the source of fat. A thumb-sized portion of fats typically provides around 60-90 calories, depending on the source of fats.
- **Recommended Fat Sources:** Avocado, Nuts, Seeds, Olive Oil, Butter (in moderation)

If you opt for fats as your add-on for your meal, include 2 thumb-sized portions of healthy fats per meal.

This provides a balanced amount of fats to support hormone balance and satiety.

Carbohydrates: Measuring with Your Cupped Hand

Carbohydrates are the body's primary source of energy and are essential for fueling workouts and supporting overall physical performance.

Carbs will provide you sustained energy if you're exercising regularly.

To estimate your carbohydrate intake, use your cupped hand as a guide:

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- **Cupped Hand Portion:** One cupped hand-sized portion of carbohydrates is roughly equivalent to 20-30 grams of carbohydrates, depending on the density of the carbohydrate source. A cupped hand-sized portion of carbohydrates typically provides around 80-120 calories, depending on the source of carbohydrates.
- **Recommended Carb Sources:** Rice, Pasta, Potatoes, Quinoa

If you choose carbs as your add-on for a meal, include 2 cupped hand-sized portions of carbohydrates, such as a serving of cooked rice or pasta.

This provides a balanced amount of carbohydrates to fuel your workouts and support energy levels throughout the day.

Just by following these recommendations, you'll have a solid starting point for your nutrition plan.

Think of this as the foundation of your strategy.

If you can't completely overhaul your current diet, work up to these recommendations overtime.

Nutrition Consistency: The 80/20 Revisited

While we've mentioned 80/20 previously, I want to emphasize this again in a different way: consistency.

Aiming for about 80% consistency on this plan will lead to you winning.

Think about a dart board.

You're not going to hit bullseye every single time, so get some points on the board.

For example, you've been on this journey for 3 weeks, and have been really good for your diet.

Then there's a family gathering.

You know that there's going to be food that goes against the plan there.

In response, you make sure you follow your protein and fiber recommendations, and allow yourself some dessert for today.

You ate a little more than usual, but you didn't overeat to oblivion.

You don't feel too bad about it because you're getting back to the routine tomorrow.

1 day slightly off the plan out of 21 days is a huge win.

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You still got points on the dartboard.

Remember, the goal is progress, not perfection.

Focus on your nutrition strategy 80% of the time.

Allow 20% as a buffer for any indulgences you might make.

Now that we've got all of this covered, let's explore another important piece to this diet that goes beyond the food itself: tracking.

Meal Tracking Methods

Awareness is one of the most important keys to a successful diet.

If you do not know what you're eating (or planning to eat) throughout the day, you're setting yourself up for failure.

In this chapter, we are going to explore two meal tracking methods you can utilize to keep your nutrition in check.

Let's explore these two meal tracking methods.

Meal Track Method #1: Hand Portion Tracking

One of the easiest ways to track your food intake is hand portion tracking.

If you're using our strategy above and measuring hand portions to track your intake, a personalized tracker sheet can be incredibly helpful.

It can be as simple as a piece of paper with the following:

- Check off each portion box as you eat.
- Use numbers to indicate which meal you ate each portion.
- Use letters to identify the foods that fulfill each portion.
- Customize your tracking method to suit your preferences.

Meal Track Method #2: Food Journal

If you'd like to get a little more specific with what you eat, I would encourage you to start keeping a "Food Diary" or Journal.

This is extremely helpful for someone who wants to track their food patterns, or how they eat during times of stress, boredom, and more.

This next step of awareness can really help you dial in on your diet in the long-run.

For example, I have a big sweet tooth at night.

In fact, I prefer to have more carbs in the evening because of this.

Depending on how hungry I am, I will either have a nighttime protein smoothie with fruits, or I will have oatmeal and mix it with protein powder, hot almond milk, and blueberries or strawberries.

I incorporate this into my plan, allowing me to make what could be considered a "weakness", a massive strength.

When it comes to meal tracking, you can write it down, or download a meal tracking app like MyFitnessPal.

[MyFitnessPal](#) will help you track foods by searching in their database for the food you eat.

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Other great apps would include:

- [MyMacros+](#): Great for tracking macronutrients.
- [RP Diet](#): This app sets up scheduling for your training and nutrition. It's your online training and nutrition coach. You pay monthly after a free trial, but it's a powerful accountability app.

The key is finding an approach that works for you and helps you stay on track without feeling overwhelmed.

Tracking Progress: Beyond the Scale

Now you are following these basics and wondering: how should we track our progress?

In this chapter, we will explore tracking progress beyond the scale.

Rethinking the Scale

While the scale can be a useful tool for monitoring progress, it's essential not to place too much emphasis on it.

Weight fluctuations can occur due to factors like water retention, muscle gain, and hormonal changes, which may not accurately reflect your true progress.

If you're going to use the scale, you need to have no emotional attachment to that number.

If you know that you will, then don't check the scale at all.

However, if you're only using the scale to track, here's what has worked for me.

Instead of fixating on daily fluctuations, focus on long-term trends by measuring averages on the scale.

Step on the scale every morning and write down your number.

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After 7 days have passed, take your 7 days and find the average.

This provides a more accurate picture of your progress and helps mitigate the impact of daily fluctuations.

If you would like an app that does this, try [Happy Scale](#).

Happy Scale makes weight loss fun because it takes your daily fluctuations and finds SOME order in the chaos. :)

Visual Evidence: Progress Photos

One of the most powerful ways to track progress is through visual evidence.

Take progress photos every 2-4 weeks to document changes in your physique over time.

These photos can be incredibly motivating and provide a tangible reminder of how far you've come, even when the scale may not be moving as quickly as you'd like.

Remember that weight loss and fat loss are not to be used interchangeably.

You might find that you haven't lost a single pound, but looking at your progress pictures, you see that you look better.

Maybe you've been lifting weights and have gained muscle as well, which has masked your weight loss.

Measurement Matters

In addition to photos, consider taking body measurements to track changes in your body composition.

Measure key areas such as your waist, hips, chest, arms, and thighs, and track changes over time.

Sometimes, inches lost can be more meaningful than pounds on the scale, indicating progress in reducing body fat and building lean muscle.

Monitoring Overall Well-Being

Weight loss is about more than just numbers—it's about improving your overall health and well-being.

Pay attention to other indicators of progress, such as sleep quality, energy levels, and stress management.

If you find that your sleep quality is suffering, your energy levels are low, or you're experiencing high levels of stress, it may be a sign that you need to ease off the intensity of your diet.

This can be adjusted by simply adding a little more calories to your diet.

As A Reminder: More Is Not Always Better

I've done this a few times to let you know that less calories is not always better.

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If you're losing fat at a reasonable pace (which we will cover in the next chapter), keep it going.

Do not cut more calories if you're seeing progress, you're sleeping well and you're feeling good.

Cutting too much can impact your adherence and motivation to diet, and is typically one of the main reasons why people fail their diets.

Listening to Your Body

Ultimately, the key to successful progress tracking is listening to your body.

Pay attention to how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally throughout your weight loss journey.

If something doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to make adjustments to your approach.

Remember, sustainable progress is about finding balance and prioritizing your overall well-being.

By incorporating these strategies for tracking progress beyond the scale, you can gain a more comprehensive understanding of your weight loss journey and celebrate the meaningful milestones along the way.

Making Adjustments On Your Diet

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What do we do when we don't see the progress we need to see?

In this chapter, we'll discuss how to adjust your calorie intake, macros, and hand portions to further your progress on your health and fitness journey.

It's essential to understand that while the guidelines provided are a helpful starting point, they may need to be customized to fit your individual needs and goals.

Setting Realistic Expectations

Before diving into adjustments, let's establish realistic expectations for progress.

The rate at which you can lose body fat or gain muscle depends on various factors, including your consistency, body composition, and level of experience.

For body fat loss, aim for a realistic rate of 0.5-1% of body weight per week.

If you're seeing this consistently, you are eating just the right amount of food (calories).

This rate of weight loss is a slow approach that typically results in fat loss over weight loss.

It allows you to eat as much as you can while losing body fat.

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Sometimes, you may get away with more per week, but restricting too many calories is one reason why most people fail their diets.

You need to find the sweet spot where you are losing weight, you are sleeping well, you aren't ravenously hungry (some hunger is ok), and you actually don't feel a bit miserable.

Making Adjustments

After about 3-4 weeks, if you're not seeing the desired results within these realistic parameters, it may be time to make some adjustments to your intake.

The following are a few situations where you may need to make adjustments.

If You're Not Losing Weight

If you're not losing weight after 3-4 weeks, it might be time to adjust your intake.

Decrease your daily intake by about 250 calories, primarily by reducing carbs and/or fats.

How to do this is remove 1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs and/or 1-2 thumbs of fats from your daily intake.

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If You're Losing Lean Muscle

If you find that you're losing muscle:

increase your daily protein intake by about 25 grams or add 1 extra palm-sized portion of protein to your daily intake.

Rapid Weight Loss

If you find yourself rapidly losing weight, I would recommend increasing your calorie intake by 100 calories, primarily in carbs or fats.

As you know, this equates to adding ~1 cupped handful of carbs or ~1 thumb serving of fats to your daily intake.

Remember, the sweet spot is around 0.5-1% per week of weight lost on average.

This is mainly because it's easier to prioritize weight loss in the form of fat here.

Other Factors That May Hinder Progress

Beyond these factors, we can look into other factors that may impact your progress in the long-term.

If you find yourself experiencing poor sleep, ravenous hunger, or constant brain fog during your diet, chances are your calories may be too low.

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Here are some things to take into consideration here:

- **Poor Sleep Quality:** Increase your daily intake by about 100 calories, primarily in carbs or fats. This equates to adding ~1 cupped handful of carbs or ~1 thumb serving of fats to your daily intake.
- **Ravenous Hunger:** Increase your daily intake by about 100 calories, primarily in carbs or fats. This equates to adding ~1 cupped handful of carbs or ~1 thumb serving of fats to your daily intake.
- **Brain Fog (Lethargic or Tired):** Increase your daily intake by about 100 calories, primarily in carbs or fats. This equates to adding ~1 cupped handful of carbs or ~1 thumb serving of fats to your daily intake.

Sometimes, addressing these can help you make progress in the long-run.

Monitoring Progress

It's crucial to monitor your results regularly to determine if your adjustments are effective.

Check your progress every two weeks, and consider waiting up to four weeks before making any adjustments to your diet.

Pay attention to how your body responds, including changes in appetite, energy levels, and body composition.

Customizing Your Plan

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Feel free to substitute carb or fat portions based on your preferences and responses.

Additionally, you can divide your daily portions into smaller snacks if desired, as long as you ensure you're meeting your target daily intake.

By fine-tuning your nutrition plan based on your individual needs and progress, you can continue moving closer to your health and fitness goals with confidence and success.

The next chapter will cover the finish line: what to do after your diet, or after the weight loss challenge you completed.

The Finish Line: Life After the Diet

Congratulations!

You've reached the end of your diet journey or the end of your transformation challenge.

Now what?

In this chapter, we'll explore what comes next and how to maintain your success for the long term.

Reflecting on Your Journey

Before diving into post-diet life, take a moment to reflect on your journey.

Remember that at the beginning of this book, we mentioned that this is a lifestyle change.

Celebrate your achievements, no matter how big or small, and acknowledge the hard work and dedication that got you here.

With that being said, here are some next step recommendations to follow post-diet.

Transitioning to Maintenance Mode

Now that you've reached your goal weight, it's time to transition from weight loss (or weight gain) mode to maintenance mode.

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This means finding a balance between the habits and behaviors that helped you lose weight and the flexibility to enjoy the occasional indulgence without derailing your progress.

Establishing Sustainable Habits

One of the keys to maintaining your weight loss success is establishing sustainable habits that you can maintain for the long term.

This might include:

1. **Regular Exercise:** Continue to prioritize regular physical activity, not only for weight maintenance but also for overall health and well-being.
2. **Balanced Nutrition:** Focus on eating a balanced diet rich in whole foods, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats. Aim to incorporate a variety of foods into your meals to ensure you're getting all the nutrients your body needs.
3. **Mindful Eating:** Practice mindful eating techniques to tune into your body's hunger and fullness cues and avoid overeating or emotional eating.
4. **Regular Monitoring:** While you may not need to track every morsel of food you eat, it can be helpful to periodically check in with your weight and measurements to ensure you're staying on track.

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Managing Setbacks

It's essential to recognize that setbacks are a natural part of any journey, including weight maintenance.

If you find yourself slipping back into old habits or experiencing weight fluctuations, don't be too hard on yourself.

Instead, use setbacks as an opportunity to reevaluate your habits and make any necessary adjustments to get back on track.

Setting New Goals

Now that you've achieved your initial weight loss goals, consider setting new goals to keep yourself motivated and engaged.

These goals might be related to fitness, such building muscle in the gym, or hopping on a competition stage.

Or they could be focused on overall health and well-being, such as improving your sleep habits, or living a more active and happier lifestyle.

Celebrating Non-Scale Victories

Finally, remember that success isn't just about the number on the scale.

Celebrate the non-scale victories along the way, whether it's fitting into an old shirt that you like, having more energy to play with your kids, or feeling more confident in social situations.

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These victories are even more important than the number on the scale.

Avoid The Extreme

You've achieved what got you here through your efforts, and a few practical tips I might have offered.

You may want to learn more as a result.

The problem comes in the form of misinformation in the fitness space that sometimes will gaslight you into making mistakes.

Here are a few examples of nutrition myths:

- **Eliminating Food or Macronutrient Groups.** Unless you have a food allergy, it is a red flag if someone tells you to avoid a specific fruit, or carbs in general (with the exception of Trans Fats).
- **Eating past a certain hour.** Unless it causes you discomfort the next morning, don't worry about this too much.
- [We cover more nutrition myths in this blog post.](#)

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Live Reforged

As you embark on this new chapter of your journey, remember that maintaining your weight loss success is a marathon, not a sprint.

By establishing sustainable habits, managing setbacks with grace, and celebrating your achievements along the way, you can enjoy a lifetime of health, happiness, and well-being.

Cheers to your continued success!

BONUS: Tracking Junk Food (In Hand Portions)

At the beginning of this book, I mentioned the 80/20 rule of 80% whole foods, and allowing for 20% indulgent foods.

This means that we would be including junk foods in the plan.

When it comes to junk food, remember that these foods are energy-dense with low nutritional value.

However, you have the opportunity to eat them.

Looking at junk food, it's always important to look at the nutrition facts - gauge the serving size.

Typically, these foods are high in fats and carbohydrates.

Since this is the case, here's how I would break them down:

1. I would look at the nutrition facts and look at the grams of fats and carbs in each serving.
2. Then I would use these two as a reference point:
 - One thumb serving of whole-food fats = 7-12g of fats, or 63-108 calories from fats.
 - One cupped handful serving of whole-food carbs = 20-30g of carbs, or 80-120 calories from carbs.

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From there, I would break this down using our level 1 strategy:

- A serving of Oreos = 130 calories, with 7g of fat and 25g of carbs.
- This means I have 1 thumb serving of fats and 1 cupped handful serving of carbs.
- I would take these servings and apply them to one of my meals.

And this is how I would track my junk food!

For Junk Food That Doesn't Have Nutrition Facts

Let's say you're going to a restaurant today and know dessert is coming.

Use a tool like MyFitnessPal and look for the item on the restaurant's menu, or a like item.

Look at the calories, the fats, and carbs.

Break it down just like I showed you.

Alternatively, you can use ChatGPT to break this down for you.

Tell ChatGPT to break down the total calories and macronutrients of the dessert you're going to eat into hand portions.

It will break it down for you.

You can see this in action under our [ChatGPT Nutrition Hacks series here.](#)

BONUS - Diet Breaks: When to Pause and Recharge

If you're continuing on your weight loss journey, know that weight loss can be a challenging process for your body and mind.

After dieting for about 8-16 weeks, the best way forward may be to take one step back.

In this chapter, we'll explore the concept of diet breaks and why they're essential for long-term success.

Understanding Diet Breaks

After a few months of dieting (8-16 weeks typically), you might find yourself in need of a diet break.

And that's entirely normal.

A diet break is a planned period of time, typically 1-4 weeks, where you temporarily increase your calorie intake slightly.

It's not a free pass to indulge in all your favorite foods, but rather a strategic pause in your weight loss journey to give your body and mind a much-needed break.

Signs You Need a Diet Break

Knowing when to take a diet break is crucial for avoiding burnout and maintaining progress.

Here are some signs that it might be time to hit the pause button on your diet:

1. **Plateauing Progress:** If you've been following your diet plan diligently but haven't seen any changes in weight or body composition for several weeks, it could be a sign that your body needs a break.
2. **Increased Hunger and Cravings:** Feeling constantly hungry or experiencing intense cravings for high-calorie foods can be a sign that your body is struggling with the calorie deficit (your diet).
3. **Decreased Performance:** If your workouts are suffering, or you're feeling lethargic and fatigued throughout the day, it could be a sign that your body isn't getting enough fuel to support your activity level.
4. **Mental Fatigue:** Dieting can take a toll on your mental health, leading to feelings of frustration, irritability, or even depression.

How to Take a Diet Break

When it comes to implementing a diet break, there are a few key principles to keep in mind:

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1. **Plan Ahead:** Schedule your diet break in advance and set clear guidelines for how long it will last and what your calorie intake will be during that time.
2. **Increase Calories Gradually:** Add a little more carbs or fats to your meals.
3. **Focus on Nutrient-Dense Foods:** While it's okay to enjoy some treats during your diet break, try to prioritize nutrient-dense foods that will nourish your body and support overall health.
4. **Stay Active:** Use your diet break as an opportunity to focus on maintaining your current activity level.

The Benefits of Diet Breaks

Taking regular diet breaks can offer a multitude of benefits, including:

- **Preservation of Lean Muscle Mass:** Diet breaks can help prevent muscle loss that often occurs during periods of prolonged dieting, preserving your strength.
- **Restored Energy Levels:** You might find your energy levels coming back to you on a diet break that might have been depleted on the diet.
- **Motivation:** I can tell you that after 1-2 weeks of a diet break, you will be energized and motivated to continue your fat loss diet.
- **Sanity:** Giving yourself permission to relax your dietary restrictions can help alleviate feelings of deprivation and enhance your overall enjoyment of the weight loss process.

Rest & Recharge

Incorporating periodic diet breaks into your weight loss plan can be a game-changer for both your physical and mental well-being.

By recognizing the signs that you need a break and implementing one strategically, you can set yourself up for long-term success and sustainable results.

Remember, progress isn't always linear, and sometimes the best way forward is to take a step back and recharge.

BONUS - Advanced Methods of Nutrition (Level Two: Counting Calories & Macronutrients)

I didn't want to add this to the main part of this digital book because it adds a little bit more complexity to the level one nutrition chapter above.

However, if you're looking to get a little bit more granular with your nutrition, here are where calories and macronutrients come in.

Level 2 is typically for those that are in a pre-competition phase, looking to be more meticulous about what they eat for performance purposes.

At some phases of my fitness journey, I have swapped from level two to level one methods depending on my goals.

Currently, I am in a level one phase where I am not tracking every calorie, but intuitively eating with the strategies in the previous chapter.

Now with that being said, let's explore the level two dieting strategy, starting with calculating calories.

Step One: Calculating Your Calories

Awareness is one of the biggest parts of this journey.

If you know what you're eating, you'll have a better handle on your transformation goals.

This section explores a great starting point for this challenge.

Take your body weight and multiply it by 10.

This will give you a base calorie intake.

The base calorie intake is what you technically burn through daily without activity.

Example: Me at 185. $185 \times 10 = 1850$ (base calories).

The activity multiplier is a generic estimation; you might need to adjust depending on how much energy you expend.

This is determined by the following:

- Very low activity (light cardio): **1.3-1.4**
- Active (weight training 3-5 days weekly): **1.5-1.8**
- Super Active (high intensity; genetic outlier): **1.8-2.2**

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C. Get Your Maintenance Calories

Take your base calories and multiply them by your multiplier to get your "Maintenance Calories".

This will determine the calories you can POSSIBLY eat to maintain your current physique.

Example:

2775 (maintenance calories)

If you're only looking to eat better and maintain, you can skip the fourth step.

D. Determine Your Phase

If Fat Loss is the goal:

- **Your goal is to lose ~0.5-1% per week of body weight.**
- The sweet spot would be 300-500 calories subtracted from maintenance.
- My example: My maintenance calories are 2775. For fat loss, I will subtract 500 calories. **2775-500 = 2275 calories for fat loss**

If Weight Gain is the goal:

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- This is determined by training experience.
- **If a Beginner (first year of training):** add 300-500 calories to maintenance.
- **If Intermediate (2-5 consistent years of training):** add 150-300 calories to maintenance.
- **If Advanced (5+ consistent years):** add 60-100 calories to maintenance.

Step Two (A): Calculating Protein (The Protein Protocol)

For those that are not looking to calculate every macronutrient, level 2 of the protein protocol may be perfect for you.

The protein protocol is a focus on calculating your calories and protein ONLY.

This strategy is for those who prefer to calorie track but are not being super strict with the calories they consume.

I highly recommend this if you're just getting started with calorie and macro tracking.

Since you have your calories in place, what you're going to do is calculate your protein (in grams).

You're going to calculate your protein intake (in grams) by multiplying 0.45-1 per pound of your bodyweight.

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For those that are on the leaner end looking to lose under 50 pounds:

stick with the average recommendation of 0.8-1g per pound of bodyweight.

For those who have over 50-100lbs to lose: stick to 0.6-0.7g per pound of bodyweight.

For those who have over 100+lbs to lose: stick to the 0.45-5g per pound of bodyweight range.

The reason for this is that if you weigh 500 lbs and you have over 100lbs to lose, eating over 400g of protein is not easy.

If one palm serving of protein is around 20-30g of protein, you're going to need to eat ~13 palm servings of protein.

It's not practical, it's not cheap, and it's not fun ;)

Let's say I am looking to lose a little bit of body fat at my current body weight of 185 lbs.

With fat loss being my goal, my calorie goal is 2275 calories.

My protein goal will be around 180g of protein, mainly because I currently don't want to lose too much weight.

1g of protein equates to ~4 calories (less with protein's thermic effect, but we are rounding up here).

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180 x 4 = 720 calories from protein.

From there, we can break it down further.

Since one palm serving of protein is around 20-30g of protein, this means I will have to eat ~6-9 palm servings of protein daily.

If I'm eating 4 times a day, I will be eating ~1-2 palm servings of protein per meal, most likely staying on the higher end.

As I mentioned, if you're only tracking calories and protein intake in grams, you can make some amazing progress in doing so.

Just make sure you eat healthy 80% of the time!

Step Two (B): Calculating Proteins, Carbohydrates, & Fats

If you calculate your calories and protein but want to get even more granular with macronutrient tracking, we can also calculate our carbohydrates and fats in grams as well.

Let's use my example for the following section as well.

As mentioned above, your protein should be around 0.45-1 gram per pound of body weight.

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In using my above example, I will be eating 180g of protein every day, equating to 6-9 palm servings of protein daily, with ~1-2 palm servings per meal.

Fats are calculated by taking 20-30% of your total calories and utilizing that for your total fat intake.

If you prefer more carbs, stay on the lower end of total calories (20%).

If you prefer more fats, stay on the higher end of total calories (30%).

If you like a balance of the two, 25% is a sweet spot.

Here's how I would do that with my scenario above, with fat loss being the goal:

My calorie goal for fat loss is around **2275 calories**.

Since I like a balance of fats and carbs, 25% of my total calories will come from fats.

$$2275 \times 0.25 = 568.75$$

~570 of total calories (in Fats)

Since fats are more calorically dense (9 calories per gram), here's how to calculate the fats in grams:

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$$570 / 9 = 63.33$$

~63 grams (in Fats)

As one thumb serving of fats equates to around 10-15g of fats, I will need to shoot for ~4-6 fat servings per day.

Since I eat 4 meals per day, I will be having 1-1.5 thumb servings of fats per meal.

Now that you have your calories in protein and fats, now we are going to take the remaining calories and put them towards carbs.

Using my example above:

$$2275 \text{ (Total Calories)} - 720 \text{ (Calories in Proteins)} - 570 \text{ (Calories in Fats)}$$

$$= 985 \text{ Calories in Carbs}$$

Since 1g of carbs equates to 4 calories, we will have 246 g of carbs (985 / 4).

As one cupped handful of carbs equates to ~25-35g of carbohydrates, I will need to shoot for ~7-9 cupped handful servings of carbs.

Since I eat 4 meals per day, I will be having ~1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs per meal (staying in the 1.5-2 servings range)

Bringing The Macros Together

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So my goal macros that I am going to hit every day are the following:

63g of Fats

246g of Carbs

180g of Protein

I will allow for flexibility in my diet by allowing a range for these macros:

Fats: +/- 5g (~58-68g)

Carbs: +/- 25g (~221-271g)

Proteins: +/- 15g (~165-195g)

And there you have it - your macros to shoot for every day!

Think of macro tracking like a budget: if you hit this range for each macronutrient, you will hit your goals.

Prioritize your protein first, and allow for the carbs and fats to fall into place.

To reduce the complication, if you'd like ChatGPT to calculate calories and macros for you, [check out our ChatGPT Hacks series](#).

Resources

Supporting Content

Looking for more Exercise, Nutrition, and Sleep hacks for mental health?

[Check out our resources page for more freebies.](#)

Pre-Forged Pre-Workout

Looking for an extra kick for your workout sessions?

Pre-Forged is here to help.

I created Pre-Forged for new and experienced fitness goers alike, with the goal of providing a tasty and clean pre-workout.

With only 5 ingredients, we made sure Pre-Forged gives you the mind & body boost you need to dominate your workout sessions.

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