

THE PURE BODYBUILDING NUTRITION BOOKLET

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In this booklet I'm going to boil down everything there is to know about bodybuilding nutrition to the bare essentials. What follows is the essence of what you really need to do with your diet to get jacked: the pure bodybuilding nutrition fundamentals.

SETTING UP YOUR CALORIES

Your caloric intake will ultimately dictate whether you gain or lose weight over the long term. Generally speaking, if you are in a caloric deficit, you will lose weight. If you are in a caloric surplus, you will gain weight. And if you are at caloric maintenance, you will maintain your weight. Therefore, how many calories you eat will depend on your primary goal while running this program.

If Your Main Goal Is To Maximize Muscle Gain

Because building new muscle tissue is an energetically expensive project for the body, in order to gain maximum muscle on this program, I recommend a small ~5-15% caloric surplus. This means you eat 5-15% more calories than your maintenance intake. I'll explain how to find your maintenance intake shortly. The reason I suggest a small caloric surplus is because the bigger the surplus, the more fat you will gain alongside your muscle gain.

If Your Main Goal Is To Gain Muscle & Lose Fat At The Same Time (*Body Recomposition*)

If your main goal while running this program is to build muscle while losing fat, I'd suggest putting your calories at maintenance intake. This simply means you will eat the number of calories needed to maintain your current bodyweight. In this case, as you gain muscle, you will simultaneously lose fat at a similar rate, resulting in little to no net weight change.

If Your Main Goal Is To Lose Fat

If losing fat is your main priority, then you'll want to be in a 5-15% caloric deficit. Over the long term, larger deficits tend to result in more muscle loss and less sustainable fat loss. For this reason, I am suggesting a smaller deficit and a slower diet. It may be tempting to get the weight off as fast as possible, but remember, crash dieting often hurts muscle mass, strength and can result in rapid weight regain after the diet is over.

Finding Your Maintenance Calories

If you aren't sure how to find your maintenance calories, here is a rough guide:

Method 1 *(faster but less accurate)*

- Multiply your weight (in lbs) by 14-18.
 - If you are more active, you may be closer to $bw \times 18$ (or higher).
 - If you are less active, you may be closer to $bw \times 14$ (or lower).
 - If you aren't sure, $bw \times 16$ is usually reasonably accurate.



Method 2 *(slower but more accurate)*

- Guess-and-check: Track your bodyweight and caloric intake for 2 weeks.
- Calculate your average weight and average calories for Week 1 and Week 2.
- Determine average weight gained or lost from Week 1 to Week 2.
- Find your maintenance based on the weight change.
 - If you maintained your weight, your average calories is your estimated maintenance
 - If you lost 0.5-1 lbs, your maintenance will be roughly 200-500 calories above your average calories.
 - If you gained 0.5-1 lbs, your maintenance will be roughly 200-500 calories below your average calories.
- Continue to guess-and-check for a few weeks until you find the intake at which you maintain your weight.

For example, let's say you used one of the above methods and found that your maintenance is 2,500 calories per day. This is just a hypothetical example, you will likely have a maintenance that is unique and different from this number. But let's assume you found your maintenance is 2,500 calories. This means you would roughly maintain your current weight if you ate 2,500 calories each day on average.

Therefore, rolling with the same example, to put yourself in a 5-15% caloric surplus, you would add 125 to 375 calories to 2,500. That means your lean bulking intake would be 2,625 to 2,875 calories. To eat at maintenance, you would simply eat 2,500 calories. To eat in a 5-15% caloric deficit, you would subtract 125 to 375 calories from 2,500. That means your cutting intake would be 2,125 to 2,375 calories.

For a more detailed explanation of calories for body recomposition, I recommend watching [this video](#).



For a more detailed explanation of calories for fat loss, I recommend watching [this video](#).



SETTING UP YOUR PROTEIN

If you are planning to be in a caloric surplus (i.e. gaining) OR at maintenance (i.e. recomping) then you should aim to eat:

- 0.7-1 gram of protein per lb of bodyweight per day or
- 1.6-2.2 grams of protein per kg of bodyweight per day

If you are planning to be in a caloric deficit (i.e. cutting) then you should aim to eat:

- 0.8-1.2 grams of protein per lb of bodyweight per day or
- 1.8-2.7 grams of protein per kg of bodyweight per day

Example 1:

Let's say you weigh 180 lbs and your main goal is to both build muscle and lose fat. Using the recommendation above, you should eat something between 126 and 180 grams of protein per day.

Example 2:

Let's say you weigh 200 lbs and your main goal is to lose fat while running this program. Using the recommendation above, you should eat something between 160 and 240 grams of protein per day. The upper end of this range is most likely overkill for muscle retention, but some people prefer high protein intakes to help with hunger.

If you are very overweight and carrying a high level of body fat, then you can use your height instead as a rough guide for protein intake:

Daily protein = height (in centimeters)

For example, if you are 180 cm (5'10") tall, then 180 grams of protein is a reasonable target to aim for, whether cutting, bulking or recomping.

Note that using the height formula will still generally overestimate your true protein needs and most people will be able to build muscle just as well by eating ~20-40 grams less than what the height method predicts.

SETTING UP YOUR FATS AND CARBS

The fat and carb numbers are much less important from a bodybuilding standpoint than your calorie and protein targets. However, if either gets too low, you can run into hormonal and performance issues.

Generally speaking, I suggest setting your fats at approximately 20-30% of your total caloric intake. For example, if you're eating 2,700 calories per day, 675 of those calories should come from fat. Since there are 9 calories in 1 gram of fat, that would equate to 75 grams of fat per day.

Your carb intake will then be dictated by whatever calories are left over after figuring out your protein and fat numbers. That is, once you've determined your calories, protein and fat intake, you can let your carbs simply fill up any remaining calories.

Your nutrition doesn't need to be micromanaged or meticulously tracked in order to have success on this program, but I've included these guidelines as additional information for those who are looking to line everything up.

AUTO-REGULATED EATING

Of course, if you do not want to track your food intake, you can simply make good common sense nutrition choices by following these general tips:

- Use your weekly average bodyweight as your main metric for progress. If you're losing or gaining too slowly or too quickly, make an effort to adjust your diet by eating more or less calories.
- Make common-sense food decisions like eating less calorically dense foods if you are gaining too quickly or eating more calorically dense foods if you aren't gaining fast enough.
- Eat 3-5 balanced discrete meals rather than picking throughout the day
- Maintain the same (or similar) meal pattern from day to day
- Prioritize lean protein and vegetables at meals to promote satiety
- Keep an eye on the nutritional information of what you're eating, even if you aren't tracking it



RECOMMENDED NUTRITION TRACKING APP

If you are looking to track your nutrition intake while running this program, I strongly recommend using the MacroFactor App. You can try it out for 2 weeks for free here. I'm a part owner of MacroFactor and I truly believe it's the best nutrition app on the market.

Unlike most diet apps, it isn't just a macro tracker. It's quite literally a nutrition coach that uses science-based algorithms to detect changes in your metabolism and make adjustments to your food intake at weekly check-ins. This is super helpful for accountability. Here are a few other things that set the app apart:



- It has detailed micronutrient tracking (hey, health matters too!)
- It has the fastest food logger in existence, which means tracking really won't feel like a chore once you give it a few days to get the hang of it
- It also doesn't punish you if you miss a day here and there, so you can be more chill about your diet overall
- It can sync data with other smart devices
- It comes with a ton of nerdy analytics about your metabolism, goal tracking, weight trends, and plenty more.

A man with a beard, wearing a dark hoodie and shorts, is standing in a gym. He is holding a white protein shaker in his right hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing gym equipment and a bright light source. The overall image has a dark blue overlay.

BODYBUILDING SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements will make up a tiny part of your success on this program. Here is a short list of supplements that may help you make the most of your training:

Creatine Monohydrate	Protein Powder
Take 5 grams (1 tsp) per day at any time of day	Take as needed to hit daily protein goals
Caffeine	Multivitamin
Optionally take ~150-250mg ~30-60 minutes before training, especially if you are feeling more tired than usual	Optionally take a multivitamin each day with a meal. Keep in mind that if you are eating an overall balanced and nutritious diet, a multivitamin will not enhance your health or performance. I think of a multivitamin as an “insurance policy” to avoid nutrient deficiencies.

Most other supplements such as test boosters, fat burners and BCAAs are not strongly supported by scientific evidence and therefore not necessary.

For a more detailed guide covering everything about nutrition for bodybuilding from A-Z, I recommend checking out my [Ultimate Guide To Body Recomposition](#).