

Introduction

During this challenge, you will be tracking your food intake daily using one of the two tracking strategies you'll learn in the next section.

In order to lose weight, you must be in a calorie deficit to lose weight, and the best way to ensure you're consistency eating in a deficit is by tracking your food.

Tracking will help you stay aware of how much you're eating and will hold you accountable. With tracking, you won't be able to lie to yourself about how much you're consuming every day.

Most people are familiar with calorie counting and macro tracking, but the way you'll be tracking your food will likely look different than how you've done it before.

The problem with traditional approaches to tracking like those above is how they can lead people to get overly obsessed with hitting exact numbers. When that happens, it's easy to get frustrated and unmotivated when you aren't able to hit your numbers perfectly.

Truth is, you don't have to hit specific numbers every day to make progress.

The goal is to get close enough, and the two journal tracking strategies you'll be using during this challenge will help you do just that.

The first strategy is called Freedom Tracking.

Instead of having exact calorie and macronutrient targets, Freedom Tracking will give you a range of calories and a protein minimum goal.

This strategy takes the stress away of needing to be perfect.

For example, let's say you need to eat 1800 calories to lose weight.

With Freedom Tracking, you'll aim for something like 1650-1950 calories. As long as you're within your range, you're on track. Along with a calorie range, you'll also have a protein minimum target.

Three reasons why protein is the most important macronutrient for fat loss.

1) Protein helps you build muscle.

More importantly, it helps you maintain muscle while you're in a calorie deficit.

Alongside strength training, which we'll talk more about here soon, getting enough protein will ensure that the weight you lose comes entirely from fat and not muscle.

2) Protein is very satiating.

Protein is the most filling macronutrient. The more protein you eat, the easier it'll be to get and stay full, which is a huge help while you're eating in a calorie deficit.

3) Protein has the highest TEF.

TEF stands for Thermic Effect of Food, which is a fancy way of talking about how many calories your body burns turning the food you eat into usable energy.

Fats provide 9 calories per gram, and have a TEF of around 0-3%, meaning 0-3% of the calories consumed will go towards turning fat into usable energy.

Carbs provide 4 calories per gram and have a TEF of around 3-10%.

Protein also provides 4 calories per gram and has a TEF of around 25-30%.

No, your eyes aren't deceiving you! 25-30% of the calories you consume from protein are used to break it down into usable energy, meaning the more protein you eat, the more calories you'll burn digesting it.

On the whole, this won't make a huge difference with your results, but it will absolutely help.

The one problem with protein is that most people don't naturally eat a lot of protein.

So if they have a ridiculously high protein goal they're trying to hit, it's going to add a lot of resistance to their plan.

When you're building a sustainable weight loss plan, you want to create the least amount of resistance possible.

Less resistance = more consistency

More consistency = more confidence

More confidence = more consistency

And the cycle continues.

You need to eat a high protein diet to maximize your results, but you don't want to set a goal that's so high that you're not able to hit it consistently.

That's why, with Freedom Tracking, you'll have a protein minimum target. You can always eat more than your minimum, but the goal is to get to at least your minimum target every day.

The second strategy is **Social Cycling**

The two things that people struggle with most are consistency and social eating.

Freedom Tracking fixes the consistency problem.

Social Cycling fixes the social eating problem.

Here's why Social Cycling works so well...

Most people don't have a problem staying on track with their diet Monday through Friday or Sunday through Thursday.

Problems arise on the weekend or on days when social events are going on.

That why with Social Cycling, you'll have 5 days a week where you're in a more aggressive calorie deficit and 2 days where you're at maintenance calories.

By the end of the week, your average calorie intake will be right where it needs to be to see consistent fat loss results.

How To Set Up Your Nutrition Targets

Each week, you'll have five low-calorie days and two high-calorie days.

I recommend having these high-calorie days on the weekend or on days when you will be going out to eat or attending holiday parties, given the time of year.

To figure out your high and low calorie ranges, you'll be using the Social Cycling Calculator.

[CLICK HERE](#) to use that calculator.

Once you figure out your high and low calorie ranges, you'll set a protein minimum goal.

Remember, you can eat as much protein as you like, but you want to at least hit your minimum protein target.

If your low-calorie days are greater than 1600 calories, your minimum protein target will be 120g per day. If your low-calorie days are at or less than 1600 calories, your minimum protein target will be 100g per day.

On your high calorie days, your protein minimum goal will be 100g of protein.

However, if you end up not hitting your protein minimum goal on your high calorie days, that's okay. Just make sure you hit your protein minimum goal on your low days and as frequently as you can on your high days.

Pretty simple, right? That's how it should be.

Lifestyle Eating Strategies

Now that you've set up your nutrition targets, you'll need to have a plan for hitting those targets each day. That's where Lifestyle Eating Strategies come in.

Lifestyle Eating Strategies give you guidelines on when you'll eat each day and how big your meals will be.

There are two lifestyle eating strategies to choose from: Three Square Meals and Just Skip Breakfast.

1) Three Square Meals

Three square meals works exactly like it says – you'll have 2-3 meals and 0-2 snacks per day that are evenly spread throughout the day.

Some approaches with percentage of total calories:

- Meal/Meal/Meal (33%/33%/33%)
- Meal/Snack/Meal (40%/20%/40%)
- Snack/Meal/Snack/Meal (10%/40/10%/40%)
- Meal/Meal/Snack (40%/40%/40%)

If you choose to use the Three Square Meal eating strategy, I want you to choose one of these four approaches. Ideally, your meals will be between 30-45% of your total calories and snacks will be no more than 10-20%.

This approach works best for folks who have a set routine or who like to have smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day

2) Just Skip Breakfast

Just Skip Breakfast is my way of approaching Intermittent Fasting.

The whole idea is to, as you might have guessed, skip breakfast and push your first meal back 4-6 hours after waking up.

Some approaches with percentage of total calories:

- Meal/Meal (50%/50%)
- Small Meal/Big Meal (30%/70%)
- Snack/Meal/Meal (20%/40%/40%)
- Snack/Big Meal (20%/80%)

If you choose to use the Just Skip Breakfast eating strategy, I recommend having at least 2 times when you eat each day. Having one big meal per day sounds enticing, but it's very difficult, and will leave you feeling bloated and sick afterwards.

This approach works best for folks who have an unpredictable schedule or who like to have larger, less frequent meals throughout the day.

If you've never tried Intermittent Fasting before, you may experience more hunger than you're used to.

Here's how to work around it...

If you find yourself getting hungry in the morning, getting some caffeine from black coffee or tea can help.

(Caffeine is an appetite suppressant, and having 1-2 cups in the AM makes it easier to push that first meal back.)

After doing Just Skip Breakfast for a week or two, you'll get used to the small bits of hunger you feel periodically in between meals. But if you are getting uncomfortably hungry, strategic snacking can help.

Great snacks to curb hunger are whole fruit and protein. The water, fiber, and volume of fruit will help keep you full. Protein is great too since it's the most filling macronutrient.

Some of my favorite snacks for fasting include:

- Banana + light string cheese
- Blueberries + greek yogurt
- Apple + protein bar
- Frozen grapes + beef jerky

Note: Try to keep your snacks around 200-300 calories.

Handy Tracking (eyeball portions)

Note: hand sizes vary. Use these measurements as a rough guide.



1 OUNCE (two tbsp)



nuts



dressings



nut butter



oils

1 CUP



veggies



grains



fruit

3-4 OUNCES



chicken



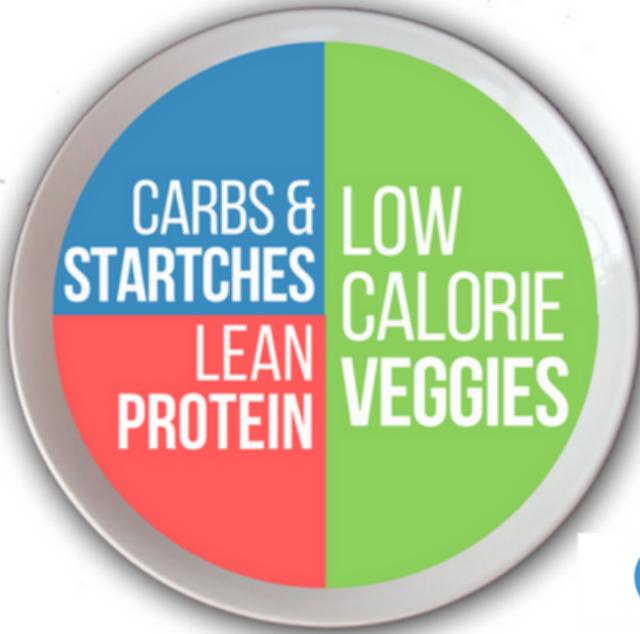
steak

Something to pay attention to:

Make sure you're accounting for raw/uncooked vs. cooked nutrition. Four ounces of cooked meat will have more calories than four ounces of uncooked meat due to having less water. One cup of cooked rice will have more water and fewer calories than one cup of raw rice.

How To Build A Healthy Meals

MEAL TEMPLATE



MEAL EXAMPLE



CARBS & STARCHES

- Rice
- Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes
- Beans
- Breads
- Fruit
- Oats
- Quinoa
- Low-calorie pretzels
- Low-Calorie Chips
- Pasta
- Startchy Veggies

LEAN PROTEIN

- Chicken Breast
- Lean Steak
- Lean Beef*
- Turkey
- Tuna
- Salmon
- White Fish
- Low-Fat Cottage Cheese
- Low-Fat Yogurt
- Eggs*
- Egg Whites

LOW-CAL VEGGIES

- Steamed Broccoli, carrots, green beans, cauliflower, peas, etc.
- Salads w/ light dressing
- Peppers & Onions
- Zucchini & Squash
- etc...

* Lean beef would be 92/8 or leaner; eggs are great, but pay attention to their fat content

Sample Grocery List

This is NOT an exclusive list. These are simply recommendations. You can eat other foods.

Eat These Foods 80% Of The Time

Protein Sources:

- *Chicken breasts, cutlets, tenderloins*
- *Fish - salmon, cod, tilapia, tuna, etc.*
- *85/15, 90/10, 96/4 Ground Beef*
- *Sirloin steak*
- *Turkey*
- *Ham*
- *Shrimp*
- *Egg whites*
- *Protein Powder/Bars*
- *Pork chops*
- *Eggs*
- *Greek Yogurt*
- *Milk*

Carb Sources:

- Potatoes (white, sweet, hash browns, red, etc.)
- Any Rice
- Thomas Bagels
- Oatmeal
- Whole Wheat Wraps/Bread
- Whole Grain Pasta
- Kodiak Pancakes
- Fruity Pebbles/Rice Crispie Treats (around workout)
- Raisin Bran Crunch
- Cheerios
- Fruit - all kinds
- Vegetables - all kinds
- Beans
- Low-fat Popcorn

Fat Sources:

- Olive/Avocado Oil (Pam Spray works great as it's low calorie)
- Almond or Peanut Butter/Nuts
- Cheese
- Silk Almond Milk
- Grass Fed Butter
- Full Fat Yogurt
- Avocado
- Whole Eggs

Eat These Foods 20% Of The Time

Remember... NO FOOD IS OFF LIMITS!

You can eat whatever you want, you just can't eat as much of whatever you want.

Here are some foods that I encourage you to include in your diet every so often so that you can enjoy your life.

- Pizza
- Burgers
- Chocolate
- Candy
- Ice Cream
- etc.

Staple Foods & Snacks

A sustainable fat loss nutrition plan will create the least amount of resistance possible.

The less resistance you have with following your plan, the more likely you are to stay consistent. The more consistent you can be, the better results you'll see.

One way to create less resistance is to have a list of foods that are convenient and easy to make on a regular basis.

I call these "Staple Meals."

That's where this list comes in.

These are some of my favorite foods for losing fat. They're super convenient and make fat loss easier.

I'm all about convenience, so these foods are staples for me.

If you're struggling to find time or motivation to cook healthy meals, add one, two, or all of these convenient foods into your diet.



Pre-Cooked Protein

Pre-cooked protein (like the one pictured to the left) are great when you don't have a lot of time to cook.

Try to choose a pre-cooked protein that doesn't have a ton of added sauces & calories.



Greek Yogurt

Greek yogurt is a quick & easy meal or snack option that's loaded with protein.

My favorite brand is Dannon Light & Fit Greek Yogurt... 12g of protein per cup!



Beef Jerky

Beef jerky isn't the most filling snack of all time, but it's great when you're traveling or just want a tasty high-protein snack!

I'll always keep a pack or two in my book bag for plane rides and car trips. For under 100 calories per serving, you can't beat it!

Egg Substitute



Whole eggs are a great healthy food, but the calories can add up quick with the high-fat yolk.

Egg beaters (or any egg substitute) taste great and save a TON of calories.

Protein Shakes



They aren't fancy, they aren't always the tastiest thing in the entire world...

But protein shakes can be a great snack or meal replacement when life gets busy!

Microwave Rice



Microwave rice takes about 90 seconds to cook and is a great base for building a healthy fat loss meal.

Depending on your nutrition targets, one bag will make 1-3 meals.



Frozen Vegetables

We all need our veggies, but it's annoying to have to cut up, cook, and prep them.

That's where frozen veggies come in clutch! Throw 'em in the microwave for 5-6 mins and BOOM!



Frozen Fruits

Frozen fruits are helpful for similar reasons to frozen veggies.

I'll buy tons of frozen fruits & berries and throw them into greek yogurt, smoothies, oatmeal, and cereal.



Single Serving Treats

Just because you're dieting, it doesn't mean you can't have treats! Nowadays, there are tons of brands that provide low-calorie desserts.

Or, you can opt for a single-serving sized treat that makes moderation easy-peasy.