The Ultimate Guide to Getting Shredded

A nutritional guide

by Spot Me Bro

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Disclaimer

The content presented in this book are for informational purposes only and is not intended to cure any illness. This content is not designed or meant to replace professional medical input. As per usual, always seek the help of a healthcare professional before attempting any form of resistance training and/or diet/nutritional plan. All the information present in this guide is what I've gained through years of reading books on nutrition and have combined various diet tactics and strategies into what I have found to work best for myself during my years of training. I do not claim to own any of the diet tactics or to be the creator thereof.

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking a step into a new world of transforming your body. Allow me to explain why we've decided to write this book: Nowadays, everybody who's competed once or who has trained for more than three years, fancy themselves to be something of a fitness "expert." I'm not taking their hard work and dogged determination away from them. I am, however, saying that most advice you'll receive should be taken with a grain of salt, or in most cases, a bag.

The aim of this book is to help educate the reader on how to successfully cut down on body fat, and doing it in the safest manner. We won't be diving into the world of performance enhancers, because honestly, you don't need them to get your body fat down to five-percent. PED's do, however, shorten the process, albeit at a cost.

Over the years I have studied and read several books on nutrition and caloric manipulation to obtain the lowest possible body fat. And what I've noticed is that some of these books don't take your general health into consideration. Sure, you'll drop body fat, but at what cost? Sure, you'll look great physically, but what about your organs? Your metabolism?

A few years ago I embarked on my first journey to getting shredded – and it worked! I was lined up for photo shoots, people at the gym, and in public, began walking up to me and asking for advice, and honestly, I couldn't give them any except for "eat chicken and rice." Back then I hadn't the slightest idea about being flexible with my diet. I thought that it was the chicken and rice, egg white omelets, and sweet potato that gave me the results – I wasn't aware of caloric manipulation.

By the time I had peaked in my shred, my metabolism was so impaired and so low that after a week of binge eating I gained a good amount of weight back. See, back then I wasn't at all aware of metabolic "damage." After I saw that I had gained weight, I immediately reverted back to my diet, because I thought that it was the food I was eating that helped me lose weight---which, in part, it did---but really, it was the caloric deficit that I was in. I tried to diet back down, with very little to show. And I couldn't put my finger on it. I'm doing everything according to the book, so am I not getting shredded again?

As the years went by, I learned a little more in the way of dieting down and limiting the amount of damage that your metabolic rate suffers during a cut. Your metabolism

will suffer – there's no denying that. But there are steps and protocols you can (and need to) follow if you want to keep it to a minimum, all of which we will discuss in this book.

This book contains no secrets, simply because there aren't any. What this book will do is provide you with the necessary tools to create your own diet plan and set you up for the rest of your life. No investment is greater than investing in your own health.

Explaining the Metabolism

Metabolism is the term used to describe all the chemical reactions involved to maintain a living state of the organism and the cells. The metabolism can be divided into two categories:

Anabolism	The synthesis of various compounds that have been broken down by the catabolism process. The broken-down molecules are then utilized by the cells to form small precursors which act as building blocks.
Catabolism	The breakdown of complex molecules into smaller, simpler ones to be converted into energy.

Nutrition is what gets your metabolism going, meaning that your metabolic rate relies on the nutrients that you feed it with. You can't put unleaded gasoline into a Formula One racecar and expect it to perform optimally – it doesn't work that way. The same rule applies to your body and metabolism. If you're not feeding your body with the quality nutrients that will actually help your metabolism perform at a high rate, then you're setting yourself up for failure.

Feeding your body with the right nutrients not only aids your metabolism and fat loss process, but you will also feel better, thus your performance in the gym improves substantially.

Macronutrients

You've probably heard or read about this word, "macronutrients," or "macros." What are they? In essence, macronutrients could be defined as the main energy sources for the body to operate optimally. Without these nutrients, we simply would not be able to sustain a holistic lifestyle.

For those of you who are in the dark about what macronutrients really are, then it's time you learned.

Macronutrients can be broken down into three main categories:

- Protein
- Carbohydrates
- Fats

Each macro has its own unique purpose in our bodies to sustain life. For example, we need protein for cellular repair, function and regulation of our organs and tissue; carbohydrates for glucose energy to be stored as glycogen, to fuel the nervous system, build macromolecules, and is protein- and fat-sparing so that these two macros can be used for more essential functions in the human body; and fats can be used as an energy source when carbs are low, also, fat is used to maintain core body temperature – a reason why coconut oil is such an essential tool in your dietary success (which we'll discuss later on).

So, what is protein?

Protein is typically described as being the "building blocks" for muscle, but it serves a much deeper purpose than purely aiding in muscle recovery after a hard workout. Protein consists of amino acids; essential, and non-essential.

Essential amino acids are what your body can't produce, and thus need to be ingested from an outside food or supplement source. There are nine essential amino acids, namely: leucine, isoleucine, valine, threonine, tryptophan, lysine, methionine, histidine, and phenylalanine.

Non-essential amino acids are synthesized by the human body. Unlike essential amino acids, non-essential consist of eleven amino acids: asparagine, aspartic acid, alanine, glutamic acid, arginine, glutamine, cysteine, glycine, serine, proline, and tyrosine.

There are many food sources that contain a good amount of protein for both meat lovers and vegetarians alike. Like meat, some plant-based protein sources can be

considered as whole protein, because they contain every amino acid. However, plant protein is slightly inferior to meat proteins due to the amino acid concentration being lower. Some vegetable protein sources might also contain small amounts of toxins which could affect the digestion of protein.

This means that even if you are hitting your daily goal of protein on paper, your body might not break down or absorb all the protein that has been consumed.

So, we get that protein consist of amino acids and are needed to build muscle, but what other functions does protein have in the human body? Well, protein is what builds the structural components of the human body, like your hair, nails, skin, organs, bones, and collagen. When calories are on the lower end of the scale the body will go into a state of what is known as catabolism.

Catabolism can mean the breakdown of cells, but what I'm referring to is the breakdown of protein into glucose to be used as energy – mainly for the function of the brain.

Carbs! Now we're talking!

Ah, carbohydrates… Just scroll through any fitness personality's social media account and see the myriad of carb-influenced pictures; donuts, pizza, fries, ice cream, and so on. Carbs are a bodybuilder's best friend. Period.

In essence, carbohydrates are sugars and can be broken down into two main categories: simple carbohydrates and complex carbohydrates. The only thing that differentiates complex carbs from the simpler ones is their molecular structure. Carbs can be broken down into further groups:

Simple Carbohydrates

- Monosaccharides – structurally, this is the simplest form of sugar and cannot be broken down into smaller carbohydrate units via the process of hydrolysis.
- Disaccharides – disaccharides are composed of two monosaccharide units which have been joined together by molecular bonds.

Simple carbohydrate examples include table sugar, dextrose, fruit juice, yogurt, honey, etc.

Complex Carbohydrates

- Oligosaccharides – multiple short chains of monosaccharides that are joined together by covalent bonds forms oligosaccharides.

- Polysaccharides – made up of long chains of monosaccharides, often numbering in the hundreds, and even to thousands of units.

Complex carbohydrate examples include whole grain bread, pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, sweet potato, legumes, etc.

At the end of the day, all carbohydrates are digested and absorbed as sugar, or in other words, glucose. However, when blood sugar levels rise above a certain point, all excess sugars will be stored in reserves – this could be your muscle glycogen stores, your liver, or fat cells (it leans more toward the latter when the former have been filled and restored with glycogen). This is one of the reasons why macronutrient timing is so important for optimal results.

Common belief says that you should consume 25 percent of your daily carb intake for breakfast and another 25 percent post-workout. I've used this principle with great results, but I've used other principles that showed the same promising results, like skipping carbs at breakfast or even skipping carbs for the first half of my day and then only ingesting them after my training session which is typically in the late afternoon / early evening. It all comes down to what works for you and what suits your lifestyle.

Fats

Why is it that when it comes to dietary fat, people become afraid? Is it because dietary fat is the main reason for fat gain? That's probably it. However, people are so easily persuaded due to ignorance that they will believe that dietary fat is why they're gaining weight. That might very well be the case, but it's a case in point of overconsuming fat in their diets. Heck, you could get fat from eating too much protein! It all comes down to what your body needs.
Fat plays a unique role in the human body. One would think it only provides energy, but in fact, it does so much more. Fat has the ability to reduce inflammation in our bodies, boost our metabolism (coconut oil for the win), can help to detoxify the liver and kidneys, it protects major organs like the heart, and so forth.

For cooking food, saturated fats might be your best option due to being more stable than mono- and polyunsaturated fats. Saturated fats also have the ability to increase the metabolism by raising your core temperature. I'm not saying that you should go crazy on the saturated fat intake, but rather use it as a tool to benefit your weight loss goals.

Calories and Macronutrients

Each macronutrient has its own set amounts of calories per gram. In simple terms, it would be 4 calories for protein and carbs, and 9 calories for one gram of fat.

Just to give you an illustration, someone who is eating 220 grams of protein, 200 grams of carbs, and 55 grams of fat will have a caloric intake that would look something like 2,175 calories per day.

There are a few ways that macronutrients can be switched around to compensate for a deficiency in another when in a cutting phase. For example, if you're eating 250 grams of carbs, and 200 grams of protein, and decide to do a little carb cycling (carb cycling, the process of having 3 consecutive days of low carbs followed by 1 day of a high carb intake) to drop some body fat, you'll have to increase your protein intake by a few grams. Remember that carbs are protein sparing, meaning that, if you are consuming upwards of 300 grams of carbs, you won't need copious amounts of protein to sustain your muscle mass. This also depends on your weight. If you weigh 240 pounds with less than 10% body fat, then you would want to increase your protein a bit higher than 200 grams.

Now that you're aware of what macronutrients are, it's time to show you how to determine the amounts of macros and calories you should be consuming on a day-to-day basis.

Establishing Your Daily Caloric Intake: Tracking calories and bodyweight

Tracking Calories

The first method that I'll discuss---the more accurate method---will require you to do some working and calculating on your end. However, I'm here to provide the needed tools and knowledge to help set you on the right track. And afterward, we'll discuss the quick and mathematical method. Although, the second method might not be as accurate as the first.

To get the most accurate results from the first method, you will need to do these two things: track your food and track your weight. The preferred method of weighing your food would be to utilize a food scale. You could use other methods of measuring, like tablespoons and teaspoons, cups, etc. When using a cup to measure your food volumes, keep in mind that it should be used mainly when the food is in an uncooked state. And for even more accuracy, try to only measure grains in cups – all others

should be weighed out. For example, it would be highly illogical to measure a steak in a cup. There are even some products that you can purchase at the supermarket that will provide an off reading. It might say 50 grams per cup, but when you go home and measure it, it turns out to be 60 or 70 grams. So, when in doubt always weigh your food.

You will also need some form of tracking the calories in the foods that you eat. Fortunately, we live in a time where information and resources are so easy to come by, and so there are many options available today. It's highly advised that you use an online nutritional database to get the most accurate (and easy) numbers on your calories. You could use a pen and paper if you're up for the extra work and calculations.

First off, for this method to be successful you will need to be honest with yourself. If you're purposefully going to eat fewer foods during this time period, you'll only be shooting yourself in the foot.

To begin this process, weigh each and every meal that you're going to eat, but don't weigh it as a whole meal. Rather, weigh each individual food source. So, if you're having chicken and beans (just an example), you'll want to weigh your chicken separately from your beans, and then write that weight down. Follow this process for each and every meal. At the end of each week, calculate the average calories consumed during that week. I'll explain how to do that below.

I would recommend that you follow this process, and the below process, for 3-4 weeks for the utmost accurate outcome.

Tracking Bodyweight

For this process you'll need – you guessed it – a scale. You will need to weigh yourself every day, preferably in the mornings and on a completely empty stomach after doing your morning ritual. This will provide the most accurate numbers to work with. Record every weigh in each morning. By doing this, you will gather all the needed data to calculate an average for every week.

Don't get discouraged if your weigh-ins fluctuate from day-to-day – this is normal. That is also why I recommend you weigh yourself every day so that you can gather an accurate average by the end of each week. I'll show you how the values from your calories and weight correspond with one another.

Using The Data to Equate Your Maintenance Calories

Let's say that you follow the above processes for three weeks. That totals at 21 days.

First, take all your calorie counts from each day and put them together for a grand total. Divide that total by 21, and then you'll have your average caloric intake. Let's say that your grand total comes out to be 46,200 calories, you will want to divide that by 21, giving you an average of 2,200 calories. This number can almost be used for the number of calories that you should be consuming each day, but not without getting a weekly average of your weigh-ins.

Here's the formula for the above explanation:

> [grand total of calories from 3 weeks of tracking] ÷ 21 (number of days in 3 weeks)
>
> = [average of daily caloric consumption]

To get the average from your weigh-ins, you'll have to follow the same process, but this time on a weekly basis. So, if by the end of the first week your weigh-in total comes to 1,132 pounds, divide that number by 7, giving you an average of 161.7 pounds.

> 1,132 lbs (weigh-in total) ÷ 7 (number of days in a week)
>
> = 161.7 lbs. (average weight)

Important: Follow the same process for weeks 2 and 3.

If the second week's average is 162 pounds, and the third week is 162.8 pounds, then it means that you're gaining weight and vice versa. This means that your calories are slightly above your maintenance and should be reduced. But how do you know by how much you should reduce it?

Well, there's a folktale that 1 pound of fat equates to 3,500 calories. By using this number you'll be able to calculate a rough estimate of how many calories you should be dropping to more-or-less find your maintenance calories.

Let's say that you're gaining around 0.8 pounds a week. How will you be able to calculate how much of a weekly/daily surplus you are in?

> 3,500 (calories in ~1 lb of fat) x 0.8 (weight gained in a week)
>
> = 2,800 calorie surplus (weekly)

And to get the daily caloric surplus, you divide the weekly caloric surplus (2,800) by the number of days in a week.

> 2,800 (weekly surplus) ÷ 7 (number of days in a week)
>
> = 400 calorie surplus (daily)

And by looking at the numbers above, you now know that you should drop an estimated 400 calories from your diet in order for you reach maintenance. The same rule applies to estimating the rate of fat loss – a topic that we will cover later on in this book.

Recap:

- Be honest with yourself.
- Weigh your food individually to gather the needed data, i.e. calories and macros in each food source.
- Weigh yourself everyday first thing in the morning, preferably after using the toilet.
- Calculate the average calories consumed during the three-week process and divide it by 21 to get your average daily caloric intake.
- Calculate your average weight at the end of each week and divide it by 7. Do this for three weeks.
- Do the math to find your maintenance calories.

Setting Your Macros for Fat Loss

During the course of this book you might read "fat loss" instead of "weight loss." There's a reason for this: fat loss and weight loss are two entirely different things. Anybody can achieve weight loss by putting themselves in a caloric deficit, but the weight they'll be losing will be made up of both fat and muscle. We don't want that. Fat loss, on the other hand, is exactly what the term dictates: fat loss.

The goal is to lose as much body fat while retaining as much muscle mass as we possibly can, and that requires playing around with macronutrient dispersion. Some folks are easily able to lower their body fat levels while consuming anywhere in the range of 300 grams a day. And then on the total opposite end of the spectrum we find people who can only drop fat when their carbs go below 200 grams a day. Thanks, genetics.

What should your protein intake be?

This one is a bit hard (as with the other macros) to give a straight-up, work-for-all number or calculation. In the past, the best method to use was the "1 gram per pound of bodyweight" calculation. And it worked – still does. Protein requirements increase when physical activities increase. So, when adding cardio into the routine protein needs become more. This can be contributed to protein being used as an energy source because the other macros are lacking. Besides, increasing protein never hurt anyone.

Protein requirements vary from one individual to the next. Factors like training intensity, weight, and caloric intake all play a role on how much protein you should consume. If you weigh 200 pounds with 10% body fat, training 5-6 days a week, then you'll certainly need more protein than the individual who weighs 180 pounds with 12% body fat, and who only trains 3-4 days a week. Why? Because you suffer from more damage and micro tears than the lighter individual trying to stimulate muscle growth only a few days out of the week.

If you're in too much of a caloric deficit, a good amount of your protein consumption will be wasted. We know that when calories are too low, muscle tissue gets broken down and used as fuel. So, even if you weigh 200 pounds with a sub-10 body fat, you're consuming 250 grams of protein a day, most of that protein will be used as energy if your daily caloric intake is around 1,800 calories.

The protein needs that I recommend are between 0.8g/lb and 1.5g/lb of bodyweight.

The lower your calories drop, the more your protein consumption should be increased by. But increasing your protein too high will push your calories up, which will end up affecting your rate of fat loss.

Setting Your Fat Intake

While carbs are delicious and muscle-sparing, they are not entirely essential for life and everyday functions. Fat, on the other hand, is important to maintaining life. As we discussed earlier, fat is essential for regulating your core temperature and optimal hormone production.

For dietary purposes, however, pushing your fat intake too high without "robbing" one of your other macronutrients will undoubtedly end up in fat gain. If you're in off-season "mode" then I guess it wouldn't really matter, but for dieting down you'll need to keep an especially close eye on your fat intake (and with protein and carbs). The reason I say to keep an eye on your fat intake, is because fat has more calories (9) per gram than protein (4) and carbs (4) do.

And thus, the numbers I've always found to work well over the years, is to have your fat make up 15-25% of your total calories. By doing this you will allow for your body to regulate a healthy core temperature and have optimal hormone production. However, staying on the lower end of the spectrum for too long may disrupt the aforementioned bodily functions in the long run. And staying in the higher end will hinder your fat loss goals if your macros aren't set up correctly.

Setting Your Carb Intake

Now that we've got the recommendations for protein and fat, all that's left is to calculate what your carbohydrate intake should be. This is probably the most difficult to equate out of them all.

After you have your numbers for protein and fat, all you need to do now is allocate the remaining calories to your carbs. Easy, huh? If you still don't get it, I'll explain it below.

For example, if your maintenance calories came out to around 2,300 calories, your protein to 180g, and let's say you want to get your fat intake to be made up of 20% of your calories, it will come down to ~51g of fat. So, let's look at the numbers:

Calories from protein	= 720kcals
Calories from fat	= 460kcals
Total calories	= 1,180kcals

Now that we have the number of calories that are currently in use, it's time to allocate the remaining calories (from of the 2,300) to carbohydrates.

2,300 – 1,180

= 1,120kcals for carbohydrates

1,120 ÷ 4 (number of calories in a gram of carbs)

= 280g of carbohydrates

Recap:

- Set protein between 0.8-1.5g/lb of bodyweight.
- Set fat between 15-25% of total caloric intake
- Allocate remaining calories to carbohydrate intake.
- Set fat between 15-25% of total caloric intake.

Rate of Fat Loss

Now that you've got your basis covered for macros, it's time to work out how much weight you should be losing each week. A good rate of fat loss that you should aim for is 0.5 – 1% of your bodyweight (in pounds) a week. Keeping it this low will help ensure that you maintain as much muscle mass as possible during your cutting phase.

We know that 1 pound of fat roughly equates to 3,500 calories. And going by that number, we should remove 500 calories from our maintenance. Here's the fun part: those calories don't necessarily have to come from your food, it can be calories burnt during cardio, too. If you're anything like me, you like to eat… a lot. So, we could either initiate the fat burning process by starting it off with cardio or dropping the calories from food.

Calculating your rate of fat loss

It's possible to skip this process, but for the most accurate results, it's best to know where your body fat levels are sitting at. No need to lose your head if you don't know your body fat percentage – it's just a suggestion.

Let's say our subject weighs 190 pounds with a body fat percentage of 12%. That would mean that his "fat weight" is around 22.8 pounds. I'll explain the math below:

190 x 0.12 (body fat percentage) = 22.8 pounds (fat weight)

We have the approximate number of the weight of subcutaneous body fat that our subject is carrying. Remember what the recommended rate of fat loss was? Anywhere between 0.5 and 1% of your bodyweight per week. Let's say that our man decides to go with a rate of 0.5% a week. How long would it take him to lose all 22.8 pounds?

First, we need to equate how much his 0.5% a week will be:

190 x 0.5 ÷ 100 = 0.95

And now we can work out how long it will take (in theory, that is) to lose the 22.8 pounds.

22.8 ÷ 0.95 = 24 weeks

Common belief says to take 16+ weeks to do a shred because it ensures that you keep most of your muscle mass, provided that you're doing this thing naturally. Even though there really isn't any scientific backing that 16 weeks is the magical sweet spot for contest prep or a shred. However, it wouldn't hurt to add an extra 2 or 3 weeks to

your cutting phase, purely to ensure that you have some extra time in case you encounter any setbacks or plateaus.

Now that we have the number of weeks it will take to lose all of the body fat weight, it's time to find the caloric deficit that our subject should be in every day for the next few weeks.

I've stated in this book that 1 pound of fat equals 3,500 calories. How do we use that number to find our subject's daily deficit? We multiply 3,500 by the amount of weight our subject should be losing every week.

3,500 x 0.95 = 3,325

3,325 ÷ 7 (number of days in a week) = 475 calories

Remember, not all 475 calories have to come from your diet. Although, it is recommended that the majority of calories do come from there. It would obviously be best to expend energy through cardiovascular efforts than purely restricting your caloric intake.

Cardio and Fat Loss

I don't know about your gym, but at mine, the cardio machines are pretty old and properly worn out. The one day it says my heart rate is 40 bpm and the next day it's over 9000. What I'm trying to say is that some of these machines can't be relied upon to deliver you the correct number of calories that you're burning.

To understand how many calories you burn during cardio, you first need to know what Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is. RPE is a scale that is used to measure the intensity of a workout. The RPE scale runs from 0 to 10; the lower the number, the less effort is being placed into said workout, and vice versa.

These are the RPE numbers for the various intensities of cardio:

Light cardio, 2 – 4 RPE

Moderate cardio, 5 – 7 RPE

Intense cardio, 7 – 10 RPE

When performing cardio, you burn approximately 0.2 (light cardio), 0.45 (moderate cardio), and 0.7 (intense cardio) calories per 10 minutes per pound of bodyweight.

Let's do some more math just in case I've lost you somewhere along the lines. Let's say that our 190-pound subject wants to do moderate intensity cardio, his calories burnt per 10 minutes would look like this:

190 x 0.45 = 85.5 calories per 10 minutes

Obviously, you'll have to calculate the calories burnt per 10 minutes the more weight you lose over the course of your cut.

Let's start putting this puzzle together. Our subject has a daily caloric deficit of 475 calories that he needs to meet in order for him to reach his goal. Earlier we said that more calories need to come from the diet than cardio, so let's use a 60:40 ratio; 60% from food, 40% from cardio.

(475 x 60) ÷ 100 = 285 calories from food

(475 x 40) ÷ 100 = 190 calories from cardio

I would recommend against using a ratio that puts calories-burnt more than calories from food. Remember, our goal is to conserve as much muscle mass as possible while dropping all kinds of body fat.

When to Eat

This is a very controversial topic to cover as there are many theories surrounding the question of when to eat your meals. With so many diet trends and fads these days, is it any wonder why there seems to be a lack of clarity or a one-size-fits-all solution to when you should be eating?

When I first started out on the path to bodybuilding nutrition, I was dead-set on eating 6-7 meals a day at the same times each day, week after week. And even though I could stick to eating the same foods day in and day out, I was feeling miserable and always hungry. I read in a nutritional book that that's how many meals you should be eating and that you should eat them at the same times each day. This approach worked well for me in terms of progress, but the longer it dragged out, the harder it became to stick to it. Back then I was unaware of refeeding days or flexible dieting, and anything other than "clean" foods was from the devil.

Let's start off by discussing meal frequency.

Meal Frequency

If you're unaware, meal frequency refers to how many meals you eat daily. As stated above, I used to consume anywhere between 6 and 7 meals a day. These days I'm a bit more lenient, however, I do make sure to meet my macronutrient requirements. Nowadays, I'll consume anywhere between 3 and 5 meals a day – it depends on how I feel and if I'm taking a rest day or if I trained a large muscle group that day or if I want a weak area to grow.

I will say this, if you're on a cut and want a weak area to develop more than the rest of your body, make sure to schedule your refeed days on the days that you train your weaker muscles (we'll cover refeeds a bit later on).

Several studies have been done on the effects that meal frequency has on our body composition. The results showed that little to no changes were noted between eating 3 meals a day or eating 6 meals. This is interesting, because what you read on the internet or in the magazines is that fitness models or bodybuilders don't eat anything less than 6 meals. This I can understand for a Mr. Olympia competitor and the reason I say that is because of the copious amounts of food they must eat to sustain their muscle mass and energy expenditure. Could you imagine what it would be like to eat 6,500 calories in 4 meals? So, that's why I can understand why these gargantuan men eat so frequently.

There isn't a gold standard for meal frequency, and if there was, this segment would only be one paragraph long. Like most things pertaining to gains, you should find what works best for you. Yes, you could eat 3 meals a day and still get shredded. You could also eat 6 meals a day and still get shredded. The question you need to be asking yourself is: Do I feel full/satiated after each meal, or does it feel like I can eat a baby hippo?

You could get away with eating anywhere between 3 and 6 meals a day. You just have to figure out for yourself what works best for you; 3 infrequent, larger meals, or 6 frequent, smaller meals.

When to Eat

Breakfast

Meal timing could probably be one of the most important factors after proper nutrition. I'm willing to bet that you have a hearty carb-laden meal for breakfast, and then another one after that, and another one, and another one. You see where I'm going with this? When it comes to breakfast, I generally delay it by a few hours. Why? Because eating early on will dictate to your body what it should or should not be using as fuel for energy.

Look at it this way: Your goal is to get shredded, right? By eating a breakfast that contains carbs you'll be using carbohydrates as your primary source of energy throughout the day. By skipping breakfast your body will tap into its own fat stores to be used as energy. Get it?

While you're sleeping, your cortisol levels will steadily rise throughout the night. If you know anything about cortisol, it's a catabolic hormone – and the reason why so many fitness gurus preach breakfast to be the most important meal of the day because eating breakfast will stop cortisol in its tracks. However, what's not always considered is that catabolism isn't limited to muscle breakdown only, but lipolysis is also a process of catabolism (lipolysis is the breakdown of triglycerides into free fatty acids, in other words, your fat gets burned for energy).

Another interesting thing that happens in the morning is the release of ghrelin, the hunger hormone. The more ghrelin you have released, the more it stimulates the release of growth hormone which releases more fat to be burned and used as a source of energy.

So, what happens when you do eat breakfast containing carbs? Let's say your breakfast contains anywhere between 30 – 40 grams of carbs. That's enough to

stimulate the release of insulin, and when insulin is released, all fat-burning processes are brought to a halt.

So, what do you do?

First thing upon waking I would recommend having 20 grams of whey protein. Drinking higher amounts of whey will also encourage the release of insulin since whey contains bcaa's, and if you didn't know already, leucine, when taken in amounts of 3 grams or higher, will cause your insulin levels to rise. This is what you want post training but not in the mornings.

I'm an advocate of eating all my carbs post training and in the evening times. The reason being, I want to keep insulin as low as possible during the first half of the day to keep the fat burning process going on for as long as I possibly can. This might be a little difficult to do at first, but once you see the difference it makes in your body composition and the effects it has on your training you'll never revert to the classic bodybuilder diet.

However, if skipping breakfast or carbs isn't for you, refer to one of my previous statements and ingest 25% of your total carb intake for breakfast. Again, there is nothing wrong with the inclusion of carbs with each and every meal. You have to find what works for you, and when you do, stick to it.

Between breakfast and pre-workout

As stated above, if fat loss is your goal (which, if you're reading this book, it must be) then your aim should be to keep insulin as low as possible throughout most of your day to keep the fat burning process alive and steaming forward. How do we do this? By making protein and fat your main food sources. You don't have to eat as much fat during this time, but be sure to keep your protein intake relatively high.

Also, if you want to include carbs into this portion of the day, I'd suggest going for low carb vegetables, but bear in mind that it only takes up to 30 grams of carbs to stimulate the release of insulin.

It takes several hours for protein to be completely broken down in your body, so you won't benefit much from eating a pre-workout meal 30 minutes before you train. In my experiences, eating my pre-workout meal about 2 hours before I train is ideal. Then again, not everyone is the same. Really, you could eat 45 minutes before you train if it works for you. I would recommend you consume between 0.15 – 0.2 g of protein per pound in bodyweight.

If you're following the carb approach, then you should be sure to eat enough carbs an

hour or two before your workout. I would recommend anywhere between 20 – 25% of your daily carb intake.

Post-workout and evening eats

As with the protein recommendation for the pre-workout meal, I would use the same recommendation for your post-workout protein intake. As for carbs, if you're taking the approach which has you eating pretty much no carbs through the first part of your day, then you're going to enjoy this part, simply because you get to eat higher volumes of carbohydrates – this is assuming you train during the late afternoons or evenings.

If you train in the mornings, don't fret. Studies have shown that there is a higher success rate of fat loss when you move most of your calories to later in the day, in other words, the evening. This doesn't mean that you don't get to enjoy a carb meal post workout if you're doing a morning session. If you train in the mornings, have carbs with your post-workout meal, but after that meal, abstain from carbs until the evening rolls around.

In the case of you training in the mornings or early afternoons, your post-workout carb intake should be between 10 – 15% of your daily carb intake – these carbs should generally be fast absorbing. Yes, it may spike your insulin, but the difference between complex and simple carbs is that complex carbs leave you with a steady output of insulin that lasts for a few hours, whereas simple carbs will spike your insulin for an hour or two and then begin to return to normal levels.

If you're taking the second approach, then you should consume 25 – 30% of your daily carb intake post-workout. So, if we assume that you took the higher percentages for your carb intake at the most crucial times and let's also assume that your daily carb intake is 250 grams, it would be something like this:

Breakfast – 25%, 62.5 grams

Pre-workout – 25%, 62.5 grams

Post-workout – 30% 75 grams

This leaves you with 20% of your daily carbs (50 grams, to be exact) to be consumed whenever or wherever you find time to fit it into.

Refeed Days

One of my favorite parts about dieting. For those of you who don't know what refeed days are, it's when you consume your maintenance calories, or slightly above maintenance, for a day. See, when you're in a caloric deficit for an extended period your body eventually begins to adapt to this deficit and lowers your metabolic rate. The most effective way to offset this negative metabolic adaptation is by refeeding.

I should note, however, that your refeeding frequency is dependent on your level of leanness. If you're in the 10 – 15% body fat range, refeeding once a week should suffice. If your body fat is higher than 15% then there is no reason for you to refeed. However, the leaner you become throughout your shred, the more refeeds you'll be able to have a week – upwards of 3 refeed days a week.

Refeeding not only ensures that your metabolism stays on point, but it also releases a hormone called leptin.

How to Incorporate Refeed Days and How Often

When you start to diet down, your body picks up on the fact that you're feeding it fewer calories than what it's used to. So, what does your body do? It adjusts to the number of calories it's being fed. This is known as metabolic adaptation. This is basically a survival tactic that your body uses. Drop your calories too low too soon, and your body will begin to go into a state of homeostasis, which means that it begins to hold onto fat more stubbornly and your hunger shoots through the roof.

Refeeding offsets this bodily process. However, refeeding is not a "fix" that should be relied upon as the solution to this problem, rather, use it as a tool to aid your progress.

Incorporating a refeed day is stupid simple. Pick a day where you're either training a large muscle group, i.e. back or legs or when you're training a weak area, i.e. calves or arms. Depending on the time of day that you train, you'd have to refeed accordingly. If your training sessions happen in the morning, refeed on the day before. If your training sessions are in the evenings or late afternoon, refeed on the day of.

As stated somewhere above, if you're on the higher end of the body fat scale, refeeding won't be necessary. However, if you're in the "average" range, refeeding once a week is fine. The lower your body fat goes and the leaner you become, the more refeeds you can incorporate into your week. I would, however, suggest that you do not refeed more than 3 times a week. And if you feel like playing it safe, keep your refeeds to 2 times a week.

Now that you know why and when you should refeed, let's get to how you should refeed.

When refeeding, you would typically bring your calories back up to maintenance, but here's the kicker: most of your calories should come from carbs. Yes, carbohydrates! The reason being that your glycogen stores become depleted when you're in a caloric deficit due to the lack of carbs. Refeeding with the majority of your calories coming from carbs allows your glycogen stores to be replenished, which also allows for a more intense training session. Hence why you should refeed before or on the days of large muscle groups or weak areas.

Diet Breaks

Down the line you're undoubtedly bound to get "stuck" with your progress, which is okay, it's normal. The thing is, how do you get out of that "stuck" position? By incorporating a diet break.

Diet breaks are of a similar concept than that of refeeding. Taking a diet break is basically a week long refeed, if I may call it that. Just like hitting plateaus in training, you also hit plateaus while dieting. Refeeding is a way of off-setting that adaptive process from taking place at a much faster rate, but trust me, it will come – refeed or not.

Diet breaks are typically implemented when your cutting program or contest prep is on the long end of the scale, reaching into the 18-week territory and beyond. The deeper you are into your prep or shred, the less intense your diet breaks become due to caloric adaptation. In the early stages of a long prep you could raise your calories to maintenance, but the closer you get to your goal, the lower the increase of calories become. When in this "deep" stage of your prep, I'd recommend an increase of between 200-600 calories from what your current caloric intake would be during that time.

During diet breaks, it's also advisable to cut your cardio in half.

The setup and planning of diet breaks should be strategically implemented into your prep or cut by planning ahead of time when you're going to go on a diet break. It's recommended that your diet breaks are evenly spread out through your prep.

If you're going for a 24-week cut you could implement about 3 diet breaks. Anything between 15-18 weeks can be 2 diet breaks. 14 weeks and less I would suggest only one diet break.

Reverse Dieting

You may be asking yourself what reverse dieting is. Reverse dieting refers to the process of slowly building your caloric intake back up after restricting your calories for an extended period of time. The brilliance behind this is that you're able to bring your metabolism back to where it was without the excess fat gain.

You'll see that oftentimes someone may be getting ready for a show or doing a cut for summer, and then a couple weeks after they've met their goal, they've become one hella chubby person. Sound familiar? When you're in a prolonged state of caloric restriction, you begin to crave all kinds of food more and more with each passing week. Once you've completed your show or your time at the beach is done, you go on what is commonly known as a "binge."

Binge eating refers to the act of uncontrolled consumption of food; you're full from that pizza you just ate but you'll go ahead and finish a whole tub of Ben & Jerry's anyway, followed by whatever else you manage to get your hands on.

Why should you reverse diet?

If you've been following the guidelines laid out in this book and have been restricting your calories for more than 8 weeks, you should definitely consider reversing your diet. There are many benefits to slowly introducing more calories back into your diet which may help restore normal hormone function like elevated testosterone production and recuperate T3 and leptin. These three things are essential metabolic hormones.

How do you reverse diet?

As mentioned above, reverse dieting is the reintroduction of calories into your diet with small and manageable increases. Increasing your calories on a small scale will allow your body to adapt to the increase and therefore your metabolic output will increase.

When I say that small and calculated caloric increases should be made, I'm literally talking about small increases. For someone who has been dieting for 12 – 16 weeks should take it slower than someone who has been dieting for 6 – 8 weeks.

My recommendations for reverse dieting are as follows:

Men can be a little more lenient when it comes to reverse dieting than women, albeit not much. For men, I would recommend they start by increasing their calories by 5%

of their current caloric intake, and for women, I would suggest a 3% increase.

So, if your current caloric intake is 2,100, your reverse would look like:

(Men) 2,100 x 0.05 = 105 kcal increase

(Women) 1,900 x 0.03 = 57 kcal increase

It is equally important to track your weight during this process. If you find that your weight is staying consistent, then you can make weekly increases. Don't fret if you're gaining less than a pound each week – this is natural. Your glycogen stores are slowly beginning to fill up. However, if you're gaining 1.5 – 2 pounds a week, that means you need to pump the brakes and make biweekly increases.

I would suggest you begin by increasing carbs first, and then fat. Remember, fat is more calorically dense than carbs are.

Conclusion

Now that you have everything you need to make some sweet, sweet fat loss gains, we wish you nothing but the best and most success on your journey.

Remember to utilize all the information and make it work for you. At first, you might feel a bit out of your comfort zone, especially if you've never been on a nutritional plan, let alone calorice deficit, but don't lose heart. Remember why you're doing this. It may be to impress girls, and if that's your goal, so be it.

Who knows, the information in this guide might just set you on the path to attaining your pro card or gain that Instagram stardom that you've been working for.

Appendix A

Recommended sources of protein

Meats:

Pastured chicken

Pastured turkey

Pastured pork

Grass- or green-fed beef

Grass- or green-fed bison

Grass- or green-fed lamb

Ostrich

Dairy:

Cow milk – whole, 1%, 2%

Goat milk

Eggs

Fish:

Wild salmon

Tilapia

Sole

Flounder

Cod

Catfish

Shellfish:

Shrimp

Mussels

Oysters

Crab

Appendix B

Recommended sources of carbohydrates

Vegetables:

- Raw carrots
- Cucumber
- Broccoli
- Squash
- Green, yellow, red peppers

Fruits:

- Berries
- African mango
- Watermelon
- Oranges
- Dates
- Pawpaw
- Lychees
- Plums
- Raisins
- Apples (cooked)
- Bananas
- Pineapple

Grains:

- Organic oatmeal
- Organic Jasmine and white rice
- Wild rice
- Couscous
- Quinoa

Appendix C

Recommended sources of fat:

Almonds

Cashew nuts

Avocado

Coconut oil

Extra-virgin olive oil (use as dressing)

Grass-fed butter

Chia and flaxseeds

Raw cocoa

Appendix D

Sample meal plans

This is if you're following the approach of limiting your carbs during the first half of your day. Note that I am not providing the quantities of the foods as that varies from one person to the next.

Upon waking:

20 grams of whey protein

Coffee, no sugar

Breakfast:

Whole eggs

Egg whites

*Fried in coconut oil

Breakfast meats like ham and bacon

Snack (optional):

Cashew or almond nuts

Pre-workout:

Chicken, ostrich, or turkey

A hearty serving of green vegetables

A salad (optional)

Post-workout:

Whey protein

Dextrose (or any other fast absorbing carb)

Post post-workout:

Chicken, ostrich, turkey, beef, or pork

White, Jasmine rice

Russet potatoes

Last meal:

Same as the post post-workout meal but just in fewer quantities

This is if you're following the typical bodybuilding diet approach

Meal 1:

Whole eggs

Egg whites

Oatmeal with whey protein and/or banana or berries

Meal 2:

Chicken, turkey, or ostrich

White or Jasmin rice, couscous, or quinoa

Green vegetables

Cashew, or almond nuts

Meal 3:

Beef, chicken, turkey, or ostrich

White or Jasmin rice, couscous, or quinoa

Green vegetables

Cashew or almond nuts (only if you didn't eat beef with this meal)

Meal 4:

Same options as meal 3 but without the nuts

Meal 5:

A serving of fruit(s)

Meal 6:

Protein shake