

Guide to Sustainable Dieting



This dieting guide is designed to help you set and achieve goals with fitness and nutrition by creating a sustainable diet plan.

If you value a balance between fun and food, along with your overall health and training, this guide is for you. This guide is also for you if you're looking to get back on track. Maybe you're looking to drop weight and need help putting a plan in place. Perhaps you train regularly and have hit a plateau. Even if you struggle to put on weight and want to be pushed in the right



direction to start building muscle, the information in this guide will help you reach your goals.

The beauty of what you're about to dive into is that it's flexible. It applies to every type of goal related to your weight and/or training. Just bend the program to fit your goals, combine it with hard work in the gym, and off you go!

We're not gonna dive into any fads or gimmicks.

Nope. Not even close.

There are no shortcuts here — no magical supplements, pills, or theories. It's just a straightforward approach backed by common sense.

This approach has not only worked for me, but it has worked for countless clients I've worked with over the years, because the best diet plan you can use is the one you can be consistent with.

So let's start building yours!

At the end of this book is a template that will help you customize each piece of your diet plan. Grab that sheet and keep it nearby. On to setting up your plan!



Disclaimer:

If you have any health concerns, please consult a doctor before beginning any type of health or fitness program. The information in this book is not professional therapy or medical opinion. Readers should seek professional therapy or consult a primary care physician before starting any health or fitness coaching program.



Contents

5. Goal Setting

- *What is your goal? Why do you want to achieve it?*

7. The Dieting Strategy

- *Explaining the concept of sustainable dieting and its benefits.*

10. Basic Nutritional Information

- *Information on macronutrients, caloric breakdown, and principles on choosing the right foods.*

13. Setting Up Your Diet

- *A comprehensive breakdown on how to set your calories and macros.*

21. The Process of Tracking Macros

- *How do you log your calories each day?*

25. How to Make Adjustments

- *Presenting actionable steps on how to adjust your diet.*

28. Conclusion

30. About Chris Gates Fitness

31. Diet Template



Step No. 1: Goal Setting

I can't stress enough how important this step is. And yeah, it might seem obvious, but think about how many people step foot inside a gym without any plan in mind.

Same goes for people that order food off a menu in a restaurant. How many people order a meal without giving any thought toward how many calories they're about to eat?



If you're trying to manipulate your weight, it's important to set a goal, learn about how to achieve that goal, and then put that knowledge into practice. So, if you want to build muscle or burn fat, you should take time to understand what foods will help you do that, how many calories you need to eat each day, and then start to put a plan in motion.

And let's be realistic here. A feasible, healthy approach to any weight change is slow and steady.

You're not in a race. Fat loss is not a sprint, and you're not competing against other people to get there.

The same thing goes for building muscle — maybe even more so. It's a long process that requires patience and time.

So for reference, here are some safe numbers to aim for:

- Weight loss: A healthy rate of weight loss is anywhere between 0.5-1.5 pounds per week.
- Weight gain: You should aim for around 0.5 pounds gained per week, or 2-3 pounds gained per month for developing muscle mass without accumulating too much excess body fat.



The Dieting Strategy

OK, that was important. You've established your goal.

Now it's time to talk about your diet plan, and what lies ahead for you as you start your journey.

For starters, the general approach here is to create a diet that's sustainable for you — something you can see yourself sticking to long term. Because there's no real reason to eat in a way you'd never otherwise choose.



That's not going to teach you anything about your relationship with the foods you enjoy, or how to maintain your progress long term.

The "bro diet" of chicken and broccoli every meal is one that's hard to maintain, and if we're going about a slow, steady, healthy diet, you need something that's more sustainable.

Same goes for eliminating entire food groups and hopping on the keto or carnivore diets.

Your goal should be to still eat the foods you love, but enjoy them with some moderation, and see results by fitting them into your overall macro plan. Later in this guide, we're going to dive into how to set up a macro plan, so if you're unfamiliar with that term right now, don't worry. We'll get there.

Sustainability isn't a new concept. We've all heard of the mainstream services that have customized meal plans. Many of them advertise their programs with the appeal of, "lose weight while eating all of the foods you love! Steak! Lasagna! CAKE!!!" Typically, the case with those plans is, yes, you get to eat those foods you love. However, the portion sizes are much smaller than you'd usually eat.

A similar principle resides with this plan, only you don't have to sign up for a service to do it and you get to manage your own portions. Also, you'll be in control and will actually learn how your body works and how to develop the right relationship with food.



Dieting doesn't need to be terrible. Too many people assume it does, and find themselves miserable on a diet. Too often, that misery leads to abandoning the diet and personal goals altogether.

But not anymore.

Let's dive into how to create a sustainable framework for your diet!



Basic Nutritional Information

We're about to go over your macro plan, but what does "macro" mean?

Well, macro is short for "macronutrient." Macronutrients are the three main nutrients your body utilizes for energy. They are:

- Carbohydrates
- Fat
- Protein



You'll see these three macronutrients called out in bold lettering in any nutrition facts label you look at in the grocery store. That's because these three macronutrients are largely what dictate the total calories of the food you eat. Thus, these three macronutrients are going to be the basis of what you focus on moving forward with your nutrition.

We want to set up an ideal amount of carbohydrates, fats, and protein in alignment with the results you're looking for. Those three will combine to give you an overall calorie total, which brings us to the next "need to know" piece of information.

- 1 gram of carbohydrates = 4 calories
- 1 gram of fat = 9 calories
- 1 gram of protein = 4 calories

Those three bullet points are going to be the building blocks of your entire meal plan, and it's pretty basic information that most people aren't aware of. Congratulations, you're already ahead of the game!

Now, one misguided perception with a dieting plan like this is that you can consume literally any foods you want — regardless of nutritional value. What I'd recommend is to try and have the majority of your calories come from whole, nutritious foods (~80%). You don't want to be getting all of your carbohydrates from candy and all of your protein from shakes. Ideally, you're hitting your macros while providing your body with quality foods that enhance your overall well being.



Beyond the macronutrient basics, your weight is going to be dependent upon the basic idea of calories coming in and energy going out. This is called energy balance, and the relationship between those two factors will determine your level of progress when it comes to seeing a change in weight.



Setting Up Your Diet

It's time to set up your macros!

Before we break it all down, let's get one thing straight: your macros will always be fluid. You'll set up a starting point and make small adjustments here and there throughout the course of working toward your goal. Since every single person has a different height, weight, medical history, and genetics, there is no blanket way to assess everyone's meal plan. There isn't one magical equation that solves everything for everyone. However, there



are steps you can take to get yourself in a good starting position, which will make reaching your goal that much more attainable.

As you make progress in whatever direction your goal is — building muscle or burning fat — you will periodically have to make changes to continue making progress. As you might expect, when your weight drops as you diet down, your calories may eventually have to decrease in order to continue to see progress. The opposite is the case when putting on weight/building muscle.

Now, let's get into it. There are five steps to setting up your macros.

No. 1: Calculate your Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

Your BMR is the amount of calories your body burns at baseline. If we know your BMR (approximately), we'll know approximately the minimum amount of calories your body will burn on a given day.

But how do we calculate BMR? To get this number exact, you'd need a very controlled situation with very specific variables defined, like going without food for 12 hours, going without physical activity for 12 hours, and being in a metabolic chamber that reads how much heat your body gives off.

Obviously, that's not realistic, and we don't need to go to those lengths to give us a relative starting point for your diet.



Given the nature of this process (things will change, especially early on), you can take the easier route of utilizing free tools at your disposal. Go ahead and Google “BMR calculator,” and you’ll get a laundry list of results that will work. A personal favorite of mine comes from [Muscular Strength](#), which allows you to enter some basic information about yourself into the calculator in order to get your BMR at rest and in motion. I’d recommend looking up 2-3 of those free tools and using the average of the numbers you receive.

No. 2: Set Your Maintenance Calories

As mentioned earlier, you want to find your “maintenance calories.” What that means is essentially a state of equilibrium where you’ll know approximately how many calories you should eat to maintain your weight. In order to find your maintenance calories, you’ll have to use some trial and error to eat, track your nutrition, and weigh yourself over a period of time to see what calorie intake results in weight maintenance. Typically, adding 300-500 calories to your BMR is a good place to start with your calorie intake, so pick a number in that range, add it to the BMR you calculated, and try eating that many calories for a period of time to see how your weight responds.

When you set this “maintenance calorie” number, you have your starting point. From there, if you want to add weight, you should think about adding calories above that maintenance number. If you want to lose weight, you should think about reducing calories below that maintenance number.



So to recap, here's what I recommend you do to set up your starting calories:

1. Calculate your estimated BMR.
2. Add 300-500 calories to that number.
3. Track your nutrition for 1-2 weeks to see how your weight responds.
4. Slightly reduce or add to that number based on how your body weight changes, and based on your goals.

Whatever your goal is, and whatever it requires — adding or subtracting from your maintenance calories — start small. If you're trying to lose body fat, and your maintenance calories are at 2,000, don't cut that in half and try to diet on 1,000 calories.

Because that never, ever works.

It's never, ever sustainable.

What you should do is cut out a moderate amount of calories to get started (approximately a 10% reduction), because the goal here is to diet sustainably and eat as much food as you can while still losing weight! See how your body responds.

The same principle applies for building muscle. Don't go from 2,000 calories to 3,000 calories because you need to "eat big to get big!" If you do that, you'll get big, alright.

By big, I mean you'll gain a ton of excess body fat.

Take things slow.

No. 3: Calculate Your Protein Intake

Protein is your starting point for setting up your macros. Take your body weight and/or height and assign the following daily protein totals based on your goal:

- If you're at/around a healthy body weight, you should consume ~1 gram of protein per pound of body weight each day.
- If you're overweight, obese, or underweight, take your height in centimeters and eat 1 gram for each centimeter each day.

Protein is the most important macronutrient to focus on when attempting to change your body composition. It's the most satiating macronutrient, which means it will help you feel full when dieting. And it's also a crucial piece in helping you recover from your workouts and continue to train hard.

The end result of any type of body transformation normally requires you to build, or maintain, some muscle mass. Protein will help you do that.

Once you've got your daily protein goal, mark that down. You've just accounted for the first chunk of your daily intake!

No. 4: Calculate Your Fat Intake

Generally speaking, you should probably have your fat intake somewhere in the range of 20%-30% of your total calories. Knowing that 1 gram of fat = 9 calories, you can easily identify this number.

So, remember what your maintenance calories were? And then remember what you did to manipulate your maintenance calorie number, based on your goal?

You should look to assign 20%-30% of those calories to fat.

There's a range here for a reason, so use it to your advantage to set up a meal plan that you like. If you like your meal plan, it will be more sustainable. So, if you like extra fat in your diet, go for it. If not, skew towards the lower end. Don't go too low or too high, though, as you want to afford yourself some wiggle room to make adjustments when needed.

So let's use the 2,000-calorie example we started with earlier.

1. Your maintenance calories are 2,000.
2. You want to lose weight, so you're starting at 1,800 calories for your calorie deficit.
3. Well 20%-30% of 1,800 calories means you should eat somewhere between:
 - a. 40 grams of fat
 - b. 60 grams of fat



You calculate those numbers by taking 1,800 calories and multiplying by 0.2 and/or 0.3, which gives you 20% or 30% of 1,800.

From there, divide each number by 9 (because 1 gram of fat = 9 calories), and voila! You've got your fat grams.

No. 5: Calculate Your Carbohydrate Intake

The hard work is done at this point. You have an overall calorie total, you have a protein number set, and you have a fat number set. There's a limited amount of calories left in your meal plan, so you take those leftover calories, divide by four (the amount of calories in one gram of carbohydrates) and POOF! Your macro plan is complete.

Let's review.

- (Your protein grams) x 4 = A
- (Your fat grams) x 9 = B
- (Maintenance Calories) - (A + B) = carbohydrate calories
- Divide carbohydrate calories by 4 = grams of carbohydrates

That's a lot of equations, I know. I think this is a scenario where finishing our running example will really help.



So let's say you've established the following protein and fat goals for yourself:

- Protein grams per day: 150 grams
- Fat grams per day: 60 grams

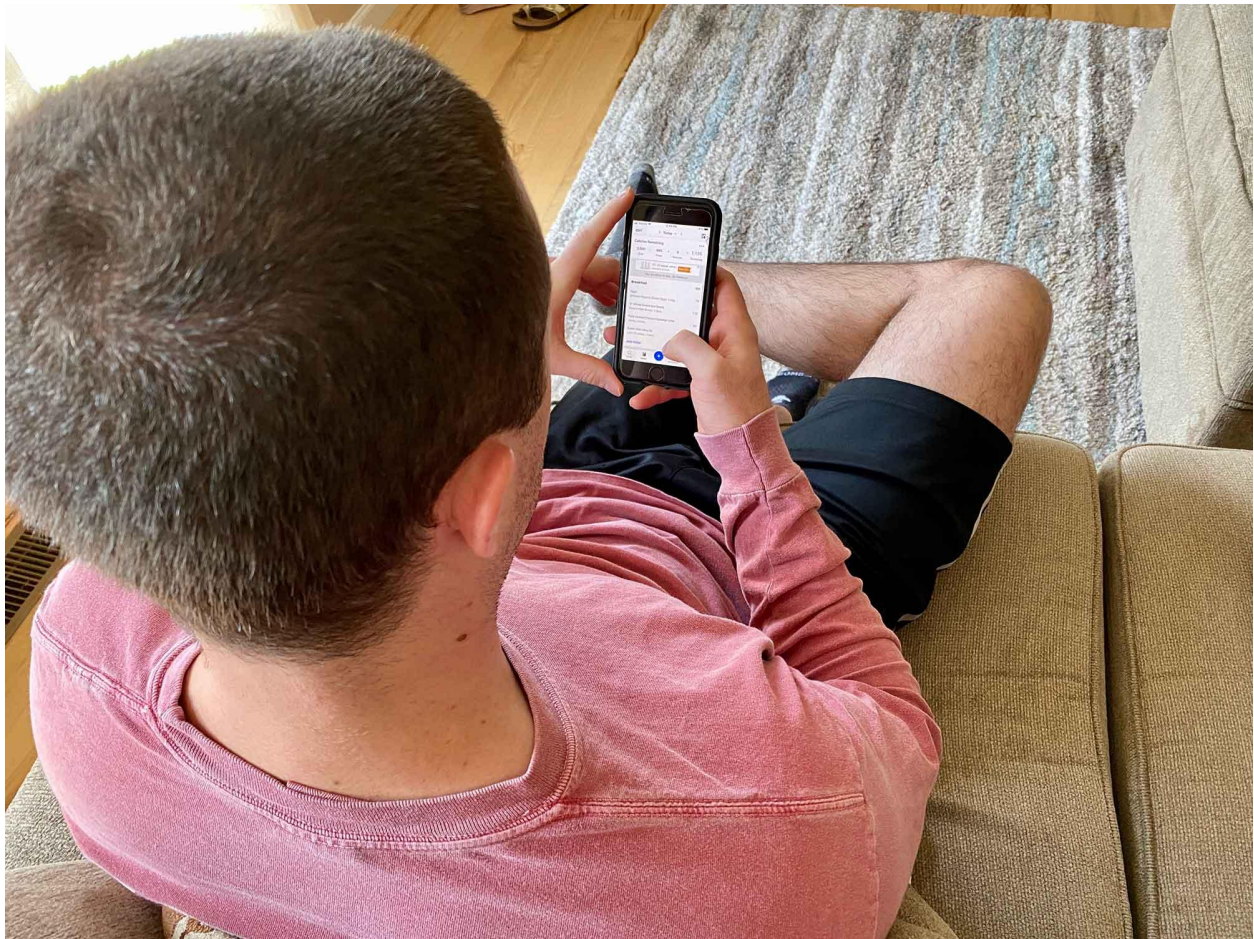
Those numbers add up to 1,140 calories (150 grams X 4 calories per gram of protein = 600 calories; 60 grams X 9 calories per gram of fat = 540 calories).

If your calorie deficit is set at 1,800 calories, that means you've got 660 remaining calories to allocate to carbohydrates. Take 660 calories, divide it by 4, and you get 165 grams of carbohydrates.

Just like that, your macros are set!

- Protein: 150 grams per day
- Fat: 60 grams per day
- Carbohydrates: 165 grams per day

And the beauty of all of this is that once you run through this process once, you really don't have to ever do it again. You'll have a starting point, you'll make adjustments depending on your progress and goals, and you'll develop a really good understanding of how those calories and macronutrients affect your progress.



The Process of Tracking Macros

You've taken the time to calculate your macros, and now the sustainable dieting process begins! It's time to track the food you're eating.

This may seem like a daunting task, but I promise it's not. There is a learning curve to tracking macros, but if you stick with it you'll learn quickly that it's a pretty quick and easy process. You'll also learn how flexible your diet can really be!



In order to accurately track your macros, the following three items will provide you with just about everything you need to get started. You can get all of these for under \$20, which will be money well spent.

- Food scale
- Measuring cups
- My Fitness Pal

A food scale is what you'll use to weigh out just about everything for your meals. [A quick search for food scales on Amazon.com](#) will provide you with a ton of options, starting as low as \$8.

Check out my video on [how to accurately weigh and measure your food](#) for more details on this process. Weighing and/or measuring food adds only one step to the process, and it's simple!

There will be other instances where a food scale doesn't quite fit the mold for what you're measuring, and normally measuring cups can fill in those gaps. Most foods will have serving size listed in cups, fractions of a cup, ounces, or grams on the nutrition facts label. Between a food scale (most measure in ounces, grams, and a few additional metrics) and measuring cups, you'll be all set to track just about any food you want to prepare.

Now, how do you keep track of all of the calories? Do you have to tally these up on a pad of paper every day?

No. If you have a smartphone, there are quite a few free nutrition tracking apps available. The one I use with my clients is the [MyFitnessPal app](#). In it, [chrisgatesfitness.com](#) • Follow me on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)



you can scan just about any food barcode and have it show up automatically in the app. The app has an ever-growing directory of food choices that make it easy to scan or search for the food you're eating.

Whether you're preparing food on your own, or dining out at a restaurant, you're going to be able to track your food. From there, you can select the serving size, number of servings, and view the macronutrient breakdown for everything you eat. You can set macronutrient goals and view your daily totals as you go, so it's easy to understand how your diet evolves throughout each day. Pay attention to the macro totals, and you'll be all set!

If you find yourself in a situation where you can't get a 100% accurate track on what you're eating (ie. that specific food can't be found in the app), I recommend looking for a food choice that is similar, and estimate. As you go through this process for a few weeks, you'll suddenly get a good idea of what four ounces of chicken looks like, or what a cup of rice looks like, or approximately how many carbs are in your favorite snack. In circumstances where you need to estimate, be honest with yourself and track your nutrition to the best of your ability.

Estimating to the best of your ability is better than not tracking at all.

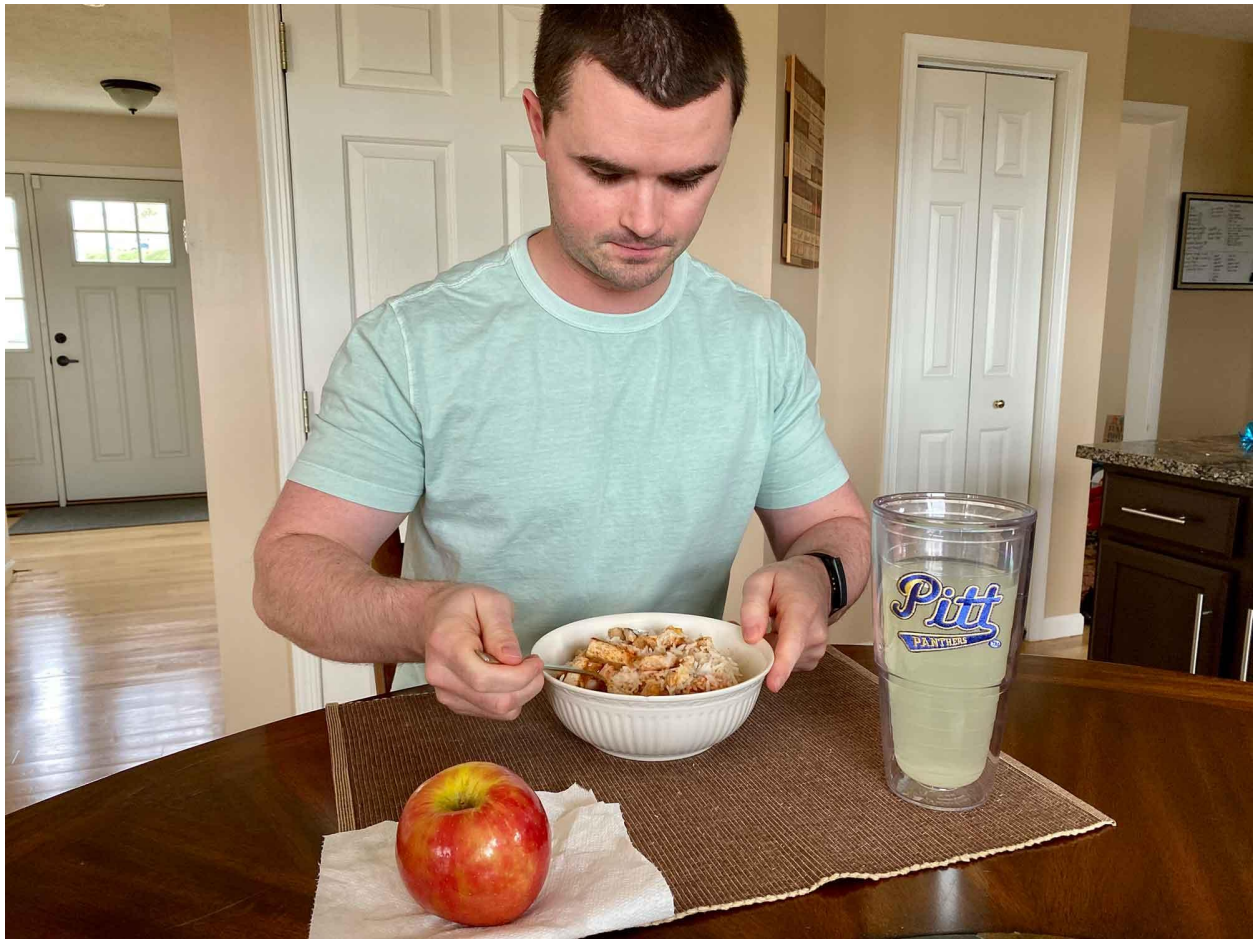
Some additional tips worth considering are to pick easily measurable foods to start. Also, buy in bulk and meal prep ahead of time. Measuring out a few cups of rice to boil and cook is simple. Storing rice is simple. Weighing a specific amount of ounces of rice to eat is simple. Same goes for chicken,



steak, beef, salmon, turkey, etc. You can slice up an exact amount you want to eat in any sitting and put the rest back in the refrigerator for next time.

When you're cooking foods that have a lot of ingredients to them, it gets harder and harder to track. For instance, if you're layering together a lasagna or cooking a stew from scratch, you know there will be a lot of elements involved. Measuring out all of this is not something I'd recommend while learning how to track your food. However, once you get more comfortable and experienced with tracking what you cook, you can start to expand your variety and include more multi-ingredient choices.

Start with some simple items, tailor them towards your diet, and then build from that as you get more comfortable. Oftentimes, those simple items are ones that you can dress up with different cheeses, spices, and toppings, which helps keep things interesting while keeping your macros in check.



Making Adjustments

As mentioned earlier, whether your goal is to gain or lose weight, your macros are going to change. The heavier or lighter you get — the more muscle you build, or the more fat you burn — changes eventually must be made to your meal plan. Understanding how to make these types of changes is where your own intuition comes into play.

This section is tough to map out, because every person is so uniquely different, meaning circumstances and variables are impossible to predict



from person to person. Understanding when to make these changes and how to alter your current plan is where a good coach can really be valuable. If coaching is something you're interested in and want to learn more, check out the [coaching page](#) on my website. My clients benefit from an extremely personalized approach to their health and fitness, as well as consistent guidance and support along the way.

Quite simply, if you hit a plateau it might be time to reevaluate your macros or training. But let's define a plateau...

Seeing your weight stabilize for a few days is not a plateau.

Neither is seeing your weight plateau for 1-2 weeks.

Those are all normal, and don't require you to make immediate changes. So evaluate your weight over the course of several weeks, and note the week-to-week changes. After several weeks of a weight plateau, it may be time to make some adjustments.

Don't be rash. As we've discussed, chasing your goal should be at a slow and steady pace. If you don't see the progress you want after a few days or even a week, stick to the plan. Progress isn't linear, and the human body is unpredictable. Any diet plan will have ebbs and flows. [Weigh yourself each morning](#), track the numbers over an extended period of time, and adjust accordingly.

However, if you experience a prolonged period of time without seeing progress, it may be time to make a change. Nine times out of 10, this means



slightly reducing calories (for weight loss) or increasing calories (for weight gain) and making tweaks to your macros by way of carbohydrates or fats. Manipulating your nutrition will make the most impactful change to fat loss or muscle gain.

If you're in a fat loss phase, DO NOT...

I repeat, DO NOT try to add extra hours of cardio to your routine in order to burn more calories and "clear out room" in your diet. That becomes dangerous, as it changes the perception of exercise from something that builds your body up, to it being a tool to burn more calories and make up for poor nutrition.

We're in the business of sustainable dieting here.

Small adjustments and smart choices over time lead to great progress.



Conclusion

You now have all the tools to get started with your sustainable dieting plan! In the end, the results you see are going to be a product of your own hard work, determination, and consistency.

No diet plan results in success without hard work. You're going to have to apply yourself in multiple ways. For one, planning ahead with your food and being diligent about sticking to your goals is critical. Additionally, making sure you're being active and building yourself up through strength training should be a top priority as well.

Determination comes from within. We all have the ability to set a goal, create a plan, and stick to it. If you're still reading, that means you've set your goal and put a plan together, or at least given it some serious thought. All you have to do now is believe in yourself and believe in the plan to reach your goal!

And finally, being consistent is paramount. If you have a fitness or body composition goal, just tackle it day after day. Everyone has the capacity to conquer this stuff. The problem is that not everyone believes in themselves or thinks they can find that quality from within. They think they have to be perfect, and when things aren't perfect they think they've failed.

So they quit.

But you aren't going to quit.



It comes down to what's important to you, and if your health, wellness, and fitness are important to you (they should be) you'll make time for them. It doesn't have to be more complicated than that.

If you can get serious about the plan we've outlined in this e-book, and if you can stick with it early on, this dieting plan will become a lifestyle, and that lifestyle will become contagious. You'll realize that every meal you make throughout the day, each rep you perform at the gym, and every day you hit your macros will directly contribute to bettering yourself in a way you've never done before. If you can stick with it for a couple of weeks, you'll start to notice changes in your body. You'll see them in the mirror (make sure you take progress photos once a week!). The work you put in at the gym will directly translate in front of you. After that point, every single rep, cardio session, and meal will start to look like another opportunity to contribute to those results. You'll never want to stop.

Just get started, and don't stop.

--

I hope you've enjoyed the information in this e-book. If you have any comments or feedback, or if you find yourself having any questions at all, please feel free to [contact me](#). I truly believe that a healthy lifestyle led by a smart diet and exercise can help lift people to new heights. If I can help you improve your quality of life in any way, let's talk.

Good luck, and thanks for reading!



About the Author



My name is Chris Gates and I am the owner of Chris Gates Fitness LLC. I've been coaching people who want to improve their lives through proper training and nutrition since 2017. I have a master's degree in health and fitness from the University of Pittsburgh, and my goal is to help as many people as possible learn how to achieve their goals with fitness and nutrition in a sustainable way. If you're interested in learning more about me and my clients, check out my [coaching page](#) along with a [list of testimonials](#) from current and past clients.

Dieting Plan Template

BMR at Rest: _____

BMR while Active: _____



Maintenance Calories: _____

Protein:

Grams per pound of body weight: _____ x 4 = _____ calories.

Fat:

Percentage of total calories: _____ x 9 = _____ calories.

Carbohydrates:

Maintenance calories - (Calories from proteins + calories from fats)

Remaining calories = _____ / 4 = _____ calories.