



MACRO CYCLING & STRATEGIES

MACRONUTRIENT STRATEGIES

Now that you know what your calorie needs are based on your goals and which macronutrient option to choose, we can discuss different ways to implement them to match your lifestyle.

I have created six different macronutrient strategies to make adhering to your calorie and macronutrient goals easier. But first, I will give you a bonus strategy that can apply to any of your goals and macronutrient strategies.

ONLY FOCUSING ON HITTING YOUR CALORIE AND PROTEIN GOALS

This strategy is one I wish I had learned a long time ago. The common denominator in successful diets is high protein intake and consuming the appropriate amount of calories for your goal. If all you did were eat enough protein and hit your daily calorie target, you would be on the right track.

Don't fret about eating the exact number of grams of carbohydrates and fats each day. Eat your protein, hit your calorie goal, and don't worry about the rest.

This strategy is suitable for almost anyone, whether you're new to food logging or a seasoned veteran.

MACRONUTRIENT STRATEGIES

Simplifying your food logging can make it less tedious, reduce stress, or allow you to focus your mental energy elsewhere when life gets busy.

However, this will not work if you take out all carbohydrates or all fats from your diet or if you are a super elite athlete. If you feel sluggish, hungry, or generally crappy, you may want to track your carbohydrates and fats more closely.

But for regular people, amateur athletes, and weekend warriors, this is the golden ticket to consistently logging your food so you can reach your goals.

If you implement this strategy, you can ignore the carbohydrate and fat recommendations in Trainerize for each macronutrient strategy. Just fill up your calorie and protein goals and don't stress about hitting the specific fat and carbohydrate goals.

STRAIGHT SHOOTER

THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER

The next strategy is the Straight Shooter, where you eat the same amount of calories every day until you reach your goal. This strategy is as simple as it gets, hence the name Straight Shooter.

This strategy is suitable for people who like a routine, have a predictable schedule, and don't mind eating similar things every day.

The drawback of the Straight Shooter is that it can be hard to fit social events into your life and still adhere to your calorie goal. The monotony can also get to some people.

If you're in a fat loss phase, a continuous caloric deficit may not be optimal for preserving muscle, so I would encourage you to include diet breaks into your schedule if you're doing the Straight Shooter. I will discuss Diet Breaks in more detail later in the guide.

WEEKEND WARRIOR

THE WEEKEND WARRIOR

The Weekend Warrior is the first strategy that utilizes calorie cycling. Calorie cycling alternates between high-calorie days and low-calorie days, so the weekly average of your calorie consumption aligns with your goals.

For example, you can eat 2088 calories each day, and the total amount of calories you would eat each week would be 14,616.

You could also eat 1879 calories four days of the week and 2366 calories the other three days of the week, and your weekly total would be 14,614.

Calorie cycling is a fantastic way to make adhering to your goals easier. You can factor in social events, family dinners, and date nights without sabotaging your hard work from the rest of the week. It is also helpful if there are days when you are busy and can't dedicate a lot of time and energy to eating large, nutritious meals.

The Weekend Warrior is for people who work hard and play hard. I created this strategy for people who tell me that they don't get adequate breaks at work to eat or that they aren't as hungry when they are distracted with work.

WEEKEND WARRIOR

The low-calorie days are Monday through Thursday while you're busy with work and the high-calorie days are Friday through Sunday to account for social events, parties, and decompressing from the work week.

Feel free to shift the high-calorie and low-calorie days around to fit your specific work schedule. There's nothing magical about assigning high-calorie days on the weekends. Just be sure to have four low-calorie days and three high-calorie days.

The Weekend Warrior has the largest difference between the high-calorie days and low-calorie days of all the calorie cycling strategies. If you struggle with low-calorie days and feel overstuffed on high-calorie days, you might want to try a different macronutrient strategy.

THE SHAQ

THE SHAQ (3 HIGH DAYS, 4 LOW DAYS)

The Shaq is similar to the Weekend Warrior, except the swing from high-calorie days to low-calorie days is smaller. I named this strategy The Shaq because three high days and four low days make me think of the number 34, the same jersey Shaquille O'Neal wore in the NBA.

I designed this strategy for people with three hard workouts during the week and four lower-intensity or recovery days the rest of the week. Many people (including myself) prefer to eat more on days when they have hard workouts and less on other days.

You could also apply this strategy the same way as the Weekend Warrior, with the low-calorie days Monday through Thursday and the high-calorie days Friday through Sunday.

THE SHELDON

THE SHELDON (4 HIGH DAYS, 3 LOW DAYS)

The Sheldon is The Shaq in reverse; four high-calorie days and three low-calorie days. I named this strategy The Sheldon because, in an episode of the sitcom The Big Bang Theory, Howard, Raj, and Leonard discover a room where Sheldon goes in secret with the number 43 written on a chalkboard. No spoilers, but the entire episode is about trying to figure out what the number 43 means.

I designed this strategy for people with four hard workouts during the week and three lower-intensity or recovery days the rest of the week.

You can place the four high-calorie days on any day of the week; there's no need to alternate between high and low calories each day.

THE FULL DECK

THE FULL DECK (5 HIGH DAYS, 2 LOW DAYS)

The Full Deck is five high-calorie days and two low-calorie days each week. There is a small difference between the high and low-calorie days, but if you like an extra pre-workout meal, you might enjoy The Full Deck. I named this strategy The Full Deck because 52 makes me think of a full deck of cards.

I designed this strategy for people with five moderate to hard workouts during the week and two lower-intensity or recovery days the rest of the week.

Again, you can place the five high-calorie days on any day of the week; you don't need to adhere to a specific pattern for this strategy to be effective.

REFEEDS

Refeeds are for people with more experience tracking their food with serious athletic or aesthetic goals. If you decide to try the Refeed strategy, you will need to be able to hit your calories, protein, carbohydrates, and fats very closely each day. Tracking only calories and protein will not work here.

Refeeds maybe your strategy if you need to drop weight for a high-level competition or are stepping onto a bodybuilding stage. Refeeds are designed only to be used during a Conservative Fat Loss phase. The goal is to preserve athletic performance as much as possible while lowering your body fat percentage. You will have five low-calorie days and 2 refeed days. The refeed days have a much higher amount of carbohydrates so that you can refill your glycogen stores each week. Filling your glycogen stores will keep your energy up for your workouts and improve your recovery.

If you try the Refeed strategy during an Aggressive Fat Loss phase, you won't have enough calories to refuel properly.

Try to plan your refeeds on the day before your most demanding workouts of the week. For example, if your most strenuous workouts of the week are on Wednesday and Saturday, your refeed days would be on Tuesday and Friday.

REFEEDS

You can also plan your refeeds for two consecutive days to top off your glycogen stores and be ready for the upcoming week of training. Doing refeeds on Saturday and Sunday to accommodate your lifestyle, work schedule, or social events is totally acceptable.

Please ensure you give yourself enough time to lower your body fat percentage before your goal date. The last thing you need to do before a significant competition is to crash diet to lose weight quickly. All your hard work improving your performance will suffer.



DIET BREAKS

DIET BREAKS

If you are not rushing to lose fat, consider adding diet breaks to your fat-loss phase. A diet break is simply a week or two where you switch from a fat loss phase to your maintenance calories so you can refuel, negate hunger, keep your hormones in check, and break up the monotony of being in a fat loss phase. A diet break is similar to a deload week during a strength training program; you lower the intensity of the workouts for a week, so you can return to the program feeling strong, recovered, and more energetic.

In the Fat Loss Timeline Calculator, I created three scenarios for a fat loss phase: a continuous deficit, a diet break every 5th week, and a diet break every 3rd week.

A continuous deficit would include no diet breaks.

A diet break every 5th would indicate four weeks in a fat loss phase followed by one week at maintenance until the goal weight is met.

A diet break every 3rd would indicate two weeks in a fat loss phase followed by one week at maintenance until the goal weight is met.

DIET BREAKS

You might be hesitant to include diet breaks into your fat loss phase because it will take longer to reach your goal weight. But there may be several advantages of diet breaks that you don't get with a continuous deficit:

- Diet breaks can give you a psychological break during a fat-loss phase.
- Hunger and cravings are usually less.
- You may preserve more muscle and lose more fat.
- You get better practice being at maintenance, so the fat loss is easier to maintain.
- The metabolic slowdown may be lessened.
- Maintaining fat loss in the long term is more manageable.
- You can plan your diet breaks around vacations, social events, and holidays so you don't miss out.

You can experiment with diet breaks and see what works best for you. You can even extend each diet break to 2 weeks if you are not in a hurry to hit your goal weight.

INTERMITTENT FASTING

INTERMITTENT FASTING AND EATING WINDOWS

Another tool you can use on any macronutrient strategy is intermittent fasting or establishing an eating window. I would recommend using intermittent fasting primarily for fat loss, but you can also use it to maintain weight. If you're trying to gain muscle, eating the appropriate amount of calories and protein in a shorter period may be challenging.

There are many different versions of intermittent fasting, including full-day fasts. If I recommend intermittent fasting, I use the 16:8 model, where you would fast for 16 hours and then eat the remaining 8 hours of the day. Essentially this means skipping breakfast or pushing back your first meal a few hours. For example, you could fast until noon, have your first meal, then spread out 1-3 more meals until 8 pm.

You can also shift the eating window to fit your lifestyle, such as 9 am-5 pm or 10 am-6 pm. You can even change the eating window, so you're fasting in the afternoon if you like, but most people prefer to skip breakfast instead of dinner.

I usually do this for people who don't want to eat in the morning or if someone is struggling to feel satiated because they are grazing on small meals throughout the day.

INTERMITTENT FASTING

Here are some things I like about intermittent fasting:

- You can eat 1-3 satiating meals instead of 4-6 small meals throughout the day
- People usually drink more water when they fast
- Meals typically become more structured and deliberate
- Night-time snacking decreases
- Digestion is generally better, and bloating decreases
- You don't have to do it every day for it to be effective
- It teaches self-discipline

Here are some things I don't like about intermittent fasting:

- Intense workouts during a fast feel awful
- Some people disregard other nutrition principles like calorie balance and food quality if they are fasting. For example, "I can eat whatever I want in whatever amount because I do intermittent fasting." That is simply not true.
- Eating protein throughout the day stimulates muscle protein synthesis, and you typically don't get as many protein feedings when you fast.
- Athletic performance may decrease if you show up to a workout glycogen depleted.

Keep these things in mind if you decide to implement intermittent fasting.

INTERMITTENT FASTING

If you decide to try intermittent fasting, here are a few guidelines:

- Avoid any calorie-containing foods or beverages.
- Avoid sweet, zero-calorie beverages, so you don't trigger an anticipatory insulin response.
- Drink plain water, black coffee, and unsweetened tea during a fast.
- If you have diabetes or problems controlling your blood sugar, be careful with fasting. Consult with your doctor before starting an intermittent fasting routine.
- Do not fast if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to conceive.
- Make sure you can take your medications in a fasted state without risking side effects or an upset stomach. Consult with your doctor.
- If you have a history of eating disorders, please be cautious about fasting.

Now that we have presented all the different macronutrient strategies, it's time to commit to one. I have created a flow chart to help you narrow down the strategy that would work best for you. Follow the chart and see what strategy will work best for you.



