THE SHREDSMART PROGRAM

HOW TO LOOK GREAT AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

The ShredSmart Program
by Radu Antoniu

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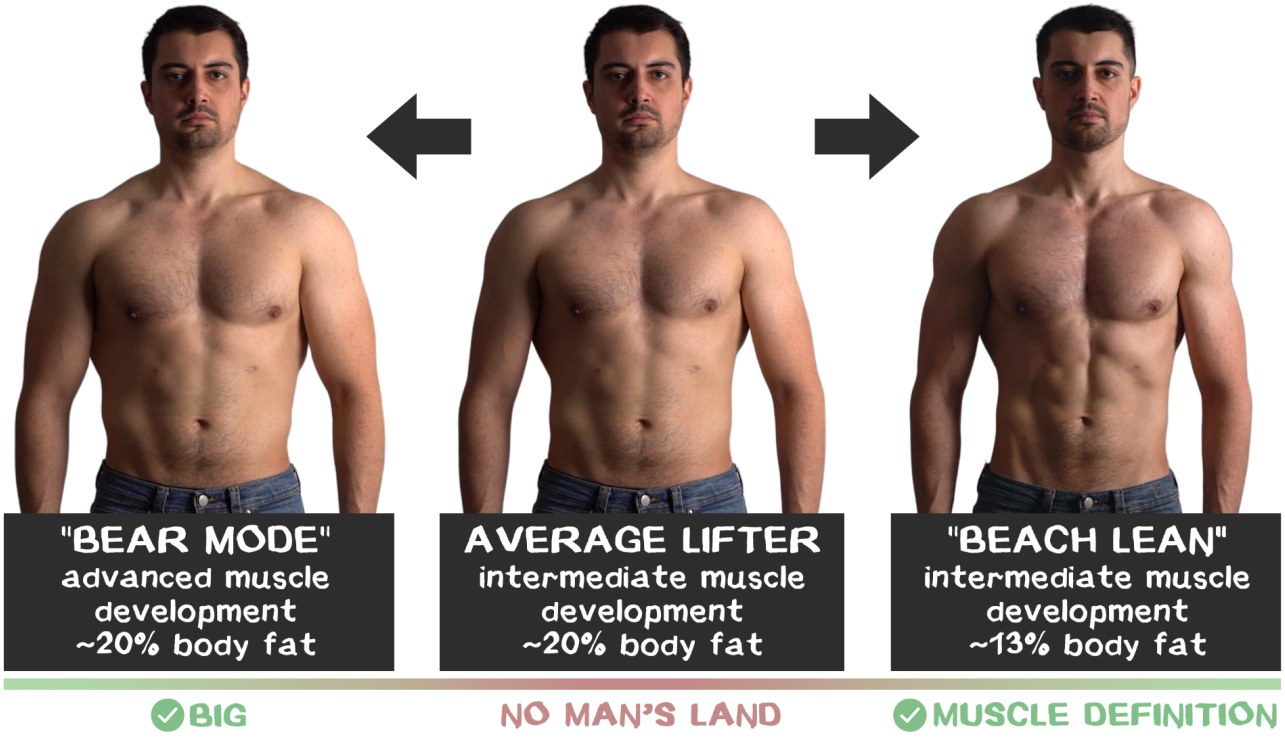


If you've been training for a few years, there's a good chance your physique looks similar to mine in the middle picture: **intermediate muscle development** and **20-25% body fat**.

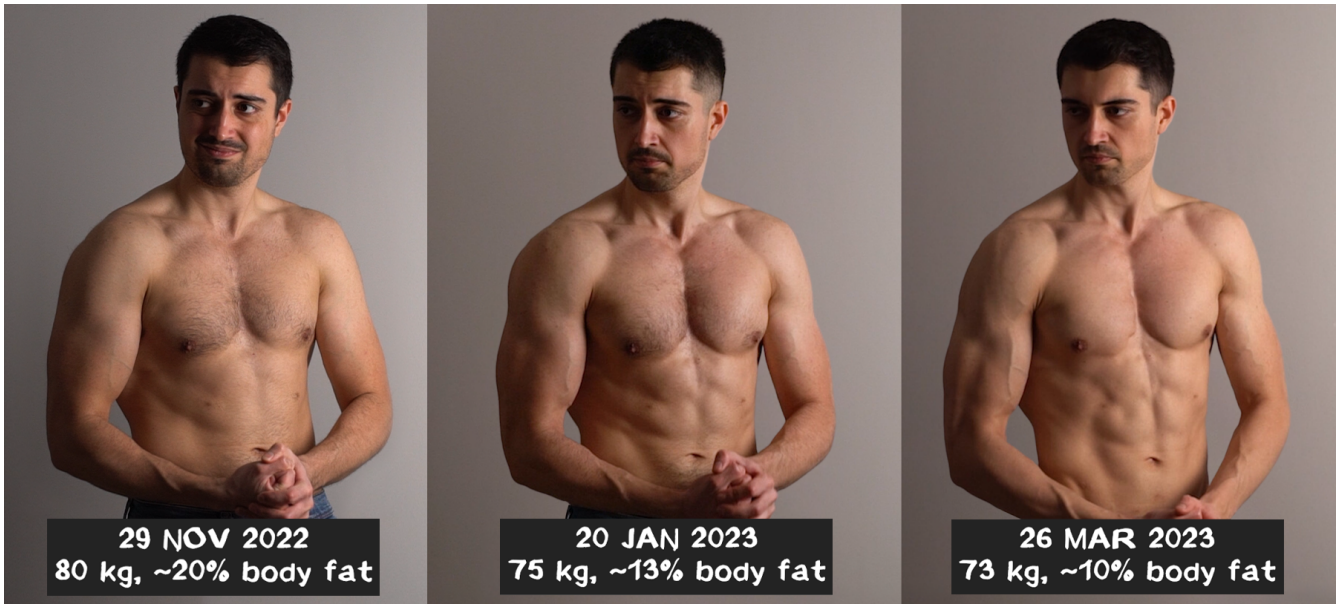
That's better than 90% of the general population, so congrats on that! But given that fitness enthusiasts have higher standards, you probably don't view this physique as particularly impressive. The problem is that you're not muscular enough to look big and not lean enough to have muscle definition either. You're somewhere in between. I call this being in *"no man's land"* - not quite big, not quite lean.

To improve from this point there are two paths you can take:

Path #1 - Bulk up: get to an advanced level of muscle development while trying to stay at around 20% body fat (this is sometimes called "going bear mode"). That photo is photoshopped BTW 🙂
Path #2 - Get lean: improve muscle definition by losing some fat and maintaining (or slightly increasing) your muscle mass

ShredSmart will show you how to go down the second path and get lean. This will make you look great with the muscle mass you already have and also set you up for a long

bulk afterwards to build more size. For example, here's how I looked when I cut down from around 20% body fat to 13% and then 10%.



I tried to keep the same camera settings, angle, and lighting to make the comparison as fair as possible. Notice how when I'm leaner I appear to be bigger and more muscular. That's not the case. I was actually *smaller* but the increased definition creates the illusion of size. ShredSmart will help you achieve a similar transformation.

How You Can Expect To Look

In my interactions with audience members and gym-goers over the years, I found that the majority of lifters don't necessarily want to get huge. Being huge and strong would be nice, but the primary goal of most gym regulars is to get clearly defined abs, round shoulders, thick upper back, wide chest with a line down the middle, well developed arms and athletic legs. The look Hollywood actors have in movies:

Bradley Cooper in the A-Team (2010), Zac Efron in Bad Neighbors (2014), Henry Cavill in Immortals (2011), Brad Pitt in Fury (2014)

What most lifters don't realize is that you don't actually need a lot of muscle mass to achieve this look. An intermediate level of muscle development is usually sufficient **but you must have a low body fat percentage**. That is the key. Body fat affects the way you look much more than muscle mass does. If you've been training for 2-3 years, you probably already have enough muscle to look great, you just need to reduce your body fat percentage to achieve better muscle definition.

To help you visualize how you might look after getting lean, I've provided strength standards and pictures below. These pictures group actors according to their muscularity and indicate the strength levels typically associated with each level. Muscle size and strength are closely related beyond the novice level. This means that you can guess the strength level of an intermediate lifter based on their muscularity and their muscularity based on their strength level. Of course, this correlation isn't perfectly accurate. Strength is primarily determined by muscle size but it is also influenced by bone length, tendon insertions, exercise technique, training specificity, and muscle architecture. Still, muscle size and strength typically correlate well enough to allow you to guess how you might look once you get lean.

So here's what you can do:

1. Go to https://symmetricstrength.com/standards#/
2. Choose imperial/metric, choose your sex, input your current body weight, and click on "view strength standards"
3. Choose "5 rep maxes" (or choose the rep range you currently use in your training)
4. See the category most of your lifts fall into: novice, intermediate, or proficient

Note that the Symmetric Strength website gives you eight levels of training advancement: untrained, novice, intermediate, proficient, advanced, exceptional, elite, and world class. This is much better than the normal 3-level categorization (novice, intermediate, and advanced) because it allows for more precise differentiation of muscle size and training advancement. For example, a lower-intermediate lifter has significantly less muscle mass than a proficient lifter but in the normal 3-level categorization they would both qualify as intermediates. So just keep this in mind while using the website: what most people refer to as *the intermediate category* is split into intermediate and proficient and what most people refer to as *the advanced category* is split into advanced and exceptional.

Alright, now check out the pictures below. At 10-13% body fat, you can expect to look similar to the actors at your current strength level.

Lower-Intermediate Strength Standards

Examples: Tom Holland in Spider-Man Homecoming (2017), Paul Rudd in Ant-Man (2015), Dustin Clare in Spartacus: Gods of the Arena (2011), Ryan Gosling in Crazy, Stupid, Love (2011)

Bench Press: 1 x body weight for 5 reps
Incline Bench Press: 0.8 x BW for 5 reps
Overhead Press: 0.7 x BW for 5 reps
Weighted Chin-up: 10 kg attached for 5 reps
Pendlay Row: 0.8 x BW for 5 reps
Back Squat: 1.2 x BW for 5 reps
Deadlift: 1.5 x BW for 5 reps
Body fat: 10-13%
Click here to calculate your strength standards

If most of your lifts fall into the lower half of the intermediate category, you can expect to look similar to these actors once you drop down to 10-13% BF. I've also listed the strength standards in case you can't use the Symmetric Strength website.

Upper-Intermediate Strength Standards

Examples: Andy Withfield in Spartacus (2010), Henry Cavill in Immortals (2011), Daniel Craig in Quantum of Solace (2008), Brad Pitt in Fury (2014)

Bench Press: 1.1 x body weight for 5 reps
Incline Bench Press: 0.9 x BW for 5 reps
Overhead Press: 0.7 x BW for 5 reps
Weighted Chin-up: 20 kg attached for 5 reps
Pendlay Row: 0.9 x BW for 5 reps
Back Squat: 1.4 x BW for 5 reps
Deadlift: 1.7 x BW for 5 reps
Body fat: 10-13%
Click here to calculate your strength standards

If most of your lifts fall into the upper half of the intermediate category, you can expect to look similar to the actors in the pictures above. I've also listed the strength standards in case you can't use the Symmetric Strength website.

Proficient Strength Standards

Examples: Jason Statham in The Mechanic (2016), Ryan Reynolds in Blade (2004), Justin Hartley in This Is Us (2017), Jake Gyllenhaal in Southpaw (2015)

Bench Press: 1.2 x body weight for 5 reps
Incline Bench Press: 1.1 x BW for 5 reps
Overhead Press: 0.8 x BW for 5 reps
Weighted Chin-up: 25 kg attached for 5 reps
Pendlay Row: 1 x BW for 5 reps
Back Squat: 1.6 x BW for 5 reps
Deadlift: 1.8 x BW for 5 reps
Body fat: 10-13%
Click here to calculate your strength standards

If most of your lifts fall into the proficient category, you can expect to look similar to the actors in the pictures above (and similar to me; when I took those pictures most of my lifts were into the upper half of the proficient category). I've also listed the strength standards in case you can't use the Symmetric Strength website.

Advanced Strength Standards

Examples: Chadwick Boseman in Black Panther (2018), Chris Hemsworth in Thor Ragnarok (2017), Jason Momoa in Conan the Barbarian (2011), Chris Evans in Captain America (2011)

Bench Press: 1.4 x body weight for 5 reps
Incline Bench Press: 1.3 x BW for 5 reps
Overhead Press: 0.9 x BW for 5 reps
Weighted Chin-up: 35 kg attached for 5 reps
Pendlay Row: 1.2 x BW for 5 reps
Back Squat: 1.9 x BW for 5 reps
Deadlift: 2.2 x BW for 5 reps
Body fat: 10-13%
Click here to calculate your strength standards

If most of your lifts fall into the advanced category, you can expect to look similar to the actors in the pictures above. I've also listed the strength standards in case you can't use the Symmetric Strength website.

How to Look Good in Pictures

In case you want to use one of these images as your goal, you'll need to replicate the shooting conditions to achieve a fair comparison.

It's important to realize that actors usually pump up with dumbbells or body weight exercises right before a shirtless scene. They are also filmed with professional cameras and are lit from above or from the side in order to create intense shadows between their muscles and accentuate definition. The muscle pump and good lighting make their physiques look much more impressive.

You'll need to use the same techniques for your transformation photos:

✅ How to look good	❌ How to look meh
✔ Muscle pump	**X** No muscle pump
✔ Good angle	**X** Bad angle
✔ Hard light from above or from the side	**X** Diffuse light from the front or behind
✔ Narrow-angle camera lens (for example the 75mm telephoto camera on your phone)	**X** Wide-angle lens (for example the 24mm main camera on your phone)

These pictures were taken on the same day

✔ Muscle pump (did some push-ups)
✔ Good angle
✔ Hard light placed at ~45°, facing down
✔ 50mm camera lens

X No muscle pump (just woke up)
✔ Good angle
X Diffuse light (almost facing a window)
X 24mm camera lens (distortion)

Hard light is concentrated light that creates intense shadows: the sun on a clear day, a window without curtains, spot lights, LED lights with thin diffusers (diffusers are the translucent or semi-transparent covers that are usually placed in front of lightbulbs). Diffuse light is scattered light that creates soft shadows: the sun on a cloudy day, a lamp with a thick lampshade, a window with curtains.

Hard light directed from the top or the side makes you look leaner and more muscular because it casts intense shadows between your muscles. The strong contrast between

light and dark areas also allows the perception of depth (it makes your muscles look 3D) and accentuates definition.

It's also important to use the right camera lenses because they can distort your appearance in photos. Wide-angle lenses (below 50mm) distort the image by making objects in the center appear smaller and the objects near the edges appear larger. The main camera of most phones has a wide-angle lens, usually around 24mm equivalent. For example, the main cameras of the iPhone 14 and Galaxy S23 use 24mm and 23mm lenses, respectively. To find out the focal lengths of your phone's cameras do a google search for: *"What are the focal lengths of the camera lenses on a [your phone model]?"*

If you ask a friend to take a picture of your physique with your phone and you stand relatively close to the camera (something like 2 meters or 7 feet), the wide lens will make your torso and arms appear smaller in comparison to your head and the objects around you. This is why you may feel you look more muscular in the mirror compared to pictures.

X No muscle pump (just woke up)
✔ Good angle
X Diffuse light (facing a window)
✔ 50mm lens

X No muscle pump (just woke up)
✔ Good angle
X Diffuse light (almost facing a window)
X 24mm lens

Notice how the 24mm lens makes my torso and arms appear smaller in comparison to my head. I look thinner and elongated because the edges of the photo are stretched. The faint gray line shows the outline of my physique captured using the 50mm lens, as seen on the left. The reduction in size is considerable.

To better represent the proportions of your torso, head, and the objects around you, you must use a lens with a narrower angle. A 55mm lens is the closest to the human eye. **So if you want to appear as you see yourself in the mirror, use a lens with a focal length of around 50mm.** Unfortunately, many phones don't have a telephoto camera, they only have a wide main camera (~24mm) and an ultra-wide (~13mm). But flagships that feature a triple camera setup generally include a telephoto lens. The telephoto camera of the iPhone 14 Pro uses a 77mm lens, the one on the Galaxy S23 uses a 69mm lens, and the one on the Xiaomi 13 Pro uses a 75mm lens. Going higher than 50mm is generally not a problem, the proportions look almost identical. In order to look your best, you should use a 50-85mm lens for your photos.

Do you think fitness influencers know these tricks?

You bet!

Keep in mind that social media often presents a skewed version of reality. People tend to share only their best pictures and videos, usually captured post-workout (with a muscle pump) and in good lighting. So if you want to compare yourself with your favorite fitness influencer, make sure that your photos are taken under similar conditions as theirs.

Summary

- The key to looking great at the intermediate level is to have a low body fat percentage.

- Muscle definition affects the way you look more than the amount of muscle mass you have.

- Because strength and muscle development are closely related at the intermediate level, you can use your current strength levels to guess how muscular you'll look after you get lean.

- If you're using a picture as your goal, you need to replicate the shooting conditions for a fair comparison: muscle pump, posing angle, light direction, lens angle, and camera settings.

I hope you're right. But from my coaching experience I'm telling you that this formula works pretty well. To give myself as an example, I'm 180 cm tall and my body weight at ~12% body fat is between 75 and 78 kg, at proficient strength levels (depending on whether I'm closer to the upper or lower end of the category).

Obviously, the more muscle mass you have, the higher your body weight will be at a low body fat percentage. And the opposite is true as well. If your strength levels are in the lower half of the intermediate category, it's more likely that your body weight at ~12% will be closer to your height in cm minus 110. If your strength levels are in the upper half of the proficient category, it's more likely that your body weight at ~12% body fat will be closer to your height in cm minus 105.

The key is to embrace the fact that your body weight may need to decrease more than you first anticipated. **It's crucial that you don't get emotionally attached to not falling below a certain body weight.** I've met guys who simply could not bear going below 90 kg because they felt as if they were losing part of their identity. Being above 90 kg was part of their self-image.

If you try to cut without fully accepting that your body weight must be reduced, you will almost certainly do so halfheartedly. You'll [illegible] unconsciously sabotage your diet in order to maintain your weight. This will [illegible] as:

- Indecision as to whether to continue the cut or switch to bulking (this is the worst version of being stuck in cut [illegible])
- Lack of motivation to maintain the deficit
- Frequent cheat meals / cheat days / binges
- Increased hunger and cravings
- Increased mental stress
- Dissatisfaction with your results
- Rapid weight gain once the cut is done

To put it another way, if you don't fully accept that your body weight will need to be significantly reduced, your official goal may be cutting, but you will think and act as if your true goal is to fail to lose weight. To avoid this situation, you must achieve congruence between your self-image and your actions. I'll talk about this in detail in Part 2.

The Goldilocks Method

In order to get lean you must maintain a small, daily calorie deficit for as long as it takes to get the fat off.

Part 1
NUTRITION

How To Set Up Your Cutting Plan

Nutrition Basics

If you're like most people, you choose the foods you eat based on how good they taste or how full they make you feel. You don't choose them based on macronutrients and calories. While this is a psychologically healthy mindset, in order to achieve fitness goals, you need to develop at least a general sense of how much protein, carbs, fat and calories are in the foods you're eating on a regular basis. This knowledge will allow you to control your body weight, lose fat, and fuel muscle growth.

In this section, I'll cover how you should think about food in terms of macronutrients and calories. Feel free to skip ahead if you already know this stuff.

Food, Macronutrients, and Calories

Calories are a measurement unit for energy. A kilocalorie (kcal) is equal to the amount of energy required to heat up one kilogram of water by one degree Celsius. When we say that a food has a certain amount of calories we refer to how much heat is released when that food is burned in a device that measures calorimeter.

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Food is "burned" in your body as well, and the value of a food is a pretty accurate estimate of how much energy you can derive from it. Your body oxidizes food to get the energy it needs to exercise, to do daily activities and perform internal functions like keeping your heart beating, maintaining body temperature, or growing new tissues like your fingernails or hair.

Depending on how much you eat and how much you move, three things can happen:

1. You eat about as many calories as you burn. In this case your weight stays the same. Most people maintain this equilibrium unconsciously over long periods of time. This is called **maintenance**.
2. You eat more calories than you burn. You steadily start gaining weight. This **calorie surplus** can be transformed into fat and/or muscle (if you train correctly).
3. You burn more calories than you eat. You steadily start to lose weight. That **calorie deficit** forces your body to tap into its own fat reserves for energy. Depending on the size of the deficit, the way you train, and the macronutrients you eat, your body will obtain the extra energy from burning fat and/or muscle.

Food Choices

Your food choices should be guided by three concepts:

- **If it fits your macros (IIFYM)**
- **The palatability spectrum**
- **Meal calorie density**

This will allow you to strike a balance between being flexible, hitting your calorie and protein targets, and managing your hunger and cravings.

But before we get to that, I think it'd be helpful to tell you which foods are good sources of protein, carbs, and fat. I suggest that these foods should comprise 80-90% of your daily caloric intake.

Protein Sources

Animal products: lean meats (chicken, turkey, pork, beef, etc), lean fish (tuna, trout, halibut, etc), eggs, low fat dairy products (cottage cheese, greek yogurt, low fat cheddar, etc), whey or casein protein powders.
Plants: plant protein powders (pea, rice, soy, hemp), legumes (lentils, chickpeas, peas, beans, soy, peanuts), grains (wheat, corn, oats), mock meats (veggie burgers, sausages, minced meat), nuts (walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts), seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, flax, hemp), mushrooms, tofu, tempeh, seitan.

Carb Sources

Vegetables: tomatoes, bell peppers, carrots, onions, eggplants, broccoli, etc.
Leafy greens: spinach, kale, lettuce, brussel sprouts, cabbage, etc.
Legumes: peas, green beans, lentils, chickpeas, beans, etc.
Grains: wheat, oats, rice, corn
Tubers: potatoes, sweet potatoes
Fruit: berries, apples, bananas, oranges, etc.

- ➢ Leafy greens and vegetables are the most filling carb sources because they contain mostly fiber and water. They have the lowest caloric content of all foods and should be staples in a fat loss diet.
- ➢ Legumes can be consumed as sources of protein. They are also rich in fiber and can be prepared in a wide variety of ways. These should also be staples in your

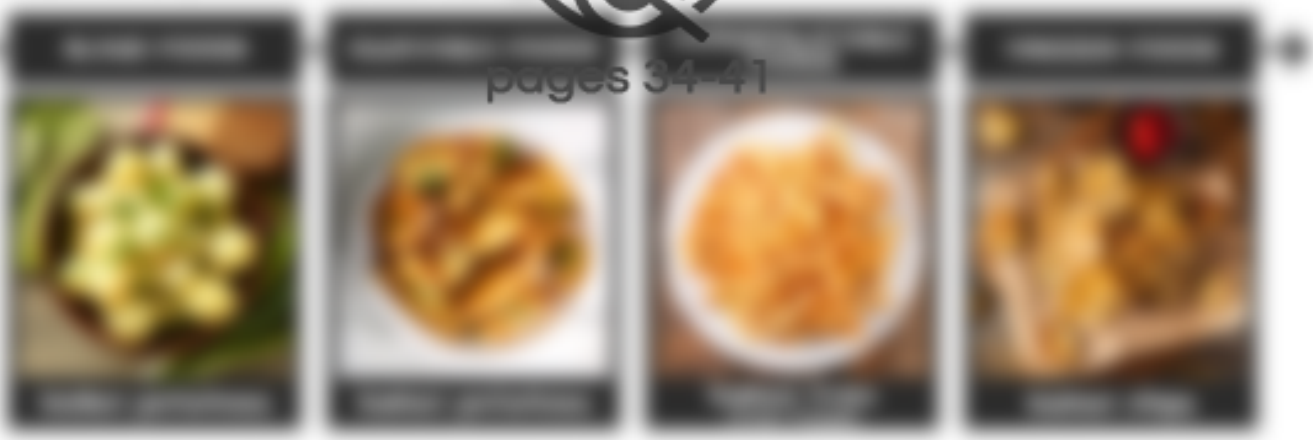
Trigger foods should be avoided altogether unless you make it impossible to overeat by buying only the amount you intend to consume in one sitting. For example, if you buy only one ice cream bar or only one small bag of chips, you'll have no choice but to stop eating once the food is finished. I'll give you more information about how to handle trigger foods in the section about managing your food environment.

As you might expect, low calorie high volume foods tend to fall into the Mainstayable categories whereas high calorie low volume foods tend to fall into the Hyperpalatable/Trigger categories. But not always. The classification of a food item can change depending on:

- how the food is prepared and served
- how much you plan on how long you've been dieting)

This has important implications for how you should prepare and select your foods throughout the cut.

Consider potatoes for example. Depending on how you prepare and serve them, they can fall into any one of the four categories.



When in a calorie deficit, you should prepare foods in a way that enhances their taste and texture from bland to enjoyable. **What you should not do is prepare foods in a way that makes them hyperpalatable or trigger foods** (see the picture below).

This is where fitness recipes can be counterproductive. You can find lower calorie, higher protein recipes for pretty much any food you can think of. These recipes might show you how to make high protein pizza or pancakes that contain 20% fewer calories than regular pizza or pancakes. Ok, that's great. But if these foods are so delicious that you're left craving more at the end of the meal, are you actually benefiting from them?

Meal Calorie Density

When external influences as well as physiological and psychological states are not considered, the satiation effect of a meal is mainly determined by two factors: **food volume** and **calorie intake**. Whether one or the other is the primary signal for satiation depends on the calorie density of the meal.

Calorie density refers to the amount of energy contained per gram of food. You calculate it by simply dividing the calorie content of a food/meal by its mass. For example, if a 300g pizza contains 800 calories, its energy density is equal to ~2.7 kcal per gram (800 kcal ÷ 300 grams = 2.66 kcal/gram).

A 2022 study by Flynn and colleagues suggests that when the calorie density of a meal is below approximately 1.75 kcal/gram, **food volume** is the predominant satiation signal. So when you eat a meal with low calorie density (like a low-fat salad), you become satiated and stop eating mostly because your stomach gets full, without much influence from the total amount of energy consumed.

As the calorie density of the meal increases above 1.75 kcal/gram, **calorie intake** becomes the major satiation signal. So when you eat a meal with a calorie density of 4.5 kcal/gram (like peanut butter on toast), you become satiated and stop eating mostly because you've consumed enough calories, without much influence from meal size.

- **Food volume** is the key satiation signal when meal energy density is **below ~1.75 kcal/g**.
- **Calorie content** is the key satiation signal when meal energy density is **above ~1.75 kcal/g**.

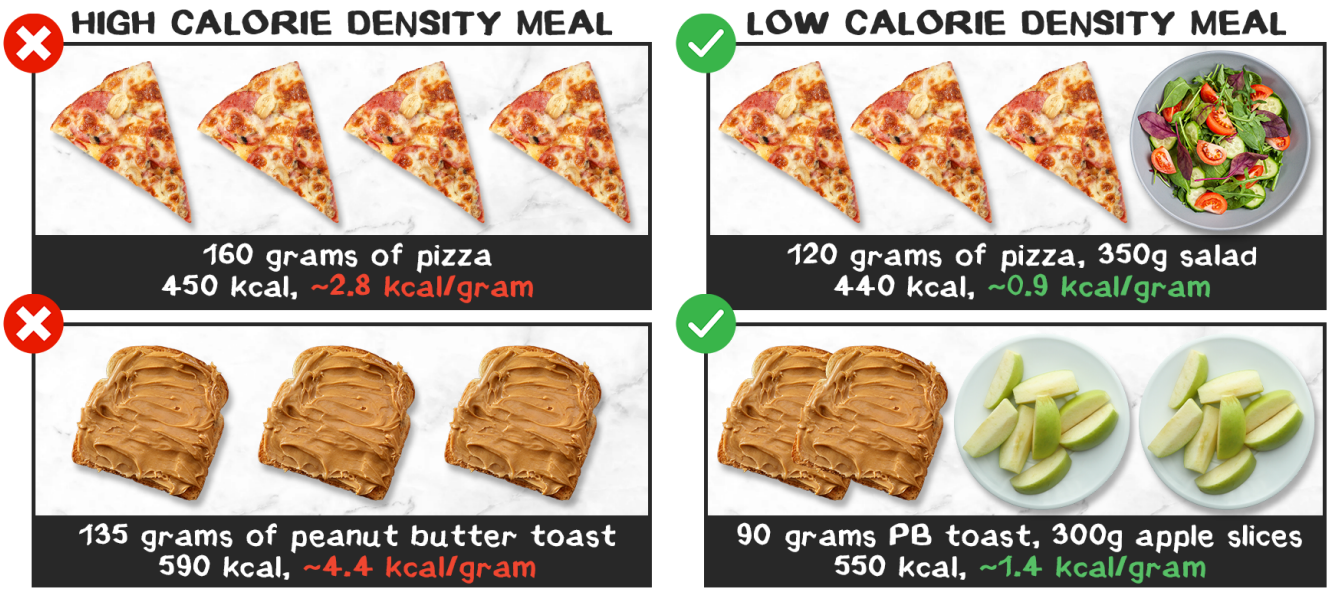
This makes sense, right? Eating a 100 gram soft pretzel (3.5 kcal/g) feels very different to eating a 100 gram apple (0.5 kcal/g). When the calorie density is high, small quantities of food are quite satiating. On the other hand, when the calorie density is low, you need to eat a higher quantity of food to feel full.

During a cut, it can be challenging to achieve satiation on meals with high-energy density because you don't have many calories to spare. For example, if you need 600 calories of peanut butter toast to feel satisfied, but your calorie limit only allows for 300 calories, you'll still feel hungry after such a meal. **To achieve satiation while staying within your calorie limit, it's best to rely on the satiation signal of food volume by preparing meals with low calorie density.**

Now you may be thinking: *Ok, but how is this different from the recommendation of simply eating low-calorie foods?*

It's different because this refers to **the calorie density of the *meal*** and **not of the individual foods** which are part of that meal. Low calorie density *meals* can be prepared by combining high-calorie foods with low-calorie foods.

By swapping some high-calorie foods in the meal with lower-calorie options, you may be able to drop the overall energy density of the meal from 4 to 2, or from 3 to 1, and switch the predominant satiation signal from calorie intake to food volume. This allows you to consume high-calorie foods while still achieving satiation on low calories.



For example, let's say you want to eat pizza. But you need 800 kcal to feel satisfied and you can only spare 450 kcal. Eating just 450 kcal worth of pizza would leave you hungry. So what can you do? You can have some pizza *together* with some lower calorie foods, such that the overall energy density of the meal is reduced. You might have three slices of pizza and a salad (baby spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers, 5g olive oil) on the side. With the addition of the salad, the overall energy density of the meal is reduced from ~2.8 to ~0.9 kcal/gram and you can feel full on 450 kcal while still satisfying your cravings for pizza.

Same thing with peanut butter toast: instead of having three slices, you can have two slices and two medium apples. This would reduce the calorie density of the meal from ~4.4 kcal/g to ~1.4 kcal/g.

In the goal section, select Normal Cut (-20%). This means that your calories are set at 20% below maintenance (what we call a 20% calorie deficit).

And in the macro option section select your preferred protein and fat intake. I recommend 0.8 grams of protein per pound, 30% fat, and carbs. As I'll explain in later chapters, this protein intake strikes an ideal balance in terms of promoting satiety, preserving muscle mass, and supporting hormonal function.

After you do all this, the calculator will estimate your daily target calories and macros.

Keep in mind that these are just good initial estimates and may need to be adjusted. **The rate of weight loss you should aim for is approximately 0.5 kg or 1 lb per week, which is achieved with a daily calorie deficit of around 500 kcal (20-25% below maintenance for most men).**

If your energy expenditure is approximately average, the calorie target provided by the *BreadBlmart* calculator should be pretty accurate and result in the desired weight loss rate without further adjustments. However, if your metabolism is faster or slower than average, you may need to adjust the calorie target up or down by 100-200 kcal to achieve the desired weight loss rate. I'll explain how to do this in the chapter called **How to Adjust Your Calorie Intake**.

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Also, if your body weight is higher than 120 kg / 265 lbs, the protein intake shown in the calculator is unnecessarily high. That's because it assumes most of your body weight is lean body mass. Most men, regardless of training advancement, don't need more than ~1.7/kg of protein per day. Even 1.5/1.6/kg is enough for most lifters. So if the calculator says you need to eat more than that, I recommend setting your protein intake based on your height instead. Aim to get 0.8-1 gram of protein per cm of height. So if you're 6 feet tall (183 cm) aim to get 150 to 180g of protein per day.

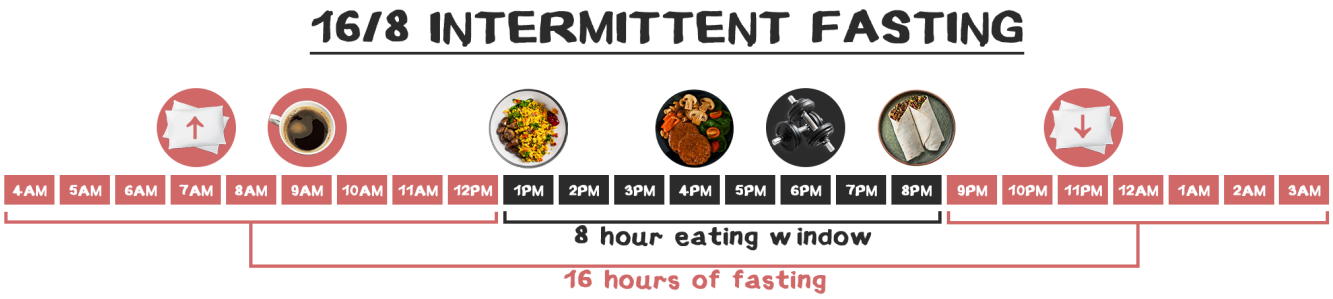
3. The MacroFactor Nutrition App

A better way to determine your calorie and protein intake is by using the MacroFactor App. MacroFactor uses science-based algorithms to provide you with customized targets

Diet Structure: Intermittent Fasting

As long as you meet the daily calorie and protein targets, the timing and frequency of your meals have little-to-no impact on your fat loss results. Small meals don't ramp up your metabolism, neither are they better for appetite control. Eating in the evening doesn't make you fat and you don't need to eat protein every three hours to maintain muscle mass.

You most likely know this already. So let's see the diet structure I recommend following: 16/8 intermittent fasting.



Intermittent fasting means alternating between periods of fasting and eating. The type of IF I recommend involves skipping breakfast and consuming two or three meals later in the day. This results in a fasting period of approximately 16 hours and an eating window of 8 hours. The 16/8 method of intermittent fasting was developed by Martin Berkhan and is also known as the Leangains protocol.

The Benefits of Intermittent Fasting For Fat Loss

Before discussing the specifics of intermittent fasting, it's important to get one thing straight: **The calorie deficit is what causes fat loss, not intermittent fasting.** IF alone will not result in fat loss unless a calorie deficit is achieved.

Your results are determined almost entirely by the calorie deficit, your protein intake, and training program. Meal frequency and food distribution (where intermittent fasting fits into) have only a small *direct* impact on fat loss and muscle growth. However, meal frequency and food distribution significantly affect these outcomes *indirectly* by influencing adherence to the calorie and protein targets.

Intermittent fasting is beneficial for fat loss because it makes it easier to achieve and maintain a calorie deficit. If you're like most people, you'll find it easy to skip breakfast and go without food for a few hours in the morning. Short-term fasting can have an

appetite-blunting effect, allowing you to allocate more calories to the latter part of the day. This can be both practical and satisfying.

Practical: Fasting can be great for convenience if you are away from home in the morning and early afternoon and can't easily find low-calorie options while at work or school. By fasting, your need to bring meals in containers can be eliminated. And if you work from home, fasting can also be convenient as it minimizes the time you spend on meal preparation and cleanup during work hours. ShredSmart members often report improved concentration and productivity during the fast.

Satisfying: You may find that you naturally consume more calories at dinner than in the morning or afternoon. This could be because that's when you have time to unwind and spend time with your family/friends. By fasting, you can eat to satisfaction at dinner because you have a higher calorie budget for that meal. Moreover, social events (such as parties, dates, and movie outings) tend to take place in the evening. As such, it can be beneficial to allocate a significant portion of your daily caloric intake to the evening meal so that you can more easily participate in these events.

In summary, practicing Intermittent Fasting offers several benefits, including:

- Improved hunger control during fasting periods.
- Reduced likelihood of overeating due to a shorter eating window.
- More satisfying meals as a result of having more calories available per meal.
- Less time spent preparing and eating food = more productivity.
- Saving more calories for the evening allows the flexibility to dine out or partake in social events that involve food.
- Larger meals allow you to incorporate higher calorie foods that satisfy cravings and eliminate the need for cheat meals.

Moreover, muscle protein synthesis peaks only around 24 hours after weight training and remains elevated above baseline for up to 72h. It's not like you miss your window of opportunity if you don't down a protein shake as soon as you reach your last set. Rather, as long as you hit your daily protein targets you will get good results regardless of how you time your nutrients.

BB. If you want to optimize muscle growth/retention, it's best to sandwich your workouts between two protein-containing meals/shakes to help reduce muscle breakdown and enhance muscle protein synthesis (at least 20-30g of protein each).

Here's what this means in practice:

- **Fasted training is not optimal. A pre-workout shake would help.**

If you train before your first meal, it's best to have a protein shake before lifting weights. If you train early in the morning and plan on eating your first meal within 4 hours post workout, you may have a decent window of fasted training. The pre-workout shake will ensure your muscles get enough amino acids to inhibit muscle breakdown and permit repair and growth until you eat your first meal. Technically, you won't be fasting anymore but you'll still save ~40% of your calories for your meals -- keeping the adherence benefits in it.

- **If you eat two meals per day and train in between, having a shake before or after your workout may be beneficial.**

When there is an 8 hour gap (or more) between your pre and post workout meals, you may benefit from having an additional protein feeding before or after your workout. But the potential benefit is smaller compared to the previous scenario as you'd still be training in a fed state.

- **Don’t obsess about hitting your calorie and protein targets EXACTLY.**

If the ShredSmart calculator tells you that you’re supposed to eat 167 grams of protein, 59 grams of fat, and 223 grams of carbs, please round that up to 165, 60, and 220. Don’t obsess about hitting your macros to the gram. Remember that your targets are estimations anyway and food labels are not 100% exact. Also, the macro profile of a food varies slightly with each batch. The potatoes you buy today are not 100% identical to the potatoes you bought last week. So even if you want to be 100% exact you cannot be.

The same goes for weighing your food. If you’re supposed to eat 130 grams of falafel and when you weigh 6 pieces you see that they weigh 134 grams, you don’t need to cut a little piece off so that you get EXACTLY 130g. You can just have 134g. Eating a few grams above or below the target quantity is fine (unless you’re always eating a few grams more than the target and never a few grams less so the difference can be balanced out). While being obsessive will almost certainly give you slightly better results, it’s generally not worth it because it can contribute to developing an eating disorder.

The only things you should weigh precisely to the gram are high-fat foods like oil, mayo, nuts, and seeds. That’s because being off even by 4 grams can mean 36 calories (4 x 9). If you accidentally eat an extra 4g of oil for 3 meals a day, you’re overeating by ~100 kcal per day - which means 15-20% of your calorie deficit is eliminated.

- **Weigh all foods in the state that you’ve logged them into the app: raw or cooked.**

Make sure you don’t log something in its raw state and then weigh it after cooking because the calorie difference can be massive. For example, 100g of raw rice has 365 kcal while 100g of cooked rice has 130 kcal. That’s because rice absorbs water while cooking so its calorie density is reduced. On the other hand, some foods lose water while cooking, so their calorie density is higher in the cooked state. Potatoes are like that. 100g of raw potatoes have around 75 kcal while 100g of baked potatoes may have 90-150 kcal, depending on how much they stay in the oven and whether you bake them sliced or whole, in skin.

If you log 500g of raw potatoes in the app and you eat 500g of baked potatoes you'll be overeating by 100-350 kcal.

It’s best to log and weigh food in its raw state. This way you limit the inaccuracies caused by not cooking foods the same every time. However, when you cook higher

quantities that last you several days, it is more convenient to weigh your food after cooking.

- **Use the macros listed on the labels of the products you use, not other similar products that you find in the app's database. If the app doesn't have the food brands you plan to use, add them to the app yourself.**

Different companies can produce a similar product based on different recipes, and as a result, the macronutrient profile may vary significantly. For example, one company may produce hummus that is 6% fat while another company may produce a much creamier hummus that is 12% fat. If you eat 12% fat hummus but log 6% fat hummus into the app you will be underestimating your calorie intake by ~50 kcal. If you do this for multiple products you can end up being in a much smaller calorie deficit than you think.

For diet staples, you can use the foods listed in the app's database: fruit, veggies, potatoes, rice, bread, pasta, etc.

- **Don't get into the habit of "borrowing" calories from the next day (or the next meal).**

Sometimes it may be tempting to allow yourself to eat a bit more today and compensate for it by eating a bit less tomorrow. Don't do this. If you repeatedly allow yourself to go over the daily calorie limit, you can get to the point where the calorie limit doesn't mean anything to you anymore. This can lead to abandoning the cut altogether. Alternatively, you may get into a situation where you're almost always "in debt" and you have to eat very little food several days per week to compensate for past lapses.

Multiple experiments have shown that when we think we have the option to make up for bad behaviors in the future, we are *more likely* to engage in them now.

In one experiment, weight-conscious female students were given the choice between a low-calorie, fat-free yogurt and a high-calorie, large cookie. When the students were told that they would have the same options the following week, 83% chose the cookie, compared with only 57% of students who thought the snacks were a one-time choice.

It turns out that we tend to be overly optimistic about our future behavior and believe that, unlike the present, in the future we'll have greater self-control and we'll find it easier to resist temptation and do what's right. So if we think that we'll be able to make up for our lapses tomorrow we are more likely to slack off today.

Buddha bowl

- 1 tbsp of smoked tofu, diced
- 1 tbsp of chickpeas, canned, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp of quinoa (weighed cooked)
- 1 x medium tomato (~ 120g)
- 80g boiled broccoli
- 1 tbsp of leftover

Based on the brands I used: 350 kcal, 40g protein, 20g fat, 18g carbs of which 10g fiber.

Note: you'll need to adjust the quantities based on your calorie targets and the brands you use (check the calorie labels).

- **Eat your largest meal in the evening: 40-50% of your calories**

Examples for this meal:

Wraps

- two small wheat tortillas (30g each)
- ½ can of lentils (240g drained)
- 1 tbsp of plant-[illegible] mixed then in 5 g of oil
- 100-200g of [illegible] you want: onion, tomato, cucumber, pickles, [illegible] lettuce, spinach, etc.
- 1 up to 3 tbsp [illegible] e.g. salsa, sriracha, etc.

Based on the brands I used: 500 kcal, 34g protein, 20g fat, 11g carbs of which 2.5g fiber.

Veggie burgers

- two veggie burger putties (100g each) fried in 5g of oil
- two burger buns (50g each)
- 20g mustard
- 20g ketchup
- 1/2 onion sliced
- 1 pickle cut into slices
- 200g of veggies on the side (carrots, spinach, cucumbers, cabbage, etc.) (carrots can be cut into sticks to replace pickle) Fries

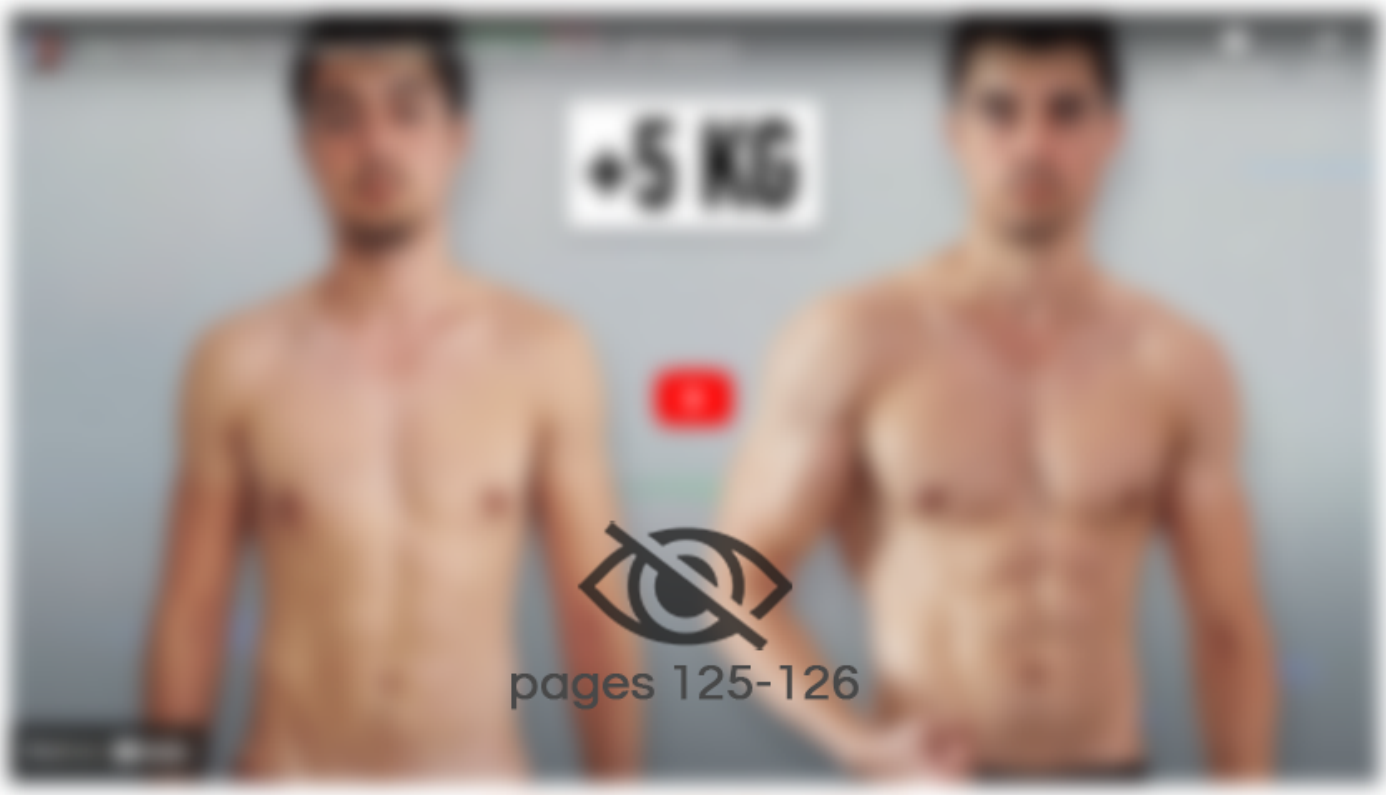
Based on the brands I used: 790 kcal, 40g protein, 27g fat, 104g carbs (30g fiber).

Part 2
TRAINING

How To Gain Or Maintain Muscle While Cutting

The Basics of Training for Muscle Growth

Before delving into the specifics of the Streetlimit training routines, I think it would be beneficial to quickly go over the underlying principles of muscle growth. This knowledge will help you focus on the most crucial aspects of your training, avoid common mistakes, and establish a solid foundation for long-term progress. If you're already familiar with these concepts, feel free to skip ahead.



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[Click to watch the video]

I recently covered this topic in a video I made with Jeff Nippard. Although we made the video primarily for beginners, these lessons are relevant to all lifters, including intermediates, and you will be able to use them to guide your training. Check it out:

Key Takeaways

- The primary initiator of muscle growth is mechanical tension — not muscle damage, novelty, or "feeling the squeeze". Fatigue likely plays an important role in amplifying the signal initiated by tension.

- Muscle soreness, pumps, aches, and burns, are poor indicators of growth. For this reason, you shouldn't chase sensations in the muscle, you should chase progress. Progressively adding weight or reps to an exercise is what maintains tension sufficiently high to stimulate muscle growth over time. Focusing on

What Makes A Good Training Program

All effective training programs are built on the same basic principles. They may look and feel different, but all muscle-building programs employ the same basic variables in order to subject muscle fibers to *sufficient* tension, enough *times* to stimulate muscle protein synthesis.

The variables are:

Volume - the total amount of training you do. It is usually measured as the number of high-effort sets you perform for a particular muscle group each week.

Intensity - the amount of weight you load on the bar or machine. It is usually measured as a percentage of your one-rep maximum (1RM). Intensity can also be described in terms of the number of repetitions performed per set, with lower rep ranges indicating higher intensity and higher rep ranges indicating lower intensity.

Frequency - how often you train a particular muscle group. For example, if you train your chest Monday and Thursday, your chest training frequency is two times a week.

Effort / Intensiveness - how close to failure you take your sets. Training to failure means performing a set until you are unable to complete another repetition with good form.

Exercise selection - the specific exercises you choose to target the muscles you want to develop.

Rest periods - the amount of time you rest between sets during an exercise.

Tempo - the speed at which you perform each repetition during a set, as well as whether or not you include pauses during reps (e.g. at the bottom of the bench press).

Progression - gradually increasing the demands placed on your muscles over time to ensure that they continue to be subjected to sufficient tension, enough times to stimulate further growth. This can be achieved by increasing volume, intensity, effort, by performing more difficult exercises, or by decreasing tempo and rest periods. Progression is the key factor that ties everything together and drives long-term muscle growth.

These variables can be adjusted in various ways to create equally effective training programs that suit different people depending on their goals, genetics, preferences, and schedules. It's important to understand that there is no such thing as a "perfect" training program, in the sense that changing anything about it would make it less

effective. Any program, whether designed by a legendary bodybuilder or a highly esteemed expert, is ultimately just one possible arrangement of the basic variables and it can be organized differently in terms of volume, intensity, frequency, exercise selection, or progression scheme while still maintaining its effectiveness.

Of course, this doesn't mean that all training programs are equal. There are optimal ranges for each variable in a training program, and there are principles that govern how these variables interact with one another. It's beneficial to have a solid understanding of these concepts, so here I will provide a brief overview.

Volume

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that 10-20 hard sets per muscle group per week is the optimal amount of volume for most lifters. A minority of people can get better results outside of this range, depending on their recovery capacity and genetics.

As a general rule, novices do best on the low end of the 10-20 range, intermediates towards the middle, and advanced lifters towards the upper end.

Novices	Intermediates	Advanced
9-12 sets/week	9-15 sets/week	12-20 sets/week

It's important to consider overlap when calculating volume. When you do compound exercises that work multiple muscle groups simultaneously, a good rule of thumb is to count half the volume for the primary muscle group towards the secondary muscle groups. For instance, if you do 18 sets of back work per week, you might count 9 of those sets for your biceps as well.

Caloric intake and body composition both play a role in determining the optimal training volume. For intermediate and advanced lifters, being in a caloric deficit and/or having low body fat tends to hamper the body's ability to recover from training, shifting the optimal volume towards the lower end of the recommended range. On the other hand, being in a caloric surplus and/or having higher body fat can shift the optimal volume towards the higher end of the recommended range.

Additionally, effort and volume can be somewhat interchangeable when it comes to achieving optimal results. This means that individuals may see success with volumes that fall outside of the theoretical optimal range, depending on the intensity and effort they apply during each set. I'll provide more detail on this shortly.

easy, and frequent progression through the addition of weight or reps. The medium rep range is best suited for this.

Other notes

- Due to genetic variation, some individuals experience better muscle growth when using lower or higher rep range. For example, a fitness influencer might assess that switching to the 15-20 rep range was a game-changer for him and urge everyone to abandon heavy training in favor of high rep training. However, your body may actually respond best to the 4-6 rep range. It's important to know that what works best for one person may not necessarily work best for another. And if a rep range doesn't seem to work for you, it's worth trying the opposite.

- Intensity and volume are usually inversely related. In other words, an increase in intensity often requires a compensatory decrease in volume and vice versa. When training with high loads and near failure, the volume per session and per week needs to decrease because each repetition is more stressful and requires longer rest periods for recovery. On the other hand, high-volume training generally requires lower intensities to prevent injuries, limit workout duration, and allow for proper recovery.

Frequency

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It can be helpful to think of training frequency as a way to organize your weekly volume, rather than a distinct training variable.

Recommended training frequencies based on weekly volume		
[illegible] sets	[illegible] sets	[illegible] sets
1-3 x week	2-4 x week	2-6 x week

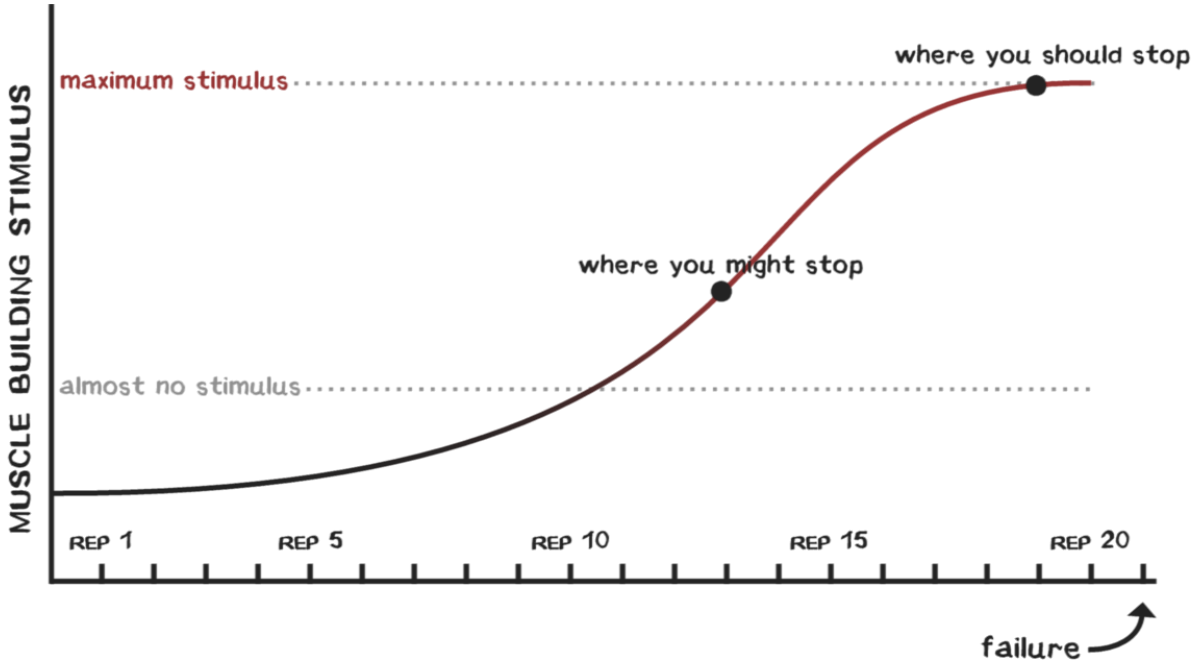
Research and real-world results consistently show that training frequency is not a major factor in maximizing hypertrophy, as people have built impressive physiques by training muscle groups once, twice, three times, or more per week. This suggests that the number of times you train a muscle is unlikely to significantly impact your results. When the number of high-effort sets per week is equal, training frequencies of 1 to 6 times per week will likely produce pretty similar muscle growth.

For this reason, you might have people claim that training frequency doesn't matter. Well, that's taking things too far. If training frequency truly didn't matter, then performing around 30 sets for a muscle group once every two weeks should yield

Effort / Intensiveness

In order to create a strong stimulus for muscle growth, a set must be taken *close* to failure - the point where no more reps can be completed with good form.

Meta-analyses indicate that taking sets to complete failure is not necessary, and stopping 2-3 reps shy of failure leads to approximately the same muscle growth when volume is matched. In fact, consistently training to failure can have drawbacks, such as reduced performance on subsequent sets, higher injury risk, increased symptoms of overtraining, and longer recovery periods between workouts. **But it is crucial that sets are taken to within less than 5 reps of failure because otherwise they simply don't provide enough tension to trigger much muscle growth.**



This appears to be a problem for a lot of lifters: they tend to overestimate their proximity to failure by a large margin.

In this study, regular gym goers were asked to select a weight they'd normally use to perform sets of 10 reps on the bench press and then perform as many reps as possible with that weight. Guess what happened? They completed an average of 16 reps, with more than a quarter completing at least 19 reps! Only 22% got it right and performed between 10 and 12 repetitions.

A 2021 meta-analysis confirmed these findings, indicating that most lifters simply train too lightly to build muscle. The study found that the average lifter tends to gravitate towards sets of 10 reps with about 55% of their 1RM if left to their own devi

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How to Progress with MSDP

Multi-Set Double Progression involves setting up a rep range for each exercise. When you hit the top of the rep range in all sets, you increase the weight. This increase usually leads to a reduction in reps in at least one set. The goal for the following workouts is to add back the reps until you hit the top of the rep range again, allowing for another weight increase.

For example, here is how you might progress on the Chest Supported Row while using the 8-10 rep range:

Workout 1 Set 1: 60 kg x 10 Set 2: 60 kg x 9 Set 3: 60 kg x 8	**Workout 2** Set 1: 60 kg x 10 Set 2: 60 kg x 9 Set 3: 60 kg x 9	**Workout 3** Set 1: 60 kg x 10 Set 2: 60 kg x 10 Set 3: 60 kg x 10 ✅ add 2.5 kg to all sets
Workout 4 Set 1: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 2: 62.5 kg x 9 Set 3: 62.5 kg x 8	**Workout 5** Set 1: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 2: 62.5 kg x 9 Set 3: 62.5 kg x 9	**Workout 6** Set 1: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 2: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 3: 62.5 kg x 9
Workout 7 Set 1: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 2: 62.5 kg x 10 Set 3: 62.5 kg x 10 ✅ add 2.5 kg to all sets	**Workout 8** Set 1: 65 kg x 9 Set 2: 65 kg x 9 Set 3: 65 kg x 9	**Workout 9** Set 1: 65 kg x 10 Set 2: 65 kg x 9 Set 3: 65 kg x 9

and so on…

For this system to work effectively, the rep range must be wider when the load increase is a larger percentage of the total load. For barbell and machine compound exercises, the rep range can be as narrow as one or two reps since the load can be increased in small increments of 2.5 kg / 5 lbs. However, for isolation and dumbbell exercises, the rep range may need to be wider, around 4-8 reps, as each increase in load results in a greater loss of reps.

For example, let's say you're doing sets of 12 on the Standing One Arm Dumbbell Shoulder Press with a 20 kg / 45 lbs dumbbell. When you progress to a 22.5 kg / 50 lbs dumbbell, that represents an increase of about 10% and will likely result in a loss of four

How To Do Cardio For Fat Loss

Contrary to what many people believe, cardio alone doesn't burn fat. Fat loss is achieved by being in a calorie deficit. If you eat enough calories to compensate for the energy you burn during cardio, you won't lose fat, even if you're doing very intense workouts that leave you out of breath and covered in sweat. In other words, there are no such things as "fat burning cardio workouts". Cardio can contribute to creating a calorie deficit, but it must be paired with monitoring food intake to ensure the energy burned isn't compensated for by eating more calories.

Creating A Calorie Deficit

The best approach to getting lean is to create part of your calorie deficit through cardio because that allows you to eat a bit more food every day and makes the cut more enjoyable. I recommend creating about 80% of the weekly deficit through your diet and about 20% through cardio.

Recommended weekly calorie deficit proportions

80-90% diet	10-20% cardio

For example, to achieve an average daily deficit of 500 calories, you could reduce your food intake by 400 calories and incorporate three weekly cardio sessions that burn about 200 calories each.

What you should NOT do is add cardio on top of the calorie deficit created through diet. Doing so creates too large of a deficit, which can lead to muscle loss, decreased testosterone levels, increased hunger, and chronic fatigue. Not differently, the calories

Part 3
MOTIVATION

How To Stick To The Program

Knowing Does Not Equal Doing

You now possess all the information you need in order to lose fat and build muscle. Does this mean your success is guaranteed?

Unfortunately not…

You still have to apply everything you've learned. You have to maintain a calorie deficit almost every day for a few weeks and you have to lift weights consistently.

This is the part most people struggle with. They don't lack information; they lack the motivation and discipline to apply what they know.

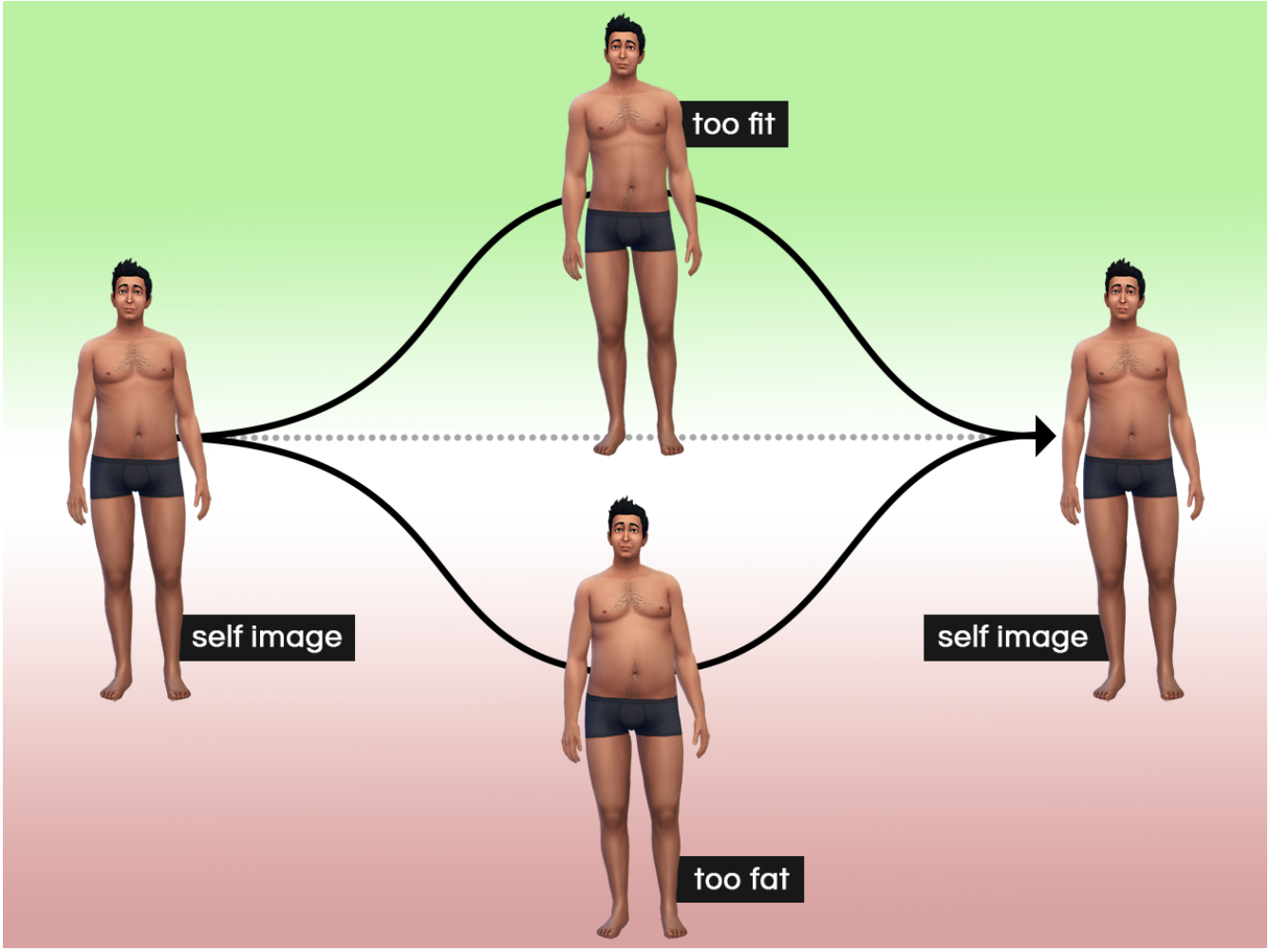
This final part of ShredSmart is meant to help you increase the chances that you will actually do the program. It shows you a few behavioral strategies that you can use to increase your desire to achieve your fitness goals and keep your level of motivation high throughout the cut.

This can turn out to be the most valuable part of the program for you if:

- You usually struggle to change your habits
- You've failed to follow fitness programs in the past
- You don't really like going to the gym
- You don't like cooking or tracking your food intake
- You lose motivation easily
- You find it hard to stay disciplined for long periods of time
- You don't like physical effort

The Concept of Self-Image

Based on my own behavior and my coaching experience, I've come to believe that our results in fitness and other areas of life are influenced to a large degree by the way we see ourselves (the self-image). We tend to unconsciously adjust our behaviors to match the way we see ourselves in our minds.



For example, if you see yourself having 20% body fat and little muscle, whenever you stray away from that self-image, you eventually end up readjusting your behaviors (positively or negatively) to return to what you consider "normal".

Like I said, this ***seems*** to be true based on my observations. As far as I'm aware, not much research has been done to confirm or invalidate whether self-image plays a role in influencing behavior. But the one study I'm aware of appears to support this idea.

Researchers from the University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom, set out to find out which types of motivational intervention would be most effective in aiding weight loss efforts.

contradictory to the existing experiences. In turn subsequent perceptual or brain states. This influence is assumed to be reflected at a phenomenological, behavioral, and neurophysiological level."

I would simply define autosuggestion as the practice of exposing yourself to an idea or image long enough that it becomes part of your habitual way of thinking which ends up influencing what decisions you make.

But before I move on, I should warn you that the term autosuggestion has been hijacked by some self-help pseudoscientific writers and speakers who claim that visualization works through "the law of attraction" and other mystical, magical forces of the universe. They say ridiculous things like when you visualize something your brain cells vibrate on a certain frequency which matches the frequency of the things you need and therefore creates an attraction force between the two. Or they say that there exists an original substance that permeates, penetrates, and fills the interspaces of the universe and that by impressing thoughts upon this substance you cause the thing which you think about to be created - calling this process manifestation. Or they say that autosuggestion changes your very powerful "subconscious mind" which is part of the "infinite intelligence" that will guide you to your goals.

I'm ashamed to say I used to believe [illegible] I'm also ashamed I promoted these ideas in my old videos.

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Don't believe a word these New Thought people say. And don't listen to my old videos on the topic either (2010-2011). I've unpublished the most egregious of them but maybe I've missed some.

Anyway, autosuggestion works for very simple reasons that have nothing to do with mystical forces of the universe, infinite intelligence, or invisible primordial substances. In fact, it's common sense.

- **Through autosuggestion you constantly remind yourself of your long term goal which helps you resist instant gratification.**

  It's very easy for us to forget our long term goals and prefer instant gratification over discipline. For example, when you forget why it's important for you to get lean, eating a cookie now feels much more desirable than not eating it. Or when you forget why you want to get fit, watching Netflix now feels much more desirable than going to the gym. So by reminding yourself of your goals often you are better able to distinguish desirable choices from undesirable ones. When

Make a goal card

The goal card is in my opinion the most powerful motivation tool.

It involves writing your current major goal on a card that you carry loose in your pocket that you read a few times a day. The reason you carry it loose in your pocket (and not in your wallet) is so you have to touch it several times a day and remember your goal every time. Having the goal written on a vision board or on your phone lockscreen is good too but doesn't achieve quite the same effect because your brain gets used to that piece of writing over time and you don't notice it every time you see it. **The goal card on the other hand is always on you. You should never forget it at home just like you never forget your keys or your phone.** The psychological effect of doing this is very powerful. It proves you never forget about your goal. It's always with you, always a part of you. Your goal card should become an extra thing you check to have on you whenever you leave the house: *"Let's see, I've got my wallet, phone, keys…Whops! I don't have my goal card, better go get it."*

So here's how to write a fitness goal card:

1. **At the top of the card write your current goal.**
   Be specific. It's not sufficient to say "I want to be strong" or "I want to look great". Your goal must be definite so the picture you get in your mind is clear.
2. **Underneath that, write what you intend to give in return for that goal.**
   You obviously must work hard for your goal so here you state what you will do on a daily basis to ensure your success. For example "I track my macros every day and I am consistent with my workouts".
3. **Optional: describe the conditions in which you want to achieve that goal.**
   If for example your goal is to get 6 pack abs you may describe that you want to get there while still being able to attend social events or while still being able to have your favorite treats.
4. **Optional: You may place pictures of people that inspire you at the bottom of the card.**
   You could put a picture of the type of physique you want to build, a picture of someone you admire for their discipline, and a picture of someone you admire for their strength.

In the end, your goal card could look like this:

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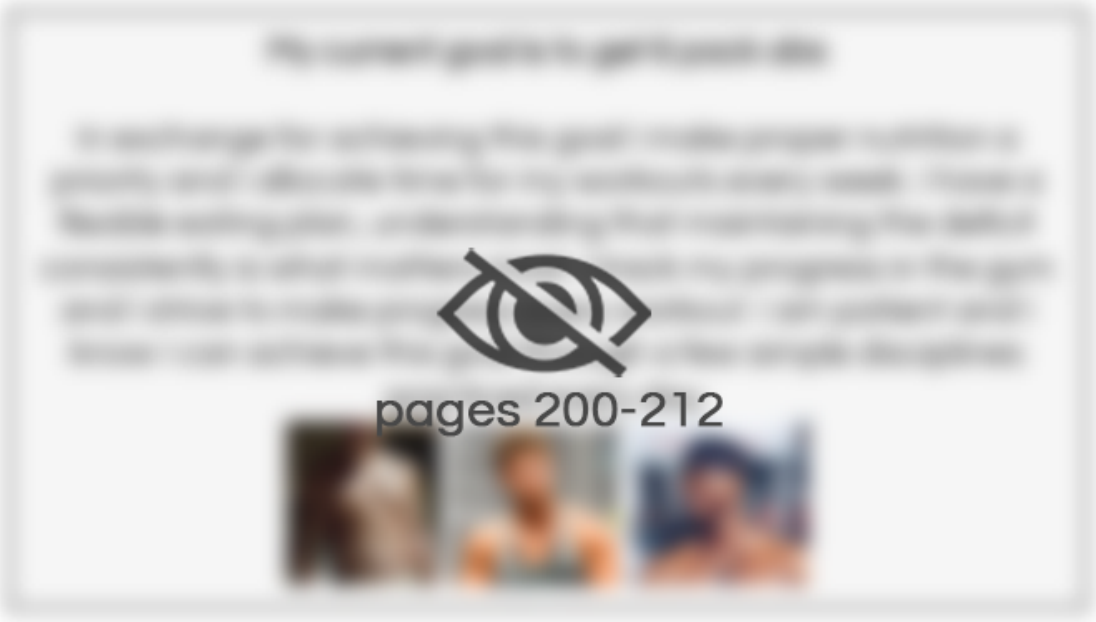

How to use the card:

1. Read it a few times a day (preferably out loud). One of the best moments to read the card is first thing in the morning because it reminds you of your goal before you get the chance to neglect your disciplines.
2. Have the card in your pocket all the time. I recommend printing the card out, writing it by hand and putting it in a plastic protective cover or getting it laminated. This way you can carry it loose in your pocket without crumpling it. If you want to be extra fancy, you can have it written on a plastic or metal card.

Once you've achieved your fitness goal you can make a goal card for a different area of life career, relationships, education, etc. I currently have a goal card related to content creation.