

WEIGHT GAIN FOR DUMMIES

# A 21-Day Challenge

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BEN BREWSTER



TREADATHLETICS

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*"What you measure you improve."*

### Why I wrote this guide

As a hardgainer and former toothpick like yourself, I can tell you firsthand that lifting weights and training wasn't the hard part of developing from a low 70's thrower weighing 155 lbs to a 215-pound sidearm lefty throwing into the [upper 90's](#).

No, my kryptonite from 15 to 19 years old was gaining weight – I felt like I had to fight and claw for every pound, only to lose it if I missed a meal or stopped pushing for a second.

I remember a 3-month period as a high school junior where I was stuck at 174 pounds and could not for the life of me figure out why the scale wouldn't budge. I was lifting 5 days per week, pushing myself hard and even getting somewhat stronger. But the scale didn't move.

In contrast, I would also have brief periods of progress every so often – 6 weeks here or there where I'd jump up 8-10 pounds, but I could never piece together what made those periods special. In fact, I later realized that virtually all of my weight gain progress happened in about 9 to 12 total months of training during that 4 to 5 year period. The rest of the time I was unknowingly spinning my wheels.

What I later realized, and now looking back I can see clear as day, is that I was dieting blind. I failed to track the inputs (with no idea of how many calories I was getting) and only looked at the output (the number on the scale). When that number wasn't changing, I was left confused, wondering why my plan wasn't working, and at times concluding that maybe my genetics just wouldn't allow me to put on that much muscle mass.

Dieting blind is no different than training blind – imagine trying to increase your deadlift without knowing how much weight you were lifting week to

week. Without a way to monitor if your plan was working, you'd be left to guess, and you would make mediocre progress at best.

Of course, some athletes can just look at a barbell or a peanut butter sandwich and gain muscle, but for those of us who aren't so lucky, you'll need a plan.

In 2015, I authored [Building the 95 MPH Body](#), and I still stand by the process outlined in that manual.

But I realized that some people still want a step-by-step plan to follow. I asked myself: what if from the start I just had somebody to hold my hand through a few weeks of properly executed training and nutrition? What would that have been worth to my rate of progress?

The answer, I believe, is *everything*.

## What to expect

My goals for you, 21 days from now, are as follows:

1. Eliminate the stigma that, just because you are a hardgainer and have a thin frame, you can't gain weight.
2. Create buy-in, by showing you that it is not only possible but also teaching you a process to keep making progress after these 3 weeks are up.
3. Educate you on the fundamentals of *any* successful body transformation, so that you know more than 95+% of your peers.
4. Kick-start some strength gains, making your teammates green with envy.
5. Talk to our coaching team about where to go from here – beyond gaining weight and strength, to pull within reach of your goals.

### ***Why is this a 21-day program?***

I know what you're thinking, isn't 21 days the time it takes to break or form a new habit? The answer to that is no, not only because the 21-day-habit is a myth, but because I chose this timeframe for a much simpler reason: it's a time frame that is long enough to see some progress, but not so long that some of you may get bored and not make it to the end.

This is about going *all-in* for 3 weeks and breaking your preconceptions and skepticism about what your body is capable of, kick-starting what I hope will become the most productive year of training you've ever had.



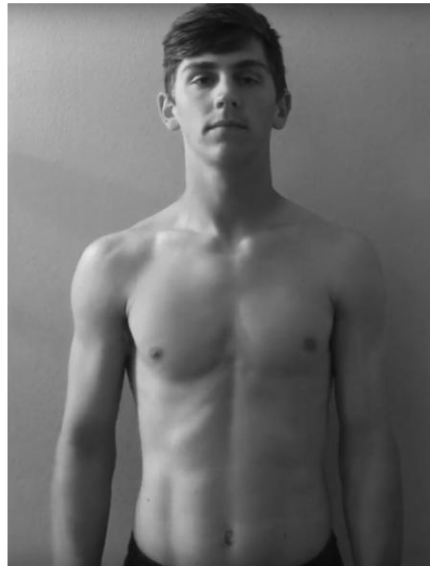
## Who this guide is for

As you may have guessed, this is a program aimed at the skinny hardgainers who know they need to gain 15-20+ pounds but have been struggling to do so in an efficient way. This is *not* a guide for the higher-body fat, slower metabolism athletes that have no business trying to put on another 1-2 pounds per week. For these athletes, you know who you are, and a large calorie surplus is the opposite of what most of those athletes need to throw harder.

Some athletes are in between – so if you're in the gray area of not being sure whether you need to gain weight or lose fat, this guide is also not for you. There is a little more nuance to dealing with these athletes, so for the sake of this guide, we're speaking to the relatively lean hardgainers, like Noah Bryant (pictured right), who started our remote training at 6'2" 165 pounds as a high school senior.

Lean? Yes. Athletic? Check. But strong? No chance. Gaining 30 pounds and nearly doubling all of his lifts got him up from 89 to [98 miles per hour](#) over the course of 18 months, but it couldn't have happened without him quickly grasping and buying into the system over the first several weeks.

If this sounds like you, keep reading.



*"I don't give a damn what brand of creatine you're using if you're not hitting your calories."*

## Understanding Nutrition Basics (in 10 Minutes)

Nutrition is the single most important variable in being able to transform your body. Think of it as your secret weapon to be able to manipulate your body at will – turning the process of gaining weight into a repeatable (and minimally miserable) process.

This approach has been successfully used with hundreds of our own athletes over the past few years – skinny guys who swear they “can’t ever gain weight” routinely pack on 30 lbs in their first 6 months. It’s not magic; it’s just being consistent with the process and holding yourself accountable for what you put in your body.

### The Nutritional Hierarchy of Importance<sup>1</sup>

Planning out a nutrition plan comes down to 5 key components, which have a clear order of priority.

People all too often devote energy to the wrong facets of nutrition, such as which supplements to take, how many meals per day to consume (meal frequency), or when to consume those meals (meal timing). All of this is convenient for the supplement industry, as making people believe they desperately need pre, during and post-workout nutrition to get stronger is quite lucrative.

We'll get into the details below and outline a plan so you can get started,

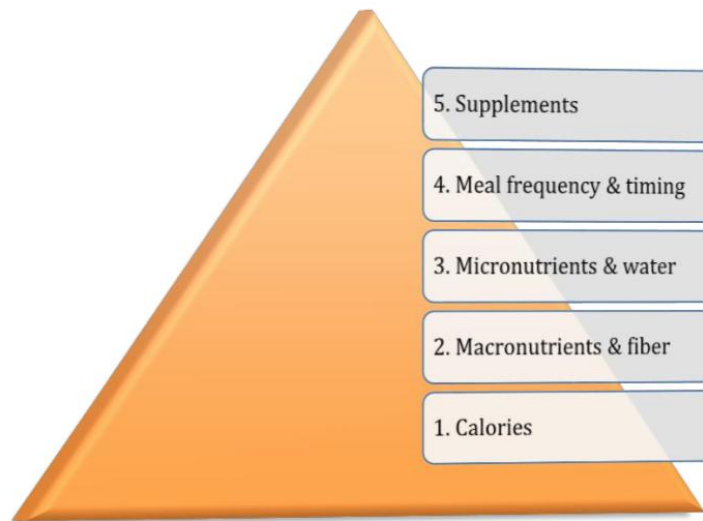
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<sup>1</sup>Pieces of this section come from *Building the 95 MPH Body*. The idea for this hierarchy originally came from Eric Helms, Ph.D. Be sure to check out his work when you get a chance.

knowing that you're focusing your efforts on the most important factors first.

The hierarchy is simple:

**Calories > Macros > Micros > Meal timing/frequency > Supplements**



**The Nutritional Hierarchy of Importance**

## Calories

Calories, which are the total energy contained in the food you eat, determine whether your body loses or gains weight. If you eat more calories than you burn over time, you will gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than you burn over time, you will lose weight. If you eat the same amount as you burn, you will maintain weight. This has been proven, and I have yet to come across somebody who can't gain or lose weight if they consistently stick to this formula. If you struggle to put on size, like many athletes, remember that you aren't the 1 in 1,000 with some rare hormonal condition - *you're just not eating enough.*

High performance is more complex than just worrying about calories, but **about 80% of the nutritional battle when it comes to building muscle is making sure you're eating the right amount** because if that's not in order,

none of the other details matter. This is why every single one of our one-on-one athletes tracks their calories (more on this later).

## Macros

Every food we eat consists of some combination of the three macronutrients or “macros.” Macronutrients refer to protein, carbohydrates, and fat (and technically alcohol as well, although we won’t cover that here). Using them to your advantage will help maximize your results as painlessly as possible. It will also ensure that as high of a percentage as possible of the weight you gain will be muscle.

### *Protein*

Protein is crucial for muscle repair and growth, muscle preservation during calorie restriction and a host of other necessary bodily processes. It contains roughly 4 calories per gram. It is hardly controversial that our bodies need adequate protein intake to recover and grow between workouts. What’s interesting is that protein is the most satiating macronutrient (it makes us feel full), so while athletes need an adequate amount for muscle recovery, if you’re trying to gain weight you don’t need to go overboard or you’ll find it difficult to consume enough calories.

For example, one pound of chicken breast contains over 100 grams of protein and just under 500 calories. To eat 4,000 calories from only chicken breast, one would be eating over 8 pounds of chicken breast and 800 grams of protein per day – an outrageous and unsustainable volume of food, and far more protein than is necessary to maximize muscle growth.

### *Fat*

Fat is crucial for three main reasons. First, it keeps anabolic hormones (like testosterone) in optimal ranges, which is potentially important for maintaining performance and gaining muscle. Second, it helps with subjective ratings of mood and happiness – athletes on extremely low-fat diets not only feel less satisfied after meals but also feel worse in general. Third, because fat is very calorically dense (9 calories per gram) low-fat diets

make it very difficult to hit high caloric intakes. Instead, moderate fat intakes are ideal for hard-gainers who need to squeeze in large amounts of food without constantly force-feeding.

### *Carbohydrates*

Carbs are our body's preferred energy source over fat and protein, particularly in exercise bouts lasting between 10 – 120 seconds (i.e. most resistance training sets). 1 gram of carbohydrate contains roughly 4 calories. Carbohydrates also fuel our brain, and have both anabolic (muscle-building) and anti-catabolic (preventing muscle breakdown) functions. Though some individuals can still function relatively well on low carb diets, it is generally agreed upon in the research that this is not an optimal approach for performance. Because of their lower satiety than protein, carbs are especially important for hard-gainers trying to squeeze in massive amounts of calories without filling yourself up too quickly.

### **Micronutrients**

“Micros” refer to vitamins and minerals – which we need in very small amounts relative to macronutrients. Using a car analogy, if calories and macros are the gasoline to the car providing direct energy for movement, micronutrients are the cooling fluids, oil, and lubricants that keep the car functioning in tip-top shape.

In a varied, whole-foods rich diet that contains several servings of fruits and veggies per day, you'll be doing better than 99% of the population when it comes to micronutrient intake. Many fruits and veggies also contain what are called phytonutrients (such as beta-carotene in carrots or lycopene in tomatoes), which are natural plant compounds that can have additional health benefits but aren't classified as vitamins or minerals.

Getting blood-work done is always an option to test for deficiencies (and several coaches I highly respect go this route with their athletes). However, major deficiencies are less likely to be an issue during a caloric surplus.

## Water

Coaches have badgered athletes for years about the importance of drinking enough water – this is well established and is not particularly controversial. While there isn't a proven "optimal" amount of fluid intake per day, a good way to make sure that you aren't dehydrated is to follow nutritionist Lyle McDonald's guideline of trying to have at least 5 clear urinations per day. For most athletes, this won't ever be an issue – thirst is, evolutionarily, the body's way of regulating hydration. If you find that you are not having clear urinations from just drinking when you are thirsty, then it may take some active effort to get enough fluids throughout the day.

## Meal Frequency

Studies show no differences in muscle growth or performance when comparing 3 vs. 6 meals per day, so much of this comes down to preference. More extreme approaches, such as eating one meal per day, do show negative effects on hunger and irritability compared to eating three meals per day, so you should probably avoid this especially when trying to eat in a large calorie surplus.

While there likely won't be any difference between 3 and 6 meals from a muscle growth standpoint (all else equal), this doesn't tell the whole story for most athletes. Remember, we're also interested in real-world application and compliance.

More frequent meals are almost a requirement in my experience for individuals trying to pack a ton of calories into the day – it's borderline impossible for most athletes to squeeze 4,000 or even 5,000 calories into 2 or 3 meals. Furthermore, having more frequent, moderately sized meals will lessen the chance of having digestive issues during practice or training. My recommendation is therefore 3-4 meals per day plus 1-2 snacks as this has worked exceptionally well for the majority of hard-gainers I've worked with.

## Meal Timing

It has traditionally been thought in the research that there exists an “anabolic window of opportunity” immediately post-workout – and that ingesting certain amounts of protein and carbohydrate during this window would provide some sort of special muscle-building response. While quite a number of studies have been done, very few well-controlled studies have demonstrated meaningful effects on muscle growth over time.

According to a [meta-analysis](#) by Alan Aragon, Ph.D.,

*“On the whole, [chronic studies] have not corroborated the consistency of positive outcomes seen in acute studies examining post-exercise nutrition.”*

Despite the lack of convincing evidence using longer-term studies, research still conservatively suggests spacing out your meals by no more than 3-4 hours, as this is approximately how long the acute muscle-building effect of protein lasts for (depending on the size of the meal). What this means is that if you have a meal an hour before a 60-minute training session, just try to eat again within a couple of hours afterward, as the pre-workout meal is still being processed.

Bottom line: If you’re eating 4-6 meals per day, you aren’t going to have more than 3-4 hours between meals anyway, and your body will be receiving a constant stream of nutrients, rendering meal timing almost entirely irrelevant.

## Supplements

The truth isn't sexy, but here it is: very few supplements have strong scientific support. That being said, some supplements can have benefit if the first four sections of the nutritional hierarchy are covered. For those that do have these things covered, here are my top supplements to consider:

1. [Creatine monohydrate](#): this supplement is highly studied, safe and effective for helping you train *slightly* harder. 3-5 grams per day is plenty. Note that creatine is naturally produced in your body in small amounts and that you also already get it throughout parts of your diet - if your red meat intake is high, you're less likely to notice a difference.
2. [A whey and/or casein protein supplement](#): This is not really a supplement, but it's fantastic for convenience to meet your protein goals. While it is a good on-the-go supplement, try to avoid using it as a regular substitute for eating real whole food meals. Faster-absorbing whey is generally agreed upon to be better during the day, and slower-absorbing casein is better before bed. Stick to [reputable brands](#), as some brands have been shown to have higher levels of contaminants.
3. [A vitamin D supplement](#): Vitamin D is actually a hormone, which controls the expression of over 1,000 genes in our DNA. Over 70% of people are deficient, even many of those who live in sunny climates. Supplementation may have beneficial effects on overall health and performance.
4. A [fish oil](#) supplement: for heart health, reduced inflammation, reduced levels of cortisol and improved cardiovascular function during exercise. [Visit here](#) for more info.
5. [A pre-workout supplement](#), if desired. I recommend using the minimum effective dose and limiting caffeine intake to 2-3 times per week. Regularly using caffeine to mask poor recovery can become a real problem. It should aid performance, not act as a crutch.

*What about other supplements?*

For all other supplement inquiries, refer to [Examine.com](#), a supplement database that summarizes all available research on a given supplement and provides unbiased information on their efficacy.



*"The man on top of the mountain didn't fall there."*

## The 12 Laws of Gaining Muscle for Hard Gainers

### Law #1: Half-Assing doesn't get results

This philosophy holds true in most areas of life, but when it comes to nutrition, you simply can't escape it. Pushing your body to gain or lose weight requires you keeping your body in the right energy balance. This means you can't just eat "a lot" and come "close" to hitting your calories to gain weight.

If your maintenance calories are 3,500 and you need 4,000 to gain weight, going to bed at 3,500 calories is quite literally choosing to not make progress – in this sense you don't get rewarded for "good enough" in nutrition, you either were able to keep your body in the right calorie surplus or deficit, or you weren't.

Likewise, you can't gain 30 lbs of quality weight over a couple of good weeks – but you can gain or lose 1 to 1.5 lbs per week, and it's stacking these productive weeks on top of each other that is the secret to making ridiculous long-term transformations.

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### Law #2: You will plateau. Don't abandon ship.

We can get into this whole process, and you may make great progress for these 21 days, but I don't care who you are, you're eventually going to plateau. **The only way to guarantee you won't get to your goal is to abandon ship and decide that this process isn't for you.**

Here's how to adjust if you fall short of your weight gain goal for 1-2 weeks:

- Increase calories by 200 and continue on as though nothing happened.

Here's how to adjust if you exceed your weight gain goal (yes this happens) for 1-2 weeks:

- Decrease calories by 200 and continue on as though nothing happened.

90% of the time, it's just nudging your body back into a steady calorie surplus or deficit that was thrown off by some extraneous factor (like your car broke down and now you're walking to and from class an extra 1 hour per day). We aren't all on an even genetic playing field, and it will be tougher for some than others, but our bodies all respond to these basic principles. Stay the course.

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### **Law #3: Tracking your calories is non-negotiable**

As I already touched on above, not tracking what you're eating is dieting blind. You need a way to quantifiably determine how many calories you put into your body on a daily basis. While we will provide you with sample meal plans that have calories factored in, you will still need to track calories for these 21 days so that you're familiar with how the process works. Meal plans give a well-defined structure and starting point, but they are ultimately too restrictive to account for life's variability.

Tracking your calories is as simple as downloading MyFitnessPal on your smartphone and taking 1 minute after each meal to enter the foods you ate. This gives you the ability to deviate from the meal plan and still make sure you hit your target calories and macronutrient goals for the day.

Whenever an athlete tells me "I just do everything and can't gain weight" I ask them if they progressively monitor and track their caloric intake,

adjusting it when they plateau. In other words, *have you tried what actually works?* None of them have.

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#### **Law #4: If it isn't sustainable, you won't sustain it.**

As much as consistency is a product of will, drive, and motivation, if those are the only variables pushing forwards compliance in a nutrition plan, it will *eventually* fall flat for 99.9% of athletes. It can't be something you *dread* doing every day and have to *brute force* your way through. As much as possible, we try to make our approach enjoyable, or at the very least, *not miserable*.

Eating 5 pounds of chicken and rice a day? Yeah, no thanks. ~~I'd rather cut off my left~~ I'd rather get the same calories and macros from foods that don't require force-feeding and monotony. That's the beauty of the calorie and macronutrient tracking approach – there is quite literally an infinite number of ways to hit those numbers each day and drive your weight up, provided you stick to the basic principles.

This law fits in with law #5 (eat breakfast) and law #6 (calorie density is king), both of which are valuable approaches to minimizing misery and making this process as effortless as possible for you.

But why is sustainability so important? The answer is because you can't gain 15, 20 or even 30 pounds in a short timeframe. It's a byproduct of stacking months and months of consistent incremental progress on top of each other. Every day and every meal represents a series of decisions and chances to stray from or stick to the plan. The athlete who makes slower, more sustainable progress always comes out on top of the athlete who crushes it for 6 weeks and fizzles out.

## Law #5: Eat breakfast (but not for the reason you think)

If you asked anyone close to me, they'd tell you I do *not* like eating breakfast. I don't have much of an appetite in the morning, and I'd rather wait until lunch when my hunger starts to kick in.

Here's the deal: breakfast doesn't have any special properties that somehow elevates it from the other meals of the day. It's not "the most important meal of the day" because it "kickstarts your metabolism" or any of the other reasons you were told as a kid – in fact, it's just another meal of the day.

But that doesn't mean you should skip it as a hardgainer. Here's why:

In order to squeeze in a large number of calories through the day, the most effective strategy is to expand the feeding window. Eating from 7am to 9pm gives you 14 hours to eat, process, digest and allow hunger to do its thing to help you along. Skipping breakfast and not eating until noon just cut down your available feeding window from 14 to 9 hours, giving less time between meals for your body to process each prior meal and requiring even larger portions per meal (i.e. force feeding).

Not only does time work against you, but your body's natural processes are simply unable to keep up with such drastic demands without force feeding yourself or resorting to getting those calories from ~~Chick-Fil-A Waffle fries and milkshakes~~ less than ideal sources.

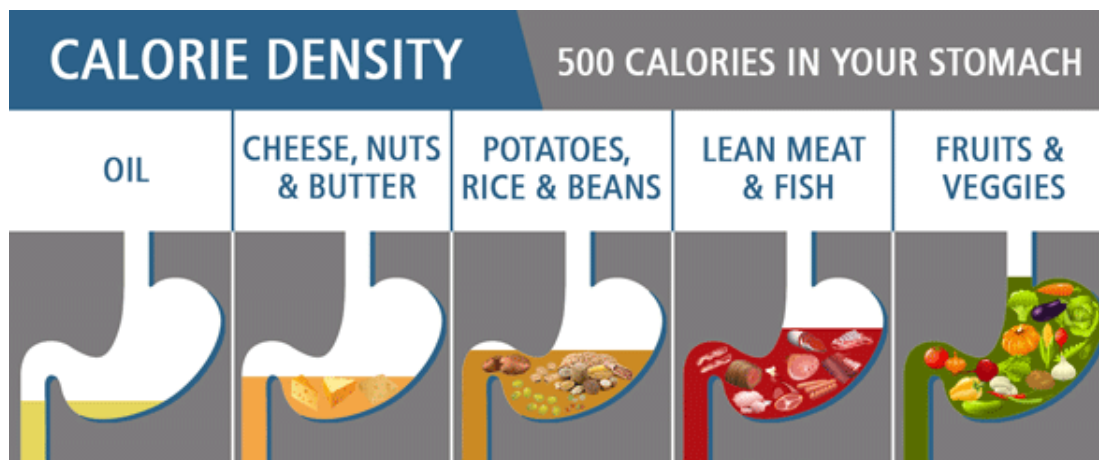
As you'll soon see, you don't need to eat a 3-course meal for breakfast – just shoot for 500 to 1,000 calories in your body to set yourself up for a successful day of eating, rather than starting off from well behind the eight ball at noon.

## Law #6: Calorie density is king

Combining this law with law #5 is the real secret to gaining weight effortlessly.

Calorie density refers to the proportion of calories in a given food relative to its volume. Foods that are higher in fat tend to be more calorically dense, as fat contains 9 calories per gram, compared to carbs and protein which only contains 4 calories per gram. Foods with very high fiber and/or water content tend to be *less* calorically dense.

This image ([photo cred](#)) shows the concept well – fruits, veggies, and very lean protein will fill you up and be less calorically dense. Consuming only these types of foods works exceptionally well for *losing weight*, but can make it extraordinarily difficult when it comes to comfortably consuming large amounts of calories.



We intuitively know that gaining weight on chicken breast and salads is a bad idea, but very few people fully extrapolate this concept out in the opposite direction. Some very basic ways to use calorie density to your advantage as a hardgainer:

- Switch out skim and fat-free milk for whole milk.
- Consume higher fat cuts of meat more often (steak, pork, chicken thighs, salmon) as opposed to leaner cuts of meat (chicken breast, tuna, tilapia, etc.).

- Eat fruits and veggies, but keep portions small if you're struggling to get in your calories.
- Switch out basic staples for higher-calorie versions of the same thing. For example, opting for 120 calorie over 50 calorie bread means the difference between a 450-calorie and a 300 calorie peanut butter sandwich, without changing the volume that sandwich takes up in your stomach.

For me, all that changes when cutting vs. bulking is switching out my staples for the lower/higher calorie versions of what I normally eat. Very little changes in the quantity of food I eat on a daily basis, but this can easily swing my intake from as little as 2,800 calories to as high as 4,000+ calories without feeling like I've changed a thing. This is how you "effortlessly" diet in either direction. More on specific food selection in our sample meal plans and sample grocery list later on.

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### **Law #7: Use snacks strategically for additional calories**

One of the easiest ways to spread out calories through the day, without killing yourself meal prepping 5 or 6 meals per day, is snacks. Oftentimes, snacks will make the difference in an athlete gaining weight or not. Even religiously eating three large, 1,200 calorie meals will only add up to 3,600 calories, not enough for many hard-gainers out there. Filling in the gaps with 1-2 snacks is a strategic way to squeeze in more calories, just remember to follow these two rules:

1. Always keep snacks on you – whether this means a case of granola bars, a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter in your car, or a 5 pound bag of trail mix at the bottom of your backpack, you must keep calories within reach throughout the day so that there is never an excuse to not hit your calories. This goes a long way towards being consistent.
2. Use your snacks to fill in the gaps with whatever macros you may be struggling to hit. If you find yourself falling short on your carb goal every day, granola bars or tortillas will help bridge the gap, while if

you find yourself falling short on your protein goal, consider adding a protein bar or two to the mix.

The three *best* times for snacks, in my experience, are mid-morning (in between classes, typically), during training (sip on a several hundred calorie protein and carb drink) and during a 5-minute break in practice or games (don't go overboard, but a bar or half a peanut butter sandwich will go a long way).

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### **Law #8: Use routines and meal prep to focus your energy where it counts**

Eating takes time and effort – both of which are finite resources. Don't stumble through each day wondering what your next meal is going to be. By having some routines and preparing as many of your meals as you can ahead of time, you'll be able to spend more of your energy actually eating.

For example, if you know that your lunch is a 2,000 calorie container of pasta and meat-sauce, go ahead and cook those 7 pounds of ground beef and 4 pounds of pasta at the beginning of the week and separate it into containers.

Even if you don't meal prep every meal of the day, just being able to put one or two of your daily meals on auto-pilot makes a huge difference when it comes to consistency. Eating and cooking can very quickly turn into a chore without routines, so build these into your habits as much as your situation will allow for. I personally use Sunday evening as a time to prepare my lunches for the week, so I really only end up having to prepare one meal a day (dinner) during the week, as my breakfasts are always a meal-replacement smoothie that I can blend up in a couple minutes.

## Law #9: More isn't better

I know what you're thinking – if gaining 1 pound a week is good, gaining 3 pounds a week is better. Why not just get to your target weight even faster?

This logic seems to make sense on the surface but fails to have an appreciation for how our physiology works. Unfortunately, it isn't possible to gain muscle beyond a certain rate, and even at 1 or 1.5 pounds per week, a chunk of that weight gain is going to be fat no matter how you slice it.

Once certain athletes finally realize how to control their weight, they immediately jump to 5,000 or 6,000 calorie intakes, then wonder why they're getting fat a month or two later. Respect the weight gain ranges laid out later in this guide – they're there for a reason.

To go along with this point, don't let fat gain deter you – but the proportion of fat to muscle gain should be managed, not spiral out of control. Some 150-pound athletes are so scared of "losing their abs" that they back off after the first hint of fat gain, continuing to spin their wheels year after year. Don't be this guy.

--

## Law #10: You're not the exception to the rule

As disheartening as it can be to not see progress, recognize going into this that you aren't the exception to the rule. This takes one more excuse off the table when you do inevitably hit a plateau. Don't ask *what's wrong with me?* Ask *how can I tweak this process?* That's how you march forward towards your goals, not by blaming your genetics or thinking there must be something wrong with you. You may have to work harder than the guy next to you to get to the same point, but that isn't an excuse to give up when you hit your first wall.



## Law #11: Train hard, but don't be an idiot

**Idiot** noun – a foolish or stupid person

id·i·ot | /'idēət/

Examples of *idiot* in a sentence

*// Only an idiot would think to increase the weight on the bar before making sure his form was perfect.*

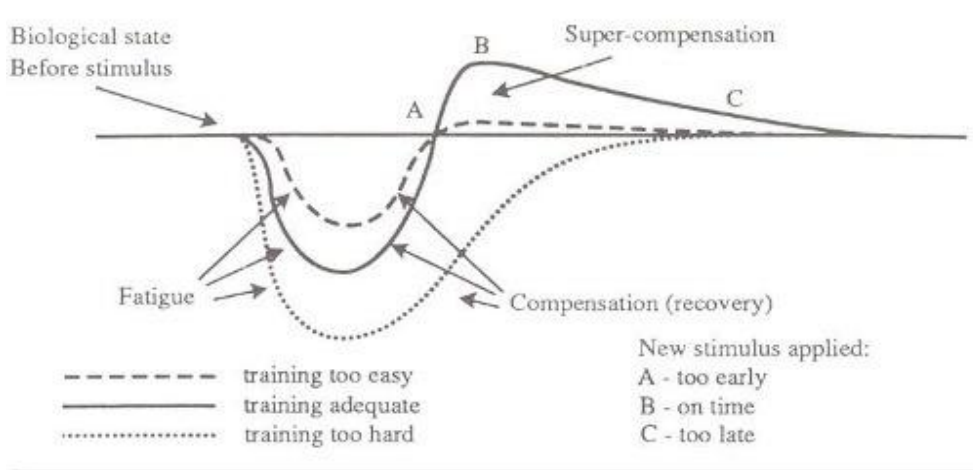
--

Gaining weight is a simple equation – if calories in > calories out, you get weight gain. To target muscle gain, all you add to the equation is progressive overload – adding weight, reps or difficulty to your workouts every week.

Let's review how adaptation to training works:

First, you have the training stimulus (the workout), where you are sending a specific signal (stimulus) to your body. This varies based on the load, angle, time under tension and rate of contraction. Presumably, you will incur muscle damage and/or fatigue, but your body will respond to the stimulus, given adequate time to recover, by rebuilding and repairing better able to deal with that stimulus in the future. This positive adaptation is called "super-compensation." What's interesting is that **both if your training stimulus is too easy and if it's too hard, adaptation is limited.**

Too easy might be going in and squatting a weight well below what is challenging for 1-2 sets. That won't do much for your strength. Too hard might be hitting 10 sets of 10, grinding to failure on every set, to where the next day you can't sit on the toilet. ~~Get it through your thick skulls that~~ Understand that while more may seem better (remember law #9) that's your testosterone talking. Train hard, make progress, but contain the urge to deviate from a program that's producing results.



How Training Adaptation Works ([Image source](#))

Not being an idiot also means avoiding exercises or drills that carry with them an irresponsibly high risk of injury – like box jump competitions, farmer’s walks the day before you have to pitch, Olympic lifting to failure, and just about anything else that resembles a Crossfit workout.

--

### Law #12: It’s not complicated, but you have to want it

I can’t force you to stick to the process – but I can tell you that with nutrition it becomes clear very quickly which guys are committed and which guys aren’t because it is so easily quantifiable. That is, it doesn’t require talent to stick to this plan, and anyone who is sufficiently motivated can get excellent results.

You’re going to have days where life happens and you get home at 10pm realizing you still need 2,500 calories to hit your daily goal. With proper planning and sticking to these laws, it will be much less common to find yourself in this situation, but the fact remains that sometimes you’re just going to have to do what needs to be done to achieve your goals. Once I understood these concepts, **I refused to let myself go to bed before I hit my calories, because I saw that as admitting defeat and choosing to not make progress.**

If you're ever struggling, know this: there is light at the end of the tunnel. Pushing your body to gain weight is far more difficult than maintaining your weight once you get there. Master this process over the next 3 weeks, and then carry that out for the next 6, 12 or 24 months until you hit your goal bodyweight. Stick to these steps and you'll be on track to becoming a totally new athlete by this time next year.

*"You know what the true definition of hell is? It's when you die, you get to meet the person you could have been."*

## Getting Started

### Determining your starting calories and macros

You'll be eating a lot of calories either way, but let's get you started by selecting the row that fits you best. Taller, faster metabolism athletes will need to eat more than smaller, slower metabolism athletes. More advanced athletes who are within 10 or 15 pounds of their goal weight should aim to gain weight slower than less advanced athletes, as they will be more prone to fat gain.

Download the MyFitnessPal App on your phone and enter these target numbers when prompted.

Height	Training Focus	Typical Situation	Caloric Goal	Calories	Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Protein (g)
6'1"+	Strength	Intermediate/advanced, within 10-15 lbs of goal weight	Slight surplus (+0.5lbs/wk)	3850	120	460	230
6'1"+	Strength / Hypertrophy	Novice/intermediate, 10-30+ lbs from goal weight	Large surplus (+1-1.5lbs/wk)	4200	120	550	230
<6'0"	Strength	Intermediate/advanced, within 10-15 lbs of goal weight	Slight surplus (+0.5lbs/wk)	3650	110	450	210
<6'0"	Strength / Hypertrophy	Novice/intermediate, 10-30+ lbs from goal weight	Large surplus (+1-1.5lbs/wk)	4000	120	525	210

\*For athletes with particularly fast metabolisms, bump these numbers up 200 calories (+50g of carbs), and vice versa for athletes with particularly slow metabolisms. If you're not sure, don't worry. You'll be able to adjust as you go based on how your body responds.

\*\*For the first week, you may gain an extra pound or two – this is food volume + water retention, so don't be alarmed if you gain 2-3 pounds right off the bat. However, continually adding 2-3 pounds per week means you should lower your calories.

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## Weigh-Ins

Get a [scale, preferably digital](#), and weigh yourself first thing in the morning before eating breakfast and after urinating. This helps ensure a relatively consistent hydration status and takes food volume in the stomach out of the equation.

*\*Note: bodyweight fluctuates from day to day with hydration and other factors. Losing or gaining 1-2 lbs in the wrong direction is no immediate cause for concern. With daily tracking, you will see weekly trends, and those trends should reflect the rate of weight change you desire, even as day-to-day variations occur.*

## Sample Meal Plans

Map out roughly what you will eat, and at what times, based around your schedule and preferences. Remember, it *can* change day to day as long as you're hitting your calorie and macronutrient goals from whole foods, eating several servings of fruits/veggies, drinking enough water to urinate clear, and making sure to eat within an hour or two after your training.

I've also supplied some examples for you to see below:

# SAMPLE DAY A- (3500-3750 calories)

## 8:30 AM

- Weigh yourself and record in chart

## 9AM: BREAKFAST – 1,171 cal

- Blend 1 peeled, frozen banana with 1 cup whole milk
- Add 2 scoops chocolate whey protein
- Add 1 handful of frozen spinach
- Add 2 tbsp natural nut butter
- (optional) Add 1 tsp of creatine monohydrate
- Blend to desired consistency (should resemble soft-serve ice cream)
  
- Eat 1 whole grain bagel with 2 tbsp natural nut butter

Also, take 3,000-5,000 IU of Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> with 4 oz. natural cranberry juice and 4 oz. of orange juice.\*\*\*

## Lunch – 1,243 cal

- 6 oz 93% lean ground beef or steak
- 1 cup of veggies
- 6 oz. whole wheat pasta with 2 cups tomato sauce
- 12 oz. water

*Note: you may swap this meal for dinner if you prefer eating your largest meal later in the day.*

## Pre-workout

- (Optional) Mix 1 scoop favorite pre-workout with 12 oz. water

## Anytime Snack – 350 cal

Eat 1 pack of Nature's Valley granola bars (190 calories) with 1 cup Whole milk

## Dinner – 884 cal

- Pan fry 8 oz of any fattier meat (salmon, chicken thighs) in 1 tbsp grass-fed butter
- Add 1 cup of veggies
- Make 2 1/4 cups of white rice in [rice cooker](#) (3/4 cup dry measure)
- Add iodized salt / favorite seasonings
- 12 oz. water

## Before bed

- 1 serving fish oil supplement.
- 12 oz. of water

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Calories: **3,648** | Protein: 219g | Carbs: 452g | Fat: 101g

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

*\*Disclaimer: these are just guidelines, and are meant to represent hypothetical sample days of my own personal nutritional habits as a professional pitcher and strength coach. I am not a dietician and this is not intended to be an individualized meal plan, or to treat any health condition.*

*\*\*If rate of weight gain stalls, add ~200 calories to this plan, ideally from carbohydrates. For this sample, adding 2oz of pasta or a pack of 2 Nature's Valley granola bars would do the trick.*

*\*\*\*[Natural cranberry juice](#) is packed full of iodine, which regulates a healthy metabolism. Ingredients must not say "from concentrate." Trader Joes is the only place I've found that has this for cheap. Mix with orange juice unless you're a savage*

## SAMPLE DAY B– (3750-4000 calories)

### 8:30 AM

- Weigh yourself and record in chart

### 9AM: BREAKFAST – 1,372 cal

- Blend 2 peeled frozen bananas with 1.5 cups whole milk
- Add 2 scoops chocolate whey protein
- Add 1 handful of frozen spinach
- Add 2 tbsp natural nut butter
- (optional) Add 1 tsp of creatine monohydrate
- Blend to desired consistency (should resemble soft-serve ice cream)
  
- Eat 1 whole grain bagel with 2 tbsp natural nut butter

Also, take 3,000-5,000 IU of Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> with 4 oz. natural cranberry juice and 4 oz. of orange juice.\*\*

### Lunch – 1,243 cal

- 6 oz 93% lean ground beef or steak
- 1 cup of veggies
- 6 oz. whole wheat pasta with 2 cups tomato sauce
- 12 oz. water

*Note: you may swap this meal for dinner if you prefer eating your largest meal later in the day.*

### Pre-workout

- (Optional) Mix 1 scoop favorite pre-workout with 12 oz. water

### Anytime Snack – 350 cal

Eat 1 pack of Nature's Valley granola bars (190 calories) with 1 cup Whole milk

### Dinner – 884 cal

- Pan fry 8 oz of any fattier meat (salmon, chicken thighs) in 1 tbsp grass-fed butter
- Add 1 cup of veggies
- Make 2 1/4 cups of white rice in [rice cooker](#) (3/4 cup dry measure)
- Add iodized salt / favorite seasonings
- 12 oz. water

### Before bed

- 1 serving fish oil supplement.
- 12 oz. of water

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Calories: **3,849** | Protein: 224g | Carbs: 490g | Fat: 105g

### ADDITIONAL NOTES

*\*If rate of weight gain stalls, add ~200 calories to this plan, ideally from carbohydrates. For this sample, adding 2oz of pasta or a pack of 2 Nature's Valley granola bars would do the trick.*

*\*\*[Natural cranberry juice](#) is packed full of iodine, which regulates a healthy metabolism. Ingredients must not say "from concentrate." Trader Joes is the only place I've found that has this for cheap. Mix with orange juice unless you're a savage*

# SAMPLE DAY C – (4000-4250 calories)

## 8:30 AM

- Weigh yourself and record in chart

## 9AM: BREAKFAST – 1,372 cal

- Blend 2 peeled frozen bananas with 1.5 cups whole milk
- Add 2 scoops chocolate whey protein
- Add 1 handful of frozen spinach
- Add 2 tbsp natural nut butter
- (optional) Add 1 tsp of creatine monohydrate
- Blend to desired consistency (should resemble soft-serve ice cream)
  
- Eat 1 whole grain bagel with 2 tbsp natural nut butter

Also, take 3,000-5,000 IU of Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> with 4 oz. natural cranberry juice and 4 oz. of orange juice.\*\*

## Lunch – 1,453 cal

- 6 oz 93% lean ground beef or steak
- 1 cup of veggies
- 8 oz. whole wheat pasta with 2 cups tomato sauce
- 12 oz. water

*Note: you may swap this meal for dinner if you prefer eating your largest meal later in the day.*

## Pre-workout

- (Optional) Mix 1 scoop favorite pre-workout with 12 oz. water

## Anytime Snack – 350 cal

Eat 1 pack of Nature's Valley granola bars (190 calories) with 1 cup Whole milk

## Dinner – 884 cal

- Pan fry 8 oz of any fattier meat (salmon, chicken thighs) in 1 tbsp grass-fed butter
- Add 1 cup of veggies
- Make 2 1/4 cups of white rice in [rice cooker](#) (3/4 cup dry measure)
- Add iodized salt / favorite seasonings
- 12 oz. water

## Before bed

- 1 serving fish oil supplement.
- 12 oz. of water

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Calories: **4,059** | Protein: 232g | Carbs: 530g | Fat: 106g

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

*\*If rate of weight gain stalls, add ~200 calories to this plan, ideally from carbohydrates. For this sample, adding 2oz of pasta or a pack of 2 Nature's Valley granola bars would do the trick.*

*\*\*[Natural cranberry juice](#) is packed full of iodine, which regulates a healthy metabolism. Ingredients must not say "from concentrate." Trader Joes is the only place I've found that has this for cheap. Mix with orange juice unless you're a savage*



# SAMPLE DAY D- (4250-4500+ calories)

## 8:30 AM

- Weigh yourself and record in chart

## 9AM: BREAKFAST – 1,372 cal

- Blend 2 peeled frozen bananas with 1.5 cups whole milk
- Add 2 scoops chocolate whey protein
- Add 1 handful of frozen spinach
- Add 2 tbsp natural nut butter
- (optional) Add 1 tsp of creatine monohydrate
- Blend to desired consistency (should resemble soft-serve ice cream)
  
- Eat 1 whole grain bagel with 2 tbsp natural nut butter

Also, take 3,000-5,000 IU of Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> with 4 oz. natural cranberry juice and 4 oz. of orange juice.

## Lunch – 1,453 cal

- 6 oz 93% lean ground beef or steak
- 1 cup of veggies
- 8 oz. whole wheat pasta with 2 cups tomato sauce
- 12 oz. water

*Note: you may swap this meal for dinner if you prefer eating your largest meal later in the day.*

## Pre-workout

- (Optional) Mix 1 scoop favorite pre-workout with 12 oz. water

## Anytime Snack – 430 cal

Eat 1 pack of Nature's Valley granola bars (190 calories) with 1.5 cups Whole milk

## Dinner – 1,044 cal

- Pan fry 8 oz of any fattier meat (salmon, chicken thighs) in 1 tbsp grass-fed butter
- Add 1 cup of veggies
- Make 3 cups of white rice in [rice cooker](#) (1 cup dry measure)
- Add iodized salt / favorite seasonings
- 12 oz. water

## Before bed

- 1 serving fish oil supplement.
- 12 oz. of water

--

Calories: **4,299** | Protein: 238g | Carbs: 573g | Fat: 110g

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

*\*If rate of weight gain stalls, add ~200 calories to this plan, ideally from carbohydrates. For this sample, adding 2oz of pasta or a pack of 2 Nature's Valley granola bars would do the trick.*

*\*\*If you need even more calories than this, add 2 tbsp of light flavorless olive or avocado oil to morning shake (~240 calories), or cook meat in 1 tbsp olive/avocado oil per serving when prepping. If you need even more calories, add 3 flour tortillas with dinner to make wraps (+450 calories).*

## Sample grocery list

This list is a good guideline to work from when shopping for calorically and nutrient dense foods that fit a hardgainer's goals. Aim to buy at least a week's worth of ingredients based on the breakdown of your meal plan.

### CARBOHYDRATES

- Whole wheat pasta
- White rice
- Sweet potatoes
- Tortillas
- Granola bars
- Whole grain bread/bagels

### PROTEINS

- 85-93% lean ground beef
- Steak
- Salmon
- Boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- Eggs
- Whole fat Greek yogurt
- Whole milk

### FATS

- Peanut butter/nut butter
- Favorite trail mix
- Grass-fed butter
- Favorite cheese

### FRUITS/VEGGIES

- Spinach\*
- Bananas\*
- Cranberry juice
- Orange juice
- Baby carrots
- Frozen berries
- Peppers

\*Peel and freeze bananas in large Zip-Loc bag to blend easier. Freeze spinach and berries as well.

### OTHER

- Pasta sauce
- Iodized salt
- Black pepper
- Garlic powder
- Other spices

### SUPPLEMENTS (optional)

- [Fish Oil](#)\*
- [Vitamin D3](#)
- [Whey protein](#)
- [Creatine monohydrate](#)
- [Greens powder](#)
- [Pre-workout](#)

\*Liquid fish oil is the most cost-effective, but if you prefer capsules use [this brand](#).

# Sample Training Program



## 21-DAY OFFSEASON TRAINING PLAN

### Strength Training

Contact@treadathletics.com

## MONDAY: UPPER A

**A1. Main pull** – perform 3-4 sets of 6-10 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Dumbbell Chest-Supported Row](#)
- [Blast Strap Inverted Row](#)
- [Single Arm TRX Row](#)

**A2. Main push** – perform 3 sets of 5-8 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Neutral Grip DB Bench Press](#)
- [Dynamic Effort DB Bench Press](#)
- [Neutral Grip Weighted Push-Up](#)

**B1. Push Accessory** – 3 sets of 8-10 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [1 Arm Incline DB Bench Press](#)
- [Half-Kneeling Landmine Press](#)
- [Alternating Incline DB Bench Press](#)

**B2. Pull Accessory** – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Half-Kneeling 1 Arm Lat Pulldown](#)
- [1 Arm Face Pull with External Rotation](#)

**C. Upper Back/Scap** – 3 sets of 15 total reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Incline YTL Shoulder Raise](#)
- [1 Arm Prone YTL Raise](#)

**D. Cuff strength/stability** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Supine Band No-Money](#)
- [Band Wall Walks](#)
- [Bottoms Up KB Waiter Walk](#)

## TUESDAY: LOWER A

**A. Main Lift** – work up to 3-4 sets of 5-8 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Front Squat](#)
- [Box Squat](#)
- [Safety Bar Box Squat](#)
- [Belt Squat](#)

**B. Lateral Work** – 3 sets of 6-8 reps/side

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Sideways Sled Drag \(x10-15 yds\)](#)
- [Goblet Lateral Lunge](#)
- [Crossover Step Up](#)

**C. Posterior Chain** – 3 sets of 6-8 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Barbell Romanian Deadlift](#)
- [Reverse Hyper \(x15-20 reps\)](#)
- [Natural Glute Ham Raise](#)

**D. Hip/Glute** – 3 sets of 12-15 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Band Monster Walks \(x10 yds\)](#)
- [Seated Band Clamshells](#)
- [Cable Pull-Throughs](#)

**E. Anterior Core** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps or 30 sec

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Weighted Front Plank](#)
- [Valslide Bodysaw](#)

**F. Lateral Core** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps or 30 sec

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Side Plank Variations](#)
- [Overhead KB Windmill](#)

## NOTES

- **Movement Prep:** make sure to begin the session with soft tissue work/foam rolling, dynamic warm-up and any prehab/correctives specific to the athlete. We individually program these, in addition to specific plyometric/medball work here depending on the athlete.

# 21-DAY OFFSEASON TRAINING PLAN

## Strength Training

### THURSDAY: UPPER B

**A1. Main pull** – perform 3-4 sets of 8-12 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Single Arm Dumbbell Row](#)
- [Half-Kneeling 1 Arm Cable Row](#)
- [Single Arm Cable Compound Row](#)

**A2. Main push** – perform 3 sets of 6-8 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Neutral Grip Band Push-Up](#)
- [1 Arm Dumbbell Bench Press](#)

**B1. Push Accessory** – 3 sets of 8-12 total reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Offset Medball Push-Up with Tap](#)
- [Yoga Push-Up](#)
- [Push-Up to 1 Arm Support](#)

**B2. Pull Accessory** – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Kneeling Straight Arm Pulldown](#)
- [Supine Band Pullover](#)

**C. Upper Back/Scap** – 3 sets of 15 total reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [TRX Y Raise](#)
- [3-Way Reverse Fly](#)

**D. Cuff Work** – 3-4 sets of 8-12 reps or 15 sec

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Wall Windshield Wipers](#)
- [Rhythmic Stabilizations](#)
- [Bottoms Up KB Overhead Carry](#)

### FRIDAY: LOWER B

**A. Main Lift** – work up to 3 sets of 5-8 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Trap Bar Deadlift](#)
- [Snatch Grip Rack Pull](#)
- [Barbell Deadlift \(double overhand grip\)](#)
- [Barbell Hip Thrust with ISO Hold](#)

**B. Unilateral** – 3 sets of 5-8 reps/side

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Barbell Reverse Lunge w/ Front Rack Grip](#)
- [Barbell Bulgarian Split Squat w/ Front Rack Grip](#)
- [Step-Ups to Parallel Box](#)

**C. Posterior Chain** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps/side

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Physioball Hamstring Curl](#)
- [Single Leg RDL](#)
- [Valslide Leg Curl](#)

**D. Hip/Glute** – 4 sets of 15-20 reps

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Band Monster Walks \(x10 yds\)](#)
- [Seated Band Clamshells](#)
- [Cable Pull-Throughs](#)

**E. Anterior Core** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps or 30 sec

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Weighted Front Plank](#)
- [Valslide Bodsaw](#)
- [Physioball Rollout Variation](#)

**F. Rotary Core** – 3 sets of 8-12 reps/side

Choose one of the following exercises:

- [Landmines with Hip Rotation](#)
- [Half-Kneeling Cable Chops](#)

### NOTES

- **Recovery matters:** Sleeping 8-10 hours and hitting your calories are 90% of the battle. Everything else is the last 10%.

## Compliance Chart

Fill out this checklist every day for 21 days. Email us after the 3 weeks are over, letting us know your progress and including the grand total compliance score at the bottom of this chart.

Day	8 hours of sleep?	Take bodyweight?	Eat breakfast?	Snack #1?	Training?	Eat Lunch?	Snack #2?	Eat Dinner?	Hit your calories?	Supplements?	Total/10
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

GRAND TOTAL: \_\_\_\_/210

Goal: 85% compliance (>178)

\*Record your bodyweight in the partner spreadsheet to this document

## What to expect: Days 1-7

As you get started following this plan, the first week will present with the steepest learning curve. In my experience, the three biggest struggles are as follows:

### 1. Getting comfortable using MyFitnessPal<sup>2</sup>

As you create the habit of entering your foods into myfitnesspal after each meal, you'll have to learn to get comfortable with portion sizes ([a food scale](#) helps a lot initially as you learn what 8oz of meat or 6oz of pasta looks like) and navigating the app's search database to accurately enter your meals.

My first tip is to use the scan feature on the app if your food has a barcode on the box or container – this will cause the food or ingredient to pop right up in your phone. Next, make sure to take advantage of the saved meals feature – if you eat the same thing a lot of the time you can save that meal as a template and take about 10 seconds from that point on to enter that meal in the future.

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### 2. Scheduling/meal prep conflicts

You'll be eating more, which requires a decent amount of planning to prep the food ahead of time and remember to pack it with you at the start of the day. Expect some adjusting to the new schedule. A tip to make this work is to pick up at least 3-4 lunch-sized tupperwares and a couple of extra large tupperwares as well to hold whatever protein and carb sources you'll be making ahead of time for the week. Keeping snacks in your bag, car or locker at all times puts those on autopilot – just remember to keep these topped off (buying in bulk ahead of time at Costco can be helpful).

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<sup>2</sup>We have a full MyFitnessPal tutorial for our remote athletes

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### 3. Food volume

As you get used to eating more calories, you'll likely be eating a higher volume of food as well (even with all the tips and tricks we're using to minimize food volume). Part of eating more is just allowing your system to adapt to processing a higher volume of food. This means an increased food capacity (and also more visits to the bathroom each day). Furthermore, your body will try to "compensate" by speeding up your metabolism, and as you eat more you'll begin to notice that you get hungrier sooner after a meal. This is part of the reason most athletes will hit a plateau and need to increase calories at some point in their dietary progress. Nonetheless, you'll have to force down some meals here and there that you don't feel like eating – just recognize that it gets better after the first week or two.

### What to expect: Days 8-14

By now, you should be comfortable tracking your food, preparing it and knowing how it fits with your schedule. Now, the struggle becomes staying consistent. Eating this much food isn't fun, and it's a lot of work. The temptation to skip meals is there, and life will very much try to stand in the way of you hitting your numbers and pushing the scale forwards.

Don't let it.

Stay consistent and you'll be able to stack a second productive week on top of the first. I'm not saying don't hang out with your friends or have a life – just to prioritize your goals first. Make the sacrifices necessary to stick to what you committed to on day 1, and you'll continue marching forward.

## What to expect: Days 15-21

By the end of week 2, you'll have compiled 14 data points for your bodyweight, and you should be able to tell if your strength is moving in the right direction in the weightroom.

If you have progressed at the appropriate rate (+0.5 lbs per week for advanced individuals within <15 pounds of their target weight and +1-1.5 lbs per week for individuals >15 lbs from their target weight) then all is good.

**Continue with the plan exactly as you have been.**

If your weight gain has stalled: bump the calories up by 200 per day and continue with the plan. If you have averaged significantly higher weight gain than intended, drop your calories *down* by 200 per day and continue following the plan.

By now, you should see that the process does work if you're consistent and diligent, which helps create further buy-in, making consistency a bit easier to maintain.

Keep going strong for the final week!



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Do you have any general meal prep tips?**

Anything that saves time preparing food will allow you to spend more time and effort actually eating. I recommend meal prepping at least one of your meals per day ahead of time. For example, if you're eating pasta and meat sauce for lunch, cook your 5 pounds of pasta and 6 or 7 pounds of ground beef at the beginning in the week. Keep each ingredient in a large tupperware and mix in tomato sauce with the ground beef to keep it from drying out. Every day, just spoon an appropriate portion of each into your lunch tupperware and microwave it when it's time to eat.

A compact blender ([this is what I use](#)) is also priceless, especially when you're in a rush. Milk, protein powder, nut butter, and frozen fruit has been a go-to meal replacement shake of mine for nearly 10 years. Almost no prep time required. For the large shakes you'll be making, grab a couple tall [32 oz attachment cups](#) as well.

When it comes to general cooking advice, that's beyond the scope of this product, but just know that we do have tutorial videos for over 50 recipes in our private remote athlete portal, which we reluctantly created after realizing that many 16 to 21-year olds don't know how to make pasta or cook a steak.

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### **I live in a dorm / don't have a kitchen - how should I modify this plan?**

If you have a mini-fridge and a microwave, you can get around not having a kitchen the majority of the time. You'll primarily be eating at a cafeteria in this situation, so figure out what the most consistent protein, carb and fat sources are at your dining hall and build your routine around them.

Eggs, bagels, peanut butter and milk tend to be available at most dining halls for breakfast, and you should be able to find rice or pasta and a large portion of protein for lunch/dinner. Don't be afraid to ask for extra meat or order double portions, as you'll typically need to customize your meals at least a little bit in order to hit your macronutrient goals.

Yes, you'll be known as the guy who stuffs his face, always snacks on peanut butter sandwiches and makes meal replacement shakes in the dorm bathroom (I was all of these things), but a year or two later they'll be asking you for training advice.

Use your dorm for snacks (which should be non-perishable anyway – granola bars, trail mix, peanut butter sandwiches) and for meal replacement shakes (nut butter, milk, frozen fruit, and protein powder). Keep extra food from the dining halls in your mini-fridge to snack on as well.

Avoid the temptation to eat desserts at every meal just because it's easy calories – now and then is okay, but just because you can get the scale to move faster by inhaling milkshakes and chocolate milk at every meal doesn't mean you're fueling your body for optimal muscle growth.

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### **With my schedule, I'm forced to eat out regularly - what are some good options?**

Just as with the previous option, the answer is whatever helps you hit your calories and macronutrients from whole food sources. Anything that gets you a solid chunk of protein, a massive portion of carbohydrates and isn't completely devoid of fruits or veggies is a good option.

- Mexican: Chipotle, Moes, Qdoba or equivalent with extra meat, extra rice, and veggies.

- ❑ Greek, Indian, Mediterranean or Middle Eastern food tend to all be variations of meat and rice. Go berserk on any of these.
- ❑ Avoid excess grease (Pizza, fried foods, etc) as these tend to cause digestive issues during training/practice and are relatively devoid of nutritional value.
- ❑ Avoid “health food” restaurants where the highest calorie item on the menu is 500 calories. You need substance to your meals. Let your girlfriend drag her friends to that restaurant instead and politely decline the invite.

Use common sense, follow these principles and you’ll be able to apply them to almost any restaurant you go to.

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### **Can I build muscle and lose fat at the same time?**

The short answer is: not really. Unless you are entirely new to training, coming off a major period of de-training (such as surgery or after a long season where you didn’t train and lost a ton of muscle) or if you are being assisted by performance-enhancing drugs, it is not possible to both build muscle and shed body fat simultaneously to any appreciable degree. This is because it requires a net positive energy balance to build muscle (more calories in than you burn) and a net negative energy balance to lose fat (fewer calories in than you burn).

This means you can’t just go from skinny-fat at 180 pounds to shredded at 210 pounds in 3 months. Doing so wouldn’t just represent a 30-pound increase in muscle, but by dropping another 6 or 7% body fat off of your frame, this represents *another* 12 or 15 pounds of added lean mass to still be 30 pounds heavier at the end of the process. Pick a goal and realistic timeline and you’ll have a good chance of hitting it if these principles are adhered to.

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## What is my genetic limit for how strong and big I can get?

This is a question explored much deeper in *Building the 95 MPH Body*, but the short version is a very unsatisfying “it depends.” Just about anybody, even with terrible genetics, should be able to ultimately hit our strength thresholds for pitchers (a 450-pound hex bar deadlift, 100 pound DB bench press, 365-pound squat and 105-pound DB row for 5 reps each).

Total lean body mass capacity varies depending on your proportions, bone structure, height, hormonal profile and more. For example, someone with a larger bone structure with wider tendons tends to mean more capacity for carrying muscle mass (think about the typical catcher’s body). But don’t get too carried away worrying about genetics, as it’s uncontrollable.

Also, recognize that most top college and pro players are strong, but they aren’t freaks from a muscular standpoint, they’re freaks from a movement standpoint. Most would get out-lifted by the average weightlifting bro at your local gym. Keep it in perspective that we’re always looking to maintain and improve exceptional movement quality and mechanics, **while layering this muscle mass, strength, and explosiveness on top** to create peak athletic performance.

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## Did you say something about eating mostly whole foods?

Yes. At least 80% of your food intake should come from whole, natural “healthy” foods like fruits, veggies, eggs, meat, fish, rice, potatoes, nuts and minimally processed oils. These foods tend to be high in vitamins and minerals (micronutrients), while processed or refined foods like crackers, ice cream, and cookies tend to be more devoid of these nutrients. However, processed foods are still a perfectly reasonable source of macros, which is why 20% of your food can come from these sources if you choose. This allows you to consume foods otherwise considered “unhealthy.” If you are skeptical, realize that these “20% foods” are strictly accounted for in terms of total energy intake. However, if you choose to eat 100% whole foods, you

can, the point being that you have the flexibility to choose. This is called a “flexible dieting” approach - you *can* eat out at restaurants, or eat a couple of slices of pizza here and there and still make just as good progress. Just don’t take this freedom and turn the 80-20 rule into the 50-50 rule or you’ll begin to be displeased with your body composition results.

## Evaluating your results

So, after 3 weeks, how did you do?

Hopefully, you kick-started some major progress in your training journey and are starting to see how the nutritional puzzle pieces come together. If so, that’s freaking awesome. Nice work.

But this is only the beginning of completely re-vamping your training and preparation.

Did you have a couple of slip-ups or issues throughout the process? Let’s discuss how to clean up those variables and keep things on track for you.

At the end of the day, so much more factors into elite velocity than *just* strength and size, which is what we have built our entire remote coaching system around – uncovering and troubleshooting specific limiting factors and deconstructing a complex training process into step-by-step programs that anyone can follow.

## Where to go from here

If you've made it to the end of this, you're the type of athlete we love to hear from. Curious. Detail-oriented. Driven. Accountable. This is the culture we have created with the 400+ players and 21 draft picks/signs that we have had throughout remote coaching from 2017-2019.

We want to hear from you, so here's the deal: shoot us an email to [contact@treadathletics.com](mailto:contact@treadathletics.com) explaining your results from this program (including your weight change, filled out spreadsheet and compliance chart) and as a thank you, I'll send you a coupon for **\$20 off my e-book Building the 95 MPH Body**.

That's it.

After doing so, you'll also have the chance to schedule a call with one of our remote coaches to discuss your results, specific situation and goals moving forward. No strings attached.

Before I go, let me just say thank you.

I'm pumped you made it to the end of this guide – I put a lot of time and effort into creating this type of content (and refrained from charging for this against the advice of many), so if you feel this information would be valuable to other athletes, share your thoughts on social media and tag us in your post!

Here's to reaching your potential,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Brewster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Ben" and "Brewster" being significantly larger and more stylized than the rest of the text.

Ben Brewster, BSc, CSCS  
Founder of TreadAthletics