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# Bulking and Cutting, by the Numbers

Why you keep ending up with the same body, and how to set your calories properly tonight

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I'm not a dietitian. This guide is general education, not an individual plan. The numbers in it are a starting point that you adjust based on what the scale and the mirror show you.

FIRST, WHY THIS KEEPS HAPPENING

# Why you keep ending up with the same body

Because muscle is slow. Much slower than you think. This is roughly how much muscle your body can build per month, based on how long you've been training:

| Training age      | Muscle per month     | Example at 80 kg |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Year one          | 1-1.5% of bodyweight | 0.8-1.2 kg       |
| Year two          | about 0.5%           | 0.4 kg           |
| Year three onward | 0.25% or less        | 0.2 kg           |

So 5 kg in two months cannot be muscle. Fast gain is fat and water, and the cut removes exactly that fat and water. You come out the other side of the whole cycle and nothing was built underneath.

The gain rate is the tell: if you're past your first year and gaining more than about 1 kg a month, the excess is mostly fat. And fast bulking costs you twice: months gaining fat, then months cutting it off again.

**The cut only reveals what the bulk built**

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

# How to read this guide

Three steps, in order. The first is for everyone, the second is where you pick your example, and the third is for everyone again.

### 1. EVERYONE STARTS HERE

## Understand the method

Three simple steps, and the numbers make sense after that → pages 4 and 5

### 2. THEN PICK YOUR EXAMPLE

## See the numbers worked out

**Men** → page 6

**Women** → page 7

The examples use 80 kg and 65 kg, but the steps are the same for any weight, height or age.

### 3. EVERYONE CONTINUES TOGETHER

## Rates, macros, signals, and your worksheet

From page 8 to the end, finishing with a worksheet you fill in with your own numbers

THE METHOD

# Your numbers, step by step

Three steps. All you need is the calculator on your phone.

■ **Step 1: your BMR** (your sleeping calories)

BMR is the calories your body burns doing nothing at all, as if you stayed in bed all day. We calculate it with the Mifflin-St Jeor formula:

**MEN**

**BMR = (10 × weight kg) + (6.25 × height cm) – (5 × age) + 5**

**WOMEN**

**BMR = (10 × weight kg) + (6.25 × height cm) – (5 × age) – 161**

Meaning: put your weight where it says weight, your height where it says height, your age where it says age. That's it.

■ **Step 2: your TDEE** (your whole-day calories)

TDEE is what you actually burn across a full day, which is your BMR multiplied by an activity factor:

| Training days per week | Factor |
|------------------------|--------|
| 2-3 days               | 1.3    |
| 4-5 days               | 1.5    |
| 6-7 days               | 1.7    |

The factor is about your whole day, not just the gym. If your work keeps you on your feet most of the day, go one step up. If you sit all day, stay where you are.

THE METHOD

■ Step 3: your phase calories

Now you decide which phase you're in and adjust your TDEE:

|                                           |               |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Bulking calories = TDEE + a small surplus | +200-300 kcal |
| Cutting calories = TDEE – a deficit       | –300-500 kcal |

Why is the surplus so small? Because muscle can't use more than that. Anything above it goes straight to fat. And the deficit stays modest so you keep the muscle you worked for.

**Important:** all of these numbers are a starting point, not a final truth. The scale over the first two weeks confirms or corrects them. If your weight is moving at the target rate, keep them. If not, adjust slightly and wait another two weeks.

THE METHOD IN ONE SCREEN

- BMR from the Mifflin-St Jeor formula for your sex
- TDEE = BMR × activity factor (1.3, 1.5 or 1.7)
- Bulk = TDEE + 200-300 kcal
- Cut = TDEE – 300-500 kcal
- Two weeks on the scale confirms or corrects the number

Screenshot this page

WORKED EXAMPLE, MEN

A man, 80 kg, 178 cm, 28 years old, trains 4 days a week

Step 1: BMR

|                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 10 × weight                  | 10 × 80 = 800       |
| 6.25 × height                | 6.25 × 178 = 1112.5 |
| 5 × age                      | 5 × 28 = 140        |
| BMR = 800 + 1112.5 – 140 + 5 | 1778 kcal           |

Step 2: TDEE (4 days = 1.5)

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1778 × 1.5 | 2667 kcal |
|------------|-----------|

Step 3: phase calories

|                                  |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Bulk: 2667 + 250 = 2917, rounded | 2900 kcal |
| Cut: 2667 – 400 = 2267, rounded  | 2250 kcal |

Bulking macros (2900 kcal)

|                                         |                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Protein at 2 g per kg                   | 160 g = 640 kcal |
| Fat at 0.9 g per kg                     | 72 g = 648 kcal  |
| Carbs = the rest (2900 – 640 – 648) ÷ 4 | 403 g            |

Cutting macros (2250 kcal)

|                                         |                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Protein at 2.2 g per kg                 | 176 g = 704 kcal |
| Fat at 0.8 g per kg                     | 64 g = 576 kcal  |
| Carbs = the rest (2250 – 704 – 576) ÷ 4 | 242 g            |

His targets

|                                                                 |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Bulk: 0.2-0.3 kg per week, about 1 kg per month, for 4-6 months | +4-6 kg |
| Cut: 0.4 kg per week, about 1.5 kg per month, for 8-12 weeks    | –3-5 kg |

WORKED EXAMPLE, WOMEN

A woman, 65 kg, 165 cm, 28 years old,  
trains 4 days a week

Step 1: BMR (women's formula)

|                                          |                             |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| $10 \times \text{weight}$                | $10 \times 65 = 650$        |
| $6.25 \times \text{height}$              | $6.25 \times 165 = 1031.25$ |
| $5 \times \text{age}$                    | $5 \times 28 = 140$         |
| $\text{BMR} = 650 + 1031.25 - 140 - 161$ | <b>1380 kcal</b>            |

Step 2: TDEE (4 days = 1.5)

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| $1380 \times 1.5$ | <b>2070 kcal</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|

Step 3: phase calories

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Bulk: $2070 + 250 = 2320$ , rounded | <b>2300 kcal</b> |
| Cut: $2070 - 400 = 1670$ , rounded  | <b>1650 kcal</b> |

Bulking macros (2300 kcal)

|                                              |                         |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Protein at 2 g per kg                        | <b>130 g = 520 kcal</b> |
| Fat at 0.9 g per kg                          | <b>58 g = 522 kcal</b>  |
| Carbs = the rest $(2300 - 520 - 522) \div 4$ | <b>314 g</b>            |

Cutting macros (1650 kcal)

|                                              |                         |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Protein at 2.2 g per kg                      | <b>143 g = 572 kcal</b> |
| Fat at 0.8 g per kg                          | <b>52 g = 468 kcal</b>  |
| Carbs = the rest $(1650 - 572 - 468) \div 4$ | <b>152 g</b>            |

Her targets

|                                                                  |                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Bulk: 0.2-0.25 kg per week, about 1 kg per month, for 4-6 months | <b>+4-6 kg</b>   |
| Cut: 0.3 kg per week, about 1.4 kg per month, for 8-12 weeks     | <b>-2.5-4 kg</b> |

For women, weekly averages matter even more, because water weight moves with the monthly cycle. Judge two-week trends, not single weeks.

EVERYONE FROM HERE

# How fast, and for how long?

## ■ Bulking

Gain 0.25-0.5% of your bodyweight per week. Stick to the lower end if you're past your first year of training, because your muscle growth has slowed. The minimum bulk length is 4-6 months, because muscle needs time, and short bulks are mostly water and fat.

## ■ Cutting

Lose about 0.5% of your bodyweight per week. Go up to 1% only if your body fat is high. A cut usually runs 8-12 weeks, and then you hold at maintenance for 2-4 weeks before starting any new phase.

## ■ Why the maintenance phase in between?

After a cut, your body is hungry and its hormones are tired. Jump straight into a bulk and you'll gain fat fast. The reverse is also true: after a long bulk your body is used to a lot of food, and the maintenance period lets it settle at its new weight before you cut. Those two to four weeks aren't wasted time. They're what protects your result.

### RATES AND DURATIONS IN ONE SCREEN

- Bulk: 0.25-0.5% per week, for at least 4-6 months
- Past your first year? Stay at the lower end
- Cut: 0.5% per week, for 8-12 weeks
- Between phases: hold at maintenance 2-4 weeks

Screenshot this page

MACROS

# Macros for both phases

- **Protein:** 1.6-2.2 g per kg while bulking, 2.0-2.4 g per kg while cutting. Higher when you're eating less, to protect muscle.
- **Fat:** 0.8-1.0 g per kg, roughly 20-30% of your calories. Never drop below about 0.6 g per kg.
- **Carbs:** whatever calories are left. This is your flexible number, the one you raise or lower when you adjust.

**To keep it simple:** use 2 g per kg of protein while bulking and 2.2 g while cutting, and 0.9 g per kg of fat while bulking and 0.8 g while cutting. That's exactly what the examples and the worksheet use.

THE CONVERSION YOU NEED TO KNOW

Protein and carbs: 1 g = 4 kcal. Fat: 1 g = 9 kcal. That's why we multiply protein and carbs by 4 and fat by 9, then subtract them from the calories to find what's left.

■ The man (80 kg)

|         | Bulk 2900 kcal | Cut 2250 kcal |
|---------|----------------|---------------|
| Protein | 160 g          | 176 g         |
| Fat     | 72 g           | 64 g          |
| Carbs   | 403 g          | 242 g         |

■ The woman (65 kg)

|         | Bulk 2300 kcal | Cut 1650 kcal |
|---------|----------------|---------------|
| Protein | 130 g          | 143 g         |
| Fat     | 58 g           | 52 g          |
| Carbs   | 314 g          | 152 g         |

## THE SIGNALS

# How to know you're doing it right

### ■ During a bulk, in this order

- Your weekly average weight is rising inside the target range.
- Your waist is rising slower than your bodyweight. Measure at the navel, once a week, same time of day.
- Your training performance is rising: more reps or more weight over the weeks.

### ■ During a cut

- Your weekly average weight is dropping inside the target range.
- Your weights in the gym are held, or nearly held.
- If strength drops fast, or sleep and hunger get bad, the deficit is too big for you.

### ■ Scale stalled for two weeks?

In either phase, adjust by 100-150 kcal only, not more. Add during a bulk, subtract during a cut, then wait another two weeks before judging. Big adjustments are what put you back in the loop.

## THE SIGNALS

# Red flags

If you see any of these, something needs fixing now, not next month:

### DURING A BULK

- Weight rising faster than the range, and the waist rising as fast as the scale
- Strength flat even though you're eating more

### THE MISTAKES THAT KEEP YOU IN THE LOOP

- Bulking too fast, so the gain is fat
- Cutting too fast, so the loss is muscle
- No tracking, so every number is a guess
- Changing the plan every week based on one day's weight
- Ending a bulk after 6 weeks
- Never holding at maintenance between phases

## ■ Already at a high body fat?

The honest option: skip both. Sit at maintenance, train hard, and let your body trade fat for muscle for 6 months before you even think about a bulk.

# Your worksheet

A.  $10 \times$  your weight

B.  $6.25 \times \text{your height}$  =

C.  $5 \times \text{your age}$  =

**BMR = A + B – C, then +5 for men or –161 for women** kcal

**TDEE = BMR × factor (1.3, 1.5 or 1.7)** kcal

**Bulking calories = TDEE + 250** kcal

**Cutting calories = TDEE – 400** kcal

Protein = your weight  $\times$  2 (bulk) or  $\times$  2.2 (cut) g

Fat = your weight  $\times$  0.9 (bulk) or  $\times$  0.8 (cut) g

$$\text{Carbs} = (\text{phase calories} - \text{protein} \times 4 - \text{fat} \times 9) \div 4$$

Not sure? Go back to page 6 or 7 and follow the same order. And two weeks on the scale settles the number.

| Week | Avg weight | Waist | Best set, main lift | Notes |
|------|------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| 1    |            |       |                     |       |
| 2    |            |       |                     |       |
| 3    |            |       |                     |       |
| 4    |            |       |                     |       |
| 5    |            |       |                     |       |
| 6    |            |       |                     |       |
| 7    |            |       |                     |       |
| 8    |            |       |                     |       |

## ONE LAST WORD

# Slow is the fast way

This is the system I wish someone had handed me years ago. I lost whole seasons bulking fast, cutting fast, and landing back at the same body, and I blamed genetics or my training. The problem was the numbers and the patience.

The numbers in this guide are a start. The mirror and the log finish the job. Track, measure, wait two weeks before every decision, and give each phase the time it needs. That's the only way out of the loop.

And if you want the training side, my free workout guide is ready for you.

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