

Craft Your Plan - Muscle Gain

1. Define the Goal

What is Your Goal? _____

How long will it take to reach this goal? _____

How will you measure progress? _____

How often will you measure progress? _____

Break the goal into smaller steps/ wins? _____

How will you celebrate these wins? _____

2. Understanding Your Why

Why do you want this goal? _____

Why is that Important to You? _____

What are you ready to give up? _____

3. Determine your Intake Starting Points

How will you keep track of your intake? _____

What is your calorie intake starting point? _____

What is your protein intake? _____

4. Establish New Behaviours

What 2 behaviours will you put in place to keep you on track of my intake goals?

Habit #1 _____

Details _____

Habit #2 _____

Details _____

5. Build Your Environment for Success

Physical Environment

What 1-2 changes will you make to your physical environment to be more successful?

Family Environment

Who will have the greatest influence on you? _____

What might they do to impede your progress? _____

What is your plan for this? _____

Social Support Environment

Who will you use for support along the way? _____

Muscle Gain & Caloric Surplus

What is a calorie surplus?

Let's start simple: If you have been trying for a while and want to gain weight, you should be in a Caloric Surplus. Without getting too sciency, a caloric surplus is when we consume more calories (through food and drink) than our bodies burn. How much you burn in a day depends on a lot of competing factors like your height, weight, activity level, types of foods you eat, and genetics. This number varies a lot from person to person, but we can estimate it and use it as a starting point. Before we do that, let's define some specifics about your weight gain goal.

1. Define your goal

What are the specifics of your goal?

If we want to make sure we are making progress towards a goal, we need to first define the goal! In this section, write down your goal and be as specific as possible. Do you want to gain a specific number of pounds? Add inches to a specific body part? Gain mass in a specific muscle group so you can gain strength in a specific lift or exercise? Be as specific as you can.

How long will it take you to reach this goal? Define your timeline.

We don't want you to be in a surplus forever, so let's put a timestamp on your goal. In general, we recommend a 10-12 week period where the goal is to gain 0.5-2 lbs/week. More is not always better here, as rushing the process may end in more fat gain than is necessary. Let's say you want to gain 10 pounds and decide 10 weeks is your goal. That puts you at 1 lb/ week, which is great! Keep in mind that after this period is done, take a diet break that is equal or longer in length from your diet phase to give your body a chance to adapt to this new weight.

How will you measure progress?

So how will you know if you are making progress? How do you know if your caloric intake guesses that we will find in the next sections were right? That is where tracking comes in. For weight gain, we can track various measurements such as weight, progress photos, body measurements or by the fit of your clothing. Each has their own set of pros and cons and should be chosen based on your specific situation, history of dieting, and preference. Write the method that you will be using in your goal setting sheet.

See the next section for more details on each of these options if you aren't sure which one is for you.

There are multiple ways to record your progress over time. We suggest using an excel spreadsheet, free application like MyFitnessPal, or a printed tracking sheet on your fridge. Calendar tracking for habit success can also be helpful in addition to your other method. In this instance, you check off the days that you successfully completed your daily goal/habit (hit your calorie intake, hit your protein intake, complete your healthy habit etc.) to see your level of adherence overtime.

How often will you measure progress?

How often you check your progress will depend on your choice of tracking method and personal reference.

1. **Weight:** Body weight can vary quite a lot day-to-day depending on your salt retention, hormones, how much you ate the day before, when you trained, stress, and more. Given this, how do we differentiate progress from the noise? We measure anywhere from 2x per week to everyday and look at the bigger trends, like weekly averages, instead of daily numbers. It is really easy to get caught up in the day to day fluctuations, but remember that we need to take a step back and see the bigger picture. Decide how often and on which days you will weigh yourself.
2. **Progress photos:** Day-to-day changes are really hard to see in the mirror, so progress photos are a great way to see long term progress. These should be taken 2-4x/month from the same angles, distance and under the same lighting. When you do these, make sure you get one where you are fully relaxed... and maybe another with a full flex.
3. **Body Measurements:** The number on the scale doesn't always tell the full story and body measurements can be extremely useful. If you go this route, take measurements 2-4x/month at equal intervals. Make sure you are measuring the same side of your body and at the same location each time. When comparing measurement sets, you can use either the total number of inches lost for each tracking period or compare individual locations on the body.

Whichever option you choose, make sure you check progress under the same conditions every time. We suggest right after waking and using the washroom in the morning, but before you eat or drink anything.

Break the goal into smaller steps

It is common for people to forget to celebrate small successes along the way to their bigger goal. In order to appreciate every step of your journey, break your end goal into smaller stepping stones.

Let's look at an example. Say you want to gain 15 lb over 3 months. Breaking it down into 5 months per month creates smaller, obtainable goals that can be celebrated each month.

How will you celebrate these wins?

Now that you have your smaller wins established, you need to make sure to celebrate each one once you get there. This not only helps with motivation and long-term success, but also makes sure that you don't overdo the celebrations. Your celebration is entirely up to you, but make sure to take a minute and plan it out.

2. Understanding your Why

Why this goal?

Changing your behaviors and taking on new challenges is difficult by definition. You will run into obstacles along the way and struggle through moments when you want to give up. In order to overcome these moments and be successful, it's crucial to clearly identify and understand your "Why." We are looking for you to go deep into the reason behind your goal- the deeper and more emotional you can get, the better. "Because I want a bit more muscle," won't cut it here! Why does your aesthetic or performance to you? What prompted this change? Take a few moments and reflect on why this goal is important, how it will make you feel once you reach it and who else's life it will impact.

Why is that important to you right now?

So, why now? Why didn't you try last year or even last month to reach this goal? If you did, why do you think you were unsuccessful? What is going to be different this time?

What are you ready to give up?

Change often requires sacrifice. So the question is: How important is this goal to you and what are you willing to sacrifice to get there?

3. Tools & Food Intake

Choose a tracking style for your intake

Most people don't have a good understanding of what or how much they eat on a regular basis. Tracking your intake can be a great educational tool to get you on track and learn more about your habits. We can track intake in more than one way but we suggest everyone tries tracking their

calories with an app such as MyFitnessPal for at least a week. Yes, this can be a tedious and time consuming endeavor, but you'll learn a lot!

A word of caution: tracking can turn into an obsessive process for some people. If you have had a negative experience or find yourself creating obsessive tendencies, please reach out to a qualified professional for help.

If you are ready to track, write which method you will be using in this section (again, we like MyFitnessPal but you can use whatever works for you)

Determine your calorie intake starting point

So you are going to track - now what? How much do I need? Where do I start? [THIS](#) link will take you to the NIH Body Weight Planner. This calculator will guide you through the steps of determining what your calorie needs are, based on the specifics you outlined from the steps above. Once you have calculated your intake, write it here and put it into the Goals section in MyFitnessPal if you are tracking.

Determine your protein intake

While trying to grow muscle, it is important to keep protein intake relatively high. Protein is essential for retaining muscle mass, supporting our recovery from training, and keeping your body functioning properly. So how much do you need? Start with your target body weight in kg. Multiply that by 1.6-2.2 - if you struggle to get enough protein to start, just start with 1.6. This will give you your daily protein intake in grams.

Let's walk through an example! Say your target weight is 80 kg (or 176 lb) and you struggle to get enough protein. $80 \text{ kg} * 1.6 = 128 \text{ g}$. That means this person should aim for 128 g of protein per day, split more or less evenly throughout each meal. If you are new to this and aren't sure how much protein that looks like, go on MyFitnessPal or any other nutritional guide and take a look around at some common foods you eat. The app will tell you how much protein that food contains for a given quantity.

4. Changing Behaviours

Long term change stems from (1) identifying the behaviors that led us to this point and (2) altering them in sustainable ways. Believe it or not, less is more here and adding in new habits can be more successful than trying to completely eliminate old habits. There are countless behavior change

strategies that could help you reach your weight gain goals, but here are a few common ones to get you started.

Meal Preparation

Meal choices that pull us away from our goals often stem from a busy lifestyle and poor planning. By planning what you'll eat days in advance and having the bulk of the work done ahead of time, it's easier to make good choices that fall in line with our goals. Before doing your grocery shopping for the week, plan your meals and snacks for the week and make a list of the foods you need to buy. Set aside a non-negotiable timeframe during the weekend to cook and prep as many of the items as you can.

Meal Scheduling

Sometimes we get in a rush, life gets in the way, and we don't have time for big meals. If this sounds like you, it could be helpful to plan out multiple smaller meals throughout the day to ensure your intake matches your goal. Remember, we don't have to get caught up in the idea of a meal vs a snack - getting the food in is number one!

Physical Activity

When we gain any amount of weight, there will be some muscle gain and some fat gain. Resistance training is an excellent way to make sure that that distribution is skewed towards muscle as much as possible. If you haven't started a training program yet and are unsure where to start, check out our [Introductory Program Here](#).

5. Build your Environment:

Family Environment

Big changes are rarely done alone. The people in your home or work environment can have a big influence on your success - whether that be positively or negatively. In this section, identify one or two people that have the largest influence on your progress and talk through the following questions with them.

1. Do they know that this goal is important to you and why?
2. What do you need from them to be successful?

3. What might they do (accidentally or not) to impede your progress and how are you going to address that before it comes up?

Social Support Environment

Let's make this perfectly clear: you do not have to do this alone and we are all here to help each other. Having a supportive social environment with like minded people going through similar journeys is a recipe for success. Luckily we have that environment here, but there are many other options as well. Here is the question: which support environment are you going to lean on when things are tough, use for motivation, and grow together with? Some examples could be:

1. Our Kick-Ass Private Facebook group
2. A personal coach
3. Your own personal social group
4. A spouse or partner (this one can be tough)