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The Real-Life Fat Loss Guide

Lose the fat and feel like yourself again, without putting your life on hold.

Thomas Edwards

Personal trainer and online coach

thomasedwardstraining.com

Everything in this guide is exactly how I coach my clients to achieve their fat loss goals in the real world.

I say in the real world because there is far too much out there already covering fat loss in theory, when life is simple and treated like a basic physiology equation.

In reality, you likely have more than a few kg to lose, it will take you a bit longer than you expect, and there will be holidays, meals out, birthdays, parties and much more to contend with. You will have a life outside of dieting is the gist of what I'm saying.

With this in mind, you need an approach that is built around all of this. One that teaches you how to lose weight when the gym is not your only priority, but you still want to build a strong, toned, lean physique you can be proud of in the mirror. That's exactly what my approach is built around, and what we'll be covering in this guide.

It's also how I coached myself to lose 16kg in 8 months and get ready for my photoshoot. I followed all the same approaches, techniques and tactics that I instil in my clients because I know they work and have a track record of helping people achieve their goals and navigate the most difficult social situations that have most people throwing the diet in the bin.



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How to use this guide

Chapters 2 to 11 each finish with the same three boxes, so you always know where to look.

HOW I COACH IT

How I use the chapter with my clients, and why I do it that way.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

What I actually did on my own diet, numbers included.



DO THIS

One practical thing to do before you move on to the next chapter.

00

Quick start

If you're short on time and only read one page of this guide, make it this one. These are the five things that matter most, in the order I'd fix them with any new client.

- 1 Eat a little less than you burn, in a way you can keep repeating.** Pick a deficit you'll still be happily sticking to in three months' time, because that's the one that gets you results. *Chapters 2 and 3.*
- 2 Get enough protein.** It helps you hold on to your muscle and keeps you fuller for longer, so build every meal around it. *Chapter 4.*
- 3 Judge the average, not the day.** One meal out, one bad day or one heavy weigh-in decides nothing on its own. It's what you do most of the time that counts. *Chapters 8 and 10.*
- 4 Lift weights and walk more.** Three sessions a week and a few thousand extra steps a day will do far more for you than punishing yourself with cardio. *Chapter 7.*
- 5 Measure properly.** Waist, weekly average weight and photos. In any given week one of them will stall, so never judge your progress on one alone. *Chapter 8.*

Everything else in this guide, from meals out and holidays to bad weeks and plateaus, is about keeping those five things going when real life gets in the way. And it will.

Get those five right most of the time and you'll end up leaner and stronger, with the meals out, the holidays and the weekends still in your diary.

☒ **START HERE**

Put your details into the [Real-Life Calorie Calculator](#) to get your starting numbers, and start weighing yourself each morning. Chapter 3 walks you through it.

01

Why I wrote this

I've been coaching people since 2014, both in person and online with clients around the world.

2025 was a rough year for me, to say the least.

I had two surgeries to remove lumps, and the second was at the base of my spine, which meant that for a good while afterwards I couldn't train or even sit down. On top of that, a foot injury stopped me running. Mentally, this was tough. I put weight on and lost muscle, and I didn't really recognise myself in the mirror.

I also have ulcerative colitis, and coming off some of my medication around the surgeries caused issues with this, so to say I wasn't feeling my best is a bit of an understatement.

By the end of the year I just didn't feel like myself, and it felt like none of it was in my control.

So while I was still recovering from the second surgery, I booked a photoshoot and set the date in stone. This wasn't how I was going to stay.

I knew the year ahead was going to be a busy one, and I wasn't willing to give up the memories that came with it, especially the time with my wife and my son.

I also knew that with the right approach and the right framework in place, I could work around all of it. That's why the shoot mattered so much to me. I wanted to keep my life and still get back to recognising myself in the mirror.

1 JANUARY 2026

91.8kg

22 AUGUST, SHOOT DAY

75.9kg

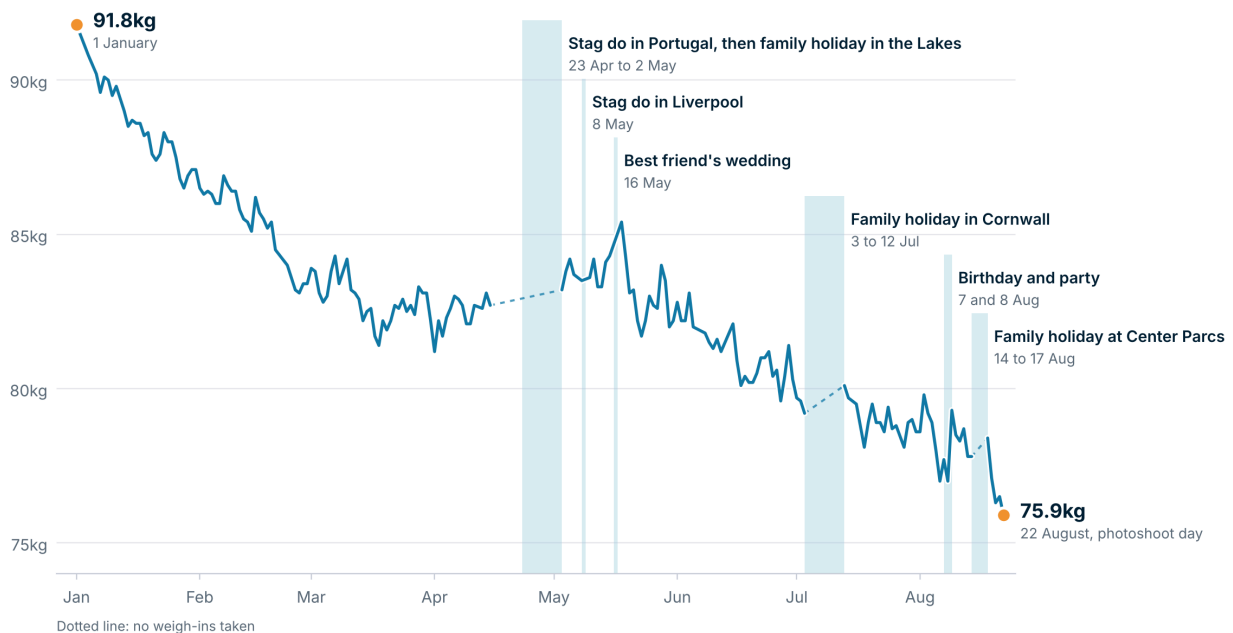


My progress photos, 1 January and 6 August 2026.

91.8kg to 75.9kg

Every morning weigh-in from 1 January to 22 August 2026.

Shaded bands are the holidays, stag dos and parties. None of them were tracked.



Every morning weigh-in from 1 January to 22 August 2026, with each holiday, stag do and party marked.

In between there were three family holidays, two stag dos, my best friend's wedding, my birthday party, and a meal out or takeaway roughly every 8 to 10 days. I didn't track a single one of the holidays or events. Every bump you can see on the chart is one of them, and every one of them came back down.

To be clear, 75.9kg was my shoot-day weight, with some water dropped for the photos. Where I've settled since is 78 to 79kg, about 13kg below where I started the year. Even after ten untracked days in Kefalonia since the shoot, I weighed 82.8kg the morning after we landed and was back to 80kg by the end of that week.

None of it needed me to put my life on hold. It needed the approach in this guide, which is exactly how I coach my clients. And if there's one idea that sits underneath every chapter, it's this: your results come from the average of your efforts.

The rest of this guide shows you how to do the same, so you can feel like yourself again without putting your life on hold.



PART 2

How fat loss works

02 Energy balance

03 Your numbers

04 Protein

05 Food without the rules

06 Tracking

07 Training and movement

08 Reading your progress

02

Energy balance

Fat loss comes down to one rule, and whatever anyone tries to sell you, there's no getting around it. Over time, if you use more energy than you eat, your body makes up the gap from what it has stored, and a good chunk of that store is body fat.

That's energy balance. Everything else in this guide, from protein and training to steps and meals out, is about making that one rule easier to stick to without hating your life in the process.

Where your energy goes

Your body uses energy in four main ways:

- **Keeping you alive.** Breathing, your heartbeat, your organs, keeping you warm. For most people this is the biggest share by far, somewhere in the 60 to 70% range.
- **Everyday movement.** Walking to the car, standing at work, fidgeting, chasing the kids round the garden. This is the one that changes the most from person to person and from one day to the next.
- **Digesting food.** Roughly 10%, and a bit more when your meals are higher in protein.
- **Exercise.** Usually a smaller slice than people expect. A hard gym session matters, but it won't out-train a takeaway, however hard you go.

Both sides are estimates

Food labels, tracking apps and calorie calculators are close rather than exact, and fitness watches are often a bit generous about what you've burned. That's fine, because you're not trying to hit a perfect number every day. You're looking for a direction that shows up on

the scale over a few weeks.

It's also why fat loss slows down as you go. You weigh less, so moving around costs less, and most people quietly move less when they're eating less without even realising. Nothing has broken. The gap has just got smaller, which is why I keep as close an eye on steps as I do on food.

Three things that get blamed instead

- **Carbs.** They don't make you fat on their own. They do hold water, so the scale jumps after a big pasta night, and that jump is water.
- **Eating late.** The time on the clock matters far less than the total for the day. If 9pm on the sofa is where the extra calories tend to come from, that's the pattern worth fixing.
- **A "broken" metabolism.** Your body does adapt a little when you diet, but it doesn't stop fat loss. When progress stalls, it's almost always because intake has crept up or movement has crept down, usually without you noticing.

Nothing has broken. The gap has just got smaller.

HOW I COACH IT

Fat loss is simple in principle and complicated in application. The maths fits on the back of a beer mat. Fitting it around a Friday night, the kids' tea and a work dinner is the hard part, and that's where most of my coaching time actually goes.

The other thing I want every client to understand is that energy balance works across weeks, not meals. Your results come from the average of your efforts. One big meal won't undo a good week, and one perfect day won't make one either.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

I ate out or had a takeaway roughly every 8 to 10 days, went on three family holidays, two stag dos and a wedding, and still lost 16kg by shoot day. None of those meals decided anything on their own. The weekly average did.

☒ DO THIS

Before you change anything, get two things in place. Check your average daily steps for the last week on your phone or watch and write it down, because chapter 7 builds on it. Then start weighing yourself each morning, after the toilet and before breakfast, and keep a note of it. Chapter 8 shows you how to read those numbers properly.

03

Your numbers

Before you change anything, you need three numbers: roughly what you burn in a day, how far below that to eat, and how fast you can realistically expect the scale to move.

Step 1: estimate maintenance

Maintenance is the amount you can eat while your weight holds steady. The Real-Life Calorie Calculator works it out from your age, height, weight, sex and how active you are, using a standard equation called Mifflin-St Jeor.

Treat that number as a good rough starting point rather than gospel. Any formula can easily be a couple of hundred calories out either way, because it can't see how much you fidget, how much your job has you on your feet, or what your last few diets have done. That's fine. Start there, and your weigh-ins over the next two or three weeks will tell you whether it needs nudging. Chapter 8 shows you how to read them.

Step 2: choose your deficit

I start most people at 20% below maintenance, and 30% is the harshest I'd go for the majority of people. I know bigger deficits look faster on paper, but hunger, sleep and training all get worse, and a plan that falls apart in week three will always lose to one you're still doing in week twelve.

Within that, I'd rather you diet on as many calories as you can while still getting results. More food means better training, better sleep and a diet that survives a birthday.

Step 3: set a range, not a number

Exact targets create failures that aren't real. Being 40 calories over isn't a bad day, and it's certainly no reason to write the rest of the week off. So every target gets a range:

- within 5% is spot on
- within 10% is a good day

What to expect

Aim to lose somewhere between 0.25% and 1.5% of your bodyweight a week, depending on how much you have to lose and how soon you need it. The first week or two will usually drop faster than that, because there's less food in your system and less stored water. Don't get too excited or too worried about it. It settles.

A worked example

A 40-year-old woman, 165cm and 80kg, on her feet a fair bit through the day.

The calculator puts her maintenance at about 2,280 calories. From there, this is how her target and ranges are worked out:

Step	Working	Result
20% deficit	$2,280 \times 0.20$	456 a day
Daily target	$2,280 - 456$	1,824, call it 1,820
Spot on (within 5%)	$1,824 \times 0.95 = 1,733$ and $1,824 \times 1.05 = 1,915$	1,730 to 1,920
Good day (within 10%)	$1,824 \times 0.90 = 1,642$ and $1,824 \times 1.10 = 2,006$	1,640 to 2,010

I round to the nearest 10 to keep it simple. So any day she lands between 1,730 and 1,920 is spot on, and anything from 1,640 to 2,010 is still a good day. Once the first fortnight settles, she should see roughly 0.4kg a week, about half a percent of her bodyweight. If her weigh-ins haven't moved after two or three weeks, the calculator was probably a little generous for her, and chapter 10 covers what to change.

Exact targets create failures that aren't real.

HOW I COACH IT

With my 1:1 clients, the calculator is only where we start. Every client has an assessment week before I write their plan. They track everything they eat and weigh in each morning, and I dig into all of it: what they eat and when, what the weekend really looks like, and how their body actually responds to it. That gives us a truly bespoke starting point, built around them rather than a formula.



COACHING WITH ME

If you're doing this on your own, the calculator number is a good rough starting point to work from, and your weigh-ins will fine-tune it. If you'd rather have a starting point built around you from day one, [book a free call with me.](#)

Book a free call →



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

In January the calculator put my maintenance at about 3,265 calories. I set myself 2,020 to 2,220, which is about 35% below, harsher than I'd go for most clients. I did that because I know I handle an aggressive diet well, and I tend to need lower calories than calculators expect before I see results. I lost about 9.5kg in the first 11 weeks. I wouldn't start a new client there, though, and chapter 12 explains why.

☒ DO THIS

Put your details into the [Real-Life Calorie Calculator](#) to get your starting number. Pick your deficit, write down your range, and keep it somewhere you'll see it every day. And if your weekends need a bit more room, the calculator can also split the same weekly total into lower weekdays and higher weekends, or one higher day a week.

04

Protein

If calories decide whether you lose weight, protein has a big say in what that weight actually is. You don't just want to end up a smaller version of yourself, you want to end up a leaner one, and protein is a big part of how you get there.

Why it matters when you're dieting

- **It protects your muscle.** In a deficit your body will happily use muscle for energy as well as fat. Getting enough protein, alongside the training in chapter 7, tells your body that muscle is still needed and it should hang on to it.
- **It keeps you fuller.** Protein takes longer to break down, so a meal built around it holds you for longer and you're not picking at the cupboards an hour later.
- **It costs more to digest.** Your body uses roughly 20 to 30% of protein's calories just processing it, compared with a much smaller share for carbs and fat.

How much

- **Women:** about 0.8g per lb of bodyweight, roughly 1.8g per kg.
- **Men:** about 1g per lb, roughly 2.2g per kg.

For the woman in chapter 3, that's $80\text{kg} \times 2.2 = 176\text{lb}$, then $176 \times 0.8 =$ about 140g of protein a day. The calculator works this out for you as well.

If you've got a lot of weight to lose, those numbers come out higher than you actually need. In that case I work from your estimated lean mass instead, and the Real-Life Calorie Calculator will do that for you if you add your neck and waist measurements (plus hips for women).

If you're nowhere near that number right now, don't jump straight to it. Going from 60g a day to 180g overnight is a quick way to an unhappy stomach and a diet you'll be sick of by the second week. Add 20 to 30g a week until you're in range, and give your body and your shopping list time to catch up.

Meal timing

Your daily total matters far more than when you eat it, so get that right first. Once it's there and you want to get a bit more out of it, these are the four rules I'd follow:

- **Spread it out.** 30g or more at a time, every 3 to 5 hours, does more for your muscles than one or two huge servings a day.
- **Have some around training.** About 30g in the 1 to 2 hours before or after a session.
- **Consider a bigger serving before bed.** You might benefit from 40g or more.
- **Fuel the session.** Some carbs before a workout can help you train harder and feel better doing it.

If that isn't always doable around work, kids and everything else you've got going on, don't worry about it. The daily total still comes first, and that's what gets you results.

You don't just want to end up a smaller version of yourself, you want to end up a leaner one.

HOW I COACH IT

At the start, most of my clients get two targets and only two: calories and protein. Carbs and fat sort themselves out inside the calories, apart from a fat minimum I'll cover in the next chapter. I keep it that simple on purpose. Fewer numbers means fewer ways to feel like you've failed.

The practical rule I give everyone is a protein anchor. Build every meal around a protein source first, then add everything else around it. Split across three or four meals, most people land somewhere in the 30 to 50g range per meal, which is a lot easier to picture than one big number for the day.

Most people have one meal that lets the whole day down. Find that one and fix it before you touch anything else, because it's nearly always the quickest win.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

My plan had me at 180 to 200g a day on normal days, with a floor of 150g on holiday and event days. That way, even when a day wasn't going to plan, I still knew the one number I was aiming for.

☒ DO THIS

Work out your number, then find your lowest-protein meal and add 20g to it this week. Just that one meal, nothing else. If you're not sure how, [Protein, Sorted](#) (free) will suggest swaps for that exact meal. And if the real problem is eating that much protein without getting bored, [my Protein Cookbook](#) has over 300 recipes with the macros already worked out.

05

Food without the rules

There are no good or bad foods. There are just foods that are more or less in line with your goal on a given day, and honestly, that's a far more useful way to think about it.

A slice of cake isn't a moral failing. It costs a few hundred calories that then aren't available for something else. Sometimes that's worth it and sometimes it isn't, and the decision is yours to make.

Calling a food "bad" turns eating it into a failure. One biscuit at 9pm becomes proof you can't do this, the rest of the evening goes with it, and before you know it the diet's in the bin until Monday. Take the label away and it's just a biscuit, with a cost you can plan for.

Building meals that keep you full

The same calories can leave you full or starving, depending on what they're made of. This is how I build meals, in four steps:

- 1 A protein anchor.** The base of the meal, from chapter 4.
- 2 High-volume food.** Veg, salad, fruit, soup: plenty on the plate for very few calories.
- 3 Some fibre.** Beans, lentils, wholegrains, berries, even popcorn.
- 4 The taste calories.** Sauces, oils, cheese. These are what make a meal worth eating, so keep them in, but measure them, because this is where calories sneak in without you noticing.

The common mistake I see is doing it backwards: planning the day around the treats, then wondering why you're starving by 3pm. As a starting point, leaving about 20% of your calories for the foods you'd miss works well for most people.

Single-ingredient foods

For everyday eating, aim for around 80% of your food to come from single-ingredient foods. These are things that are just one thing, like chicken, potatoes, rice, eggs or fruit. That leaves the other 20% for the foods you'd miss.

Protein	Carbs	Fats
Chicken, turkey and lean mince	Rice, potatoes and sweet potatoes	Avocado
Lean beef, steak and lamb	Oats and quinoa	Nuts and nut butters
Venison and duck	Bread, rice cakes and rice noodles	Butter
Turkey bacon and chicken sausages	Fruit	Extra virgin olive oil
Eggs and egg whites	Veg	Olives and hummus
All fish and shellfish	Cauliflower rice, butternut squash and celeriac	Oily fish and red meat
Greek yoghurt and whey protein	Milk	Dark chocolate and coconut

It isn't a complete list, so don't worry if your favourites aren't on it. Think of it as a starting point to build your meals from.

And here are some easy swaps that save calories without costing you much in the way of enjoyment:

- sugary drinks for zero-sugar ones
- full-fat dairy for lower-fat versions where you won't notice the difference
- more potatoes and wholegrain carbs, which fill you up better than most
- an extra portion of veg in whatever you're already cooking
- cauliflower or broccoli rice instead of rice, with a dash of soy sauce and garlic salt
- butternut squash or root veg mash in place of some of the potato, for a bigger plate
- courgette or celeriac chips in the air fryer
- some egg whites in place of whole eggs

- 0% Greek yoghurt and whey protein, which are high in protein with very little fat or carbs
- a low-calorie spray instead of oil when calories are getting tight

Watch the drinks too. Juices, smoothies, milky coffees and alcohol all count, and they go down very easily without filling you up.

Meal prep

You don't have to live out of plastic tubs of dry chicken and rice, but prepping some meals ahead makes the week a lot easier, especially on the days you get home late and tired. There are two ways to do it:

- **Daily.** Cook a double portion of tea and have the rest for lunch the next day. Or cook in the morning, if you're an early riser.
- **Weekly.** Cook the week's meals on one day that suits you, like a Sunday. Keep it simple and it's an hour or two at most.

None of these are essential, but they do make it a lot easier to stick to: digital kitchen scales, an air fryer, a slow cooker, a decent set of food containers, and pans that are actually non-stick.

Carbs, fat and alcohol

- **Carbs aren't the enemy.** Cut them right back and your training, mood and energy usually suffer, and so does how long you stick at it. Be wary of anyone who blames one food group for everything, especially if they're the one selling the cure.
- **Fat has a floor.** It does important jobs in the body, so I don't let it drop below about 0.6g per kg of bodyweight. It's calorie-dense, though, so it's the one to measure properly.
- **Alcohol fits if you plan it.** Count it like anything else, and expect the scale to be up the next morning. That's water, not fat, so don't panic.

A slice of cake isn't a moral failing.

HOW I COACH IT

There are no good or bad foods, just pros and cons for different goals. I teach my clients the why behind every choice, because the worst thing I could hear is that a client ordered a burger without the bun and, when someone asked why, could only say "because my coach told me to".

If the decision comes from you, you can make it again on holiday, at a wedding or on a random Tuesday when I'm not there. That's the whole point.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

I eat toast every day, and I did all the way through the 8 months. It fitted, so it stayed. If a food you love can fit too, keep it.

☒ DO THIS

Build tomorrow's tea using the four steps: protein first, then volume, then fibre, then the bits that make it taste good. If you'd rather have meals already built that way, [my Protein Cookbook](#) has over 300 of them.

06

Tracking

You don't have to track calories to lose fat, and I don't want you tracking forever. I use tracking early on because it's the quickest way to learn what you're actually eating, and it gives you honest numbers to work from. The aim is always to need it less.

Doing it properly

- **Weigh it.** Guessing portions is where most tracking goes wrong. A cheap set of kitchen scales will fix more than any app ever will.
- **Weigh it raw.** Log food uncooked unless the packet says otherwise, so 100g of pasta means 100g dry.
- **Weigh the jar.** For sauces and oils, put the jar on the scales, zero it, use what you need and put it back. The minus number is what you used.
- **Check the entry.** App databases are full of entries added by other users, and plenty of them are wrong. Scan the barcode, then check it against the label.
- **Log the small stuff.** Oil in the pan, milk in your coffee, the kids' leftovers, a handful of whatever's open in the cupboard. It all adds up.
- **Log it before you eat it.** That way nothing gets forgotten.
- **Log the weekend.** The days you least want to track are the ones you most need to. A tracked Monday to Thursday with a blank Friday to Sunday tells you very little, and the weekend is usually where the answer is.

To start, just track two things: calories and protein. Hit them within your ranges from chapter 3 and you're doing the job. Everything else can wait.

The aim is always to need it less.

HOW I COACH IT

When I review a client's food diary, I'm looking for the tells:

- **Round numbers.** 100g of chicken, 100g of rice and 100g of pasta usually means it was guessed, not weighed.
- **Generic entries.** "Chicken casserole" picked from the app could be 300 calories or 800, depending on who made it.
- **Days that look too neat,** or days that just stop at teatime.
- **Gaps.** A missing Saturday usually explains the scale on Monday.

None of that is about catching anyone out. The days that go least to plan are the ones we learn the most from, so they're the ones I most want to see. I'd much rather see an honest Saturday than a perfect-looking week that isn't real.

The longer-term plan is tracking, then spotting your own patterns, then needing it less and less. That might mean untracked meals out first, then untracked weekends, then just tracking now and again to check you haven't drifted.

I think of tracking as a dimmer switch rather than an on/off switch. When you're less in control of the food, because someone else cooked it or you're eating out, log a rough generic entry anyway. A rough entry that's 200 or 300 calories out on the odd day makes very little difference to your weekly average. Logging nothing because "I can't track it properly, so I'll just do whatever" makes a big one, and it hands over the control you've worked so hard to build.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

I didn't track a single one of the holidays, the stag dos or the wedding. I used a simple rule instead, which you'll find in chapter 9. Being able to make a sensible call without an app is exactly where tracking is meant to get you.

☒ DO THIS

Track seven days honestly, Saturday included. At the end, look for the one time of day or day of the week where most of the extra calories are coming from. That's your first thing to fix, and it's usually more obvious than you'd think.

07

Training and movement

You could lose weight without lifting anything. You'd just lose more muscle along with the fat, and end up smaller and softer rather than leaner. Lifting while you diet tells your body that muscle is still needed, so it holds on to it.

It does a lot more than that, too. Getting stronger week to week is one of the best confidence builders I know of. Training is there to build you up. It isn't a punishment for what you ate, and you never have to earn your food.

How much is enough

- **Three sessions a week is plenty for most people.** Three full-body sessions, or if you've got four days, an upper and lower split. Hitting each muscle more than once a week beats hammering it once.
- **10 to 15 hard sets per muscle per week** is a good starting point.
- **Mostly 8 to 12 reps.** Heavier main lifts can go lower, but if you're new I wouldn't go below 6.
- **Stop 1 to 2 reps short on the big lifts.** Smaller exercises like curls and lateral raises can go closer to failure.
- **Progress on purpose.** When you hit the top of the rep range, add a bit of weight, drop back to the bottom of the range and build back up.

Technique first

- **If your form starts to fall apart, end the set.** Extra reps with bad technique mean worse results and a higher chance of injury, and time out injured is the last thing you need when consistency is what gets you results.

- **Control the weight.** No bouncing, no momentum, no dive-bombing squats. If you're not sure, film a set and ask a coach to check it.
- **Use the rep range to pick the weight.** With a range of 8 to 12, failing at 6 or fewer means it's too heavy. If you could keep going well past 12, it's too light.

Putting your sessions together

With my 1:1 clients, I pick every exercise based on their training history, how they move, their build and anything that came up in their assessment. I can't do that for you from a guide. What I can do is show you how I'd structure your sessions so you get the most out of them. Treat what follows as rules of thumb rather than a programme.

Every session follows the same shape:

- **One or two main movements, done as straight sets.** 3 sets of 6 to 10 reps, resting 2 to 3 minutes between sets. These are the ones you push hardest on, so they go first while you're fresh.
- **Then one or two paired sets.** Two movements that don't compete with each other, done back to back: one set of the first, straight into one set of the second, then rest 60 to 90 seconds and go again.
- **About 45 to 50 minutes in total,** including a quick warm-up of a couple of lighter sets of your first exercise.

That order isn't an accident. If a day goes wrong and you only get 20 minutes, the main movements are the bit you've already done.

Picking your exercises

The templates use movement patterns rather than named exercises, so you can fill them in with whatever suits you. Here are some examples of each:

Movement	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Squat	Goblet squat, leg press	Hack squat, Smith machine squat	Barbell back squat, front squat
Hip hinge	Cable pull-through, kettlebell deadlift	Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	Barbell Romanian deadlift, trap bar deadlift
Hip extension	Glute bridge	Hip thrust machine, 45° back extension	Barbell hip thrust
Single leg	Split squat, step-up	Walking lunge, reverse lunge	Bulgarian split squat
Horizontal push	Machine chest press, incline push-up	Dumbbell bench press	Barbell bench press
Horizontal pull	Seated cable row	Chest-supported dumbbell row	Barbell bent-over row
Vertical push	Machine shoulder press	Seated dumbbell shoulder press	Standing barbell overhead press
Vertical pull	Lat pulldown	Assisted pull-up	Pull-up or chin-up
Core	Dead bug, plank	Pallof press, cable crunch	Ab wheel rollout, hanging leg raise

Pick the exercises you feel confident performing, and the ones that make the most logical sense for your setup. Beginner, intermediate and advanced is about how comfortable you are with the movement, not how fit you are, and there's no prize for picking the hardest one. A leg press you can push hard and safely will do far more for you than a barbell squat you're nervous about. For shoulders and arms, lateral raises, biceps curls and triceps pushdowns work at any level.

Pairing in a busy gym. Pair a machine with something you can do right next to it, or two dumbbell movements in the same spot. Tying up two machines at opposite ends of the gym at 6pm won't make you any friends. A few pairs that work well:

- Dumbbell Romanian deadlift and lat pulldown: grab the dumbbells and do them beside the pulldown.

- Split squat and seated dumbbell shoulder press: same dumbbells, same bench.
- Chest-supported dumbbell row and dead bug: one bench, one mat.
- Biceps curl and triceps pushdown on one cable stack: just swap the handle.
- Hamstring curl and calf raise: do the calf raises on a step next to the machine, holding a dumbbell.

The templates

Two days a week: alternate Full body A and B. Three days a week: rotate A, B and C. Four days a week: Upper 1, Lower 1, Upper 2, Lower 2. Keep the same exercises for a good few weeks so you can see yourself progress, rather than changing them every session.

2 OR 3 DAYS A WEEK: FULL BODY

Full body A	Full body B
1 Squat 3 × 6-10 · rest 2-3 min	1 Hip hinge 3 × 6-10 · rest 2-3 min
2 Horizontal push 3 × 6-10 · rest 2-3 min	2 Vertical pull 3 × 6-10 · rest 2-3 min
3a Hip hinge 3 × 8-12 · straight into 3b	3a Single leg 3 × 8-12 each side · straight into 3b
3b Vertical pull 3 × 8-12 · rest 60-90 sec	3b Vertical push 3 × 8-12 · rest 60-90 sec
4a Lateral raise 2-3 × 12-15 · straight into 4b	4a Horizontal pull 2-3 × 10-12 · straight into 4b
4b Core 2-3 × 10-15, or 30-45 sec · rest 60 sec	4b Core 2-3 × 10-15, or 30-45 sec · rest 60 sec

Full body C

1 Hip extension

3 × 8–10 · rest 2–3 min

2 Horizontal pull

3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min

3a Squat (a different one to A)

3 × 10–12 · straight into 3b

3b Horizontal push (a different one to A)

3 × 10–12 · rest 60–90 sec

4a Biceps curl

2–3 × 10–15 · straight into 4b

4b Triceps pushdown

2–3 × 10–15 · rest 60 sec

HOW TO READ THESE

1 and 2 are your main movements, done as straight sets.

3a and 3b, 4a and 4b are paired: one set of each, back to back, then rest.

Fill each slot from the movement table, and keep the whole session to about 45 to 50 minutes.

4 DAYS A WEEK: UPPER AND LOWER

Upper 1

1 Vertical pull

3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min

2 Horizontal push

3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min

3a Horizontal pull

3 × 8–12 · straight into 3b

3b Vertical push

3 × 8–12 · rest 60–90 sec

4a Lateral raise

2–3 × 12–15 · straight into 4b

4b Triceps pushdown

2–3 × 10–15 · rest 60 sec

Lower 1

1 Squat

3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min

2 Hip hinge

3 × 8–10 · rest 2–3 min

3a Single leg

3 × 8–12 each side · straight into 3b

3b Core

3 × 10–15, or 30–45 sec · rest 60–90 sec

4a Hamstring curl

2–3 × 10–15 · straight into 4b

4b Calf raise

2–3 × 10–15 · rest 60 sec

Upper 2	Lower 2
1 Vertical push 3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min	1 Hip hinge 3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min
2 Horizontal pull 3 × 6–10 · rest 2–3 min	2 Squat (a different one to Lower 1) 3 × 8–12 · rest 2–3 min
3a Horizontal push (an incline works well) 3 × 8–12 · straight into 3b	3a Hip extension 3 × 10–12 · straight into 3b
3b Vertical pull 3 × 8–12 · rest 60–90 sec	3b Core 3 × 10–15, or 30–45 sec · rest 60–90 sec
4a Biceps curl 2–3 × 10–15 · straight into 4b	4a Single leg 2–3 × 10–12 each side · straight into 4b
4b Core 2–3 × 10–15, or 30–45 sec · rest 60 sec	4b Calf raise 2–3 × 10–15 · rest 60 sec

When life gets in the way

If you've only got 20 minutes, do the first two exercises of the session. You'll still get somewhere around 60 to 80% of the benefit, which is a lot better than skipping it altogether.

If you miss a session, don't try to double up later in the week to make up for it. Just move on, and work out what would make it easier next time.

Steps before cardio

Take your current daily step average and add 1,000 to 2,000 to it. For most people that does more than extra cardio, and it's far easier to fit around work and family.

I keep cardio in reserve. When fat loss stalls, adding a session or 10 more minutes is one of the levers in chapter 10. If you start with all of it, there's nothing left to add when you actually need it.

Training is there to build you up. It isn't a punishment for what you ate.

HOW I COACH IT

The plan has to fit the week you actually have, not the one you wish you had. Three sessions you do every week beat five that fall apart by Wednesday, so I build around your diary, your gym and how long you've really got. Then I make sure there's a short version for the days that go wrong, because some of them will.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

My plan was five 30-minute gym sessions Monday to Friday, three runs a week and 10,000 to 12,000 steps a day. That's what fitted my week and my goals, not a minimum I'd expect from you. When I fell behind plan in the summer, I let the running build, up to a long run of about 13km, rather than cutting my food further.

☒ DO THIS

Write down the 20-minute version of your next session: the first two exercises, with sets and reps. That way, even a bad day still counts.

08

Reading your progress

The scale is useful information, but it isn't the be-all and end-all. It weighs everything at once: fat, muscle, water, the food still in your system. Most of the day-to-day changes you see have nothing to do with fat, so try not to let one number make or break your morning.

Why the scale jumps around

- **Food.** A big meal is still physically in you the next morning.
- **Carbs.** Every gram of carbohydrate your body stores holds roughly 3g of water with it.
- **Salt.** A salty takeaway makes you hold on to water for a day or two.
- **Training.** Sore muscles hold fluid while they repair, especially after a hard leg session.
- **Your cycle.** Many women see the scale climb in the days before a period, then drop again.

None of these is fat. If you're a kilo heavier the morning after a pizza, you haven't made a kilo of fat overnight. That isn't how fat works, so don't let it knock you off course.

How to weigh

Weigh yourself every morning after the toilet and before you eat or drink anything. Then ignore the daily number and look at the weekly average. Daily weights are noisy; the average tells you the direction.

Here's an example of two weeks of morning weigh-ins, with a takeaway on the second Friday night:

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Average
Week 1	81.4	81.2	81.3	81.0	80.9	81.1	81.2	81.2
Week 2	80.9	80.8	80.6	80.7	80.5	81.6	81.0	80.9

That Saturday is the heaviest reading of the whole fortnight, 1.1kg up on the day before, and on its own it looks like a step backwards. But the weekly average still came down from 81.2kg to 80.9kg, and by Sunday the takeaway was already on its way back out. That's why you judge the average, not the day.

Three measures, not one

In any given week, one measure will stall while the others move, which is why I never rely on just one. I use three:

- 1** **Waist**, with a tape, at the same point each time.
- 2** **Average weight** for the week.
- 3** **Photos** from the front, side and back, in the same light and the same clothes, so you're comparing like with like.

If you have periods, compare your weight at the same point in each cycle rather than this week against last week. Otherwise you're just comparing two different amounts of water.

What to expect, and when

- **Weeks 1 to 2:** not much in the mirror, especially in the places you keep checking.
- **Weeks 4 to 6:** probably no big change in how clothes fit yet.
- **From about week 6:** you start to notice changes in places you weren't even looking at.

Progress comes in waves rather than a straight line. A flat week followed by a big drop is completely normal, so if you have a week where nothing seems to move, trust the process and keep going.

Daily weights are noisy; the average tells you the direction.

HOW I COACH IT

I never change a plan off the back of one week. It takes two weeks of all three measures standing still before I call it a real plateau, and chapter 10 covers what to do then.

I also count the wins the scale can't see: energy, sleep, strength in the gym, how your clothes fit. One of my clients, Juliana, saw her body shape change far more than her weight did across her fat loss phase. If she'd judged it on the scale alone, she'd have thought it wasn't working.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

After the wedding my weight peaked at 85.4kg on 18 May. Four days later it was 82.2kg. After Center Parcs I weighed 78.4kg, and the very next morning 77.1kg. Neither spike was fat, and neither one changed my plan. If spikes like that get to you, they got to me too, and chapter 12 talks about how I dealt with it.

☒ DO THIS

Start all three today: measure your waist, take your photos, and weigh yourself tomorrow morning. Every Sunday, write down the weekly average and leave the daily numbers alone.



PART 3

Making it work in real life

09 Meals out, holidays and social life

10 Bad weeks and plateaus

11 Ending the diet

09

Meals out, holidays and social life

Anyone can lose weight if they cancel every meal out, every night out and every holiday. It just doesn't teach you anything, and the weight comes back the first time life goes back to normal. I'd rather you learn to lose fat with all of it still in the diary.

Not every event is the same

I sort events into three levels, and each one gets a different plan.

Level	How often	The plan
1. Regular	Weekly meals out, Friday takeaways	Still track. Stay within your calories by eating a bit lighter earlier in the day, or taking a little off the day or two around it
2. Occasional	Every few months: a big birthday meal, a weekend away	Bank some calories across the week before and after. Accept the scale will wobble
3. Rare	Once or twice a year: weddings, milestone birthdays, holidays	Enjoy it. Progress pauses for a few days. Get straight back to normal afterwards

Banking calories

Banking means taking a little off several days to free up room for one. Taking 150 calories off four days frees up 600 for Saturday. Spread it thinly, though. Starving yourself all day before a meal out sounds sensible, but it usually ends with you eating twice as much once you get there.

Here's how that looks for the woman from chapter 3, who's on 1,820 a day:

Day	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Week
Normal week	1,820	1,820	1,820	1,820	1,820	1,820	1,820	12,740
Banked week	1,670	1,670	1,670	1,670	1,820	2,420	1,820	12,740

Same weekly total, but 600 more on the day it matters, and only 150 less on the days she's banking.

As the diet goes on

As your calories come down, there's less room for meals out. That's just part of having less to work with. It's for a fixed stretch, not forever, and the room comes back once the diet ends.

Tracking a meal with no numbers

Most big chains publish their calories, so use those when you can. When they don't, a rough number still beats no number at all:

- Search your tracking app for a supermarket premium-range version of the meal, or of each part of it (Tesco Finest, if you're in the UK). They're made with richer ingredients, so they land closer to restaurant food.
- Add 1 tablespoon of oil for the cooking, or 2 if it looks greasy. Restaurants use plenty, and it adds up quickly.
- Don't worry about being exact. Logging 200g of chips when you had 220g makes no real difference to your week.

Portion sizes by hand

No idea what it weighed? Use your hand. It's always with you, and it's close enough:

Your hand	Food	Roughly
1 palm	Meat or fish	150g raw
1 fist	Rice or pasta	50g dry
1 fist	Potato	150g raw
1 handful	Veg	80g

A chicken curry with rice and a bit of naan might go in as a palm of chicken (150g chicken breast), a fist of rice (50g dry basmati), a quarter of a premium-range naan, half a jar of premium jalfrezi sauce, a handful of peppers (80g) and a tablespoon of oil.

Alcohol

It fits if it's in the numbers. Plan the drinks into the day like anything else, and expect the scale to be up the next morning from water rather than fat.

Holidays

I didn't track a single holiday. I used one rule instead:

- stay as active as you can
- pick one thing each day you really want
- eat until you're satisfied, not stuffed

Here's how that looked in practice on three very different trips.

Portugal, a stag do. The hardest of the three. I was with all my mates and a lot less in control of where we ate and drank. I knew which nights would be heaviest for drinking, so I kept the food lighter during the day. I walked places instead of getting taxis where I could, and the activities we'd booked kept us moving. For drinks I picked ones I enjoyed that weren't as heavy, like beers or spirits with light mixers, and I stayed away from cocktails.

Cornwall, a family holiday. We had set nights for meals out. Breakfast stayed routine, cereal or toast, which is only a few hundred calories. The days were busy: on the beach, in the sea with my son, rock jumping, bike rides. At the meal out I'd have a starter or a

dessert, not both. I ate slowly, drank slowly and stopped when I was comfortable rather than stuffed. Taking my time gave my body a chance to register what I'd eaten, and I got to enjoy the conversation and the atmosphere.

Center Parcs, another family holiday. The same again. Lots of activity, and one thing each day I really wanted rather than whatever was there because it was there. I didn't order a course I'd stopped wanting, and I didn't finish a plate just because I'd paid for it.

I'd rather you learn to lose fat with all of it still in the diary.

HOW I COACH IT

Before any big event, I ask my clients one question: what do you want to get out of it? If you want to stay on track, we look at where you'll be eating and find options that fit. If you want to switch off and enjoy it, that's absolutely fine too, and we sort it out when you're back.

Either way, you've made the decision. You don't come home feeling guilty, because nothing went wrong. You did exactly what you planned to do.

That matters because life isn't going to stop while you lose weight. If your plan only works when nothing's happening, you won't hold on to the results, and you'll be back to square one the first time something comes up.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

- **Portugal stag do, then the Lakes:** ten untracked days. My last weigh-in before was 82.7kg, and I was 83.2kg the morning after I got back.
- **Cornwall:** 79.2kg before, 80.1kg after, and 78.8kg four days later.
- **Kefalonia, after the shoot:** 82.8kg the morning after we landed, 80kg by the end of that week.

Cornwall and Kefalonia washed out within days. Portugal and the Lakes ran straight into another stag do and the wedding, so that one took a few weeks to settle, but I was below my pre-trip weight again by 22 May.

☒ DO THIS

Look at the next month in your diary. Put every event into one of the three levels, and decide now what you want to get out of each one, before you're sat at the table.

10

Bad weeks and plateaus

You will have bad weeks. Everyone does, me included, and anyone who tells you otherwise isn't being honest with you. What decides your results is what happens next.

After a bad day or a bad week

The meal out usually isn't the expensive part. What really costs you is turning it into "I've blown it, I'll start again on Monday" and writing off the next three days along with it. So:

- **Just win the next meal.** Not tomorrow, not Monday. The next meal, in line with your goal. Then the one after that.
- **Remember the average.** One bad week inside a month of decent ones barely shows up in the bigger picture.
- **Work out where it started.** Look for the first domino, without beating yourself up about it. A late meeting, no lunch, a 4pm biscuit raid, then a takeaway because you were starving and fed up.

It probably isn't discipline

If you go off track in the same place every week, more willpower isn't the fix. It's usually a sign the plan doesn't fit that part of your week: too few calories during the week, no plan for Friday night, or a target that only works when nothing's happening. Fix the plan and the "discipline problem" often disappears with it.

When a plateau is real

A plateau isn't one heavy weigh-in or one flat week. I only call it a real one when all three measures from chapter 8 (waist, weekly average weight and photos) have stood still for two weeks. Then I change one thing at a time:

- **First, food.** Take 100 to 150 calories off your daily target, mostly from carbs with a little from fat.
- **Next time, movement.** Add about 1,000 steps a day, an extra cardio session, or 10 minutes onto one you already do.

For the woman from chapter 3, taking 100 calories off moves her from 1,820 to 1,720 a day. Split roughly three parts carbs to one part fat, that's about 20g of carbs and 3g of fat less each day. Her new ranges come from the same sums as before:

Range	Working	New range
Spot on (within 5%)	$1,720 \times 0.95 = 1,634$ and $1,720 \times 1.05 = 1,806$	1,630 to 1,810
Good day (within 10%)	$1,720 \times 0.90 = 1,548$ and $1,720 \times 1.10 = 1,892$	1,550 to 1,890

I alternate the two rather than doing both at once. That keeps something in reserve for next time, and it stops calories sliding lower and lower until the whole plan falls apart.

It works the other way too. If you're losing faster than you should after the first few weeks, or your training, sleep and mood are all heading downhill, the answer is usually more food, not less. I know that can feel backwards, but a diet you can't keep up won't get you anywhere.

Missed sessions

One missed week is just life. Two in a row is worth keeping an eye on. Three means the plan doesn't fit, and it's time to change it rather than try harder at it.

Just win the next meal.

HOW I COACH IT

When a client has had a good week, I tell them what to do next. When they've had a bad one, I ask them to talk me through the week: what happened, and where did it start? Often the cause has nothing to do with food or training, and the plan that comes out of that conversation is one they've helped build, so they're far more likely to stick to it.

And I won't change a plan off the back of one bad week. Knowing when to leave something alone is the hardest call to make on your own, and it's the one people most often get wrong.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

From mid-March to early June my weight barely moved, through two stag dos, a family holiday and a wedding. To be honest, that was partly planned and partly drift. The idea was an aggressive start, then practising holding the result through a busy social stretch, then a second diet into the shoot. I didn't slash calories to force it, and the second diet started at 83.8kg on 4 May, not back at 90.

The toughest point was coming back from Portugal and the Lakes. The scale was up, the shoot was getting closer, and I started to think I wouldn't be lean enough in time. Mentally, that was a tough one, and I felt pretty despondent about it.

What got me back on track was reminding myself what was in that number. Water retention, more food in my system, different foods from usual, and none of my normal training. I'd still been moving, just not the way or as hard as I usually train. Most of it would go once I was back in my routine.

I also reminded myself what the holidays were for. They were never meant to be fat loss weeks. They were for enjoying and making memories, and my job was to limit the impact.

Fat loss isn't linear either. Your body doesn't lose the same amount every week on the same calories, and the scale can sit still for a few weeks and then drop in one go. So I got back into my routine and gave it time. By 22 May I was below my pre-trip weight again.

☒ DO THIS

Think back to your last bad week and trace it back to where it started. Write down the first domino, and one thing you'd do differently the next time it happens.



COACHING WITH ME

If you'd like someone in your corner to make those calls with you,
[book a free call with me.](#)

Book a free call →

11

Ending the diet

Most diets have an end date and no plan for the day after it. That's where most of the weight comes back, and it's why so many people end up dieting on and off for years.

Why people regain

- They go straight back to how they ate before, which is how they got there in the first place.
- They drop everything that was working: the meals, the routine, the weigh-ins.
- Hunger and food noise are at their loudest right at the end of a diet, just when the structure disappears.

How to come out of it

- **Add food straight away, but not all of it.** A couple of hundred calories a day is enough to feel the difference without losing control.
- **Keep the same structure.** Same meals, same timings, same foods, just more of them. The structure is what carries you through the first few weeks.
- **Keep measuring.** Same weigh-ins, same waist and photos. What changes is what counts as a win.
- **Pick the next goal before this one ends.** Getting stronger, running further, building some muscle. Something to work towards that isn't the scale.

For the woman from chapter 3, if she finishes her diet on 1,720 a day, she'd go straight up by about 200 to roughly 1,920. Same breakfast, same lunch, same tea, just a bit more on the plate: a slightly bigger portion of rice or potatoes, an extra slice of toast, or a yoghurt

she'd been leaving out. The structure stays exactly as it was. Only the amounts change.

Happy weight and shoot weight

The weight you hit for a deadline and the weight you live at aren't always the same, and they don't need to be. My shoot weight was 75.9kg. My happy weight, the one I can comfortably hold, is 78 to 79kg, and that's what I aim for now.

The weight you hit for a deadline and the weight you live at aren't always the same.

HOW I COACH IT

By the end of a diet we have a good idea where a client's maintenance is. Holding it still takes some work, but it's immediately easier than dieting, and they're in a far better position to keep the result than they've ever been before.

I start talking about the next phase a few weeks before the current one ends. More energy, better sleep, personal bests in the gym, or building shape somewhere they've always wanted it. There's always a next thing.



FROM MY 8 MONTHS

For the first couple of weeks after the shoot, I kept my food routine and ate slightly more of what I was already eating. Cravings weren't high, because the foods I'd normally crave had been part of my diet all along.

That's why I'm a big fan of flexible dieting done properly. Most people use it backwards, to see how much junk they can fit into their calories, then wonder why they're starving. Most of the time your calories still need to come from nutritious, filling food. The things you really fancy get blended in for the occasions that matter, and you stay accountable to your targets. Making that call yourself, whether a food is worth the calories, keeps you in the driving seat instead of your cravings.

A week after the shoot I was back at 78 to 79kg. Kefalonia took me to 82.8kg for a morning, I was 80kg by the end of that week, and I'm working back to 78 to 79kg now.

My next goal is a sub-20 minute 5k.

For eight months, a lower number on the scale and a bit more definition meant a good week. Coming out of the diet, I want goals that have nothing to do with how I look, to reset where my focus goes. The process was very looks-focused, and I know how I feel can end up tied to how lean I am. I'm more than what I see in the mirror, and it's fine to look a bit softer or heavier in this phase, because that's what this phase needs.

☒ DO THIS

Before your diet ends, write down two things: what a normal week of eating will look like at maintenance, and the next goal you'll work towards. Don't leave it until the day after to figure it out.



PART 4

Proof and next steps

12 My 8 months in full

13 Client results

14 How I coach

15 What next

12

My 8 months in full

This is the whole thing, numbers included, with the parts I'd copy and the parts I wouldn't. I haven't tidied it up to look better than it was.

This wasn't my first diet



An earlier diet, around 2020.



Another, in 2023.



These photos are from years before this one, the first from around 2020 and the second from 2023. Each diet was part of me refining my approach, working out what actually held up in real life and what didn't, until I landed on the way I diet now, and the approach in this guide.

Before it started

In the second half of 2025 I had two surgeries and a foot injury, and coming off some of my medication around the surgeries caused issues with my ulcerative colitis. Mentally, it was a tough time. I booked the shoot while I was still recovering from the second one. On 1 January I weighed 91.8kg.

Phase 1: a fast start (January to mid-March)

- The plan: 2,020 to 2,220 calories a day, about 35% below my calculated maintenance of 3,265, a protein target of 174 to 194g, and 12,000 steps.
- Back to training and running after months off.
- 91.8kg to around 82kg in 11 weeks.

I went aggressive because I know I handle it well, I tend to need lower calories than calculators expect, and I had a date set in stone to hit.

My training stayed much the same all the way through: five 30-minute gym sessions a week. For most of it I ran an upper/lower split, then switched to a full-body split towards the end, to keep it interesting and spread my lower-body work across the week.

Every session was built on the foundations: a vertical and a horizontal push and pull, a lower-body push and pull, and some core bracing and rotation work. Upper days finished with accessory supersets or giant sets. Lower days were mostly machines, to work around my foot. For cardio I mainly used the cross trainer, because I enjoyed it more than the StairMaster.

Phase 2: holding steady (mid-March to early June)

- My weekly average was about 82.3kg in mid-March and about 82.4kg at the start of June.
- In between: the Portugal stag do and the Lakes, the Liverpool stag do and the wedding. I peaked at 85.4kg on 18 May and was 82.2kg four days later.
- Part planned maintenance, part drift. The point was to practise holding a result through the busiest social stretch of my year.

I didn't formally track in this phase. I ate more intuitively, and on some days I logged the day afterwards to review it: how did I feel, was I happy with it, did anything need adjusting? Years of tracking meant I had a good rule-of-thumb idea of what most things cost, which is

exactly where I want my clients to get to.

Phase 3: the second diet (May to August)

- The plan from 4 May, at 83.8kg: calories set by the day, from 1,900 to 2,050 on rest days up to 2,300 to 2,500 on long-run days. Protein 180 to 200g, with a floor of 150g on event days. Five 30-minute gym sessions, three runs and 10,000 to 12,000 steps.
- I fell behind the plan: about 82.5kg against a planned 80.9kg in the first week of June, and 78.2kg against 76.6kg in mid-August. I kept the calories as written and let the running build, up to a long run of about 13km.
- Cornwall: 79.2kg, then 80.1kg, then 78.8kg four days later. My birthday: 77.0kg, then 79.3kg, then 77.8kg four days later. Center Parcs: 77.8kg, then 78.4kg, then 77.1kg the next day.

Shoot week

I dropped some water for the photos. I was 78.4kg on 18 August and 75.9kg on the 22nd, and back at 78 to 79kg a week later.

I kept shoot week as routine as I could, and I didn't go aggressive with the water or the carbs.

- **Food:** my usual foods, just in different amounts to fit the carbs.
- **Water:** about 4 litres a day on the Tuesday and Wednesday, tapering to about 2 litres on the Friday and just over a litre on shoot day.
- **Carbs:** pulled back to about 110 to 150g on the Tuesday and Wednesday, with calories around 1,400 to 1,600. Then I front-loaded the carb-up: about 435g on the Thursday and 380g on the Friday, with fat kept to about 50g a day. On shoot day I had about 515g, including a lot of gummy sweets during the shoot, which was fantastic.
- **Training:** I tapered the cardio off the week before and stopped training legs most of a week out, to give them time to recover. After that it was just upper-body pump work, circuits of 15 to 20 reps to keep blood flowing into the muscles.

I judged it day by day, based on how my body was responding, rather than following a set script.

What I'd copy

- Planning around every event instead of cancelling them.
- A protein floor for the days that aren't going to plan.
- Judging the weekly average and leaving the spikes alone.
- Moving more instead of cutting food further when progress slowed.
- The holiday rule from chapter 9.

What I wouldn't ask a client to copy

- **January's deficit.** 35% is harsher than I'd go for most people I've just started working with. I knew how my body responds. With a new client I'd start at 20% and learn how theirs does.
- **Shoot-week water.** It's fine for one day of photos and pointless for a normal goal. It gives you a number you won't live at.

The hardest part

The days after a social event, when I'd eaten food I had less control over. Watching the scale spike for a few days is hard. We're naturally drawn to progress markers that are easy to read, and down means good. Even knowing what I know, I had to keep reminding myself that the number would be higher for a while, and that plenty besides fat goes into it.

The deeper I got into the diet, the less I could trust my own eyes. People would tell me I was looking lean, then I'd look in the mirror and feel like I had loads of fat to lose. Your mind plays tricks on you, and you're rarely the best judge of your own progress. That's why it helps so much to have an extra set of eyes reviewing your photos, from someone less emotionally invested with an outside view.

I think I handled it well, and experience is the reason. I've coached a lot of people through the same moments, and I could hear myself saying the things clients have said to me hundreds of times. Having that to lean on made it far easier to apply to myself.

What I'd do differently

I could pick holes in plenty of it. I could have been stricter here, or tighter there. I knew from the start it wasn't going to be a perfect prep, and waiting for the perfect time is what held me back before. With that much going on it was never the ideal moment, but I knew I

needed to change, so I started anyway.

There are things I'd do better, and I'm still really happy with the result. That's what I take from it. I'm starting from a much better place now because I got on with it instead of waiting for a quieter year, and I'm grateful I did.



COACHING WITH ME

If you'd like this approach built around your own week and your own life, [book a free call with me.](#)

Book a free call →

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Client results

Two people, two very different problems. What they have in common is that the plan changed to fit them, not the other way round, which is how it should always be.

Greg: perfect, then nothing, then perfect again



Greg, before and after.

Greg was in his mid-20s and no stranger to the gym. He'd been training for years, researched everything he could get his hands on online, and had soaked up more than enough knowledge to make the changes he wanted.

But fat loss doesn't always work the same in real life as it does on paper. Greg would put the work in all week, then the weekend would undo it. He struggled to find a balance between blowing off steam after a long week and not obliterating everything he'd done Monday to Friday. The first time we worked together he lost about 18kg, but between coaching spells he put about 20kg back on.

He was spinning his wheels. He thought motivation was the missing piece, and watched motivational videos to find it. What he actually needed wasn't another set of calories or another workout plan. It was real accountability, and coaching to help him recognise the behaviour patterns that kept showing up and derailing his results.

The second time he told me he had everything sorted, I told him straight: I could keep taking his money while he yo-yoed up and down, but it wasn't going to get him what he actually wanted.

So we didn't start another diet. We did a maintenance phase instead, with strength goals for his shoulders and chest to aim at. He did the maintenance phase and kept training. When he later stopped coaching for financial reasons, his weight crept up slightly but nowhere near where it had been.

Kirsty: "you'll never run or lift"



Kirsty, before and after.

When Kirsty came to me she was overweight, anxious in the gym, and had been told by doctors she'd never run or lift weights because of her back.

We started where she was. At first, just walking through the gym doors was a struggle. Over two years she got stronger week by week, lost 26kg, and worked through movements and pain that would once have stopped her. She took on powerlifting, then a charity boxing match, then strongwoman, where she's done her first competition and is still training. She's in the strongest, most confident shape of her life.

The weight was the smaller part of it. Watching her believe she was capable of things she'd been told she'd never do is the result I'm proudest of.

More results



David



Katy



James



Gary



Holly



Rich



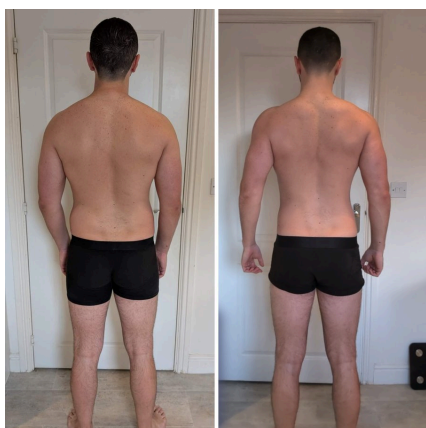
Jamie



Name withheld



Ian



Chris



Name withheld



Name withheld

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How I coach

Everything in this guide is free, and it's enough to make real progress on your own. So why would anyone pay for coaching?



Coaching a client in the gym.

Because information was never the problem. If knowing what to do were enough, anyone could Google their way to the body they want. Most people I work with already know a fair bit. What they're missing is help applying it on a Tuesday when work runs late, at a wedding, or in the week everything goes sideways, and someone in their corner who'll notice before one bad week turns into a bad month.

When you hire me, you get me.

Three things I hold to

- **You understand the why.** I'd rather you could make a good decision without me than follow rules you don't understand.
- **I start with the full picture.** No plan gets written until I know your history, your week and what's gone wrong before.
- **Accountability beats information.** A plan you actually follow beats a perfect one you don't.

What working with me looks like

An in-depth background questionnaire, so your plan is built around your life, your history and your goals rather than a template.

An assessment week of your normal eating and weigh-ins, so your numbers come from your real week, not a formula.

A video from me walking you through your plan and why each part is there, so you know what you're doing and why it works.

Weekly check-ins, each starting with your three biggest wins and your one biggest struggle. I review and update your plan every week, so small problems get fixed before they grow.

A direct line to me between check-ins. When you hire me, you get me. There's no team of junior coaches.

Your programme, check-ins and progress in the TETraining app, so everything's in one place.

Online wherever you are, or in person if you're local to me.

No minimum term beyond the month you've paid for.

Who it's for

-
- ✓ **You've lost weight before, maybe more than once,** and you're tired of watching it come back.
-
- ✓ **You're good all week, then the weekend undoes it,** and you can't work out how to have both.

-
- ✓ **You already know a fair bit**, but knowing hasn't turned into the body you want.
-
- ✓ **Your life is busy** with work, family and plans, and you're not willing to put it all on hold to get results.
-
- ✓ **You want to understand what you're doing and why**, so you can keep doing it long after the diet ends.
-
- ✓ **You're ready to be honest about what's actually happening**, including the bits that don't go to plan.
-

Who it isn't for

- ✗ **You want a meal plan to follow without ever asking why.**
-
- ✗ **You want to lose as much as possible in four weeks**, whatever it costs.
-
- ✗ **You're looking for a quick fix or a secret hack.** There isn't one, and I won't pretend otherwise.
-
- ✗ **You're not ready to be honest in your check-ins.** I can only coach what I can see.
-
- ✗ **You want someone to do it for you.** I'll guide you every step of the way, but you still have to take the steps.
-

If you're dealing with something medical, I'll work alongside your GP or specialist, never instead of them.

What happens next

If most of that first list sounds like you, coaching could be the best move you make for your results. There's no secret plan behind that. What changes is that you'd have someone in your corner who knows what to look for, keeps you accountable when life gets messy, and helps you turn what you already know into results that actually last.



COACHING WITH ME

Book a free call with me. We'll talk about where you are, what's got in the way before, and whether coaching with me is the right fit. If it isn't, I'll be honest and tell you.

Book a free call →

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What next

You've now got everything you need to start. Here are three ways to go from here, depending on how much help you want.

1. Do it yourself

Go back to the quick start at the front of this guide, and use the free tools:

- [The Real-Life Calorie Calculator](#) for your starting numbers
- [Protein, Sorted](#) to fix your lowest-protein meal
- [The Fat Loss Leak Finder](#), a short quiz that shows what's been tripping you up so far

Over the next 30 days I'll also send you a short email each day, each one taking a chapter of this guide a step further, so keep an eye on your inbox.

2. The Protein Cookbook

Over 300 high-protein recipes with the macros already worked out, so hitting your protein doesn't mean eating the same three meals on repeat. £8.99. [Get the Protein Cookbook](#).

3. A free call with me



COACHING WITH ME

Picture six months from now: leaner, stronger, comfortable in your clothes, and you didn't cancel a single meal out to get there. If you'd like me in your corner for that, building all of this around your life and keeping you on track week to week, [book a free call](#).

Book a free call →

You don't need to put your life on hold to get there. You just need to start.

Whichever you choose, make it today. Not Monday.



Leaner, stronger, and still living your life. Start today, not Monday.

Picture six months from now: comfortable in your clothes, proud of what you see in the mirror, and you didn't cancel a single meal out to get there. If you'd like me in your corner for that, book a free call.

[Book a free call →](#)

Real-Life Calorie Calculator

calories.thomasedwardstraining.com

Protein, Sorted

tetproteinsorted.netlify.app

The Fat Loss Leak Finder

quiz.thomasedwardstraining.com

The Protein Cookbook

Over 300 recipes, £8.99