



Tarah Valenti, RDN

# BUILD

Your Weight Loss Success Plan

## INTRO

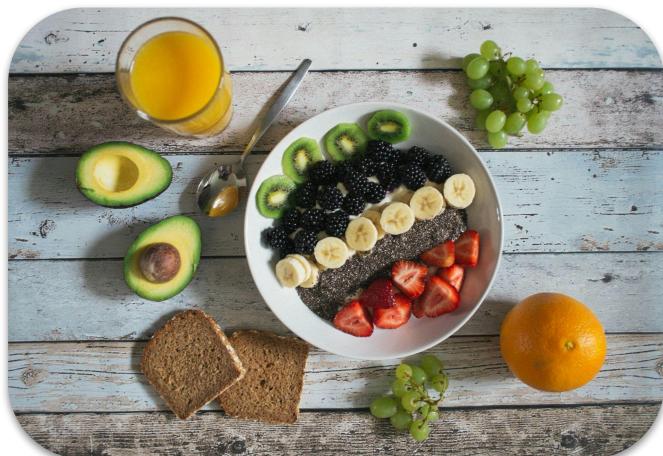
Welcome to the BUILD weight loss program! I'm so glad you decided to take this step toward achieving a healthy weight and feeling like your best and healthiest self! I'm Tarah Valenti, a registered dietitian, and I've helped so many clients transform their health by building sustainable habits and fostering a positive relationship with food – and I want to help you do the same.

Over the next four weeks, I'll guide you through how to build your very own Weight Loss Success Plan. We'll cover nutritional science, evidence-based behavior changes, meal planning, how to cook delicious balanced meals, fitness planning, all the things!

Starting with a foundation week, we'll focus on mastering each of the macros one at a time, stacking bricks to build a balanced weight loss plan. This is an important piece of the *BUILD* ethos – stacking positive nutrition principles, not cutting out or restricting “bad” foods. By the end of the program you'll be a pro at building balanced meals, and well on your way to a lifestyle that supports long-term healthy weight.

A successful weight loss journey is a long-term endeavor, but you can learn the skills and knowledge you need in my 4-week program. So, let's ditch the restrictive no-this, no-that diets and BUILD a more sustainable and successful weight loss plan, for you!

- Tarah



### TARAH VALENTI

*Registered Dietitian*

I'm a registered dietitian located in the Bay Area, California. My approach to nutrition is a marriage between my love for science and passion for facilitating personal growth.

Using an evidence-based approach, I strive to dispel the myths of popular nutrition media, and to create customized nutrition and wellness plans that are both realistic and effective.

I believe that we can all unveil a brighter, happier self with the power of nutrition.

<https://www.tarahvenrd.com/>



### HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is designed to accompany the video program. It can be helpful to use both together to reflect and fully understand the key learnings of each lesson and exercise.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

1. You'll start the first week by building out your weight loss goals and expectations to create a healthy foundation.
2. From there, you'll work on mastering one macronutrient at a time and gradually build a healthy eating and fitness plan that's just for you.

- Each week will include recipe ideas that help you practice and understand how to build balanced meals that support weight loss. You'll love building your own tailored nutrition plan to support your weight loss.
- You'll also learn to build a sustainable fitness plan, drawing on Grokker's vast library of fitness videos to inspire and guide you. So, let's get to it!
- If you have any questions, you can connect with me and share your questions in the comments section underneath each video.

## WEIGHT LOSS GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

We're starting with the foundations of weight loss, setting goals and expectations that actually set you up for success. Healthy weight loss isn't about extremes or quick fixes; it's about steady progress through small, sustainable changes that fit your real life.

The CDC recommends aiming for **1-2 pounds per week**, which usually means a calorie deficit of about 500–1,000 calories a day. For some people, that can be as simple as trading sugary drinks for water, eating more protein and fiber, and moving a little more.

Also remember that the only goal isn't just to shrink the number on the scale, it's to maintain muscle while losing body fat. Strength training a few times a week and eating enough protein – about **1.2-2.0 grams per kg of body weight** – helps protect lean muscle and keeps you feeling full and strong.

As you set your weight loss goals, make them **specific and realistic**, something like “I'll double my protein intake, limit fried foods to once a week, and lift weights three times per week.”

Then, give yourself a **sustainable timeline** such as six months, not six weeks, to see meaningful change. The healthiest calorie deficit is one you can live with, often 300–500 calories below maintenance. You'll know it's right if you sometimes feel a little hungry, but still energetic, sleep well, and lose about  $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 pound a week on average.

Remember that your body adapts as you lose weight, so some weeks will be slower than others. Plateaus aren't failures, they're signals. Make small tweaks like adding another walk or double-checking portions, but don't scrap your plan. If your habits are consistent, the results will follow.

## DAY 1

### HOMEWORK: OUTCOME & GOALS

Write down one main outcome goal and three behavior goals for your journey.



Example: “**Lose 10 pounds over six months by eating 30 grams of protein at each meal, lifting three times per week, and cutting out soda.**”

#### My outcome goal:

Lose \_\_\_\_\_ *weight loss goal* over \_\_\_\_\_ *timeframe*, by \_\_\_\_\_,  
*behavior goal #1*  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
*behavior goal #2*  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ *behavior goal #3*  
\_\_\_\_\_.

#### Or write a freeform goal:

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## BALANCED EATING FOR WEIGHT LOSS

**Protein, carbohydrates, and fats** are the three **macronutrients** that make up your calories. They each have specific nutritional jobs and balanced proportions that make most people feel best. You don't have to hit exact numbers, just aim for a good balance that fits your goals.

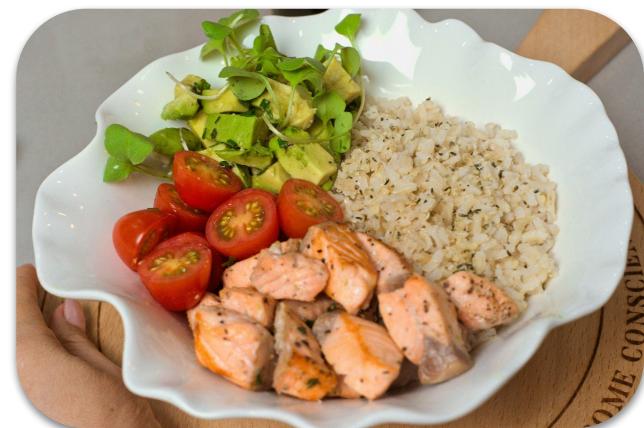
- **Protein** builds muscle: **20-30%**
- **Carbs** fuel your body and brain: **35-45%** *(of daily calories)*
- **Fats** support hormones and vitamin absorption: **30-35%** *(of daily calories)*

Calculating percentages can be a lot to start with, so **the Balanced Plate Method** is a simple place to start:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  your plate with vegetables or fruit
- $\frac{1}{4}$  with lean protein like poultry, fish, or vegetable proteins
- $\frac{1}{4}$  with a smart carb like whole grains or potatoes.
- Add a little healthy fat, like olive oil or avocado, for flavor and fullness.

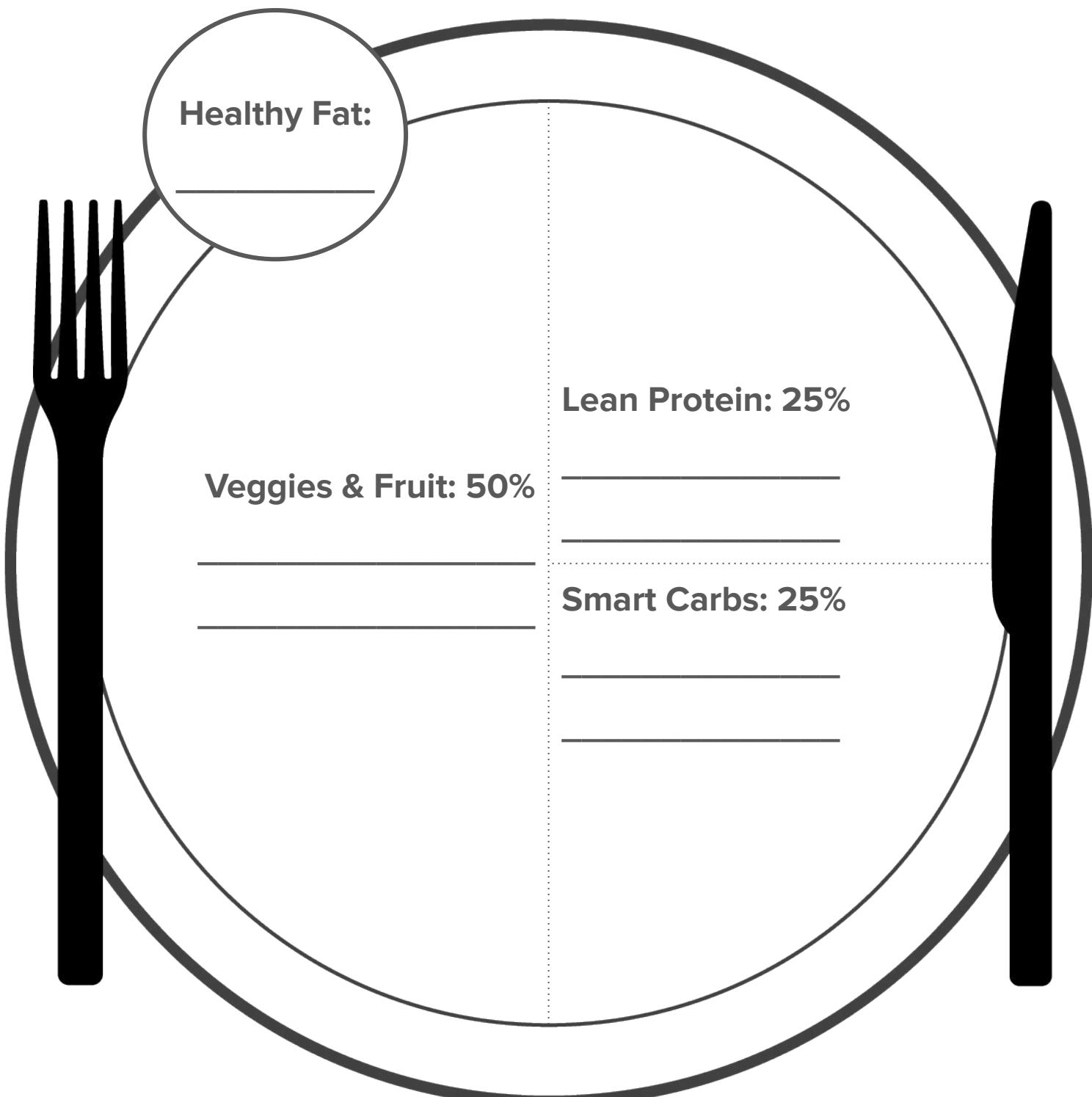
This approach keeps you satisfied and energized without counting every calorie. Feeling full comes from all the macros working together. Skip one, and your meals can feel flat or leave you hungry soon after.

Extreme diets that cut out whole food groups, like no fat or no carbs, can cause fatigue, cravings, and nutrient deficiencies. A balanced approach gives you flexibility and sustainability, something you can actually live with.



## HOMEWORK: BALANCED PLATE METHOD

Take one meal you eat often and make it fit the balanced plate method. Build it around protein, add fruits or veggies, a smart carb, and a little healthy fat. Keep it simple, delicious, and repeatable.



## FOUNDATIONAL FITNESS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

Today we're setting up your foundation for fitness to help support your weight loss. Before diving into workouts, it's important to understand where you are now and what's realistic for your next step. The national guideline for adults is **150 to 300 minutes of moderate activity per week or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous activity, plus two strength sessions.**

Add up your current weekly minutes of fitness and other activities:

Minutes:

Moderate Activities (i.e. walking, yoga):

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Vigorous Activities (i.e. HIIT, running, strength):

\_\_\_\_\_ x2 = \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x2 = \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x2 = \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

If you're not hitting the recommended fitness guidelines yet, that's okay - it just means you have lots of opportunity ahead of you to make gains!

**Start small** with what feels doable, like short walks or a couple of short strength workouts, and build from there. All movement counts, including steps, chores, and errands, which quietly boost daily calorie burn more than most people realize.

## DAY 3

### STEPPING IT UP

Once you know your baseline, the goal is to turn those guidelines into simple, repeatable weekly routines, for examples:

- 3x 30-minute strength workouts + a 15-minute walk on most days
- A mix of short cardio and strength sessions throughout the week
- 2x 40-minute workouts + short walks after meals

What matters most is consistency, not perfection. Choose activities you actually enjoy and that feel good to finish – the best routine is the one you'll stick with.

### HOMEWORK

Your homework is to schedule your first week of workouts in your calendar by either choosing one of the options above, Grokker workout videos, or your own workout ideas. Keep it fun, flexible, and repeatable because that is how fitness supports weight loss for the long haul. Use the template below or put them in your own calendar.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

## WEIGHT LOSS PLANNING & TRACKING

Planning and tracking isn't about being perfect or logging every bite. It's about **reducing decision fatigue** to make healthy eating easier, reduce stress, and create simple, repeatable systems. Having a plan leads to better choices and gives you a little accountability too.

Start **MEAL PLANNING** small with one of these simple methods:

- Plan only a few balanced dinners per week
- A couple of full days that most easily fit your schedule
- Pick two breakfasts, lunches, and dinners you like to repeat.

**MEAL TRACKING** can be just as simple with one of these ideas:

- Put a checkmark on your calendar when a meal fits the Balanced Plate Method
- Write down just your daily protein total
- Take photos of your meals for a quick record
- Use a calorie tracking app just for a week to learn about portions

You can do **FITNESS TRACKING** to stay consistent:

- Check off your workouts
- Log minutes of movement
- Note down simple progress stats like strength benchmarks or daily steps.
- Keep a journal of how you feel – energy, sleep, and mood

Remember, planning and tracking are tools to make healthy choices easier, not chores to add stress. Keep them light, keep them flexible, and let them help you feel in control of your journey.

## HOMEWORK: WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

Take some time to reflect on the the previous page. How will you plan and track during this journey and reduce decision fatigue and create accountability, in a way that works sustainably for you?

### What kind of planning do I want to try?

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### What kind of tracking do I want to try?

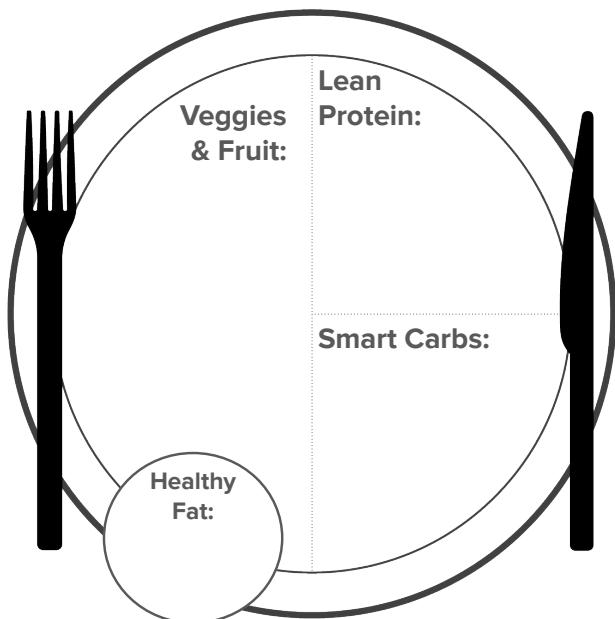
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On the next few pages you'll find different planning and tracking templates you can use to track using some of the methods discussed in this lesson. *Don't try to use all of these planners and trackers!*  
*Experiment with what works for you to choose one of each kind.*

# BALANCED PLATE DINNER PLANNER



Dish Name:

Ingredients/Shopping List:

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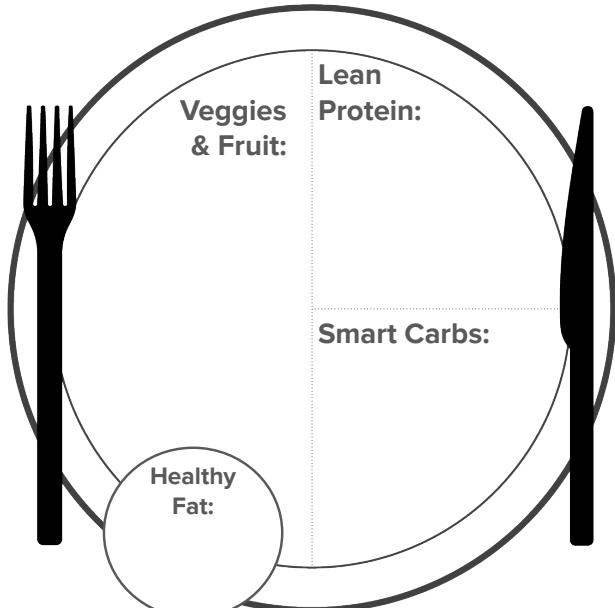
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Dish Name:

Ingredients/Shopping List:

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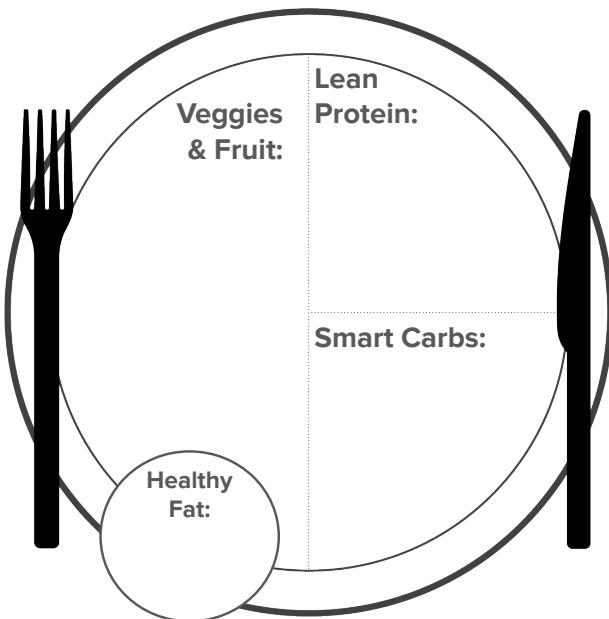


Dish Name:

Ingredients/Shopping List:

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Dish Name:

Ingredients/Shopping List:

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# SIMPLE 3-DAY PLANNER

## Breakfast

## Lunch

## Dinner

## Snacks:

### *Ingredients/Shopping List:*

## Snacks:

### *Ingredients/Shopping List:*

## Snacks:

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# EASY REPEAT MEAL PLANNER

## **Breakfast:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Breakfast:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Lunch:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Lunch**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Dinner:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Dinner:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Dinner:**

*Ingredients/Shopping List:*

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## **Healthy Snacks:**

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# FULL WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Monday			
	Snacks:		
Tuesday			
	Snacks:		
Wednesday			
	Snacks:		
Thursday			
	Snacks:		
Friday			
	Snacks:		
Saturday			
	Snacks:		
Sunday			
	Snacks:		

## SHOPPING LIST

### Protein

### Produce

### Pantry

### Spices/Seasoning

### Dairy

### Beverages

## BALANCED PLATE CALENDAR TRACKER

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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# PROTEIN TRACKER

	Breakfast	Morning Snacks	Lunch	Afternoon Snacks	Dinner	Evening Snacks	TOTAL PROTEIN
Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						
Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						
Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						
Date:	Food:						Grams:
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Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						
Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						
Date:	Food:						Grams:
	Grams:						

# WORKOUT CALENDAR TRACKER

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○
Min:	Min:	Min:	Min:	Min:	Min:	Min:
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# STRENGTH TRAINING LOG

## PROTEIN IS YOUR BEST FRIEND

Protein is your “stay full, keep muscle” macro. Higher protein diets have been shown to **reduce hunger** and **improve appetite control**, so you naturally eat less without trying so hard.

Protein works best as part of a team, and meals without carbs or fats can feel bland and incomplete. Balanced meals include protein for fullness, fiber rich carbs for steady energy, and healthy fats for flavor and satisfaction.

For most adults, a healthy protein target is about **1.2 to 2.0 grams per kg** of body weight per day. That usually lands between 80 and 125 grams for smaller adults and 120 to 200 grams for larger or more active adults. It helps to spread that evenly throughout the day—around **20 to 40 grams per meal** with some snacks, rather than saving it all for dinner.

You can easily hit these numbers with **real food**. Think Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, tofu, chicken, fish, lentils, and edamame. Protein powders are a helpful tool, but should supplement healthy but low-protein meals like oatmeal or smoothies, not replace whole foods. The goal is to build meals around protein first, then add carbs, fats, and produce.

If you focus on protein, everything else falls into place. You stay fuller, your workouts feel stronger, and your body composition improves even when the scale moves slowly. Find two or three high protein meals you genuinely love, repeat them often, and make protein a non-negotiable part of every plate.

## HOMEWORK: CALCULATE YOUR PROTEIN TARGET

To calculate your daily protein target take your body weight in kilograms and multiply it by 1.2 - 2.0 which will give you how many grams/day most active adults should aim for. Check out the [protein tracker](#)!

### MY PROTEIN GOAL:

- **Convert lbs to kgs if needed:**

Weight \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.  $\times$  0.45 = \_\_\_\_\_ kg.

- **Low end of my range:**

Weight \_\_\_\_\_ kg.  $\times$  1.2 = Eat at least \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein per day

- **High end of my range:**

Weight \_\_\_\_\_ kg.  $\times$  1.2 = Eat up to \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein per day



## PROTEIN-FORWARD BREAKFAST

Breakfast is the best time to get a solid dose of protein. After fasting overnight, your body is ready to rebuild and balance blood sugar for the day ahead. Skipping protein in the morning can lead to energy crashes or sugar cravings later. Aiming for around 25 to 40 grams of protein at breakfast helps you stay full, supports muscle repair, and keeps your focus steady through the morning. Think cottage cheese, eggs, or a protein smoothie.

**HOMEWORK:** Look at your usual breakfast and see if you can make a protein upgrade; a scoop of Greek yogurt, eggs or egg whites, or protein powder stirred into oats. Protein at breakfast sets the tone for your whole day, so make it a non-negotiable

### RECIPE: SIMPLE PROTEIN SMOOTHIE

To a blender add:

- 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt
- 1 scoop of your favorite collagen or protein powder
- 1 cup frozen fruit of your choice—banana/pineapple/mango or mixed berries are both great combos.
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds for more protein, fat and some fiber
- $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water, almond milk, or another milk of your choice depending on the texture you like

And that's it! Blend it all up and enjoy.



## HIGH-PROTEIN LUNCHES

By lunchtime, your body is ready for a reset. A protein-rich meal keeps your energy steady, supports muscle recovery, and helps control appetite through the afternoon. Aim for 25 to 40 grams of protein, about a third of your daily goal if you're targeting around 100 to 120 grams total.

Some great lunch proteins include rotisserie chicken, salmon or tuna, turkey, tofu, shrimp, or tempeh. Cottage cheese, hard-boiled eggs, and edamame also make easy add-ons. You can even boost your meal with high-protein wraps or bread for an extra 10 grams without extra effort.

**HOMEWORK:** Choose one of your regular lunches and give it a protein upgrade. Add chicken, salmon, beans, tofu, or a scoop of cottage cheese, and aim for 25–40 grams at lunch.

### RECIPE: EASY CHICKEN LETTUCE WRAPS

- Butter lettuce or romaine hearts (butter lettuce looks a little fancier)
- 1 lb. ground chicken or turkey
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp fish sauce
- 1 Tbsp Sriracha or sambal oelek (adjust for spice)
- 1 Tbsp avocado oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 scallions, sliced
- Optional: fresh mint and chopped peanuts



In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, maple syrup, fish sauce, and Sriracha. Next, heat avocado oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and scallions; and cook until fragrant - about two to three minutes. Then add the ground chicken. Break it up with a spoon and cook until it's fully browned. Pour in your sauce and stir. Then let the mixture simmer for a couple of minutes so the flavors soak in and the sauce reduces just a bit.

When you're ready to serve, spoon the mixture into your lettuce cups and top with mint, chopped peanuts, and a little extra Sriracha if you like heat.

## HIGH-PROTEIN DINNERS

Getting enough protein at dinner (25 to 40 grams) helps protect lean muscle, supports metabolism, and keeps evening snacking in check. Start with a lean protein such as fish, chicken, tofu, lentils, or beans. Add complex carbs like quinoa, brown rice, or sweet potatoes for fiber and steady energy, and finish with healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, or avocado for flavor and fullness.

**HOMEWORK:** Make one protein-forward dinner that has at least 30 grams of protein and take a look at your usual dinners to give them a protein upgrade.

### RECIPE: “NOT CHILI”

- 1 lb ground meat - bison or lean beef
- 1 can garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- 1 tbsp + 1 tsp olive oil
- ½ cup frozen corn (or fresh if you’re fancy)
- 1 tsp dried turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp chili powder (more to taste)
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh cilantro and shredded cheddar for garnish



Preheat your oven to 400°F. Rinse your tomatoes and toss them in 1 teaspoon of olive oil and a pinch of salt. Roast on a rimmed baking sheet for 15–25 minutes until they’re caramelized and starting to burst.

While the tomatoes roast, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and cook for 2–3 minutes until fragrant. Add your ground meat, breaking it up with a wooden spoon as it browns. Once cooked through, stir in the garbanzo beans, spices, salt, and pepper. Add the corn and mix well so everything is evenly distributed. This should all take about 20 minutes, so try to time it to when your tomatoes are finished. Add roasted tomatoes into the skillet. Stir it all together, then top with a shredded cheese and fresh cilantro before serving.

## NOT ALL CARBS ARE THE ENEMY

Carbohydrates are your body's **main fuel source**. When you don't eat enough of them, your energy dips, workouts feel harder, and your mood can take a hit. Carbs also help preserve muscle by sparing protein for repair instead of energy.

**Simple carbs** like sweets, pastries, or white bread digest fast, giving a quick burst of energy but leading to a crash soon after. **Complex carbs** like oats, brown rice, beans, quinoa, potatoes, and fruits digest more slowly, providing steady energy, better blood sugar control, and more nutrients.

For most people, carbs should make up around **35-50% of daily calories**, or roughly 160 to 250 grams per day if you eat 1,800 to 2,000 calories. Focus on timing and quality: eat higher-carb foods before and after workouts, and rely on fiber-rich carbs like vegetables, beans, and fruit the rest of the day.

**HOMEWORK:** Take inventory of your typical carb sources. Identify one spot where you can **upgrade to a complex carb alternative or add fiber**. Maybe that's oats instead of cereal, beans instead of chips, or whole-grain wraps instead of white tortillas.



## BALANCED-CARB BREAKFASTS

Breakfast is your first fill-up of the day. Choose good fuel like whole, complex carbs and you'll run smoothly with steady energy all morning. Choose the cheap stuff like refined or sugary carbs, and you'll burn hot - but burn out fast.

Some of the most breakfast-friendly carbs include high-fiber whole grains like oats or whole grain toast, fruit like bananas or berries, and even whole-grain cereals or granolas that have low added sugar.

**HOMEWORK:** Take a look at your current breakfast and make one carb upgrade.

Swap refined carbs for whole ones or add protein and fiber to slow digestion. Notice how you feel on mornings when you have balanced carbs vs mornings when you have only simple carbs.

### RECIPE: COCONUT GRANOLA

- ½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- 2 cups slivered raw almonds
- 1¼ cup raw pecans
- 1 cup raw walnuts (halves or pieces)
- 3 Tbsp chia seeds
- 1 Tbsp flaxseed meal
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon (optional)
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- 3 Tbsp coconut or olive oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ scant cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup dried blueberries or other dried fruit



Preheat your oven to 325°F. In a large bowl, combine the coconut, nuts, seeds, cinnamon, and salt. In a separate microwave-safe bowl or measuring cup, mix the oil, maple syrup, and vanilla, and warm it for about 20 seconds to make the liquid thin and pourable. Give the mixture a quick swirl with a whisk or fork, pour it over the dry ingredients and toss it together until everything is evenly coated.

Next, spread the granola evenly onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake it for 20 minutes, stirring halfway. After 20 minutes, remove it from the oven, add the dried fruit, mix again, and bake for another 5 minutes...just keep an eye on it in this last part because it can toast quickly. When it's golden and fragrant, pull it out and let it cool completely before storing it in jars or airtight containers.

## BALANCED CARB LUNCHES

Lunch is where balance really matters. If you skimp on carbs, you'll probably feel tired or foggy. If you eat too many refined carbs, like white bread, fries, or heavy pasta, you'll get a quick burst of energy followed by that familiar crash in the mid-afternoon. The key is to choose mostly complex carbs that digest slowly and pair them with protein, healthy fats, and plenty of color from fruits or vegetables.

Some of the best lunch carbs include hearty grains like quinoa or farro, lentils, beans, roasted vegetables or whole grain wraps and breads.

**HOMEWORK:** Take a look at your usual lunch and find one small way to improve it. Maybe swap white bread for a whole grain or add a protein source to a veggie-heavy meal.

### RECIPE: ROTISSERIE CHICKEN FARRO BOWL

- 2 cups of rotisserie chicken cut or shredded into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup of dry farro
- 2 cups of chopped kale
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$  of a cup of dried cranberries
- $\frac{1}{3}$  of a cup of roasted almonds
- $\frac{1}{3}$  of a cup of crumbled feta cheese
- Salt and pepper

Cook the farro according to the package directions. While that cooks, pull apart the rotisserie chicken. Next, heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat and sauté the kale until it's shiny and tender, about five minutes.

In a large bowl, combine the farro, chicken, and kale. Season with salt and pepper, then stir in the cranberries, feta, and almonds until everything is evenly mixed. And you're ready to eat!



## BALANCED CARB DINNERS

Dinner is your body's recovery meal. It's when you replenish energy, repair muscle, and prepare for the overnight fast ahead. The goal shouldn't be to skip carbs, it's to choose the right ones and balance them with enough protein, fiber, and healthy fats so you stay satisfied but not stuffed.

Some examples of excellent dinner-friendly complex carbs are brown rice, quinoa, sweet potatoes, beans, lentils, and fiber-rich vegetables like broccoli, carrots, and bell peppers.

**HOMEWORK:** Make one balanced-carb dinner and notice how you feel afterward. Try the Easy Vegetarian Burrito Bowl, or build your own version with a base of brown rice or quinoa, lean protein, and lots of vegetables.

## RECIPE: EASY VEGETARIAN BURRITO BOWL

- 1 can of black beans, rinsed
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- A handful of frozen corn
- 1 teaspoon of olive oil
- Cooked brown rice
- Pico de gallo
- Greek yogurt in place of sour cream
- Avocado or guacamole
- Cilantro and lime

Start by cooking your brown rice according to the package directions. While that's going, heat a skillet over medium heat and add the olive oil. Toss in the diced bell pepper and sauté for about three to five minutes until they start to soften. Add the corn and cook until it's heated through, then add the black beans and stir to combine. You can season this however you like: taco seasoning, cumin, chili powder, or even just salt and pepper.



To assemble, start with a scoop of rice as the base. Add the warm bean and veggie mixture, then top it with a spoonful of pico de gallo, a dollop of Greek yogurt, and a few slices of avocado. Finish with fresh cilantro and a squeeze of lime.

## HEALTHY FATS COMPLETE THE PICTURE

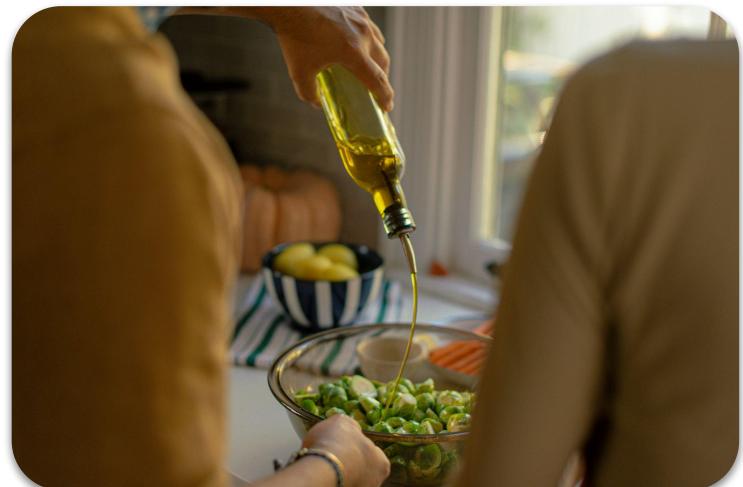
Fats are often misunderstood, but they're absolutely essential (just like carbs!). Your body needs fat for **hormone production, brain health, nutrient absorption**, and even the structure of every single cell membrane. Without enough fat, your energy can feel low, your skin can get dry, and your body struggles to absorb key vitamins like A, D, E, and K.

Fats are also your body's slow-burning energy source, helping you feel **full and satisfied** between meals. Moderate amounts of unsaturated fat – from foods like olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish – can even help improve cardiovascular health and support weight management. Most people feel their best when **20-35%** of total calories come from fat, which the Dietary Guidelines for Americans also recommends.

**Saturated fats and trans fats**, on the other hand, like those found in fatty and processed meats, full fat dairy, and coconut and palm oil, should be limited to less than 10% of total calories.

In practical terms, this usually means about **one to two servings of healthy unsaturated fat per meal**, or roughly one tablespoon of oil, a quarter of an avocado, or a small handful of nuts. Fat is more calorie-dense than the other macros at 9 calories per gram (vs. 4 cal/g for protein and carbs), so a standard serving of fat is a smaller amount than you might think.

**HOMEWORK:** Take inventory of your fats. Look at your meals and ask, "Where does my fat come from, and how much am I using?" Try swapping one saturated fat for an unsaturated one, like using olive oil instead of butter or choosing salmon instead of steak.



## HEALTHY FATS AT BREAKFAST

Healthy fats as part of your breakfast can mean fewer mid-morning cravings and steadier energy to get you through your morning. Some of the best breakfast-friendly fats include nut butters, chia seeds, flaxseeds, avocado, olive oil and smoked salmon. These foods not only taste great, they also support brain health, hormone balance, and nutrient absorption.

The types of fats to be a little more cautious with are the ones that show up in processed breakfast foods like pastries, breakfast meats, frozen breakfast foods like breakfast sandwiches and burritos, and buttery spreads. They tend to be higher in saturated fats and sodium, and they don't bring much nutrition to the table. A little butter or bacon here and there is no big deal, but for most days, try to lean toward unsaturated sources of fat.

**HOMEWORK:** Take a look at your usual breakfasts and see where you can add or swap in healthy fats. Try stirring nut butter or chia seeds into your oatmeal, topping your toast with avocado instead of butter or adding smoked salmon to your breakfast sandwich instead of sausage.

### RECIPE: LOADED OATMEAL

- Half a cup of rolled oats
- Half a cup of milk of your choice
- 1 serving of collagen or protein powder
- 1 tablespoon of chia or flax seeds
- Either a handful of fresh berries, a half a banana, or a quarter cup of canned pumpkin
- A drizzle of maple syrup, honey, or brown sugar



To make it, combine the oats and milk in a small pot and bring it to a gentle simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the oats are soft and most of the liquid is absorbed. Add more liquid if needed. Once the oats are done, remove from heat and stir in your collagen until it dissolves completely. Stir in the chia or flaxseeds, and then sweeten to taste. Top with fruit of choice and nut butter or crushed walnuts.

## HEALTHY FATS AT LUNCH

Healthy fats turn a light meal into one that actually keeps you full for hours. They help your body absorb fat-soluble vitamins, support brain function, and give food that delicious richness that makes healthy eating feel enjoyable instead of depressing.

Some of my favorite lunch-friendly fats include smoked salmon, avocado, olive oil-based dressings, nuts, and nut butters. The fats to be more cautious with at lunch are those found in mayonnaise, creamy sauces, and fried foods. These tend to be higher in saturated or trans fats. Swapping just one or two of these for healthier sources can make a big difference in your health.

**HOMEWORK:** Take a look at your lunches and identify where your fats are coming from. Try replacing just one creamy dressing or fried food with a healthier source of fat, like olive oil, nuts, or avocado.

### RECIPE: NO MAYO TUNA SALAD

- 18-20 ounces of canned tuna, drained
- 4 scallions chopped finely
- 12 pepperoncinis cut into thin strips
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of fresh dill
- $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of roasted almonds,
- $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of diced celery
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons of Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons of whole-grain mustard
- 2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
- Juice from one lemon
- And  $\frac{1}{2}$  a teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper.



Just add everything to a large mixing bowl and combine with a fork until everything is well mixed and evenly coated. So easy! Taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking. You can serve it in crisp lettuce wraps, in a whole-grain or protein tortilla, or on top of toasted whole-grain bread for an open-faced sandwich.

## HEALTHY FATS AT DINNER

Dinner is a great time to use healthy fats to complete satisfying and healthy meals. As we know, the key is using the right fats, in the right amounts; olive oil, fatty fish, avocado, and nuts and seeds all fit perfectly.

The fats to limit at dinnertime are the ones hiding in fried foods, creamy sauces, and heavy takeout meals. You don't need to avoid them forever and always, but if you focus on healthy fats most of the time, you'll feel more energized and your body will thank you.

### RECIPE: TURMERIC SALMON + TOMATO SALAD

For the salmon:

- 2 six-ounce fillets
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of ground turmeric
- A pinch of red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper

For the tomato salad, grab:

- 1 pint of cherry tomatoes
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper
- 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of za'atar seasoning
- About  $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of blueberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of crumbled feta
- And a generous amount of fresh basil and fresh mint



Preheat your oven to 400 degrees F. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, turmeric, red pepper flakes, and black pepper for the salmon. Add the salmon fillets one at a time and coat them evenly in the turmeric mixture. Place the salmon on a parchment-lined baking sheet, skin side down, sprinkle with salt, and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until it flakes easily with a fork. The internal temperature should reach 145 degrees.

While that's baking, make the salad. Slice the tomatoes and bell pepper and add to a large bowl along with the blueberries and fresh herbs. Toss with olive oil and za'atar, then mix gently and top with feta. Plate together and enjoy!

## FINAL NOTE

### **Well done for completing the BUILD program.**

You've learned how to structure your meals, set realistic goals, and create balance with protein, carbs, and fats. You've built the knowledge and habits that will make your weight loss plan sustainable long-term. That's important, because your weight loss journey will continue without me from here, using your plan on your own.

With that in mind, here's your final challenge: take what you've learned and build your own balanced meal plan for the week ahead.

Remember, perfection isn't the goal, consistency is. You'll have days where things go off track, and that's okay. What matters is that you keep coming back to the foundation you've built.

Thank you for joining me. I'm so proud of the progress you've made!

**- Tarah**

