

Tracking progress & making adjustments

To adjust whatever plan or actions were taken, you must make decisions based on data.

Use an outcome-based decision making process regularly.

This means:

1. **Define clearly what your (or your clients') goals are.**
2. **Define how to measure whether you're moving towards those goals.** This could be anything: body measurements, how much energy you have, sleep quality, and so on.
3. **Gather data regularly.** This could be daily, weekly, monthly, etc.
4. **Put those data in context.** What is happening? What do these metrics mean, given the situation?
5. **Analyze.** What is going well? What could you improve? Are there problems to be solved?
6. **Decide what to do next based on those data and analysis.** What variables could you adjust? In what direction do the data point you?
7. **Focus on long-term trends over short-term blips.** Many progress indicators will change day to day, so look for long-term trends and patterns instead.
8. **Ensure you (or your client) are aware of what realistic rates of progress truly are.** (See page 2 for more guidance.)
9. **Keep adjustments small.** Don't make wild changes. (See page 3 for more guidance.)

Many progress indicators can be used, such as various body measurements, objective physiological indicators (e.g., lab tests), and subjective physiological and psychological indicators (e.g., pain, energy levels, sleep quality, mood, stress perception, outlook, etc.).

To gather data, we recommend you use something like this:

Time-based progress

DAILY	WEEKLY OR BIWEEKLY	MONTHLY	QUARTERLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check how well you're able to follow your plan, or the practices around it (e.g., shopping for food).• Check body weight (if you're using that as an indicator).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take weekly body weight average (if you're using that).• Take body girths (if you're using those).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess overall progress indicators and look for trends.• Take skinfolds (if you're using those).• Take photos (if you're using those).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess long-term trends and patterns.• Assess goals and overall strategic direction.

Realistic rates of progress

To assess progress, you need to gather data, and then compare that data to realistic rates of progress.

Many factors can affect progress, such as age, sex, current size, training experience, activity consistency, sleep, stress, recovery, hormones, medications, other life demands, desire, etc.

See the [Cost of Getting Lean](#) to help determine what tradeoffs you are and are not willing to make.

Realistic rates of progress for fat loss per week

PROGRESS	% BODY WEIGHT	MEN	WOMEN
Extreme	1-1.5% body weight	(~2-3 lb)	(~1.65-2.5 lb)
Reasonable	0.5-1% body weight	(~1-2 lb)	(~0.8-1.65 lb)
Comfortable	0.5% body weight	(~<1 lb)	(~<0.8 lb)

How fast you can lose body fat depends on how consistently you can, or want to, follow the given guidelines. *Fat loss is often faster when first starting out and when you have more body fat to lose. The leaner you get, the slower fat loss becomes, with more frequent plateaus.*

Realistic rates of progress for muscle gain per month

FITNESS LEVEL	MEN		WOMEN	
	% of bodyweight	FFM	% of bodyweight	FFM
Beginner	1-1.5%	~1.5-2.5 lb	0.5-0.75%	~0.65-1 lb
Intermediate	0.5-0.75%	~0.75-1.25 lb	0.25-0.38%	~0.33-0.5 lb
Advanced	0.25-0.38%	~0.38-0.63 lb	0.13-0.19%	~0.16-0.25 lb

The ability to gain muscle depends on many factors. *Age, training experience / style / intensity / frequency / volume, biological sex, consistency with food intake, genetics, and more can affect our ability to gain muscle.*

Making adjustments

Make small adjustments to help solve the determined problem. Remember, the goal here is to make the smallest adjustment possible that moves you towards your desired outcome at your desired rate of progress.

Adjustment suggestions

PROBLEM	PROBABLE SOLUTION
Not losing fat within realistic parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease your energy intake by about 250 calories per day, by cutting out some carbs (~25-50 g) and/or fats (~7-15 g).• Or remove 1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs and/or 1-2 thumbs of fats from your daily intake. (That's 2-3 total portions of carbs and fats, combined.)
Not gaining muscle within realistic parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your intake by about 250 calories per day, by adding some carbs (~25-50 g) and/or fats (~7-15 g).• Or add 1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs and/or 1-2 thumbs of fats to your daily intake. (That's 2-3 total portions of carbs and fats, combined.)
Losing too much lean mass when losing weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your daily protein intake by about 25 grams.• Or simply add 1 extra palm of protein to your daily intake.
Gaining too much fat when adding muscle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your daily protein intake by about 25 grams, and decrease your daily carb intake by about 25-50 grams and/or your daily fat intake by about 7-15 grams.• Or add 1 extra palm of protein and remove 1-2 cupped handfuls of carbs and/or 1-2 thumbs of fats from your daily intake. (That's 2-3 total portions of carbs and fats, combined.)
Not recovering from tough workouts or competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review your overall daily energy intake. If you're cutting calories stringently to lose fat or weight, consider adjusting energy intake upwards by 100-200 calories so that you're eating at just a slight deficit.• Review your total daily protein intake. Just adding 25 more grams or 1 more palm of protein per day can make a difference.• Review your total daily carbohydrate intake. You may need more than you're getting, particularly right after training sessions or games/competitions. Adding 25-50 more grams or 1-2 more cupped handfuls of carbs would be a good start.• Review your total daily fat intake, particularly your intake of essential fatty acids. If you're noticing a lot of inflammation, you might benefit from increasing your intake of "Eat More" fat sources, and decreasing your intake of "Eat Less" fat sources.