

Bulk/cut checklist

Lean bulk and cut step by step

Before you start

- ☐ Set a goal and rough timeframe, for example a few months of gaining or a diet with a clear target range.
- ☐ Record starting values: weekly average weight, waist circumference, photos in the same light and poses.
- ☐ Estimate maintenance calories (TDEE calculator) and cross-check against your weight trend for two weeks.
- ☐ Set a protein target: 1.6 to 2.2 g per kg body weight.
- ☐ Choose a training plan and note your starting weights.

Lean bulk

- ☐ Target pace: about 0.25 to 0.5% of body weight gained per week. The more experienced, the slower.
- ☐ Start with a small surplus and adjust based on the trend.
- ☐ Training performance must go up: check progression in your log.
- ☐ If your waist grows much faster than chest, arms and thighs, slow down.
- ☐ End the bulk when you reach your own waist or body fat limit.

Cut

- ☐ Target pace: about 0.5 to 1.0% of body weight lost per week (Helms et al. 2014).
- ☐ Keep protein toward the upper end.
- ☐ Keep training heavy: hold your weights where possible, drop sets rather than load.
- ☐ Keep an eye on daily movement, it often drops unnoticed while dieting.
- ☐ On long diets, plan a break at maintenance calories (diet break, 1 to 2 weeks).
- ☐ End the cut when the goal is reached or performance, sleep and mood clearly suffer.

Check every week

- ☐ Compare the weekly average weight with the previous week.
- ☐ Compare the weekly rate in % with the target pace.
- ☐ Briefly note training performance, sleep, hunger and energy.
- ☐ Measurements and photos every two to four weeks.

Adjust instead of guessing

- ☐ Decide only after two to three weeks of trend, not from single days.
- ☐ Check the data first: did you weigh daily, did you track everything?
- ☐ Then change in small steps, for example 100 to 200 kcal per day.
- ☐ After the cut, raise calories gradually to maintenance and stabilize your weight for a few weeks.

Sources

Helms ER, Aragon AA, Fitschen PJ (2014): Evidence-based recommendations for natural bodybuilding contest preparation: nutrition and supplementation. J Int Soc Sports Nutr 11:20.

Morton RW et al. (2018): A systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-regression of the effect of protein supplementation on resistance training-induced gains in muscle mass and strength in healthy adults. Br J Sports Med 52:376-384.

General information, not medical advice. If you have a medical condition, pain or are pregnant, get medical clearance first.