

YEAR TWO

The Advanced Fat-Loss & Muscle Guide for
People Past the Basics



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Training progression, lean bulking and the advanced layer

01

Beginner to Intermediate — What Actually Changes

- Progress usually slows as training experience builds
- Your body may need a clearer training stimulus than it did in the first few months
- Progress now needs structure and intent, not more motivation
- More load and volume are not automatic. Increase them when performance, technique and recovery support it
- Recovery still matters, but soreness or one poor session is not a diagnosis
- The shift is from repeating the same sessions to making measured changes and checking the result

02

Progressive Overload — The Real Mechanics

Overload isn't just "add weight to the bar." Four levers, used deliberately:

- **Load** — the weight on the bar. Increase in small, sustainable jumps
- **Reps** — more reps at the same weight before you add load
- **Volume** — total sets × reps × weight across a week, not just per session
- **Frequency** — hitting a muscle group more often per week at the same total volume
- Rotate which lever you push — don't chase heavier weight every single week, it stalls
- Track it. If you're not writing numbers down, you're guessing, not progressing
- Use an app to log this — **Strong** or **Hevy** both do it free, or a plain spreadsheet works just as well if you actually use it

03

Deloads Are A Tool, Not A Calendar Rule

A lighter week can help manage fatigue. Research does not support one mandatory schedule for every lifter.

- Plan a lighter period around a hard block, travel, competition or a known recovery squeeze if that helps your programme
- Use one responsively when performance and recovery have been poor for more than a session and sleep, food, stress and illness have been checked
- A stalled lift or one bad night is not enough on its own
- Reducing weekly sets is common. Load, effort and exercise choice can also change
- There is no universal half-the-sets or 60%-of-working-weight formula. Keep enough training to practise the lifts without extending fatigue
- Persistent pain or unusual symptoms need proper assessment, not a harder deload

04

Fasting — Optional, Not A Reset

- Fasting is an eating schedule. It is not an insulin or appetite reset
- Some people find a shorter eating window convenient. Others train, recover and manage hunger better with meals spread across the day
- Total energy, protein, hydration and food quality still matter
- Check what happens to your own training and recovery instead of following a rigid fast-day rule
- Do not use fasting as punishment for eating more than planned
- If you have diabetes, take medication affected by food, are pregnant or breastfeeding, are under 18, or have an eating-disorder history, get individual clinical advice before fasting

05

Controlling Tempo — Concentric vs Eccentric

Concentric = the lifting phase. **Eccentric** = the lowering phase under load.

- Both phases contribute to the training stimulus
- A controlled rep makes technique and range of motion easier to repeat
- A wide range of normal repetition durations can build muscle. Slower is not automatically better
- Tempo alone has not been shown to make a lift injury-proof
- Use a notation such as 3-1-1-0 when a planned pause or lowering speed helps you repeat the same rep
- Pick a tempo you can control and log. Do not turn every set into a stopwatch test
- Tempo work can be useful for technique and accessory work. It is not a shortcut around load, effort and progression

06

Lean Gaining — Start Small And Review

- Faster bodyweight gain usually adds fat faster. A bigger surplus is not a guaranteed muscle shortcut
- Use **nononsensefitness.ie/tdee-calculator** for a maintenance estimate, then make a small adjustment rather than treating the result as exact
- Track the weekly weight trend alongside waist measurements and gym performance
- There is no universal 200–300 calorie surplus or 0.25–0.5kg weekly target. Body size, training age and the purpose of the phase change what is sensible
- If weight and waist are rising faster than planned without better training performance, review the intake
- Adequate protein supports training adaptation, but training, total food intake and recovery still do the work together

TODAY'S ACTION

Track the intake and the weekly trend before changing either. Create your account at **nononsensefitness.ie/tracker** to use the current tracker and sync your diary. The barcode scanner is included.

07

Steps and Cardio Still Matter — Even While Bulking

- Heart health doesn't take a break because you're in a building phase
- Cardio and daily movement can stay in the plan while you gain. Fit the amount around your training and recovery
- Steps are a useful way to monitor daily movement, not a universal 8,000–10,000 prescription
- Ireland's adult guidance is 150–300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week, or 75–150 minutes vigorous, plus muscle strengthening on at least two days. Build towards it from your current ability
- If extra cardio repeatedly harms lifting performance or recovery, adjust the dose or timing
- Not sure what intensity those sessions should be? Plain-English breakdown of the 5 heart rate zones:
nononsensefitness.ie/blog/cardio-training-zones-explained

08

Cutting After The Bulk — The Other Half

The bulk builds it. The cut reveals it. Most people only plan the first half.

- End the gaining phase when the planned block ends or the trend no longer matches the goal
- Use the maintenance estimate as a starting point and make a modest, individual reduction. Do not assume every cut needs the same 300–500 calories
- Resistance training and adequate protein can help retain lean mass. Performance may still fluctuate during an energy deficit
- Choose the rate from body size, training history, health and how well you are recovering. One percentage does not fit everyone
- Diet breaks are optional. They may help adherence or give a planned pause, but research does not show that everyone needs one after 10–12 weeks or that they automatically repair metabolism

09

Sleep Optimization for Recovery at This Volume

At beginner volume, sleep is "get enough of it." At this volume, it has to be actively managed the same way you'd manage a training block.

- **Target 7–9 hours**, protect the last hour before bed the same way you'd protect a training session
- Keep sleep and wake times reasonably consistent when life allows
- Keep the room dark, quiet and comfortably cool. There is no single correct temperature for everyone
- Caffeine timing and sensitivity vary. HSE guidance suggests avoiding it for eight hours before bed; move it earlier if sleep is still affected
- If late training regularly delays sleep, test an earlier session or a longer wind-down and compare the result
- Track something simple — resting heart rate or just how you feel on waking. A pattern over 2–3 weeks means something, one bad night doesn't

10

Reading Your Own Bloodwork Trends Over Time

Keep copies of results if your clinician orders tests. Interpretation and repeat timing belong with the clinician who knows why the test was ordered.

- A result can be affected by hydration, recent training, illness, medication, time of day and the test itself
- Follow the preparation instructions for that test. Fast only when the clinician or laboratory tells you to
- Record the date, marker, value, units and reference range. Different laboratories can use different methods or ranges
- Do not diagnose yourself from a spreadsheet trend or compare one marker with somebody else's result
- There is no general every-8–12-weeks testing rule. Your GP decides whether a repeat is useful and when to do it
- Contact the clinician who ordered the test if a result is outside range, changes unexpectedly or does not make sense

11

Research Peptides — Keep Research And Fitness Advice Separate

No peptide stack belongs in a general fitness progression guide. The research library reviews individual compounds and the limits of the evidence. It does not provide a personal stack or protocol.

- A pathway, animal study or early human signal does not prove a fitness or recovery benefit in people
- Research-only and unapproved status matters. So do product quality, legality and the absence of reliable human safety data
- Blood tests do not make self-treatment safe and do not turn monitoring into medical approval
- Approved medicines and hormone care belong with a qualified clinician
- Read compound-by-compound evidence at **nononsensefitness.ie/peptides**. Check the study design, participants, outcome and uncertainty before trusting a claim

NOTE

For education only. No diagnosis, prescribing, dosing or stacking. Speak to a qualified healthcare professional before considering a medicine or any unapproved compound.

12

Where I Buy The Supplement Side

Supplements are the last 5% of this — nothing here replaces the training, food and recovery above. Two Irish suppliers I've been buying from myself for about three years:

- **MyCore Supplements** — mycoresupplements.ie. Code **NNF10** takes 10% off. The code does not apply to items already on sale or on special offer
- **HardCore Supplements** — hardcoresupplements.ie. Code **NNF10** takes 10% off. The code does not apply to items already on sale or on special offer

13

What Comes Next

If you've read this far, you're past the point of needing basics explained — the next step is depth, not more starter content.

- **The full peptide research library:**
nononsensefitness.ie/peptides — every compound I've written about, mechanisms and research context, no dosing-as-prescription
- **More free tools like this guide:** nononsensefitness.ie/free-tools
- **Follow along day to day:** TikTok [@nononsensefitness](https://www.tiktok.com/@nononsensefitness), Instagram [@nononsensefitness](https://www.instagram.com/nononsensefitness)

NOTE

Evidence notes: Deload practice is common but published evidence does not establish one compulsory schedule ([PubMed 36619355](#); [39446750](#)). Normal repetition durations from about 0.5 to 8 seconds produced similar hypertrophy in a meta-analysis ([PubMed 25601394](#)). A small trial found faster weight gain mainly increased fat gain ([PubMed 37914977](#)). Diet breaks did not improve body composition or metabolic rate versus continuous restriction in a resistance-trained female trial ([PubMed 37181269](#)). Activity and sleep guidance comes from [HSE Every Move Counts](#) and the [HSE Brain Health Guide](#).

Nothing above is a sales pitch

It's the same thing this whole guide has been — the actual information, so you can make your own call from there.

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