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From Here To Macros: 4 Steps To Better Nutrition

 **Vince Del Monte**
January 15, 2019 • 5 min read

You've seen plenty of articles saying what your macronutrients mean. But what's involved in turning a plate of food into a usable set of data? The 'Skinny Guy Savior' Vince Del Monte breaks it down.



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What is aware eating? It's knowing what your food is made of, and using that information to eat better. One of the best ways to do that is to start by tracking the macronutrients—[protein](#), [carbohydrates](#), and fats; as well as total calories—that make up what you already eat.

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car, and office.



All it means is that *whatever* you choose to do next, you'll do it from a position of knowledge rather than ignorance. That is always a good thing.

Just try it for a couple of weeks. What do you have to lose?

Step 1. Measure

If I just convinced you to let macronutrients into your life, you probably asked in a sad voice, "OK, how much time will it take and what do I need to buy?" Fortunately, the answer to both questions is "not much."

When you are learning to track your nutrition, the three best tools you can have on the kitchen counter are a [food scale](#), a calorie/gram counting book, and a set of measuring cups. I also recommend you keep around a calculator—unless you're a master at math in your head or on your fingers—and a resource of nutritional information.

If your food comes with a label, that's a good place to start. However, if you prefer whole foods that come without labels (which, by the way, you should), you have several options. Any calorie-counting guidebook, such as the [Complete Book of Food Counts](#) or a similar reference material, is fine.

There are also countless online resources; two of the most prominent are [NutritionData.com](#) and the [USDA's National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference](#). A growing number of mobile apps also utilize either the USDA or restaurant nutritional info for easy calculations when you're not near a computer.

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The project of memorizing your staple dishes is more approachable than you think, considering that most of us stick to eating 20-30 favorite foods. Before you know it, you will remember that a six-ounce chicken breast has about 140 calories, a little more than 26 grams of protein, and 3 g of fat. You will also learn to "eyeball" what six ounces of chicken breast looks like without having to put it on the food scale. It took me at least a year until I got confident at eyeballing, and that was after measuring six meals per day.

You're not there yet, so keep the scale and measuring cups close at hand. For foods generally weighed by the ounce, such as most meats, use the food scale. For foods where the calorie count is usually measured in cups or other volume-based units, use measuring cups. Determine your quantity, do the calculations, and voila! You know your macros.

Step 2. Record

You now know what your meal is "worth," at least in terms of macronutrients. For example, say you eat about a quarter-cup of almond butter and an apple when you get home from work every day.

Here's how the macros would look:

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1 large Apple with skin

- Calories: 116
- Fats: 0 g
- Protein: 1 g
- Carbohydrates: 30 g

Nutritional databases can offer incredibly complex breakdowns of micronutrients, up to and including quantities of individual amino acids, but don't worry too much about those unless you have to. As you find your footing, it's OK if you stick to the big ones: calories, fats, carbs, protein.

You will quickly discover that macronutrient quantities are rarely whole numbers—no problem. Unless you want to spend more time doing math than eating, don't bother with calculating down to the hundredths of a gram. I just round down if it's .50 or below and round up if it's .51 or higher.

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However—and this may sound simple, but it's important—remember to jot down which *food* you eat each meal, not just the macros. That way, after a few weeks you can pull your weekly meals from your notes rather than having to look up every food you eat.



Step 3. Break It Down

Now you know how to measure macros! After you feel confident with it, next determine what your nutritional breakdown will look like going forward, and how the macronutrients in your individual meals will support it.

The first number you need to determine when planning your diet is the number of calories your body needs. This number is based on your age, gender, weight, rate of metabolism, activity level, goal, and the amount of time you have to achieve your goal. There are a number of calculators online that can help you get that number, so we're not going to dig too deep into it here. For simplicity's sake, let's say you figured out you need 2,000 calories per day and that you're working out, but not in a bulking or cutting phase.

Break your macros down so you know how many calories you should spend on each macronutrient. Let's say you start out on a simple 40/40/20 plan. On a 2,000 calorie diet, that means you need 800 calories worth of protein, 800 calories worth of carbs and 400 calories worth of fat each day. Convert those calories into grams so you know how many grams of each macro you need to get into your daily diet.

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- A gram of protein contains 4 calories.
- A gram of carbohydrates contains 4 calories
- A gram of fat contains 9 calories.

Got it?

On a 2,000 calorie diet, your macros calculate in this way:

800 calories/4 calories per gram = 200 g of protein. You'll get the same number for 40 percent carbs, 200 g. For the 20 percent fat, the equation is 400 calories/9 calories per gram of fat = 44 g of fat (rounded down).

For a 2,000 calorie daily diet, in the 40/40/20 example, look for:

- 200 g of protein
- 200 g of carbs
- 44 g of fat

Step 4. Start Meal Planning

Now you have your number. But you can't eat a number, and you can't predict how it'll make you feel. So while there are classic ratios you can start with, like 40/40/20 or 40/50/10, they should be guidelines, not rules.

Try something like 40/40/20, and if you're hungry all the time, increase your protein. If you find your energy lagging, you may want to try increasing your fats. Nutrition for bodybuilding is part science and part art, and we're always trying to strike the right balance between the two.

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Get as close as you can to your macros, and when you're not at home or are in a rush, eyeball your portions as best you can.

Along the way, don't make yourself crazy with the calculations. Get as close as you can to your macros, and when you're not at home or are in a rush, eyeball your portions as best you can. If your protein is a little low one day and your carbs are a little high on another, don't freak out. The last thing you want is for the stress of calculating perfect macros to kill your motivation for

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vince Del Monte

Naturally skinny guys need to play by a different set of rules and my mission is to empower and inform each client to reach their true potential.

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Liztx

I don't get it!!! ugh :(
1155 cal.. Any help???

April 22nd, 2020 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)



heatherortiznp

I am not so much a mathematician, and need help determining the numbers to multiply to figure macros/calories based on goal weight. **Another** trainer I worked with gave the numbers:

1×140 (1 gm carb x goal body weight) = gm carbs x 4 cal

1.5×140 (1.5 gm protein x goal body weight) = gm protein x 4 cal

0.4×140 (0.4 gm fat x goal body weight) = gm fat x 9 cal

The multipliers of 1, 1.5, & 0.4 do not give me the % of these food groups I desire for my macros of 45p, 25c, 30f

My goal is fat loss & lean muscle gains.

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**elevenferguson** (John)

Hello Anna, a bit more information would be helpful. Your weight, percent body fat and what you want to accomplish. If you are weight training and want to lose body fat then you will have to have a substantial amount of protein daily. If you just want to lose weight, say to fit into a wedding dress or ? It is a bit different approach.

I will give you what I think based on the fact you are on bodybuilding.com I will assume you are training with weights. What I would suggest is to start with 1 gram of protein for every pound of body weight. Based on your diet target I would guess you are about 125 pounds.

So 125 g of protein a day/500 calories. I would take 20% of your daily calories in fat, say 20% of 1400 calories so 280 calories divided by 9 is 31 g of fat daily. So far we have $500\text{ C} + 280\text{ C} = 780\text{ C}$ your target daily is 1400 C so you will need 620 C from carbohydrates or 69 g of carbohydrates.

Using a basic list of quality carbs, protein and fat make up 4 meals a day roughly 3 to 400 C per meal. Eat what you like as long as it is on the list, try to total your numbers at the end of the day. If you are close you will be successful. Don't worry if you are a bit off say more carbs than fat or vice versa, main focus is on meeting your numbers and getting your protein.

Eat what you like when you want. I like to eat at noon and work out at 3 pm so I eat higher carbs at that time of day etc. Also carbs and about 30 to 40 g of protein after my workout at about 5 pm and dinner at 7:30 pm. Just do what works for you.

Once you start it gets easier by the day. Make out your meal plan. The next day change the date, copy and paste it onto a new page and plug in the numbers based on what you want to eat. I like to do my dinner first and whats left spread out over the other 3 meals.

Work out hard and follow this you will be happy.

I have had success with this for many years. Wish you all the best,

Cheers, John.

April 6th, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)

**CWdietitian**

just in case they used this plan it is 155g carbs not 69g carbs. (Probably just an easy mistake after having calculated the fat out!) Just wanting to make sure no one is under-eating bc we all know that no one likes that!

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**Greta242** (Greta)

Thank you for posting this it is very informative.

March 10th, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)**PandaBroKyle** (kyle)

You know the number the macros calculator gives you, should u divide the numbers by 3 for the three meals, or is it supposed to be 300g carbs 40g fat 90g protein per meal?

March 7th, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)**Siddyy94** (Siddharth Agarwal)

I am a vegetarian and I would like to start ketogenic diet, I have read contradictory post all over the net. Any thoughts or any one who is a vegetarian and tried it?

February 23rd, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)**Jeff626** (Jeff)

Just finding out about this now, very interesting. I am looking forward to understanding the process, time to study!

January 18th, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)**TheBeastWCBB** (Nick Scott)

I wish I just did this years ago lol people have no clue how much this is everything to getting results. I am just glad I started when I did years ago

January 5th, 2017 • [Report](#) • [Reply](#)[Show More Comments](#)

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