

# Managing The Scales

Knowing what your weight means and how to make it work for you.



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A Federal Trade Commission (FTC) study by a panel of experts concluded the following: That proper weight loss is achieved by reducing caloric intake and/or increasing physical activity. Individuals maintaining weight losses over the long term do so by changing their diet and changing their physical activity.

Although there are common characteristics among the relevant population, there is not a single cause of overweight or obesity. In some people, the cause may be more closely linked to genetic factors while in other instances, the principal causal factor may be environmental. Moreover, it should be obvious that diets, metabolic rates, and levels of physical activity vary from one individual to another and that weight loss levels will vary. Weight loss results for one individual are not to be viewed as typical for another individual.

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People under treatment for other conditions or taking medications prescribed by their health care provider should tell their providers that they have begun this diet because, in some cases, adjustments to medications or modifications to the weight loss program may be appropriate.

This is not a custom weight loss program. This is merely material designed for discussion and educational and entertainment purposes. In no way should any of this material be used in place of a program from your doctor or registered dietitian. The information in this document is supported by research by various government and regulated organizations and peer reviewed studies.

## Purpose & Use

The purpose of this download is to help you with the following:

1. Keep you from crying in a fit of frustration on top of your digital weight scale. It's okay, we've all been there.
2. Help you remain logical and rational in the face of things that don't seem to make sense.
3. Help you better identify your body goals and how to achieve them.
4. Give you a chance and encouragement during your journey.
5. To move forward with any challenge carrying a better attitude.

My hope is to educate you into new actions that bring about real change, but mostly to make you not feel so alone.

## Human, Meet Scales

I have dove into the murky waters of scale weight and insanity several times. In fact, this manual is going to include an edited/updated version of a two-part post I wrote called, "The Science of Scale Fluctuations." There were many things in there that can't be said better, but I believe there is more to say.

I have had the pleasure of training and consulting some of the strongest people in the world. Actors, doctors, coaches, athletes, government leaders, models, etc. These are people who can train for hours at a time. These are individuals who invested years in higher education, internships, and wear grueling experience notches in their belts. My point, these are not the kind of people who cower in mediocrity. These are people who have stated "I WANT MORE! I NEED MORE! I EXPECT THE BEST OF LIFE!"

In an instant, all of these leaders, athletes, doctors, and savants became quivering puddles of their former selves the moment they stepped on a scale. I have held a 6'2 and 230lb pure muscled man in my arms as he wept. Why? The scale.

The scale has a magical power, especially in societies that glorify thinness and low body fat in their cultures. It's the Catch 22 of industrialized nations at its finest. Higher body fat levels are generally celebrated in cultures where food and wealth are scarce. In more

industrialized societies, self-control and lower body fat move you to a more elite status.

Hollywood, society expectations, fashion, sports, and personal stigmas drive us to achieve a certain physical standard.

## Understanding Shouldn't Equal Settling

I am not here to have you shy away from anything you might want, that isn't the point. Let me be clear, I don't care what you weigh or your body fat, that's your preference. All I want for you is to understand it all means. The point is for you to understand how to get to whatever your goals are. Believe it or not, for most of you that has nothing to do with a scale.

This bears repeating.

Most goals have very little to do with the scale.

I believe if you understand what happens in training, dieting, and mindset that you will freak out *less* and get what you want *more*.

## The Weight of Measure

This section may seem a little, well, boring. Understanding these technical things can bring you a strange comfort though, I promise.

There are a few types of scales used to measure weight. The main ones used today are balance, spring, and strain gauge.

Balance scales are used very little by everyday society as a means of measurement. A balance scale works off a lever comparing a known weight placed against the tester. A classic example of this would be [Justice Scales](#).

A widely used method for weight and standard for many years, were spring scales. These scales work on either a stretch or compress system. A stretch system is what you will find at a grocery store when weighing produce. Place an object on the scale and the distance the spring stretches, based upon its set expansion, will determine the weight.

The reverse is what is used in bathroom weight scales with springs. The amount compressed in distance is the determining factor here.

The last method is a strain gauge scale; it measures the strain of an object. A wire or many wires send out a current when weight bends the plate that it is attached to. That amount of stress is calculated and the read out that you get on a digital scale is the collection of those calculations.

There are pros and cons to every weight system. Usually different scales produce different readouts. You will find most quality scales are within a few pounds of one another for the average person's daily weigh needs. No system is without flaws and if needing to make weight for a particular event make sure you test on their scale if possible. The important thing to note is that is the only time your weight should ever matter.

Let me repeat that.

The only time your weight number is important is when you are in a competition that involves weight class. This can be the case for athletes such as fighters, wrestlers, or lifters.

## **Essential Body Mass and the Weight You Have To Keep**

The human body is made up of various bones, skin, organs, tissue, muscle, fat, water, etc. At a point, there is only so much of that weight you can get rid of. For the sake of this download let's call this *Essential Body Mass (EBM)*. This is a little different than Lean Body Mass (LBM) because you can lose or gain a certain degree of LBM. At the end of the day there is a certain amount of EBM that you must maintain. Sorry, but you can't make weight by removing your liver or extracting your femur.

If we set aside organs, bones, and blood it leaves us a few places where we can store things. Things like fat, muscle, and tissue.

**Fat:** You have a certain amount of essential fat in the body. This fat is needed for a multitude of reasons and functions in the body. The rest of the fat you store when you eat in an excess of calories for your energy needs. You can store this fat subcutaneously (right underneath the skin) or viscerally (in between organs, mainly abdominal).

**Muscle:** You also have essential muscle in the body. Movement would not be possible without it. The rest of the muscle you have is gained through various living of life or by

breaking down and rebuilding that tissue via training. Muscle is more dense than fat. This means that 5 pounds of muscle takes up less space than 5 pounds of fat. Muscle doesn't weigh more than fat, 5 pounds is 5 pounds. This is a common saying that drives me nuts. A pound is a pound is a pound.

Riddle: What weighs more, a pound of feathers or a pound of rocks?

Water: A huge amount of your body is made up of water. Lean muscle tissue and blood contain about 80% water; where as a fat cell contains about 20 to 25% water. Water helps transport nutrients, oxygen, and waste products in and out of cells. It is necessary for all digestive, absorption, and circulatory functions.

Water is needed to regulate the body's temperature and to provide energy. It also helps moisten skin and regulate hormones, emotions, and maintains normal electrical properties of cells. If your body drops even 2% of its water storage (from basal level need), you start to function worse, feel fatigued, and are more prone to health problems the further it drops. Simply put, no water in the body equals a whole lot of a mess.

## Daily Changes in Weight

Everyday you do things that are going to cause normal and abnormal weight fluctuations. On a day in and day out basis, dieting down or not, eating in a surplus, these things are going to change and are affected by your activity. That being said, the severity in the level you do things are going to dramatically change water levels in the body (and therefore weight on the scale).

## Food Weight

The weight of an item you eat is going to change the weight you are. You may be thinking, "Tell me something I didn't know!" but I can name many moments where I had someone weigh themselves after they ate and freaked out.

The food you eat has weight.

The fluid you drink has weight.

Exercise: Grab a full gallon of water, a plate of food and go stand on the scale with it and then without it.

I rest my case.

What you eat on a daily basis will also change that weight. Eat a heavy volume of food, lots of soup, vegetables, protein, and water? The scale is going to shoot up. And guess what, it can do this even in a deficit.

## **Water Retention**

Retention: To hold on to, to hold back within.

Retention comes in all forms and reasons. From hormonal to glycogen storage, you can retain water in various places on the body, in large amounts, and for extended periods of time. I am going to cover the main causes of retention and how they occur.

## **Edema**

There are many causes and sublevels of edema. Edema is classified mainly as swelling from an accumulation of watery fluid in cells, tissues, or serous cavities. This can range from mild to severe, and the reasoning behind it varies. Anything from electrolyte imbalances, kidney problems, allergies, injury, and exercise can contribute on mild to severe levels.

If you have sock rings, swollen calves, or a puffy face, technically these are forms of edema on small levels. If you live with this constantly, then you are likely dealing with issues of electrolyte balance in the body. If this is the case, you need to focus on maintaining a better state of balance, as much as you can.

One example of performance edema is marathon runners usually weigh more and are softer in their definition after racing because of swelling in the body. The physical pounding, hormonal changes, and fluid imbalances can cause quite a fluid disturbance. This doesn't happen to all individuals of the sport but for some is another reason to do marathons for sport, not body composition change.

What to do in order to reduce edema?

- Make sure to stay properly hydrated.
- Make sure you are getting the right balance of sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and zinc.



- Make sure you are getting proper rest and time off from training.
- Make sure you are focusing on taking care of your joints and muscles.
- Make sure you aren't in prolonged deficits and eat at maintenance.

## **Glycogen Retention**

Muscle holds a massive amount of water. A lot of times people accuse diets of being “muscle eaters” but this isn't usually the case. While you are freaking out and making false claims about atrophy, I can make it “magically” reappear with some carbs and one training session. One of the first things to go when you begin dieting down is the water stored via glycogen especially if taking part in an extreme diet or one that is low in carbs (even if higher in calories).

The reason that carbs are so valuable is because glycogen storage is pulled mainly from carbohydrate intake. Though a small amount can be taken from protein, it is never on a large enough level to maintain adequate or noticeable glycogen retention. That “plump” look you are going after with your muscles, to have them be filled and defined, is from storage of glycogen in the muscles. However, if you are not lean enough to see this definition pronounced, all you are going to notice is that your fat looks “fuller” on the days you eat carbs. Cue people saying carbs make them fat. They don't. Your fat makes you fat and water can look, act, and present itself as fat if you don't understand balance of it.

This is a key reason why carbs get the witch hunt. It isn't the glycogens fault, it's our fatness. Lose the fat and learn to love what the carbs can do for you. Trying to avoid this water regain and scale change will wreck your results in the gym and in your body. I have seen a sadly high number of people (usually women) destroy their bodies and health because they are trying to stave off the regain of glycogen that you need to learn to embrace.

Put the carbs to work by pulling them into the muscles by lifting and training the body. Go for “plump” not “bloated.”

## **Hormonal/Stress**

This applies to men or women, but I will say that women are going to be affected more by this on larger levels. While low testosterone can affect water retention for men, it's more of a rarity. For a larger amount of women, stress and hormonal imbalances, or just

general readjustments in the cycle system, lead toward heavy (I do mean heavy) fluctuation in your water balance and on a regular basis.

Stress is included in this as the triggers are close and affect hormonal behavior. For example, if you are stressed out, crying, and can't sleep, you are going to look and feel very much the same as you do on your period. This is not to be confused with the crying and puffiness that actually happens around your period time either. What to do about hormonal water fluctuations?

Calm down. There are some hormones and issues you can't control. For the ones you can, take care of yourself and your body will take care of you.

## **Weight Loss Isn't Linear**

Like I stated before, there are many ways you can change the course of your weigh-ins. Unless you eat the same thing every day and do the same things, in the same city, and moving at the same pace, you are going to land at a different point from day to day.

If looking for change then you have to watch the overall pattern to understand where you are falling. That is if you think the scale should matter in the first place. That is a different story though, isn't it?

The problem is that weight loss isn't linear. Fat loss is linear if you are moving in a downward trend consistently, but weight loss isn't at all. What this means is that weight loss hardly ever has constant downward progression. There are usually two main determining factors for this:

1. Body fat percentage
2. Severity of Deficit

If you provide the same percentage of deficit for a male at 29% body fat and a male at 12% body fat, the male with larger body fat will lose weight (meaning trending consistently downward) at a faster rate. Larger bodies store more water along with their fat mass and muscle mass. As you increase in fat and muscle, you will also increase at a steady rate with water. This is why we can see someone go up in the scales quickly when trying to gain mass.

You don't normally gain 6 pounds of fat when you go up 6 pounds on the scale in 3 days. Nor do you lose 6 pounds of pure fat if you go down in 3 days. The reverse is always true. Instead of playing head games with yourself and jumping up and down about victories,

you need to face that these are false victories. More so than false, they are deceptive. It is the chicken or the egg angle. Do you have to lose water to lose fat? Etc.

Larger deficits can bring stalls or plateaus at a quicker pace and since re-feeds and breaks are needed to help aid that, you will gain back the water you lost. Still, depending on how severe the diet and the situation, majority of the time a more severe deficit (>800) is going to provide more linear results.

## **The “Whoosh” Factor**

The “whoosh” is when you are watching your weight day in and out and there is little to small changes even with large deficits. One day, out of nowhere, the scale will drop dramatically lower than it had been registering. This is known as a whoosh.

The “whoosh” could be any number of factors and no one knows for sure. One idea, and the one that makes the most sense, is that as fat cells empty, they refill with water. After a certain point and time, under unknown conditions, these cells alleviate the water and the “whoosh” is born.

The exact trigger that brings about this is unknown. Some hypothesize that it is much like water and carb loading. The body had loaded that area with stored fat, the fat leaves, but the body isn’t sure yet that these areas don’t need to stay plump and open for storage. To protect itself, it fills with water and doesn’t extract until it is sure all systems are a go.

There have been a lot of correlations with re-feeds and whooshes; there have also been a lot of experiments with trying to time whooshes. I have found them to be hit and miss. The best method thus far is in the Water Manual in the section of “Method: Water-Only Manipulation.” It appears, thus far, using this method is best at triggering a whoosh.

In order to see constant steady drops, maintaining an adequate intake of minerals is the key. With the right vitamins and electrolyte balance, I have found that you run into less stalls.

## **Why the Scale Isn’t a Complete Waste of Time**

I want to make it clear the scale does have uses.

1. The scale can be a powerful motivator.

As much as the scale can be your arch nemesis, it can also be a fantastic motivator for success. New lows or any showing of progress during something so challenging can be just what you need to push you through a tough day. But, I still think pictures are better.

2. If you are largely overweight, yes, the scale should go down and a lot.

One thing that works me up about other fitness professionals is their lack of logic when it comes to clients results. Trainers, your clients are either getting results or they aren't. If not, do something about it. If you clients are more than 30% body fat, the scale should move downwards and likely a lot. There is only so much "muscle mass" a client is going to put on before they just aren't losing weight anymore. Best honest with them and yourself.

If you are largely overweight, yes, you will have to see the scale move downwards. The rate and at what pace can vary depending on training experience and deficit aggression.

3. For some people, it can be a fantastic science experiment.

I can tell you on any given day what my weight will change to. There are some individuals I have worked with that I can do the same with. I can tell them or myself from one day to the next how trends will work. Most people have a predictable pattern. When you understand it on that level, it doesn't upset you anymore. You can take health cues, training cues, break cues, and challenge cues from the scale if you know how to play the game. But, few can do it like I can and most are not calm enough to get to that point.

## **Forget Everything I Wrote, Because the Scale Shouldn't Matter**

If you fall off the non-scale wagon you can utilize the scale as a means of personal scientific study. In reality, there is only one thing that matters - what you look like. I provided you with that information so you have answers, nothing more.

I see people argue about scale accuracy, body fat percentages, water levels, pant size, dress size, and even shoe size. It doesn't matter. It is all numbers with different experts and registrations values. One pants size isn't the same as the next. One body fat estimate is different from another. What you need to understand more than anything else is that there is no scale, no piece of clothing, and no number that tells you your value.

I understand how to use examples and “standards” as helpers to reach our goals, but we should be our own example. You should be your own role model. You should be your own size, be it a 0 or a 12 by the world's view.

## **Why the Scale Shouldn't Matter**

### 1. Standards and research don't include people that train.

The average person in America is obese. The numbers are rising in other places around the world, even those who previously had low obesity rates (such as Eastern Asia). If it is common for people to be obese, it is more common for them to be generally overweight. What becomes less and less common is for them to be fit or athletic. So, when you are the government, doctors, or educators collecting data for a study, who are you going to design around?

In this instance, “healthy weights” or BMI charts, even nutritional recommendations have little relevance to a training population or those who care about maintaining or increasing muscle mass overtime. Comparing yourself to these standards, makes little sense, don't you think?

### 2. It doesn't tell the whole story

As you can see by the previous section, there are 101 reasons why the scale, at any moment, can say anything it wants to say. That number doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't say “Linda weighs 142lbs because she is pre-menstrual, earned 5 pounds of muscle and glycogen in the gym, is stronger, looks better, and is making amazing changes to better her life.”

The scale will never tell you that. It just says, “142” in a flashing digital sign and turns off as fast as your emotions turn on.

### 3. It doesn't matter, because life isn't dictated by a number

Not age, weight, or money should dictate your life. Do these things make life easier? Sure. Coming from a poor background I have felt my head cock when people have the audacity to say money doesn't matter. I have dreams and desires often ruled out after certain ages (music and dance), and I know the importance of youth to cultures. And yes, being a trainer and writer in the industry, I know the pressures of weight class in ways most will never understand.

These are hardly obstacles without choice. If you want to feel sorry for yourself, I highly recommend looking up stories of women in oppressed societies robbed of their noses because they dared to speak to a man. I suggest you examine in detail the training athletes in the Special Olympics go through. Most of us are hardly dealing with the struggle that isn't born out of being spoiled and feeling entitled. That scale number is just one more reason to get down on yourself. Don't let it.

## **Body Enhancement**

For a long time, I used the term "recomposition" in regards to this topic. The truth is that people didn't understand it and it made them feel the process of changing their body was more difficult than it needed to be. Let's keep it as uncomplicated as possible. The majority of you are dieting and training for the purpose of enhancing the way that you look; to make it better. This is true in performance, physical appearance, or health. The goal that any of you are trying to achieve is enhancement. And from this day forth, so it shall be called.

## **It's All In How You Look**

Again, I am not going to sit here and tell you a bunch of lies to make you feel better.

If you want a reality check about the kind of weight range you may need to be in for popping abs, go look at some fighters and their weight classes.

Be it high or low, you have to get the preconceived notions out of your head and live in the reality of the look you want. Technically, that could be lower than you ever thought you would go, or higher than you ever thought you would live.

The point isn't that you shouldn't care about the number. You don't ever have to know the number. That being said, if you have a body goal, you need to go for that goal all the way, and not make excuses or talk yourself out of it because "That is way to high of a scale weight." or vice versa.

## **Fitness Model Girl - The Story**

I once had a consult with a woman who wanted to be a fitness model. She was roughly 110 pounds and 5'9. She didn't have a lick of muscle in her body and had a medium sized

bone frame. This led to a lean and “heroin chic” model type of appearance. She was recovering from an eating disorder and trying to put her focus on more healthy training and dieting habits. She stated she always liked a more defined muscle appearance and part of the reason she got down so low was because she kept expecting to see her abs. I explained to her that she is seeing them; there just isn’t anything there to see.

Over the course of two calls, we discussed what she would have to do in order to achieve her goals. We discussed the type of training she would have to do to what she should expect the scale to say and do as this continues on.

She freaked out.

Why? It was my estimate that she could (in the short term) reach roughly 118-120 within a few months because of the initial shock, increase in glycogen, and new muscle building. I told her that her end goal for the type of look she desired could be somewhere in the 123-125 zone, but it may be a little higher or lower depending.

She (as you can imagine) was not comfortable at all with the idea of gaining a potential 10-15 pounds. She didn’t believe that she could gain all that weight and it not be fat. After all, women can’t gain muscle like that, right!? But, with muscle comes more water and with more eating comes more food volume. Like I said before, I am a master at scale numbers and she would look leaner, more defined, and stronger at 123-125 than she ever would at 110.

To keep the story short, with the exception of a few freakouts, she reported in every few months and was ecstatic with how things were going and how she looked at a higher weight. When you do it right and you calm down, good things really do happen.

## **The Real Questions To Ask Yourself**

I have had tons of similar experiences and in the reverse direction. I had a guy convinced at 5’7 (and not using steroids) that he should be 5% body fat at 200lbs and that it must be his training. He finally got it when I told him to Google “Bruce Lee height weight.”

You might be saying, “Um, I thought numbers didn’t matter.” They don’t, but they do. You have to be logical.

My point about all of this is people can arrive at exactly what they want to look like without ever knowing the scale weight they are. You may be getting in your own way, without even realizing it because of a number. All I am trying to do is teach you why you don't need to know.

Sometimes you have to teach a kid how to swim with floaties before they jump in the deep in without them. Take this as me giving you floaties about understanding your range and starting points. After this, take the things off and jump in the deep end.

- Are your abs developing?
- Do you like what you see in the mirror?
- Are you moving easier and more agile?
- **Do You Feel Better About Yourself?**

A client said a marvelous thing to me once. She said, "For two weeks, I kept thinking about the fact that I lost 44 pounds and have never been this weight in my adult life. But, I was a little disappointed. I wasn't getting what was so great about it. Then, I went out dancing with some of my friends. It was there I realized I didn't feel stupid anymore. I felt free to wave my arms in the air! That meant way more than the number on the scale."

I see so many people work so hard to change their life, but they don't bother to test the change. They don't go back to those awkward moments or challenges they experienced before and see how they feel this time around. I assure you, that number doesn't mean anything compared to self worth and pride. It is merely a side effect of change, it isn't the change itself.

I repeat. The scale isn't what the changes you. It is what you did, what you will do, and who you will become that is the change. The scale is the color of a car, it isn't the engine. How you feel about yourself is all matters.

## **Keep Pushing Until Your Eternal Says "Enough Is Enough."**

For some of you, there may never be enough because you are always going to be creating new physical challenges, athletic goals, and lifestyle progressions. That's great. But, in terms of body enhancement, there is a point you should switch from building the house, to decorating the walls. I see too many people spend their lives building house after



house, but never having a roof to stand under.

Work on finding definable goals that eliminate the scale as your method of measure. Be it clothing, events, naked pictures, physical feats of strength, or skills. Let anything, other than the scale, be a guide for who you are in your life. If you ever do use it, use it only as a small portion of information for use and then move on towards the direction that brings you success.

## **Now Is the Time for Action**

I can safely predict that this probably isn't your first download involving fitness, fat loss, or anything between. In the world of the internet, we are overloaded with "education" sources. We dive in so we feel like we are achieving something. The act of seeking is not a replacement or an equivalent for the act of doing. Doing is the only thing that matters. I bring this up because the challenge I am proposing is meaningless in theory. This challenge takes actual action. You actually have to do something here.

I don't care if your goal is to gain muscle, lose fat, gain speed, gain talent, or enhance your skills -- action starts now. Remember, the scale isn't the only factor but if you are going to use it, use it right.

Links of interest:

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<http://www.fatlosstroubleshoot.com> - Fat Loss Manual

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