

Choose Your Goal & Track Your Progress

A practical guide from Cut the Crap
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Start with a destination you can live with

The easiest place to start is with a goal weight. Maybe you remember a weight when you felt comfortable, moved well, and liked how your clothes fit. It might even be your high-school weight.

That can give you a starting reference, but your adult body may carry different amounts of muscle, and that old number may no longer be the right destination. Choose a weight you can work toward, then reassess as you get closer. Your first goal does not have to be your final goal.

My preferred long-term target: body composition

When you have a reasonable way to estimate it, my preferred long-term target is a healthy, sustainable body-fat percentage. You want to reduce excess body fat while preserving the muscle, strength, and capability that help you live well.

Practical body-fat goal ranges

Adult readers	Suggested goal range
Men	15-24% body fat
Women	20-29% body fat

These are this guide's suggested targets, not universal medical cutoffs. Your age, medical history, muscle mass, and measurement method matter. Being outside the range does not automatically mean you are unhealthy; being inside it does not guarantee good health. Research-based reference ranges also vary by age and population. [1]

You do not have to aim for the bottom of the range. If the destination feels far away, choose a smaller milestone first. Make progress, review your measurements and physical function, then decide on the next step.

Lose the load. Keep the engine. Build a result you can live with.

Give Yourself Credit

The scale is one progress report. It is not the only one.

The scale does not give you credit for keeping muscle

You might be losing body fat while maintaining - or even building - muscle. Your weight may move slowly, even though your body is changing in the direction you want.

Tracking body composition can give you that well-deserved pat on the back. It can help reveal progress that scale weight alone misses: **you are losing the load while keeping the engine.**

Eating enough protein and doing resistance training help support muscle retention. They do not guarantee it. Your nutrition, training, recovery, and pace of weight loss still matter. [2]

Measure consistently. Watch the trend.

I recommend using your smart scale daily, at the same time of day, wearing the same clothes or a similar amount of clothing. The easiest time is usually right after getting out of bed or just before going to bed. Choose a routine you can repeat.

Morning measurements, after using the bathroom and before eating or drinking, can make consistency easier. Keep the scale on a firm, level floor in the same place. Follow its instructions for bare feet and hand position. [3, 4]

Daily measurements are useful because they give you more information about the trend - not because every daily change deserves your attention.

Weight and body-fat estimates fluctuate. Hydration, meals, exercise, bathroom habits, and menstrual cycles can affect readings. A sudden change does not necessarily mean you gained or lost body fat or muscle.

Measuring once a week is acceptable, too. Keep the conditions consistent. You will simply have fewer data points, so it may take longer to recognize a clear pattern.

Compare weekly averages of daily readings, or a series of weekly check-ins. Averaging can smooth fluctuations; it cannot make an inaccurate estimate accurate. A single reading cannot prove muscle gain or loss.

If daily weighing becomes discouraging or consuming, measure less often and use other signs of progress alongside it.

Collect the information. Look for direction. Let the trend tell the story.

Choose Useful Tools

A smart scale and a familiar pair of jeans can both help you notice progress.

Choose a scale with hand sensors

Whatever smart scale you choose, I recommend one with **electrode-equipped handles as well as foot sensors**. Look for hand-and-foot electrodes or eight-electrode measurement, rather than simply a carrying handle.

Foot-only scales measure electrical impedance primarily through your lower body and use that information to estimate whole-body composition. Hand-and-foot models include measurement paths through your upper body, too. That broader coverage does not guarantee accuracy; the readings are still estimates. [4]

[View my recommended smart scale on Amazon](#)

As an Amazon Associate, I earn from qualifying purchases.

Your pants can give you a progress report

As you lose body fat, you will likely notice your waist getting smaller. If you enjoy shopping, this part might be fun. If you are like me, you may find it slightly annoying when the jeans you just bought are already getting loose.

You can get more precise with a tape measure. Recording your waist measurement from time to time can reveal progress that the scale does not show. But you do not have to turn this into another assignment.

For everyday tracking, paying attention to how your pants fit may be the most practical approach. Is the waistband less snug? Are you using a different belt hole? Can you comfortably wear something that used to feel tight? **Those changes count.**

Clothing fit is a useful clue rather than an exact measurement. Compare the same pair of pants under similar conditions - stretchy fabric and a fresh trip through the dryer can change the fit, too.

If you like numbers, use the tape measure. If you prefer simplicity, pay attention to your clothes.

Either way, the point is to pay attention so you get every pat on the back you deserve along the way.

Put It Into Practice

Choose one milestone. Collect useful information. Notice what is improving.

1. Write down your goal

Choose an observable result: a weight milestone, body-fat estimate, waist measurement, clothing-fit change, or physical ability. Decide what progress would look like for you.

2. Record your starting point

Write down the date, your chosen measure, the unit, and the method or device. If you use clothing fit, name the pair of pants or belt so you can compare the same item later.

3. Choose a repeatable routine

Decide when you will measure and what conditions you will repeat. If you change devices or measurement methods, record that change rather than assuming the numbers are interchangeable.

4. Review the pattern

Look at the longer-term direction alongside your strength, physical function, and clothing fit. Do not let one unusual reading erase the progress you have made. Our bodies retain and release water for reasons that are not always obvious. Remember that when you have a weird scale day.

[Open the Goal & Starting-Point Planner](#)

[Open the Progress Trend Tracker](#)

Notice the progress. Give yourself credit. Keep going.

Sources and further reading

1. Gallagher et al. Healthy percentage body fat ranges. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2000;72:694-701. Provisional reference ranges; not the source of this guide's author-selected targets.

2. National Institute on Aging. How can strength training build healthier bodies as we age?

3. NHS England. How to record your weight.

4. InBody H30 user manual: hand/foot electrodes and test preparation. Manufacturer documentation; follow your own device's instructions.

Educational guidance for adults, not individualized medical care. Use professional guidance when choosing targets affected by medical conditions.