

— TRAINING SYSTEM · LOSE FAT, KEEP MUSCLE

LEAN START

Eight weeks of training built for a fat-loss phase. The deficit is the kitchen's job — this is how you train so the weight you lose is fat, not the muscle underneath it.

LEVEL	LENGTH	SCHEDULE	GOAL
Beginner	8 Weeks	3 + Walk	Lean



01 — BEGIN HERE

LOSE THE FAT. KEEP THE MUSCLE.

Most beginners who diet lose weight and end up smaller, softer versions of themselves — because they cut food and stopped training hard. Lean Start fixes that. For eight weeks you lift to hold every ounce of muscle while the deficit does the fat-burning, and you move more so the deficit is easier to keep. The scale falls; the shape stays.

FOR YOU, IF

You want to lose fat and you're newer to training.
You're ready to eat in a modest deficit and want the training half done right so the result is lean, not just lighter.

PAIR IT WITH

The Starter Deficit (the eating) is the other half of this plan — training can't out-run the kitchen. For the structured version later, see Fat-Loss Architecture and Recomposition.

THE HONEST TRUTH, UP FRONT

Fat loss is created in the kitchen, not the gym — training burns less than people hope. What training does is decide what kind of weight you lose. Lift hard and the body keeps its muscle and sheds fat. Skip it and you lose both. That is the whole reason this program exists.

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02

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

Everything here follows from these. Read them once; they explain every choice that follows.

01 LIFT TO KEEP, DIET TO LOSE

The deficit removes the fat; the lifting tells the body to keep its muscle while it happens. Two jobs, two tools — never ask training to do the kitchen's work. → [Studies](#) · [How fat loss actually works](#)

02 HOLD THE WEIGHTS, NOT JUST THE REPS

In a deficit you train to maintain strength, not chase new records. Keep the loads heavy and honest; that signal is what protects muscle when calories are low.

03 PROTEIN IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

High protein is the other half of keeping muscle in a cut. It also keeps you full. Hit it daily and the diet gets dramatically easier. → [Pair: The Starter Deficit](#)

04 STEPS ARE THE SECRET ENGINE

A daily walk burns more fat over a week than any finisher, and it never eats into recovery. Steps, not punishing cardio, are how you widen the deficit.

05 MEASURE THE TREND, NOT THE DAY

Weight bounces daily with water and food. Judge fat loss by the weekly average and the mirror over a month — never by this morning's number.



03

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE

Eight weeks, one page. Screenshot it. This is the whole program — everything after is detail.

THE ARC · LIFT HARD, HOLD THE MUSCLE

WEEKS 1–4

ESTABLISH

3 full-body lifts · 3×8–12. Set the deficit. Build the step habit (8k/day).

WEEKS 5–7

HOLD THE LINE

Keep the loads. If the scale stalls, add steps or a finisher — not more dieting.

WEEK 8

EASE & ASSESS

A lighter week, a diet break. Measure: photos, waist, the weekly average.

THE WEEK · 3 FULL-BODY LIFTS · A WALK MOST DAYS · 1–2 SHORT FINISHERS

DAY A

LIFT

- 1 Goblet / Back Squat
- 2 DB Bench Press
- 3 One-arm DB Row
- 4 Plank
- 5 Finisher: carries

DAY B

LIFT

- 1 Romanian Deadlift
- 2 Shoulder Press
- 3 Lat Pulldown
- 4 Dead Bug
- 5 Finisher: bike/row

DAY C

LIFT

- 1 Split Squat
- 2 Incline Press
- 3 Cable Row
- 4 Side Plank
- 5 Finisher: intervals

THE ONE RULE

When the scale stops moving, add a lever from the bottom up — first steps, then a finisher, then (last) a small food cut. Never slash calories first. You can always take more food away; you can't get burned-out recovery back.



04

THE MOVEMENT LIBRARY

Six big patterns keep the most muscle for the least time — exactly what a cut needs. One cue to hold, one error to avoid.

01 SQUAT

Goblet Squat → Back Squat

Cue: sit between the hips, chest tall, drive the floor away. Avoid: knees caving, heels lifting.

02 HINGE

Romanian Deadlift

Cue: push the hips back, bar close, flat back. Avoid: rounding the lower back.

03 PUSH

DB Bench · Incline · Shoulder Press

Cue: shoulder blades set, elbows ~45°, full range. Avoid: flaring elbows, half reps.

04 PULL

DB Row · Lat Pulldown · Cable Row

Cue: lead with the elbow, squeeze the back. Avoid: yanking with the arms only.

05 BRACE

Plank · Dead Bug · Side Plank

Cue: ribs down, glutes on, breathe behind a tight core. Avoid: sagging hips, holding the breath.

06 THE ENGINE

Daily walk · Carries · Bike / Row intervals

Cue: walk daily; keep finishers short and hard. Avoid: hours of cardio that wreck recovery and appetite.



05

THE SESSIONS

Three full-body lifts a week. Keep the weights honest — in a deficit you're **maintaining** strength, not chasing PRs. Finish with one short conditioning piece. Rest 90s.

DAY A · LIFT + CARRY FINISHER

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	RIR	NOTE
Goblet / Back Squat SQUAT	3 × 8–10	2	Keep the load up
DB Bench Press PUSH	3 × 8–10	2	Full range
One-arm DB Row PULL	3 × 10–12	2	Each side
Plank BRACE	3 × 30–45s	—	Tight core
Farmer's Carry · finisher	4 × 40 m	—	Heavy, brisk, short rest

DAY B · LIFT + ENGINE FINISHER

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	RIR	NOTE
Romanian Deadlift HINGE	3 × 8–10	2	Hips back, bar close
Shoulder Press PUSH	3 × 8–10	2	Seated or standing
Lat Pulldown PULL	3 × 10–12	2	Full stretch at top
Dead Bug BRACE	3 × 8/side	—	Slow
Bike / Row · finisher	10 min	—	Easy–moderate, steady

**DAY C · LIFT + INTERVALS FINISHER**

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	RIR	NOTE
Split Squat SQUAT · SINGLE-LEG	3 × 8–10	2	Each leg
Incline DB Press PUSH	3 × 8–10	2	~30° bench
Seated Cable Row PULL	3 × 10–12	2	Chest tall
Side Plank BRACE	3 × 20–30s	—	Each side
Intervals · finisher	6 × 30s	—	Hard 30s / easy 60s

06**HOW EACH BLOCK CHANGES**

BLOCK	STEPS / DAY	WHAT YOU DO
1 · Establish WEEKS 1–4	Build to 8k	Set the deficit (The Starter Deficit). Lift hard, learn the finishers, build the walking habit.
2 · Hold the line WEEKS 5–7	8–10k	Keep the loads. Stall? Add steps, then a finisher — adjust food only if needed.
3 · Ease & assess WEEK 8	Easy	Lighter lifts, a short diet break at maintenance. Take photos and measure the trend.

After 8 weeks: take a 1–2 week diet break at maintenance, then run another block — or step up to **Recomposition** to lose fat and build at once.



07

THE PLATE · IN A DEFICIT

Training keeps the muscle; the plate creates the loss. Two rules carry almost the entire result: a modest deficit, and high protein. Here's the plate that delivers both.

BUILD EVERY PLATE FROM FOUR PARTS — PROTEIN LEADS

PROTEIN

A generous palm+

The priority in a cut — it holds muscle and kills hunger. Eggs, curd, paneer, soya, chicken, fish, whey at every meal.

VEGETABLES

Two-three fists

Your best friend in a deficit: huge volume, few calories, lots of fibre. Fill the plate with these to stay full.

CARBS

A cupped hand

Keep some — they fuel the lifts that save your muscle. Put most around training.

FATS

A thumb

A little, for hormones and taste. The easiest lever to trim when calories need to come down.

THE DEFICIT, SIMPLY

Aim to lose about **0.5–0.75% of bodyweight a week** — slow enough to keep muscle and your sanity. The full method (sizing it, holding it, breaking stalls) is **The Starter Deficit**, free.

PROTEIN TARGET

Push protein high in a cut: **~2.0 g per kg** of bodyweight. A 70 kg person $\approx$ 140 g. It protects muscle and keeps you fuller than any other food.

IN SHORT

Modest deficit · protein high · vegetables for volume · carbs around training · walk daily. Lift to keep what you have.



08

RECOVERY & THE DEFICIT

A deficit is a recovery tax. You're giving the body less material to rebuild with, so the basics — sleep, rest, steps — matter more here than anywhere.

SLEEP

7–9 hours. Short sleep raises hunger and costs you muscle in a cut. The single biggest lever after protein.

REST DAYS

A full day between lifts. In a deficit you recover slower — respect it. Walk on rest days; don't add hard sessions.

STEPS

8,000–10,000. The engine of this program — it widens the deficit without taxing recovery or spiking hunger.

TWO THINGS TO UNLEARN

More cardio is not better. Hours of cardio burn muscle and drive hunger through the roof. Walk, lift, and let the small finishers do the rest.

The scale lies daily. Water, salt, and a big meal swing it by kilos. Weigh most mornings, then judge only the weekly average. The trend is the truth.



09

THE WEEK LOG

Print this page. Tick each lift and log your weekly average weight — judge fat loss by the column on the right, never by one morning.

WEEK	DAY A	DAY B	DAY C	AVG WEIGHT	STEPS AVG
01					
02					
03					
04					
05					
06					
07					
08					



09

THE LIFT & MEASURE LOG

Keep the lifts steady — holding your numbers in a deficit is success. Track the waist and photos; they tell the truth the scale can't.

LIFT · HOLD THESE	WK 1	WK 3	WK 5	WK 8
Squat				
Romanian Deadlift				
Bench Press				
Row / Pulldown				

WAIST (CM) · THE HONEST TAPE

WK 1	WK 3	WK 5	WK 8

PHOTOS TAKEN? (FRONT / SIDE / BACK)

WK 1	WK 4	WK 8



10

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

SHOULDN'T I DO MORE CARDIO TO LOSE FAT FASTER?

No. The diet drives fat loss; lifting saves your muscle; walking adds an easy burn. Piling on cardio mostly burns muscle and makes you ravenous. Keep finishers short.

WHY AM I LIFTING HEAVY IF I'M TRYING TO GET LEAN?

Because heavy(ish) lifting is the signal that tells your body to keep its muscle while you diet. Drop the weights and you lose muscle along with the fat — and end up "skinny-fat."

THE SCALE DIDN'T MOVE THIS WEEK.

Normal. Water masks fat loss for a week or two. Hold course; check the four-week trend. If it's truly flat, add steps first, a finisher second, food last.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN, REALLY?

High — about 2 g per kg of bodyweight. It's the most important food rule in a cut: it protects muscle and keeps you full. See The Starter Deficit.

CAN I RUN THIS WITH JUST DUMBBELLS AT HOME?

Yes — swap to the dumbbell versions from **Home Base**. The structure and the finishers are identical.

I'M HUNGRY AND TIRED.

Your deficit may be too aggressive. Aim for ~0.5–0.75% bodyweight lost per week, sleep more, and take a diet break at maintenance every 6–8 weeks.

WHAT COMES AFTER WEEK 8?

A diet break, then another block — or move to **Recomposition** (lose fat and build at once) or **The Complete Cut** for a longer, structured fat-loss phase.



LIGHTER IS EASY. LEAN IS EARNED.

Anyone can lose weight by eating less. Keeping the strength and shape underneath it — that takes lifting through the cut. Do that, and you don't just weigh less at the end. You look like you train.

PAIR THE PLATE

THE STARTER DEFICIT

The eating half of this plan.
Free.

NEXT PROGRAM

RECOMPOSITION

Lose fat and build muscle at
once.

EVERY MORNING

THE EDGE

One letter before noon. One
principle, one practice.

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