

THE 0 → 1 HANDBOOK

Build Your Own AI Fitness System

Start your fitness journey. Zero to your first complete cycle.

*Bulk, cut, and recomp — one coach that reads your body and builds your path. Ten years of training, one journey,
the exact questions that turn any AI into yours.*

BY JASON XIE | ISSA CERTIFIED PERSONAL TRAINER

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WHAT THIS IS

One Roadmap. Any Body. Any Goal.

The hard part of this was never the information. It's that changing your body takes months and years of showing up when it's inconvenient — and that is genuinely hard, for everyone, me very much included. I've had stretches where I fell off completely and had to talk myself back into starting again. So before anything else: credit to you. Deciding you actually want this, and being willing to give it real time and effort, is the part most of us keep putting off — and you've already done it.

So: you've already decided you want to change your body — and that is half the hard part done. **The other half is getting the right knowledge and the right method to actually get there.** Information isn't scarce anymore — that's exactly the problem. It's everywhere, and none of it is joined up. A thousand videos and articles, each teaching one small piece, none of them telling you what order to do things in, what to ignore, or which parts even apply to someone built like you. So you collect fragments for months and never actually end up with a system.

This is the one resource that connects them. Think of it as a **zero-to-one handbook**: everything you genuinely need to know, in the order you need it, assembled into something you can follow from your very first session. It isn't a workout program and it isn't my routine handed to you — **it's the brain that ties all those scattered pieces together and turns them into your plan.**

Everything you need comes down to two things

Strip it all the way down, and anyone who wants to transform their body needs exactly two things. **First, the knowledge** — how training works, the fundamentals, how to perform each exercise properly. That knowledge already exists, free, in research papers, articles, and thousands of YouTube videos. It doesn't need rewriting — it needs finding, in the right order, from sources you can trust. So this guide doesn't lecture you; it hands you the questions and the pointers, and you go get the answers yourself — and learn to tell a fact from an opinion along the way.

Second, a positive feedback system. Track your training, your diet, and your weight. Review what that data says every month. Adjust your training, your diet, and your recovery based on what you find — then repeat. That's the entire system, and it's the part no video can do for you, so this guide builds it with you. **I believe that if you put the work in and run this loop honestly, for long enough, you should see progress.** That's a belief I've earned on my own body and watching others — not a promise I can make about yours. **How far you go is yours to find out.** Everything that follows is those two things, in the order you need them.

Here's how that actually works. This guide is built out of **prompts** — pre-written questions you copy and paste, one at a time, into a free AI like ChatGPT. Each one asks the thing an experienced lifter would know to ask and a beginner wouldn't think of — and because you've given it your own numbers, the answer comes back built around your body instead of a generic average. **If you can copy and paste, you can run this.**

Skinny and can't seem to gain? Carrying more fat than you'd like? Been training for years with no real structure? Never picked up a weight in your life? **Same guide. Same method.** The first two prompts are where everyone starts: you give the AI your real numbers, and it tells you which of the three phases to begin in — **building muscle, stripping fat, or refining what you've already built.** Everything after that is shaped by the answers you gave. One road map, three phases, any starting point.

And you don't just follow it. You build something while you work through it: **an AI coach loaded with your body, your history, your equipment and your real schedule** — one that keeps coaching you long after the last page.

What you'll walk away with

Your real numbers — maintenance calories, a protein target, and a goal and timeline that are honest for YOUR frame, not a generic internet average.

Your exact exercises — the movements that suit your body and the equipment you actually have access to, with the reasoning behind every pick.

Your training week — structured around the days you really have, not an ideal week you'll abandon by February.

A one-minute-per-session habit that quietly builds the training record your monthly check-in reads — written where you train, uploaded in seconds each day.

The ability to read your own data and adjust — the part that outlasts this guide entirely, and the real reason it's worth your time.

What it costs you: one real sit-down to build the plan — a couple of hours of prompts, plus the reading that gets you there, and you can split it across two days. Then about a minute a workout, a minute a day to upload and read your coach's reply, and around forty-five minutes every fourth week for the check-in, the adjustment, and the month-end hand-off. That's the whole system. It doesn't get more complicated later; **it gets more accurate.**

Most guides hand you a plan and hope you stick to it. This one hands you the questions — and leaves you with a system you can run for years, plus the understanding to know why it works.

Is This Guide For You?

You've just seen what this is built to do, and I meant the “any body, any goal” part — the method genuinely adapts to whoever is holding it. But precisely because I want it to work for you, let me be straight about fit: it isn't for everyone, and I'd rather you know that now than feel misled later.

A quick, honest heads-up before you dive in. This guide gets better every time someone runs it and tells me what happened. So if something is confusing, breaks, or just doesn't land — tell me. **There's a form at the end — it takes five or ten minutes, not two, and I read every single response myself.** Second, and this matters: **this guide is educational, not medical advice. I'm sharing a system and what I've learned, not diagnosing or treating anyone. Before you start any new training or eating plan, check with a doctor — especially if you have an injury, a health condition, or any history around food or eating you'd want a professional eye on. If a prompt ever hands you advice that feels off for your body, trust yourself and a professional over the AI.** Now — onto whether this is actually a fit for you.

This is for you if:

- ✓ **You're willing to be honest with it.** This only works on real input — real numbers, real effort, real setbacks reported honestly instead of smoothed over. Be straight with it and you get a plan built on who you actually are, not who you wish you were. Round up your effort or downplay a bad week and you get a worse system out than if you'd never started.
- ✓ You want to build muscle and change how you look, specifically. Training for health, for stress relief, or for a sport is a completely good reason to be in a gym — this guide just isn't built for it. What it is built for is a leaner, more muscular look you're proud of and confident showing off — not just a number on a scale. **And if you're carrying more fat than you'd like right now, this is still for you** — stripping that back to reveal what's underneath is the same road, just starting at a different point on it. The Router may well send you there first.
- ✓ **You're willing to run the whole loop, not just read it once.** Train, log, check in, adjust — the payoff compounds with time in it. Skim this guide and you get a plan for one month. Walk the loop for a few months and you get something a plan alone can't give you: a coach that understands your body better every month than the last.
- ✓ Maybe you've been training a while and made progress, but you've been winging it — no real system, no real knowledge backing up why you train the way you do, just a nagging sense you'd grow faster if you actually understood what you were doing.
- ✓ **You're okay with trial and error.** Not everything in here will land perfectly for your body on the first try — that's expected, not a failure. Observing what actually happened and adjusting from there is the whole method, and it's a skill that keeps paying off long after you've stopped needing this guide.

This probably isn't for you if:

- You want an app that just hands you a workout and counts your reps. (Honestly? Go download one — they're great at that, and some are free.) I didn't build this as an app on purpose: I want you to actually learn the knowledge — how to do this, and **WHY** — not just get handed a checklist to tap through. But if this delivery method, copying prompts into an AI, feels too complicated or too slow to follow, tell me in the feedback form. That's genuinely useful for me to know, not just a formality. And for what it's worth: I am planning to build an app that delivers this same system with a lot less copy-pasting — that's phase two of this project, not a replacement for the thinking behind it, just a smoother way to run it.

- You want someone else to be responsible for your results. This puts *you* in the driver's seat.
- You're looking for a magic shortcut. There isn't one — but there is a smarter way to do the work.

Whether you've been lifting for years or picking up your first weight — whether you're an AI power-user or you've never opened ChatGPT — this is built so you can't get lost. The prompts are copy-and-paste simple, with a gentler path for beginners. All you need is honesty about where you're starting, and the curiosity to learn as you go.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

Two Ways to Read This Guide

The foundations — everything between here and your first prompt — run to about page 45. That's roughly a 60–90 minute read, and here's the honest truth: **you don't have to finish it before you start.** Pick whichever path fits you:

The full read. Front to back, then start. Everything will be in your head before you type a word, and nothing ahead assumes you skipped anything. If you've got the patience, this is the richest version.

The fast start. Want to begin today? Read the disclaimers first (page 11 — two minutes), then jump straight to the five-minute AI setup on page 44 and run your first prompt on page 46. Before your first gym session, come back for **Tips 1–6 and 11** (starting page 20) — those are the ones that keep you safe and effective under a weight. Read the rest of the foundations during your first month, a section at a time. Honestly, they'll land harder that way — this guide's own philosophy is that understanding shows up after the reps, not before them, and that's as true of reading it as it is of training.

Both paths end in the same place. The only wrong version is the one where you stall at page 30 and never start.

BEFORE WE START

Who Am I and Why Should You Listen to Me?

Honestly? I'm just a normal guy who spent 10 years figuring this out the hard way — and this guide is me handing that head start to you through AI.

My name is Jason. I came to Canada from China at 15 — barely spoke English, no friends, no guidance, figuring it out alone. I landed on bodybuilding with zero idea what I was doing in the gym.

Over the next ten years — eight of them actually training, once you take out the injuries and the fourteen months COVID took — I went from a skinny teenager at 150 lbs to a peak of 220 lbs — all natural, just protein powder and creatine. Today I sit at a lean 195 lbs and I'm *still* learning. I've been through every phase: dirty bulks, clean bulks, cuts, recomps, injuries from bad training, plateaus that dragged on for months.

What carried me through those years wasn't *just* discipline. It was a picture I refused to let go of: me, looking good, walking into a room with confidence, no longer the lanky kid who landed here at 15. I could see the finish line long before I got near it, and I genuinely believed I'd reach it. That **belief** is half the game — the other half is a system that actually gets you there, and that's what this guide is for. **You bring the vision. I'll hand you the roadmap.**

I don't have a PhD or a sponsorship. I hold an ISSA personal training license out of genuine passion, but what matters more is 10 years of real trial and error with a real system, and on a naturally lean, narrow frame — the frame a lot of people start with and struggle with, because I struggled with it too. I also work in instrumentation and control engineering, and it shaped how I think more than people expect. Build a system, test it against real

feedback, let the loop correct itself — that's not just how I was trained to approach a control system, it's how I approach every problem in my life, this one included. This guide isn't a personality quirk of mine wrapped in fitness advice. It's an engineer's habit, pointed at a body instead of a machine. There's a concept from system control theory called **PID control** — proportional-integral-derivative, the feedback algorithm that keeps everything from cruise control to a thermostat holding steady. It never just checks whether you're off target right now and stops there. It weighs three things together: how far off you are this instant, how long you've been drifting in that direction, and how fast the gap is opening or closing. Then it corrects — a little, continuously, never a one-time fix. That's a genuinely accurate description of what your monthly check-in is doing for you: this month's number is how far off you are right now, the trend across your last few checkpoints tells you whether that's a real drift or just noise, and how fast it's moving tells you whether to nudge the plan or actually change something. Same logic.

“After years of trial, mistakes, wasted time, and injuries that could've been avoided, I've concluded what matters most: training smart, eating with intention, and recovering properly — without living in the gym or force-feeding yourself.”

Here's the thing I learned: what got me results was never a single program, or perfect form on every exercise — **it was asking the right questions about my own body, and a system to track my data and adjust my training and diet from it.** And that is exactly what AI is built to do, *if* you know what to feed it.

One warning, though: asking good questions is only half the skill — the other half is knowing what to do with the answers. We live in a world where you can find “evidence” for literally anything — dirty bulking works, dirty bulking ruins you, cardio kills gains, cardio saves them. Most people don't filter information by what's true; they filter it by what they want to be true. There's a part of all of us that goes looking for the source saying rest more, eat more, that plateau is genetics — I have done it plenty. So the real skill this guide trains is telling the difference between information that serves your actual goal and information that just lets you off the hook. Learn to verify your sources, tell an opinion apart from a fact, and build your own system of knowledge and belief on nothing but the truth.

There's only one honest way to verify anything in this game: test it on yourself. Run the trial, observe what your body does, keep what works, drop what doesn't. Your training log and the mirror are the only two sources that never lie to you. Everything in this guide — every question, every prompt — is built around that loop.

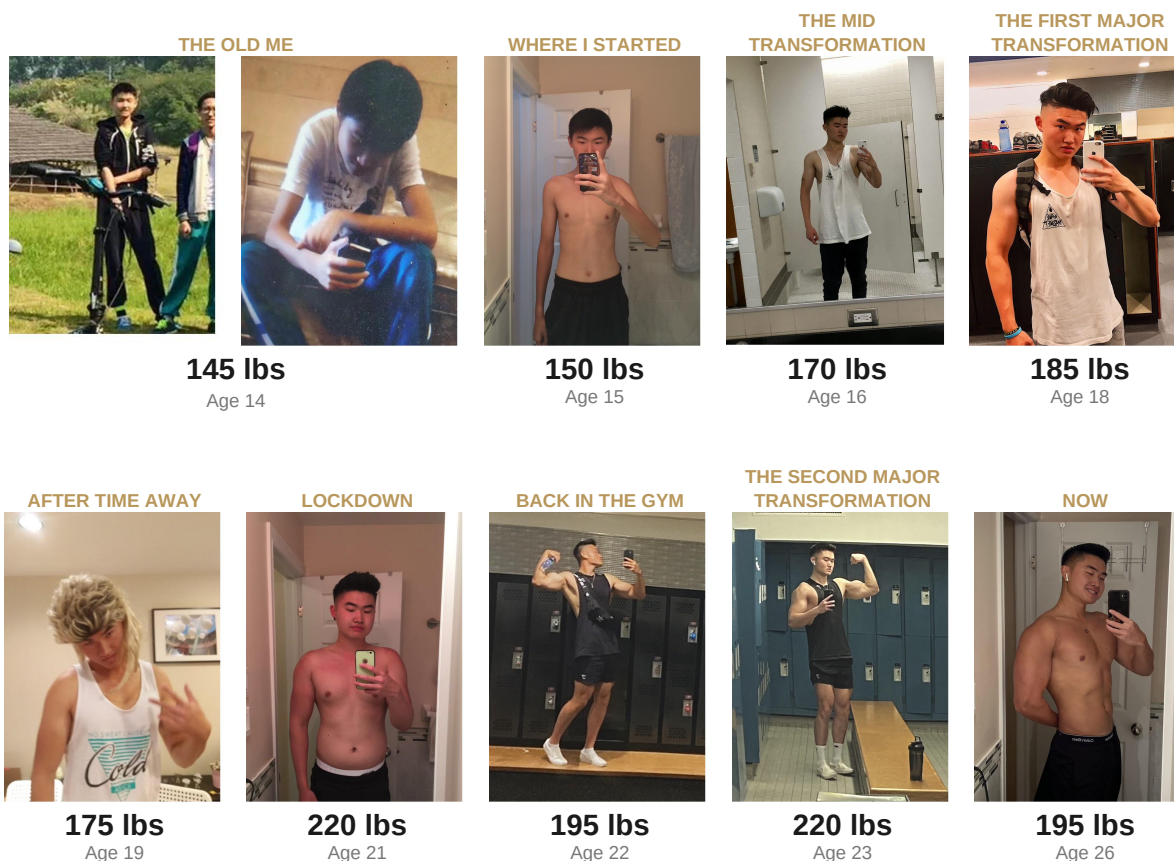
So this guide isn't my routine handed to you on a plate — it's the questions I learned to ask, turned into prompts you paste into an AI, becoming a coach shaped entirely around *your* body, not mine. Think of it as ten years of trial and error, bottled up into something you can use on day one.

And before we go further — you don't have to take my word for any of it. Here's the whole arc, one page, nothing hidden.

THE PROOF

One Method. Ten Years. Real Results.

No before-and-after trickery, no lighting tricks, no supplements beyond protein and creatine. Just the same method — observe, adjust, repeat — run over and over. This is the road this guide is built to walk you down.



Same person. Same principles. An ordinary public-school kid — the skinny kid at 15, a year before I ever touched a weight — the mid transformation at 16, the first real transformation by 18, the years when training stopped and I lost what I'd built, the fourteen months of lockdown that took me to 220 lbs, the cut back down, a second major bulk back to 220 — the same number, a very different body — and the lean, built version now at 195 lbs. It was never a straight line — training stopped more than once, and my weight went where my habits took it. Every stage came from the same loop this guide hands you: observe, adjust, repeat. Not a program I copied — a system I built around my own body, one honest adjustment at a time. I'd call myself close to worst-case genetics for this sport — narrow shoulders, long lanky limbs, wrists you can wrap two fingers around, strength that started from zero. If it worked on a frame genetics didn't hand me, through every setback, it can work on yours.

One thing to be clear about, since you're about to start watching your own number: not one of those weights was a moral event. They're data points on a ten-year graph — some of them from years I was training hard, some from years I wasn't training at all. A number going up isn't a character failure, and a number going down isn't virtue. It's information you use to make the next decision, which is all this guide will ever ask you to do with it.

THE CREDENTIAL

Trial and Error, Backed by Certification

Everything in this guide comes from a decade of testing it on my own body first. But I didn't want to hand you trial and error alone — so I put in the classroom hours too, and got it certified.



ISSA Certified Personal Trainer · Certificate No. 5619427

Disclaimers

Quick, honest, no-fluff disclaimers — because this guide works best when you know exactly what it is and isn't.

This Guide Is for Adults 18 and Over

Jason X Road and this guide are intended for adults aged 18 and older, and are not directed at minors. By using this guide you confirm that you are at least 18. If you are under 18, please do not use this guide — talk to a parent, guardian, doctor, or qualified coach about starting any training or nutrition program instead.

This Is Not Medical or Professional Advice

This guide is built from personal experience and general training knowledge — it is not medical, dietary, or professional fitness advice. Always consult a doctor or other qualified healthcare provider before starting any new training or nutrition program, especially if you have any pre-existing health conditions, injuries, or concerns. This guide was not written with pregnancy or postpartum recovery in mind — if either applies to you, get clearance and specific guidance from your doctor or a qualified pre/postnatal professional before using any part of it. Jason holds an ISSA personal training certification; he is not a physician, registered dietitian, or licensed medical professional.

AI Responses Can Be Wrong

The prompts in this guide help AI tools like ChatGPT give you personalized guidance — but AI can make mistakes, give outdated information, or misunderstand context. Use your own judgment, cross-check anything that feels off, and don't follow AI advice blindly — especially anything related to injury, pain, or health symptoms.

Know the Difference Between Soreness and Pain

Normal muscle soreness from training (felt a day or two later) is expected and fine. Sharp pain, joint pain, pain during a movement, or pain that gets worse instead of better is not normal — stop the exercise and don't push through it. If something hurts in a way that feels wrong, scale back, rest, and see a doctor or physiotherapist if it doesn't resolve in a few days. No prompt or AI response is a substitute for that.

Your Photos and Personal Data

Sharing a photo is always optional in this guide — you never have to. If a prompt invites you to attach a photo or share personal stats with an AI tool, that information is handled according to that tool's own privacy policy (e.g. OpenAI's for ChatGPT) — not by Jason X Road. We never see, collect, or store any photos or data you share with AI tools while using this guide. Only share what you're comfortable with, and review the AI provider's privacy settings if you have concerns.

Results Vary

Jason's results come from his own 10-year journey. Genetics, training history, consistency, recovery, and lifestyle mean your results will be your own — not a guaranteed outcome. This guide gives you a framework and the right questions to ask; the work and the results are yours.

A Note on Healthy Goals

This guide is about building muscle and strength in a healthy, sustainable way — it is not a weight-loss or extreme-dieting program. If you have, or think you may have, a disordered relationship with food, eating, or your

body image, please speak with a doctor or qualified professional before using this guide. Chasing extreme leanness or very low body-fat targets is not the goal here, and nothing here should be used to support restrictive or unhealthy eating. If any part of this starts to feel harmful to your relationship with food or your body, stop and reach out for support. **Where to reach out:** in the U.S., the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, **1-866-662-1235** (allianceforeatingdisorders.com); in Canada, NEDIC, **1-866-633-4220** (nedic.ca). Both keep limited daytime hours — if you need someone right now, at any hour, **call or text 988** in either country.

This guide is a map, not a prescription. Use it to think better about your own training — not as a replacement for professional medical or fitness advice.

THE PHILOSOPHY

How This Guide Actually Works

With the right approach and a system, what to do next stops being a mystery. The rest is time and consistency — and those are on you, not on the guide.

Most fitness guides give you a plan to follow. This one gives you something more permanent.

Here's what I figured out after a decade in the gym: **the program was never the point. The discovery was.**

Nobody in this world understands your body better than you — your muscle attachments, your recovery rate, your response to volume and intensity. These are uniquely yours. No program built for someone else will ever unlock what's possible for you.

Every generic program does the same thing: it takes what already worked for someone else and asks you to fit yourself around it. **This guide flips that — we build the system around YOU.** I've watched bodybuilders grow training brutally heavy, and I've watched others grow training light, chasing the pump. Both got there, because each had found the method their own body responds to. The same is true of frequency and volume, not just intensity — I've seen people train six days a week, two hours a session, and I've seen people build real physiques on three days a week. I'm one of them; that's my split right now. Look at the extremes of the sport itself: Mike Mentzer built his physique preaching brief, infrequent, brutally intense training — low volume by design. Arnold Schwarzenegger built his on close to the opposite philosophy — high volume, high frequency, hours in the gym. Directly opposite approaches, and both walked on stage with a physique that speaks for itself. There is no single right method in this sport — only the one that actually fits your body and your life, and the one you can stick with long enough to produce a consistent result. The exercises were never the secret. The fit is. **That's what this guide is built to help you discover: not my method, not anyone's template — the training system your own data proves works best for you.**

One thing I noticed along the way: it was never heavy vs. light, or low-rep vs. high-rep, that separated fast progress from slow. **It was speed of feedback — the ones who improved fastest could test a method quickly and adjust the moment their own data said something wasn't working.** That fast test-and-adjust loop is the whole point of this guide.

So instead of handing you a routine, this guide hands you the questions — the **Socratic** way. You take them to AI — ChatGPT, Claude, whatever you use — and it becomes YOUR personalized coach, built around your body, your stats, and your goals. My 10 years of experience shapes the questions. Your answers shape the program.

THE THREE PILLARS

Every prompt in this guide is built on these three principles. They are the invisible architecture behind everything.

01 — OBSERVATION

Learning to actually listen to your body. Most people train on autopilot. We train with awareness. How does that movement feel in the target muscle? What is your body telling you this week? Observation turns data into direction.

02 — TRIAL & ERROR

Treating every session as an experiment, not a performance. No ego. Just honest testing and honest feedback. The goal isn't to be right — it's to get better information about what works for you specifically.

Understanding never comes first here — it's what shows up after enough honest reps.

03 — POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Recognizing what is genuinely working for your body and building on it intelligently. Creating a personal feedback loop that compounds over time. This is how owned knowledge grows — and owned knowledge outlasts any program.

The right questions don't change even as information evolves. That's the whole point of this guide.

The Honest Answer

Fair question. You could open ChatGPT right now and ask it to build you a bulking program. So why does this guide exist?

Here's the honest answer: ChatGPT will give you an answer to almost anything you ask — but the quality of what you get back depends entirely on the quality of what you ask, the order you ask it in, and whether you know what you're missing. A **beginner doesn't know what they don't know**. If you ask ChatGPT "build me a bulking plan," it'll hand you a generic plan in one shot — and you'll have no idea what it skipped, what it assumed, or why.

Ask the same question twice and you'll often get two different answers. One time it includes a deload, the next time it doesn't. One time it explains progressive overload, the next it forgets. For someone who already knows training, that's fine — you spot what's missing and ask for it. For a beginner, it's a real problem: you can't ask for what you don't know exists.

What you're actually paying for

Not the prompts. The **sequence**. This guide is the result of a decade of trial and error, distilled into the right questions asked in the right order, each one building on the last — so the AI coaches you the way an experienced lifter would, instead of dumping a generic plan and leaving you to guess. The prompts carry the standing rules, the safety guards, the equipment logic, and the 4-week feedback loop that turns a one-time answer into a system you run for months. That structure is the part you can't easily get yourself — because building it is exactly the thing that took me ten years to learn.

Borrowed knowledge disappears the moment the conversation ends. Owned knowledge compounds for the rest of your life. This guide is built to give you the second one — a way of thinking about your own body that stays with you long after you've stopped needing the prompts at all. That's the difference between renting an answer and owning the skill.

What You're Actually Building Here

I want to be upfront about what this really is, because it's a little more than a guide. Most fitness programs hand you a plan and hope you stick to it. **What I'm trying to do here is help you build something you keep — your own personal AI fitness assistant, and a positive feedback loop system.** One that knows your body, your history, and your goals, and keeps coaching you long after you've finished reading this.

Here's how it works:

STEP 1 — Set up your AI with who you are.

The very first prompt loads your AI coach with your full profile — your stats, your training history, your starting point. This is the foundation everything else builds on. From that moment, the advice you get is shaped around YOU, not some generic internet average.

STEP 2 — Feed it the right questions, in the right order.

Each prompt in this guide is a question I learned to ask the hard way. You paste them in, and your AI answers them for your specific body — your frame, your equipment, your recovery. Step by step, you're building a coach that actually understands your situation instead of guessing.

STEP 3 — Keep the assistant you built.

By the end, you don't just walk away with a workout — you have a personalized AI coach, shaped by your own data and my framework, that travels with you through every phase: bulking, cutting, and beyond. **It's yours. You built it, and it only gets sharper the more you use it.**

*Honestly, I think this is where things are heading anyway. We all naturally lean toward one trusted system to manage the things we care about — it's just easier than juggling ten of them. Your training is no exception. **Think of this guide as your head start on building that centralized system for your own fitness — one that covers your whole scope of training, dieting, and recovering — before everyone else catches on.***

Why This Is Also AI Training

Here's something I didn't expect when I started putting this together: this guide isn't really just about building muscle. It's also about learning to work *with* AI — and I think that second skill might end up mattering even more than the first.

Let me explain what I mean. The hard part of using AI well isn't typing a question into it — anyone can do that. The hard part is knowing *what* to ask, *in what order*, and how to give it the right context so the answer is actually useful to you and not generic filler. That's a real skill, and it's exactly the skill this guide drills, over and over. It's the **Socratic** method — learning by working through the right questions — pointed at a machine.

Every prompt in here is a small lesson in that. You're learning to:

Give an AI the right context first.

Prompt 0 teaches you that the quality of any AI's answer depends entirely on what you feed it. Garbage in, garbage out — good context in, genuinely useful answers out. That principle applies to every AI tool you'll ever touch, not just this one.

Ask in sequence, not all at once.

The prompts build on each other on purpose. You're learning that complex problems get solved step by step, with each answer informing the next question — instead of dumping everything at once and hoping for a miracle.

Check the answers instead of blindly trusting them.

The Sanity-Check page exists because AI gets things wrong, and a good operator knows how to spot it. Learning to question and verify what an AI tells you is maybe the most important AI skill there is.

Set up a project and keep its memory.

You're not just firing off one-off questions — you're building an ongoing project. One conversation per job, everything saved under one place, and one summary carried from the chat that builds the plan into the chat that runs it, so nothing gets lost. That's how professionals actually use AI on real work, and you'll have done it for months by the time you're through.

Turn a real problem into something an AI can solve with you.

This is the skill underneath all the others: taking a messy, real-life goal — “I want to change my body” — and breaking it into questions an AI can actually help you answer, one step at a time, adjusting as real results come in. Swap “my body” for a business decision, a money problem, a thing you're trying to learn, and the exact same method works.

That last one is the real prize. What you're practicing in this guide isn't a fitness trick — it's a repeatable way of solving problems: define the goal, give the AI your real situation, work through it in steps, test what it suggests against reality, and adjust. Once that loop becomes second nature on your own body — something you care about and can measure — you'll find yourself reaching for it everywhere else, because it works on almost any problem worth solving.

I really believe this is where the world is heading. Soon, working with AI won't be a bonus skill — it'll be a basic one, and the people who get comfortable with it early will have a real edge. So if you take nothing else from this guide, take this: you just practiced building and directing your own AI system, using your own body as the project. The fitness results are great — the skill you built getting there is something you'll use for the rest of your life.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read This Before You Touch a Prompt

It doesn't matter if you're brand new or you've been lifting for a while without much structure, and it doesn't matter which phase you're starting in — if you're tired of guessing, this is built for you. Whether the Router sends you to bulk or cut, you'll work straight through your phase, in order. (Recomposition comes later, once you've cycled through a bulk and a cut — **it's a phase you earn, not one you start in.**)

The Guide is a Map, Not a Manual

This guide doesn't tell you exactly what to eat or exactly how to train. It points you to what you need to know and asks you the questions that will help you figure out the rest — with AI as your coach.

How Bodybuilding Actually Works

Training doesn't build muscle — it damages it. Lifting breaks down muscle fiber; recovering from that, with proper food and real rest, is what rebuilds it back stronger and bigger than before. That's called overcompensation. Run that cycle enough times and it adds up into real, measurable change — more strength, more size. That's hypertrophy — muscle growth specifically. People train for plenty of different reasons: pure strength, functional ability, general health. What's described above is the mechanism behind hypertrophy, and it's the one this guide is built around, start to finish.

The transformation generally breaks down into three phases: bulking, cutting, and recomp. Before you pick a phase, it helps to understand the whole game — because bulking, cutting, and recomp aren't three different programs. They're three parts of one cycle, and knowing how they fit together is what makes the rest of this guide click.

The Three Phases, In Plain Words

Bulking builds the mass. You eat in a surplus and train hard so your body has the material and the reason to add muscle. You'll also add some fat along the way — that's normal and expected. You can't build a lot of muscle without eating enough to grow, and eating enough to grow means some fat comes with it.

Cutting reveals it. After you've built mass, you eat in a deficit to strip the fat back off — carefully, so you keep the muscle you spent months building. This is the phase where the work you did in the bulk finally becomes visible.

Recomp maintains and refines. This one's for someone who's already lean and wants to *stay* lean while slowly adding a bit more muscle. You eat around maintenance and let your composition shift gradually. It works — but it's a much slower way to gain than a real bulk, so it's mostly a phase for holding and polishing, not for major growth.

How the Cycle Runs

For most people, the cycle looks like this: **bulk for a good long stretch** to build real mass, then **cut** to reveal it, then **bulk again** to build more, then cut again — repeating that loop over years. Eventually, once you're happy with the size you've built, you can settle into **recomp** to maintain and refine what you have.

***The one piece of advice most beginners need to hear:** don't bounce between bulking and cutting every few weeks. It feels productive, but it gets you nowhere — you never stay in a surplus long enough to build meaningful muscle, and you spend your whole time spinning in place. Commit to a **long bulk**, build real mass first, and only then cut to reveal it. The people who make the best progress are the ones patient enough to stay the course through a full bulk before they think about leaning out.*

Jason's Personal Big Tips

No matter which phase you're starting in, these are the fundamentals that, in my experience, carry most of your progress — the few things that, done right, matter more than everything else combined. These are my conclusions from ten years and a lot of mistakes, not settled science, and a few of them are opinions I hold strongly rather than facts. Earning my ISSA certification mostly confirmed what the gym had already taught me: none of this is secret, it's just rarely said plainly. Test them on yourself — that's the only verification that counts. So here it is.

THE TIPS AT A GLANCE

Seventeen tips is a real read, so here's the whole section in one glance — each line is a tip's core takeaway. **Tips 1–6 and 11 are the ones to read in full before your first session;** the rest can wait for your first month. When one of these bites you in the gym, come back and read its full story — the one-liners are reminders, not replacements.

- 1. Build the block before you carve the statue** — compounds and the big frame muscles first; save the detail work for when there's size to shape.
- 2. Build around the big lifts** — learn the plain version before the clever one; free weights carry your main lifts, machines teach, add, and finish.
- 3. Group the muscles that work together** — then leave them alone for 48–72 hours; never stack overlapping groups on back-to-back days.
- 4. Progressive overload is the engine** — chase a little more than last time, in weight, reps, control, or intensity.
- 5. Proper form always beats heavier weight** — form decides which muscle gets trained; weight only decides how much.
- 6. Set up the equipment properly** — set the machine to your body, and know which way the target muscle pulls before you load it.
- 7. Full range of motion, controlled tempo** — own the whole rep, especially the way down.
- 8. Make your hard sets actually hard** — the last few reps of a hard set are the ones that build muscle.
- 9. Feel the muscle, don't just move the weight** — mind-muscle focus on isolation work; external focus on your heaviest compounds.
- 10. Skip the supportive gear until the weight demands it** — train the joint and the grip directly first.
- 11. Warm up in three stages** — light cardio, day-matched movement prep, ramp-up sets. Never skip it.
- 12. Save the long stretches for after** — dynamic to warm up, static to cool down.
- 13. A little cardio won't kill your gains** — a couple of easy sessions a week is always fine.
- 14. Training is only 20% of the game** — diet, sleep, and recovery are the other 80%; you grow while you recover.
- 15. Eat enough protein — but not endless protein** — hit the target, don't exceed it for its own sake.
- 16. Expect a slow start** — early strength is neural, not new muscle, and the plateau after it is normal.
- 17. Real transformation takes years, not months** — keep the loop running long enough for it to compound.

1. Build the block before you carve the statue.

Think of your body like a sculpture: first you build the block, then you carve the detail. **Big compound lifts are how you build the block.** In the same hour in the gym, one compound trains the main muscle plus several peripheral ones at once — that's simply the most muscle you can train per minute you have, and it's the real reason your early training should be built around them. That's also why the first years should go almost entirely into the handful of muscle groups that actually make up your frame: back, chest, quads, glutes. Get those big first, and everything else has something to sit on. **Definition is a second phase, not a first one.** When I started benching, I wasn't thinking about upper chest, lower chest, or the inner-chest line — I was just trying to put real volume and real mass onto the pec as a whole. Chasing those regional details before there's enough size to shape is like trying to carve fine detail into a block of stone you haven't roughed out yet — there's nothing there yet to refine. You only have so many hours in the gym over a lifetime; spend the early ones where the return is highest: compounds, building the block. And I'm not the first to see the sport this way — this comes straight from my all-time blueprint for it, Arnold Schwarzenegger. In *Pumping Iron*, he described a good bodybuilder as having “**the same mind that a sculptor has**”: you analyze yourself in the mirror, see the proportions need a little more deltoid, a little more shoulder — and then you go train and put those delts on, the way an artist would just slap clay on each side. The artist gets the easy way; we take the harder one, because we're doing it on a living human body. And he made a second point in the same breath that has aged perfectly: people who don't know the sport look at all this and think it's strange — but once you actually understand what it's about, it's a pursuit like any other, no different from an engineer obsessing over getting a car through the quarter mile a few seconds faster. Half a century later, both halves are still true. ***Build the block first with compounds and the big muscle groups. Save the isolation-heavy chiseling — the edges, the separation, the regional emphasis — for once you're happy with the size and ready to finish the statue, not start it.***

2. Build around the big lifts.

When I first started, I filled my sessions with curls, lateral raises, and cable movements because they felt good and I could see the muscle working. The problem: I was decorating a house with no frame. **The compound movements — squats, hinges, presses, rows, pulls — build size and strength**, because they load the most muscle at once and let you move real weight. And here's the part most guides skip: those are movement PATTERNS, not specific tools. A machine press, a dumbbell press, and a barbell press are all the same big lift — and for a brand-new lifter, the machine and dumbbell versions are often the smarter starting point until your coordination catches up. Once I built my training around the big patterns and kept isolation as accessory work, everything changed. **Learn the plain version before the clever one.** There's a whole industry of fancy variations, and almost none of them matter until the basics are solid. Learn to bench press properly before you spend a single session on cable flyes; learn one honest row before you chase seven angles of it. In my early years I did almost nothing but big compound work — bench press, lat pulldown, cable rows — and that is exactly why it worked. The fundamental lifts build the most muscle in the least time, and they train your nervous system to coordinate whole groups of muscle at once, which is the foundation everything else gets built on top of. The clever variation isn't wrong; it's just what you add once there's something there to refine. **Free weights vs machines — know what you're actually choosing.** A barbell or dumbbell doesn't hold the path for you. You have to stabilize the weight yourself, so dozens of smaller supporting muscles work on every rep — your core, your shoulder girdle, the little stabilizers around each joint. That's why free weights build a body that's strong in the real world and not just in one fixed groove, and it's why they should carry your main lifts once you can control them. A machine does the stabilizing for you. That isn't a flaw, it's a trade: because you don't have to hold the path, you can put more attention and more fatigue straight into the target muscle. That makes machines genuinely excellent for learning a movement safely, training around an injury, and finishing a muscle off when you're already tired — they just don't develop the supporting muscle, because you never asked it to work. **So how do you choose?** Build your main lifts on free weights as soon as your technique allows — that's where size, strength and real-world stability come from. Use machines to learn a pattern when you're brand new, to add volume without wrecking your recovery, and to

isolate a muscle at the end of a session. Good programs use both. The mistake is living entirely on machines and then wondering why you feel strong in the gym and fragile outside it. ***Build around the big movement patterns, and learn the plain version of each before the clever one. Free weights should carry your main lifts; machines are there to teach, to add, and to finish. Isolation work is seasoning, not the meal.***

3. Group the muscles that work together — then leave them alone.

Here's what nobody explains when they hand you a split: **compound movements never train one muscle by itself.** A bench press isn't a chest exercise — it's chest, front shoulders, and triceps working as a unit. A row isn't a back exercise — it's lats, upper back, rear shoulders, and biceps. Every pushing movement you do involves your triceps whether you planned it or not, and every pulling movement involves your biceps and back. That one fact decides how your week should be built. If you train chest on Monday and shoulders on Tuesday, you've hit your front shoulders and triceps two days running — and the second session lands on muscle that hasn't repaired yet. The second session will be lower quality, and you're stacking fatigue on a muscle that hasn't finished rebuilding instead of giving it a fresh stimulus. So **group by movement pattern, not by body part.** Everything that presses away from you trains together — chest, shoulders, triceps. Everything that pulls toward you trains together — back and biceps. Legs get their own day. Then, once you've trained a group, you leave it completely alone until it has recovered: at least 48 hours, and closer to 72 if you hit it hard. Here's the useful bit of flexibility: **you can add any muscle that doesn't overlap with that day's work or the next day's.** Abs and calves are the classic riders — they aren't involved in pressing or pulling, so they can finish almost any session. I'll often close out a chest day with calves or abs, and the only thing I check is tomorrow: as long as the next session doesn't need chest, triceps, or calves, nothing is competing. That's the entire test, and it takes ten seconds. Before you commit to a week, read each day against the day after it and ask: **does tomorrow use anything I just trained today?** If the answer is yes, move something. A clean three-day week looks like this. **Monday — push:** chest, shoulders, triceps, finishing with abs. **Wednesday — pull:** back and biceps. **Friday — legs:** quads, hamstrings, glutes, calves. Nothing repeats, every group gets a minimum of 72 hours, and no session is fighting the one before it. ***Train what works together on the same day, then leave it fully alone until it's recovered. Overlapping muscle groups on back-to-back days is the most common reason a sensible-looking week quietly stops working.***

4. Progressive overload is the engine.

This is the one principle that makes everything else work. Muscle grows when you ask it to do slightly more than last time — a little more weight, a rep or two more, better control, or simply a harder effort than you gave last session. Progressive overload isn't only about the number on the bar; it's about **raising the demand on the muscle however you can** — push a set a little closer to failure, slow the tempo down, or just bring real intensity to a lift you've been coasting through. Without some form of increasing demand, you can train for a year and look the same. ***Don't chase variety. Chase a little more than last time — in weight, reps, control, or intensity. (The guide walks you through tracking this in Prompt 9 of the Bulk phase.)***

5. Proper form always beats heavier weight.

Tip 4 just told you to chase a little more than last time. This is the guardrail that goes with it, and it outranks everything else in this section: **form is the single most important factor in any exercise — more important than the number on the bar.** Here's why that isn't just a safety slogan. **Your setup is what aims the load.** Where you sit, the angle of the bench or the pad, how your joints are stacked, the path the weight actually travels — those decide where the tension lands. Set it up well and the muscle you came to train takes that load directly and specifically, which is the most efficient stimulus you can hand it. Set it up badly and the same weight quietly redistributes itself into whatever else can help move it, and the target ends up with a fraction of what you think you're giving it. Weight matters too — a muscle does need a real load to grow, that's what Tip 4 is about. But the two are not equal partners. **Heavy weight with bad form doesn't come close to a lighter weight with a good setup, a good angle, and an honest path.** The lighter set is doing the actual job. The heavier one only looks like it is. **And then there's the part that should genuinely give you pause: injury.** Heavy weight plus broken form is

the most reliable way to get hurt, and getting hurt is the number one thing your training should be organized to avoid — not because of the pain, but because of the math. An injury costs you weeks of not training, and then more weeks of climbing back to a level you had already reached. You lose the same ground twice. **Worse, a lot of injuries never fully go away.** Damage something badly enough and that spot tends to stay the weak link — more likely to flare up again years later, and some of it simply does not reverse. You can always add weight next month. You can't always get the joint back. That trade is never worth taking. **Here's a one-set test you can run to check yourself:** a little body English is fine — nobody moves in a perfect line, and a bit of swing on a heavy row or curl isn't a crime. But if the weight is heavy enough that you can only move it by over-extending your lower back to stabilize yourself, and you feel real strain sitting there when the set is over, that is not a hard set. That's a warning. Drop the weight *and* fix the form — both, not just the first one, because a bad pattern practiced lighter is still a bad pattern being rehearsed. **One more habit worth building: before you try a lift you haven't done, go find it on YouTube first.** Watch a couple of reputable demonstrations so you know what correct actually looks like before you're under the weight, not while you're improvising under it. Then check yourself against it once you're in the gym — film your own set on your phone, or ask a more experienced lifter to watch a set and tell you the truth. You genuinely can't always feel a form breakdown from the inside; a camera or a second pair of eyes catches what you can't. ***Form decides which muscle gets trained; weight only decides how much. Lighter and correct will always out-build heavier and sloppy — and it's the only version that doesn't eventually cost you a joint.***

6. Set up the equipment properly.

Tip 5 said your setup is what aims the load. This is how you actually find it. Before you sit down and start moving, think the movement through: which muscle is supposed to be doing this, and which direction does it naturally pull? **Every muscle contracts along a line.** Your chest pulls your upper arm in across your body; your lats pull your elbow down and back. **That same line of pull is also how you pick the exercise in the first place, not just how you set one up.** Every muscle evolved to do a specific job in real life, and the clearest way to find a great exercise for it is to ask what that job actually is, then look for a movement that recreates it. Take the rear delt: its job is shoulder extension — pulling your arm backward, past your side — which is exactly the motion of drawing a bow. That's why archers build unusually strong rear delts without ever touching a machine. Find an exercise that recreates that same pulling-back motion and you're training the muscle the way it was actually built to work, not just moving a handle in its general direction. Once you know that line, the whole job of the seat, the pad, the bench and the cable height is to put you where that pull can happen along its natural path — and where you're stable enough to push hard into it. **Set the machine to your body; never fold your body around whatever the machine was left at.** If your feet aren't planted, if you're sliding, if you're holding a position instead of pressing from it, you can't produce real force — and the muscle only ever gets what you can stably deliver. Spend the extra thirty seconds on the seat height and the pad. That isn't fussiness, it's part of the lift. **Then there's what the angle is actually doing.** Changing the angle of a movement doesn't just make it feel different — it shifts the emphasis onto a different region of the same muscle. The clearest example is your chest. **A flat bench press loads mainly the middle of the pec. Tilt the bench to a slight incline and more of the work moves to the upper chest,** because you've changed the direction your arms travel relative to the muscle fibers. Same muscle, same movement, different region emphasized — and all you changed was the bench. That principle is general: small changes in angle and body position redistribute the work inside a muscle. Tip 1 already covered why the fundamental lift comes first and the angle work comes later — this is the physical mechanism behind that rule. ***Know a muscle's natural job before you pick its exercise, and know which way it pulls before you load it. Angles move emphasis around inside a muscle — get the setup right and you're actually training what you think you're training.***

7. Full range of motion, controlled tempo.

The ego-lifting mistake has a quieter cousin: half-reps done fast. Here's the part most people skip: muscle doesn't grow because a weight traveled from point A to point B — **it grows because the muscle spent time under real tension.** That's the actual stimulus your training is chasing, and the technical name for it is **mechanical tension** —

the load the muscle fibers are under while they're lengthened and working. That's also why **stretching a muscle under load** matters so much: a muscle loaded at a deep stretch is under far more mechanical tension than the same muscle loaded in a shortened, contracted position, which is exactly why you want to own the full range — especially the bottom. In practice that means owning **both ends of every rep**: at the bottom, let the muscle stretch as far as your joint comfortably allows instead of cutting the rep short — and at the top, **squeeze the working muscle deliberately for a beat** rather than just arriving there and dropping straight back down. Most people rush through both ends, and those are the two positions with the most to give. Every rep has two halves. **The concentric** is the lifting phase, where the muscle shortens. **The eccentric** is the lowering phase, where the muscle lengthens under load — and it's at least as valuable as the lift itself, partly **because that lengthened, loaded position is where mechanical tension peaks**. **Lowering a weight under control demands more from the muscle fibers doing the work than lifting it does**, which is a big part of why a controlled, resisted negative is one of the highest-leverage things you can do in a set. Most people do the opposite without realizing it — they grind out the lift, then let gravity do the lowering for free. How you apply this depends on how easy the movement is to control. For lifts where your body is stabilized and the path is simple — bench press, lat pulldown, and similar machine or fixed-path movements — you can handle a heavier weight for lower reps (6–8) and still keep full control through the whole rep, so lean into that lower-rep, higher-load range for maximum tension. For lifts where a small breakdown in form quickly turns into a swing or a cheat — lateral raises and other single-joint or less-stable movements — drop the weight and work in a higher rep range (8–12) with strict control, because on these movements good form is what actually creates the tension; more weight with sloppy form just skips the stimulus you're chasing. **Own the weight through the whole movement — especially on the way down. Match your rep range to how controllable the lift is: heavier and lower reps (6–8) for stable movements, lighter and higher reps (8–12) for anything that gets sloppy under load.**

8. Make your hard sets actually hard.

The flip side of “don't ego-lift”: beginners often go too easy, stopping with five comfortable reps left in the tank. Here's the part that matters: **your body doesn't recruit every muscle fiber from the first rep — it saves its biggest, most growth-responsive fibers for last, only calling them in once the easier ones are already fatigued**. That's why the **last few reps of a hard set are the ones that count most for muscle growth**: research on training close to failure points to that final stretch of a set as where the growth stimulus concentrates — not the easy reps that came before it. Stop a set five reps short and comfortable, and you never reach the fibers that actually build muscle. A working set should be genuinely challenging — finish it knowing you only had a rep or two left. **Leave a little in reserve, but make the set mean something.**

9. Feel the muscle, don't just move the weight.

Early on I just shoved weight from point A to point B and wondered why my chest wasn't growing while my arms did all the work. Learning to actually feel the target muscle do the lifting — **the mind-muscle connection — is one of the highest-leverage skills a beginner can build, and it's not just a feeling, it's neurological**. Your brain decides how many muscle fibers actually switch on for a given lift, and an untrained lifter typically activates a smaller share of a muscle than someone who's learned to focus on it. There's real research behind how much this matters: in controlled studies, people who spent weeks doing nothing but mentally imagining a maximal muscle contraction — no physical movement, no weight, nothing — measurably increased that muscle's strength, purely by training their brain to send a stronger signal to it. That's how much the brain-to-muscle connection alone is worth. Now apply that same focus while you're actually lifting: slow down, **think about the muscle doing the work rather than just the weight moving, and you recruit more of it on every rep** — which means more of that set actually counts toward growth. **One scope note: this internal, feel-the-muscle focus is best backed by research on isolation and machine work**. On your heaviest compounds — squat, deadlift, bench, big barbell rows — focus externally instead: the bar, the floor, the rep you're trying to complete. Save the deliberate mind-muscle focus for the isolation exercises later in the session, where it has the most to give. **Slow down and feel the muscle on isolation work; stay externally focused — the bar, the task — on your heaviest**

compounds.

10. Skip the supportive gear until the weight actually demands it.

Personally, I think a true beginner training with relatively light weight doesn't need protective equipment — knee sleeves, elbow sleeves, wrist wraps, a weight belt. **Here's what these tools actually do: they add outside support around a joint and let you brace harder under a genuinely heavy load — but that support has to come from somewhere, and part of it comes straight out of the auxiliary muscles and tendons around that joint that would otherwise be doing the job themselves.** Wear the gear early and you're outsourcing exactly the strength you should be building in your first years of training — the joint and connective-tissue support that only develops by doing the work unassisted. **So my rule: skip the gear until the weight genuinely demands it.** That point does exist. A heavy squat — something up around 300+ pounds — puts real load on your knees and asks a lot of your lower back to stay braced; that's a fair time to reach for a knee sleeve or a belt. One I see a lot in gyms: people loop wrist wraps around the bar on lat pulldowns. That shifts the work onto the lats by taking grip strength out of the equation entirely — and I'd pull the wrap off instead. Your grip has to hold and control real weight for the rest of your training life; let a wrap do that job now and you never build it, and it catches up with you later. **Leave the supportive gear off while the weight is still light enough to train the joint and grip directly. Bring it in once the load genuinely demands it — not before.**

11. Warm up in three stages — and NEVER skip it.

I learned this one the hard way. I used to walk in cold and go straight to heavy squats — no light cardio, no movement prep, nothing. One of those cold sessions is how I tore my meniscus. A real warm-up has three quick parts: **(1)** five to ten minutes of light cardio to raise your body temperature, **(2)** dynamic movement prep *matched to what you're about to train that day*, and **(3)** a few light ramp-up sets of the actual lift before you touch working weight. That middle step is where most people go generic — don't. Match it to your session: **Leg day** — 5–10 minutes on a bike or stair climber, then leg swings (front-back and side-to-side), bodyweight squats, walking lunges, and hip openers. **Push day (chest, shoulders, triceps)** — arm circles, band pull-aparts, wall or shoulder rotations, then a set or two of light push-ups or empty-bar bench to prime the pattern. **Pull day (back, biceps)** — band pull-aparts, scap pull-ups or dead hangs, cat-cows, and a few light lat pull-downs or rows to wake the back up. **Full-body or upper/lower** — pick from the lists above for whichever movements are on the day, focused on the joints you're about to load. **Five to ten minutes up front protects every session after it — and it works far better when you match the movement prep to the day you're training. I wish I'd known that before it cost me a knee.**

12. Save the long stretches for after.

Here's one most people get backwards. Long, held (static) stretches before you lift can actually make you temporarily weaker — the research on this is clear. Dynamic movement is what belongs in a warm-up. Save the long static stretches for *after* your session, when they help you cool down and feel looser. **Move (dynamic stretches) for warm up, static stretch for cool down.**

13. A little cardio won't kill your gains.

A lot of beginners avoid cardio entirely, terrified it burns the muscle they're building. It won't. A couple of easy sessions a week is good for your heart, your recovery, and your work capacity. **How much you do depends on your phase — lighter while building, a useful tool while leaning out — but a little is always fine.**

14. Training is only 20% of the game — diet, sleep, and recovery are the rest.

This is the truth that quietly kills more beginner results than any bad workout ever will. Here's the ratio I've come to believe after ten years of watching what actually decides results — mine and everyone else's around me: **training is maybe 20% of the equation, and diet, sleep, and recovery are the other 80%.** It's a rule of thumb, not a measurement — but it's the most useful one I know. **You don't grow in the gym — you grow while you recover. Training is the signal; recovery is where the actual building happens.** You cannot out-train a bad diet — in

either direction. If you're trying to build muscle and you're not eating enough, you'll grow far slower than your training deserves — if at all. If you're trying to lean out, the extra calories you burn in a workout are a small number compared to what you eat in a day — one extra meal easily wipes out an hour of hard training. The gym signals your body what to do. Food and recovery determine whether it can. There are three legs to real recovery, and you need all three: **(1) Sleep.** This is the biggest lever you have. Seven to nine hours, consistently. One rough night now and then is fine; a habit of five or six hours quietly kills your progress no matter how hard you train. **(2) Stress management.** Your body doesn't separate gym stress from work stress, money stress, or life stress — it just sees total load. When life stress is high, your recovery capacity drops. Sleep, walk, unplug from screens, do whatever brings your system down. Chronic stress will stall your gains as surely as bad training will. **(3) Rest days between sessions.** More training does *not* mean more muscle. It's the opposite past a point: train the same muscles too frequently and you give them no window to rebuild — you stall your own progress and dig a fatigue hole instead of growing. Tip 3 already gave you the actual numbers and the split structure that builds this in automatically — this is the reason that rule exists: recovery is where the growth actually happens, not the workout itself. On the diet side, three habits decide whether it works: **(1) Know your calorie target and hit it consistently.** Bulking means a controlled surplus (a few hundred calories above maintenance). Cutting means a controlled deficit (a few hundred below). Guessing at either kills your progress — the guide gives you a real number early in your phase (Prompt 4 in Bulk, Prompt 3 in Cutting). Use it. **(2) Protein first, every day.** The next tip covers the exact target. **(3) Build it out of food you actually like eating.** A meal plan you hate lasts two weeks. A meal plan you can eat for six months quietly transforms you. Consistency beats optimization every time. One honest note on alcohol, since everyone eventually asks: **it isn't banned, but it isn't free.** It carries calories most people never count, it degrades exactly the sleep your recovery runs on, and a heavy night measurably blunts the muscle-building process for a day or two after. Count it, keep it occasional, and don't park it right after your hardest sessions. **And a quick word on soreness, because beginners read it wrong in both directions.** That deep next-day ache (DOMS — delayed-onset muscle soreness) is normal when a movement is new, and it fades as your body adapts — but it was never the scoreboard. **Soreness is not proof a session worked, and no soreness is not proof it didn't** — plenty of your most productive sessions will barely leave a trace the next day. Judge sessions by the log — the weight, the reps, the control — not by how wrecked you feel. Where soreness does carry a message is when it's constant: if you're always sore, always tired, and your lifts aren't moving — that's not proof you're working hard, it's proof you're not recovering. ***Train hard, but respect the 80%. What you eat and how you recover between sessions matters more than what you lift during them.***

15. Eat enough protein — but not endless protein.

More protein isn't more muscle past a point. You need enough to build every day — not a mountain of shakes. ***The guide gives you a real target in Prompt 4. Hit it, don't exceed it for the sake of it.***

16. Expect a slow start — that's biology, not failure.

Here's what almost nobody tells a beginner, and it's why so many people quit around month two thinking the system isn't working. **Why your strength jumps before your body changes. In the first few weeks, your lifts can go up fast while your physique barely moves — and that's not you failing to build muscle.** Early strength is mostly neural: your brain and nervous system getting better at recruiting the muscle you already have, not new tissue. **Actual muscle growth comes later, and it's a genuinely slow process — new tissue gets built during recovery, in response to the tension signal your training sends — and that building runs on your sleep and food, not your effort in the gym.** Sleep, food, and how beat-up your day leaves you all set the ceiling on how fast that repair happens. If you're not sleeping enough, not eating enough of the right things, and your day is all desk or all feet with no real rest, your body is doing its best with what it has — and sometimes “its best” is just returning to normal, not building something new on top. That's genuinely why people with more control over their sleep and food often see faster results — not better genetics, just recovery that isn't fighting them. **The awkward stretch almost everyone hits.** Once the initial newbie gains fade, there's usually a stretch where nothing seems to be working no matter what you do. That's not a sign to overhaul everything — it's usually a sign

to dial in your form and exercise selection (that's exactly what Prompt 6 in the Bulk section is for — it applies in every phase), then give it time. Don't fix it by going extreme: suddenly training to failure every set or switching to a punishing internet meal plan you can't stand. A program you can't sustain teaches you nothing, however perfect it looks on paper. For most people with a job and a life, training at least twice a week without grinding every set to failure is a completely legitimate starting point. Let your effort and your food discipline grow naturally as you see progress — not the other way around. **But there's a second version of that stretch worth naming honestly.** Sometimes it isn't a normal plateau — it's real, accumulated exhaustion: weeks where your lifts have stopped moving, your motivation is gone, and your body genuinely isn't recovering between sessions no matter what you adjust. If that's where you are, don't be afraid to take an actual break. Not a deload week — a real one, two weeks or sometimes longer. Your body needs that time to fully reset, and here's the part that scares people out of taking it: **you will not lose what you built.** Muscle memory is real — the adaptations behind your training stick around even after time off, which is exactly why lifters who take a genuine break regain their strength and size far faster than it took to build the first time. Come back after a real reset and you'll often break straight through the wall that had you stuck, not despite the time off, but because of it. The only real risk is not resting enough to let your body grow again. **Early strength isn't muscle yet, and the plateau after it is normal. Protect your sleep, keep it sustainable, and give your body the time recovery actually takes — including, when you genuinely need it, a real break, not just a deload.**

17. Real transformation takes years, not months.

I need to set your expectations correctly here, because this is where most people quit. It's completely understandable to want a real transformation in a few months — but if you don't see it happen that fast and you quit because of it, you've guaranteed you'll never get there. Realistically, a genuine physical transformation — the kind where you look in the mirror and see a different person — takes at least a year or two of real, consistent training, and for a lot of people it's longer. For me, it took years. That's not pessimism, it's just how the body works: strength moves fast because it's mostly neural, but muscle is built slowly, a little at a time, and there's no shortcut around that. You've probably seen the “one year transformation” posts from influencers online — dramatic before-and-afters that look almost impossible. I'm skeptical of a lot of them, and you should be too: lighting, angles, a pump, a dehydrated “after” photo, and things never mentioned in the caption can manufacture a gap that isn't real training progress. Believing those photos sets an expectation that isn't realistic, and it's a huge reason so many people burn out — they compare their honest, unglamorous month six to someone else's cherry-picked best photo, feel like they're failing, and quit right before the results were actually about to show up. This is the entire reason this guide is built around a system instead of a sprint. A system you can sustain for years beats a program you can grind for eight weeks, because the transformation isn't unlocked by any single month of effort — it's unlocked by a positive feedback loop running consistently long enough: train, log, get feedback, adjust, repeat, month after month, year after year. Here's what that stretch actually feels like, because nobody warns you about it. **For a long time it will feel like nothing is happening at all.** Maybe you catch a little pump after a session, maybe a bicep looks slightly fuller for an hour — but the overall picture in the mirror doesn't move. That phase lasts far longer than anyone expects. The progress is real and it does catch up, it just arrives late. **What carries people through it is the data.** The numbers you've been collecting — the weight going up, the reps you couldn't do last month, the weekly average on the scale — are the only honest evidence you have that something is happening while the mirror is still telling you nothing is. That's not bookkeeping. That's the thing that keeps you in the gym when your own eyes are arguing for quitting. So you keep showing up out of habit rather than expectation, you stop asking the mirror for a verdict every week, and you trust the process — because you believe that one day the change will be big enough to see. **And then one day it just lands.** Maybe it's an ordinary Friday after a workout and someone at the gym you barely know says something about your physique. Maybe you caught an unusually good pump, glanced in the mirror on the way out, and the light finally switched on: **WOW — I made it.** It never arrives on a schedule. It arrives for the people who were still there. **Expect years, not months. The people who actually get there aren't the ones who worked hardest for a few weeks — they're the ones who kept the loop running long enough for it to compound.**

If there's one sentence that sums up my whole philosophy on bodybuilding, it's this: think about how efficiently you can break down the muscle, and how well you can maximize your diet and recovery so your body can regenerate it.

The One Thing That Actually Matters — LESS IS MORE

After ten years in the gym, I've realized something that sounds almost too simple to be true: **the best program is the one you'll actually follow.**

I've watched people with perfect splits, perfect macros, and perfect form quit after three weeks. And I've watched people with basic routines, simple diets, and steady effort transform their bodies over years. The difference was never the program. **It was consistency.**

And here's the part almost everyone gets wrong about consistency: they treat it as a willpower problem. It isn't. **It's a fit problem.** Those people with the perfect splits didn't quit because they were weak — they quit because they were grinding against a plan built around someone else's body, someone else's schedule, someone else's life. **A plan that fits barely needs willpower at all.** That's the real reason this whole guide builds the system around YOU instead of handing you a template — not because personalization is a nice bonus, but because fit is what makes showing up easy enough to repeat for years.

Real transformation doesn't happen in a week or a month. It happens over years of showing up, doing the work, and staying patient. And the only way to stay consistent that long is to build a system so simple and convenient that following it barely takes a decision. Here's what that actually looks like:

The Real Game: Reprogramming Your Habits.

Here's what almost nobody teaches you about physique transformation: **the goal isn't to find the plan that works best. It's to find the plan you can repeat, without thinking, for years.** Because that's what actually changes a body — not any single workout or meal, but the same pattern repeated so many times it stops feeling like a choice.

Your brain is wired to run on autopilot wherever it can. Every time you repeat a behavior, the neurological path for that behavior gets stronger, until eventually you do it without willpower — the same way you brush your teeth without deciding to. That's what you're really building here: not a workout or a diet, but a set of habits your body starts running on its own. And that reprogramming takes months, not days. It only works if the system is easy enough that you'll actually stick with it long enough for the habit to lock in.

Which is why the rule is: LESS IS MORE. The simpler the routine, the less friction stands between you and doing it. The fewer moving parts, the more likely you are to still be doing it six months from now — which is when actual visible change starts appearing. A perfect plan you follow for three weeks does nothing. A B-minus plan you follow for two years transforms you completely. Don't chase the optimal. Chase the sustainable.

So when you build your system, don't ask "what's the best routine?" Ask "what's the simplest routine that fits my life so naturally I won't have to think about it?" That question, answered honestly, is the whole game. Here's what that actually looks like in practice:

Make your gym as close to home as possible.

If your gym is thirty minutes away, you'll find reasons to skip. If it's five minutes, skipping becomes the harder choice. Distance kills consistency faster than almost anything. Pick a gym close enough that going is easier than not going.

Build your diet around food you already eat.

Don't write a meal plan full of foods you hate and expect to follow it for months. Your diet should feel natural — built from meals you already eat, just nudged to hit your numbers. Rice and chicken? Build around that. Pasta and ground beef? Build around that. *The targets matter. The specific foods don't.* Choose food that fits your life, instead of forcing your life to fit the food.

Make your routine match your real schedule.

A perfect five-day split means nothing if your life only allows three days. Build your training around what you can actually do, week in and week out — not what looks good on a screen. Three days of focused, real training beats five days of half-effort every single time.

*The common thread is convenience. When the gym, the food, and the routine are all easy, you remove friction — and when there's no friction, you can actually follow through for years. That's the whole game. **Consistency beats perfection. This is a marathon, not a sprint.***

Understanding Comes After — Not Before

There's one more thing I want you to hear before you start, because it's the barrier that stops people before consistency ever becomes the problem.

For years I thought the people who had their lives together knew something I didn't — some piece of understanding I was still missing. Then I ran into an idea that changed how I saw growth entirely: **stop trying to understand it first. The understanding always comes after.** That's the order of things, and no amount of thinking ever substitutes for the rep.

Once I saw it, I recognized it everywhere in my own life. I didn't understand confidence until I'd done enough things that terrified me and come out the other side. I didn't understand how to hold a room until I'd had thousands of conversations that slowly rewired what I expected to happen when I opened my mouth. The understanding was never the starting line. It was always what showed up after, once I'd already put in the reps.

That's why so many people stay stuck: they're waiting to feel ready before they take the action. But readiness was never what creates action — **action is what creates readiness.** Your brain doesn't become confident because you give it a good enough pep talk. It becomes confident once you've given it enough evidence. That's the entire mechanism behind real, earned confidence, not the performative kind. Your brain believes your track record, not your intentions. So if you want a different identity — stronger, leaner, someone who actually knows what they're doing in a gym — you don't need another explanation first. You need evidence. And evidence is always the consequence of doing something, never the thing you wait to feel before you start.

This is exactly why your daily log matters more than it looks like it should. Every single line you write after a session — what you lifted, how it felt, whether you showed up at all — isn't just a record for a checkpoint four weeks from now. **It's evidence.** It's the actual, physical proof your brain uses to build the identity you're chasing. You don't need to feel like “someone who trains” before you start logging. You become that person by logging — one piece of evidence at a time.

You don't think your way into a new identity. You act your way into one — and every log you write is one more piece of proof.

What This Actually Changed

Before you start, I want to tell you what's waiting at the other end — not the photos, the rest of it. Because the physique turned out to be the smallest part of what I got out of this.

Here's the actual thesis underneath everything else in this guide: I don't really look at training as something that builds muscle. I look at it as something that builds **character — work ethic, confidence, integrity**. Every session I didn't want to show up for and showed up for anyway was a rep of work ethic. Every plateau, every missed lift, every stretch where nothing seemed to be working was where I learned how to fail and get back up — and eventually, how to fail, get back up, and win. Bodybuilding gave me a body. Training gave me the character it took to go build one. There is so much more to this sport than the muscle.

On the outside

I do get treated differently, and I won't pretend otherwise — the result speaks before I say a word. But that isn't why it matters to me. **How well I take care of my body turned out to be a reflection of how well I take care of myself, and of my life in general.** A good physique isn't something I built to show other people. I built it to please myself — a standing reminder that I love myself, and that I deserve to feel good in my own skin.

Think of it as a form of self-expression, the same way people dress well or do their makeup — except this one can't be bought, and you can't put it on in the morning. **It only comes from effort, held for years.** That's exactly what makes it mean something: a body built that way is visible proof of self-discipline, patience, endurance and long-term vision, all at once. It's how I show respect for myself — **I believe I deserve to look my best in the one life I get, and that I'm capable of getting there if I put the work in.** If you love your car, you wash it. This is the same instinct, pointed at yourself.

There's a bigger point underneath all of it, and it's why I think this is one of the highest-ROI investments anyone can make in themselves. Through a lifetime you're always building toward the same short list of assets nobody can ever take from you — your talent, your exposure to the world, your accumulated experience, your physique, your perspective, and your judgment. A physique you've earned isn't vanity — it's proof of the first few working, in plain sight. And plain sight matters more than people admit: it earns you more respect, better treatment, and more of the opportunities that only ever seem to find people who look like they finish what they start. Not because looks are everything. Because consistency is rare, and it shows.

On the inside

This is the part I didn't expect, and it turned out to be worth far more. I got more confident — but the real change was never about looking better. It came from within: **I proved to myself that I am capable of fulfilling my own dream.**

Nobody can take that away from me. And it doesn't stay in the gym — once you've done it once, the belief spreads. **If I can transform my body, I can transform the parts of my life I'm not satisfied with either.** That's the actual prize. It taught me that good things take time to mature, that anything profound demands patience and perseverance, and that you hold your vision and do not give up. I hit setback after setback on this road — injuries, plateaus, whole stretches where I lost the plot completely — and I got through them one at a time. That process made me tougher, more disciplined, and genuinely more optimistic than the person who started.

Some of what it built was more specific than that, and more useful. I learned to **make** time instead of waiting for it — to find the session in the week that was inconvenient, because the convenient week never actually arrives. I learned to go deep on a subject instead of skimming it: research it properly, test it on myself, and verify it against my own results rather than taking somebody's word for it. That habit — **dig in, test it, check it against reality** — is the one I now use furthest away from the gym.

And underneath all of it sits the same lesson, the one that took me years to actually believe: **good things take time, effort, and consistency**. Almost nothing worth having is a sprint. **It's a marathon** — and the people who finish are the ones who made peace with that early.

You're not only building a body. You're building the evidence that you're someone who finishes what they start — and that evidence follows you into everything else.

Here Are Some of My Favourite Quotes

“If you want something, go get it.”

“The magic you are looking for is in the work you are avoiding.”

“Never say you can't do it — say you haven't done it yet.”

“It's only delusional until it works.”

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

“Discipline your thoughts — thoughts lead to actions, actions lead to habits, and habits lead to a lifestyle.”

“A lot of people wait for the perfect conditions to start, and don't realize that starting IS the perfect condition.”

“You act like the person you want to become.”

TIME TO BUILD

Everything So Far Was the Setup. This Is Where You Start.

Everything up to this point — the mindset, the tips, the reasoning — was the foundation. From here, you stop reading about the system and start building it. The next two prompts turn your AI into a coach that knows exactly who you are and exactly which phase to put you in.

ONE MORE THING, FROM ME TO YOU

I genuinely believe everybody can transform their body — and I don't mean that as a marketing line, I mean it literally. The ability to change was never the rare part. What's rare is wanting it enough to act on it. You can always choose to eat right, and eat the right amount. You can always choose to sleep earlier. You can always choose to be more active — to train, to move, to pick up the sport or the hobby. Those choices sit in front of every one of us, every single day. The only real question is how much effort you're willing to put into turning those thoughts into actions.

I'm saying this to you, but honestly, I'm saying it to myself too — we can always be a better version of ourselves. Deep down, I think we all want to be attractive: to look in the mirror and like what we see. And I genuinely believe we all have the ability to make that change. I'm not saying everyone is headed for a Mr. Olympia stage — I'm saying the capacity to become better than you are today is already in you, and how far it goes comes down to how much effort and time you're willing to dedicate to it.

Nobody starts perfect. Nobody knows what they're doing at first — it's all a journey of self-discovery. What matters is taking that first small step and getting the snowball rolling. That's the only way you'll ever find out how far you can go.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Structure

MODULE 1 — BULKING

Building the foundation. Mass, training stimulus, progressive overload. This is where most of your journey starts.

MODULE 2 — CUTTING

Revealing what you built. Caloric deficit, muscle preservation, cardio strategy — done without losing the muscle you worked for.

MODULE 3 — RECOMPOSITION

Refining the physique. Building muscle and losing fat at once while holding weight roughly steady. The long game, for when you're already lean.

Where Should You Start?

Most beginners start with **bulking** — especially if you're on the skinnier side and your main problem is that you just don't have much muscle yet. In that case, building mass is job one, and Module 1 is your starting line.

But not everyone should bulk first. If you're a beginner carrying **more body fat than you'd like**, the smarter move is usually to **cut first** — lean down to a healthier starting point, then bulk on a clean base. Bulking on top of existing fat just piles more fat on with no muscle underneath to show for it later, and it makes your eventual cut longer and harder. Leaning out first gets you to a lean starting line, and *then* the bulk builds something you can actually see. If that's you, start with Module 2 — Cutting — and come back to bulk once you're lean.

Not sure which one you are? That's exactly what the Router (coming up in a few pages) is for — you'll give the AI your real numbers, and it'll tell you honestly whether to bulk first or cut first, and why. You don't have to figure this out on your own.

The Whole Workflow, Step by Step

This is the entire system, start to finish — not just the prompts, but everything you actually do. **Steps 1–5 you do once. Steps 6–11 are the loop you repeat every month until the phase is done.** If you ever feel lost in this guide, find which of these steps you're on and pick it back up there. (Quick map of the numbering: in every phase, Prompt 0 is your one-time setup, then the numbered prompts after it are the coaching prompts you work through in order.)

SETTING UP — ONCE

STEP 1 — Open one AI account and one folder. ChatGPT or Claude, with a folder named “My AI Fitness System” — every chat in this guide lives there. Never used one? There's a five-minute setup page ahead.

STEP 2 — Run the Router. In one new chat, run Prompt 0, then Prompt 0-A. It reads your real numbers and tells you which phase to start in — bulk or cut — and why. You don't have to decide this yourself.

YOUR FIRST SIT-DOWN — ONCE PER PHASE

STEP 3 — Stay in that same chat and build your plan. Go to your phase's first page and follow what it tells you: **if you came straight from the Router in this same chat, it will send you past Prompt 0 to Prompt 1** — your profile is already loaded. (Starting a phase fresh in a new chat, or beginning a second bulk? Then you do run Prompt 0.) After that, the numbered prompts in the order the roadmap below shows. Copy each one exactly, fill in

every blank, and read the answer before you send the next. This is a real sit-down session, not a skim.

STEP 4 — Before you close it, save your setup summary. Ask that chat to summarize everything you decided as plain text, and keep it. That summary is the only thing your next coach will know about you.

STEP 5 — Open your data chat. A NEW chat in the same folder, with the setup prompt and your summary pasted in. Set two phone reminders now: one daily for uploads, one four weeks out for your check-in.

EVERY DAY — FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS

STEP 6 — Go train, eat to your targets, and sleep. This is where the results actually come from. The plan does nothing sitting in a chat window, and this is the one part nobody — no coach, no AI — can do for you.

STEP 7 — Capture three things as you go. Your training, in a phone note you fill in between sets. Your weight, on the scale most mornings. Your food, as your app's daily total. Seconds each, and you never retype a number.

STEP 8 — Upload to your data chat, daily. Training days: a screenshot of your workout note, your food numbers, and your weigh-in typed in; rest days: just the last two. Your coach banks the numbers and answers in a line or two. Missed a day? Send it late and keep going. You never restart.

EVERY FOUR WEEKS — THE MONTHLY LOOP

STEP 9 — Run your checkpoint prompt in that same data chat. Your coach reads the whole month at once — weight trend, lifts, energy, recovery — and tells you what's actually happening, not what you feel like is happening.

STEP 10 — Run your adjustment prompt. Calories, targets, progression — re-tuned from your real month instead of a template. This is the “adjust” that makes the whole loop work.

STEP 11 — Close the month and start a fresh data chat. Ask for your hand-off summary, open a new chat, paste it in. A month-old chat gets vague; a fresh one carrying your full history stays sharp. Then go back to STEP 6.

WHEN THE PHASE IS DONE

STEP 12 — Run your phase's exit prompt. It tells you whether you're actually ready to switch, and hands you a carried-over summary. Start a new chat, paste it in as the first message — and you're at STEP 3 of your next phase.

Only the first sit-down and one session every four weeks are real desk work. Day to day, the whole job is training, eating, sleeping, and sending one screenshot.

YOUR ROADMAP — WHEN TO USE EACH PROMPT

This is not a guide you sit down and finish in one go. Different prompts are designed for different stages of your phase. Using a prompt before you have the real data it asks for will give you a generic answer instead of a personal one.

Below are two roadmaps — one for each starting point. **If you're starting with a bulk, follow the Bulking roadmap. If the Router sent you to cut first, skip ahead to the Cutting roadmap right after it.** The rhythm is the same either way: a first sit-down you do once, a monthly loop you repeat, and an exit when you're ready to switch phases.

Treat this like a full toolkit with your own personal trainer inside it — something you keep coming back to as you grow, not something you skim once and forget. Every time you return, your answers will be more specific, and your

results will be more personal. That's the whole point.

If You're Starting With a Bulk

SESSION 1 — YOUR FIRST SIT-DOWN (before your first workout)

Run these prompts in your first sitting, before you touch a weight. The output becomes your personal starting plan.

- Prompt 0 — Your Personal Profile Setup
- Prompt 1 — Understanding Your Baseline
- Prompt 2 — Setting Your Bulk Goal
- Prompt 3 — Training Stimulus First
- Prompt 4 — Building Your Caloric Strategy
- Prompt 5 — Supplements: What's Actually Worth It
- Prompt 6 — Compound & Isolation Selection
- Prompt 7 — Structuring Your Training Week
- Prompt 8 — Your First Workout
- Prompt 9 — Progressive Overload Tracking

Before you close this chat: ask your coach to summarize everything you decided today (numbers, plan, anything to carry forward) and save that summary in your Project folder — it's the first thing you'll paste into your data chat (page 82).

Stop here. Open your data chat, upload daily, and come back after 4 weeks.

SESSION 2 — AFTER 4 WEEKS IN THE GYM

Come back to this guide after you've completed 4 weeks of consistent training. These prompts require real observation data — actual weight change, actual lift numbers, actual energy and recovery. You can't fill them in meaningfully on day one.

- Prompt 10 — The 4-Week Observation Checkpoint
- Prompt 11 — Trial & Error Adjustment

*Repeat Prompts 10 and 11 every 4 weeks throughout your bulk to keep adjusting based on real data. Two side-prompts if you need them: Prompt 11C (The Deload) when accumulated fatigue calls for it, and Prompt 11B (If You Fell Off Track) any time life knocks you off for a stretch. **Every check-in happens in the same place:** your data chat, which already holds every day of the month. Run the prompts there, then close the month — hand-off summary, fresh data chat (page 82) — and keep uploading. Ask for a saved copy of your log once a week as insurance.*

SESSION 3 — WHEN YOU'RE READY TO END YOUR BULK

Run these once you've completed several months of consistent bulking and are starting to think about transitioning phases. These prompts ask you to reflect on what specifically worked for your body — that requires real training history, not guesswork.

→ Prompt 12 — Positive Feedback Recognition

→ Prompt 13 — The Bulk Exit Signal

If the Router Sent You to Cut First

Some beginners — usually those carrying more body fat — are better off leaning down before they bulk. If that's you, this is your roadmap. It works exactly like the bulking one: a first sit-down, a monthly loop, and an exit. When you've finished your cut, you'll head back to the Bulking roadmap above and build on your lean base.

SESSION 1 — YOUR FIRST SIT-DOWN (before you change a thing)

Run these prompts in your first sitting, before you start cutting. The output becomes your personal cutting plan.

→ Prompt 0 — Your Cutting Profile Setup (*skip if the Router sent you here in the same chat — go straight to Prompt 1*)

→ Prompt 1 — Understanding What You're Working With

→ Prompt 2 — Setting Your Cut Goal

→ Prompt 3 — Building Your Caloric Deficit

→ Prompt 4 — Protein: The Number You Never Cut

→ Prompt 5 — How to Train While Cutting

NEW TO THE GYM? READ THE TRAINING BASICS FIRST

The prompts above cover your cutting nutrition, but not the training fundamentals — how to pick your lifts, structure your week, and train safely. Those live in the Bulking phase and apply no matter which phase you're in. If you've never trained with real structure, jump to the Bulking section (Prompts 3 & 5–9, starting on page 64) and run these six first, then come back here:

→ Bulk Prompt 3 — Training Stimulus First (*what actually drives muscle*)

→ Bulk Prompt 5 — Supplements: What's Actually Worth It

→ Bulk Prompt 6 — Compound & Isolation Selection (*which lifts to build around*)

→ Bulk Prompt 7 — Structuring Your Training Week

→ Bulk Prompt 8 — Your First Workout

→ Bulk Prompt 9 — Progressive Overload Tracking

These six are written for a bulk, so paste this line above each one — don't edit anything inside the prompt itself:

“Before the prompt below: I'm in a cut, not a bulk. Read every mention of a bulk as my cut and every mention of a surplus as my deficit. Keep my training and exercise choices the same as they'd be either way.”

Already trained before, or did these in a past bulk? Skip them — you don't need to repeat them. When you set up the training side of your cut in Prompt 5 above, just tell your AI coach the lifts and split you already use.

Before you close this chat: ask your coach to summarize everything you decided today (numbers, plan, anything to carry forward) and save that summary in your Project folder — it's the first thing you'll paste into your data chat (page 117).

Stop here. Open your data chat, upload daily, and come back after 4 weeks.

SESSION 2 — THE MONTHLY LOOP

Come back each month of your cut. These prompts need real observation data — actual weight change, whether your lifts are holding, how you look and feel. You can't fill them in on day one.

→ **Prompt 6 — Do You Even Need Cardio?**

→ **Prompt 7 — The 4-Week Checkpoint**

→ **Prompt 8 — Adjusting Based on the Data**

→ **Prompt 9 — Recognizing What's Working**

*Repeat Prompts 7 and 8 every 4 weeks throughout your cut to keep adjusting on real data. Use Prompt 6 (cardio) whenever your progress calls for it. **Every check-in happens in the same place:** your data chat. It already holds every day of the month, so there's nothing to paste — run the prompts, close the month with a fresh data chat (page 124), and keep uploading.*

SESSION 3 — WHEN YOU'RE READY TO END YOUR CUT

Run this once you've revealed the definition you were after and are thinking about switching back to a bulk. It asks you to read your real progress, not guess.

→ **Prompt 12 — Knowing When to Stop**

Two side-prompts if you need them: Prompt 11 (Taking a Diet Break) when a long cut wears you down, and Prompt 10B (If You Fell Off Track) any time life knocks you off for a stretch. Skip both if they don't apply.

PROMPT 10B — IF YOU FELL OFF TRACK (use whenever it applies)

This prompt has no set timing. Use it any time you've missed workouts or lost consistency for a stretch — whether that's 2 weeks or 2 months. You can use it as many times as you need across your whole journey.

Important: Update your stats every time you start a new module. Your body changes. Your AI coach needs current data to give you current answers.

Set Your Time Expectations

Your first sitting (Prompts 0–9) is a real sit-down session — it builds your complete starting plan, from your profile all the way through your first workout. Read each response properly before moving to the next one. This is not a 5-minute skim.

You don't have to do it in one sitting. A natural split: **Prompts 0–5 one day** (profile, baseline, goal, calories — the foundation), **Prompts 6–9 the next** (movements, weekly structure, first workout — the training plan). If you split, reopen the **SAME** conversation the next day — rule one from page 42 — and save the data-chat setup for the start of a fresh sitting, not the exhausted end of one. When your last setup prompt is done, the STOP page right after it walks you through the close-out: summary, data chat, ready to train. One heads-up: when you paste anything long, ChatGPT may collapse it into a small "Pasted text" chip instead of showing the words. That's normal — the AI reads it exactly the same.

When you come back at 4 weeks (Prompts 10 and 11), that's a shorter session — 20 to 30 minutes, because the AI already knows your profile and you're bringing real data to fill in. The more honest your fill-in answers are, the more specific the adjustment recommendations will be.

There are a lot of AI prompt guides out there now, and most people skim them once and never get real results. The AI's answers here are long on purpose — full coaching responses, not quick replies — so read each one slowly before moving on. Treat this like a real session with a coach, not a feed you're scrolling.

WHAT A REPLY ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

You've seen the prompts — here's the other half. This is a condensed taste of a real coach reply (this one to the calorie-strategy prompt, for a 150 lb beginner), so you know the shape of what comes back. **You don't copy this anywhere — it's what the AI sends you:**

"Based on your stats — 150 lbs, 5'9", three sessions a week, mostly a desk job — your maintenance lands around 2,400 calories a day. For a lean bulk we'll sit slightly above that, not far above it: the goal is muscle with minimal fat, not scale weight for its own sake. Your numbers to act on today: daily calories 2,700 (a +300 surplus) · daily protein 150 g (1 g per pound) · expected scale trend roughly +2–3 lbs over the next month. One flag: your maintenance is an estimate until we see real data — your first month of weigh-ins will tell us whether 2,400 was right, and we'll correct it at your 4-week check-in."

Every real reply is longer and more specific than this, because it's answering YOUR numbers, not an example's. But that's the shape every time: a plain-language explanation, then numbers you can act on today, then honesty about what's still an estimate. If a reply ever skips that last part, the sanity-check pages ahead show you what to push back on.

THE SYSTEM

One System. Any Starting Point.

This guide isn't a single program — it's a system that adapts to *you*. Inside it are three phases used across your journey — but only two are starting points. You do the one that's right for your body and your goal right now, then move through the cycle as your body changes.

● BULK PHASE Build Size & Strength

for when you're lean or underweight and want to grow

You eat in a controlled surplus and train to add muscle and strength. This is where the whole method is taught in full — every phase builds on what you learn here.



● CUT PHASE Strip Body Fat

for when you're carrying more fat than you want and need to lean out

You eat in a controlled deficit while training to keep the muscle you've built. Leaner and faster than bulk — the goal is fat down, muscle protected.



AND LATER — NOT A STARTING POINT

● RECOMP PHASE Refine What You Built

for later — once you've finished a full bulk-and-cut cycle

You eat around maintenance and let composition shift gradually — the slow, precise phase for holding your weight while the shape keeps improving. It's not a starting phase; it's the phase you *earn*, and it has its own section later in the guide.

You don't have to figure out which one you need. That's the first thing your AI coach does for you. The next two prompts — a short intake (Prompt 0) and a recommendation (Prompt 0-A) — read your body data and your goal, then tell you exactly which phase to start in and which prompt to go to next. Everything after that is built around your path. Ignore the phase that isn't yours; you can always come back when your body changes.

And underneath all of it, one small daily loop: log your workout, log your diet, log your weight — all in apps you already have — then upload it to your coach as a screenshot each day. That's what fills the four weeks between check-ins; THE TRACKING LOOP section (pages 76–85) sets it up. Most of your time is spent in that loop — train, log, check in, adjust, repeat.

Think of it like a GPS. You tell it where you are and where you want to go. It picks the route — you're still the one driving.

Keep Your Data Clean: One Job, One Chat

Here is the one thing to understand about AI: your coach forgets everything the moment you leave a **conversation**. It does not remember you between chats. Every rule on this page exists to work around that single fact — and they are simple.

① **TWO CHATS PER PHASE** One chat builds your plan. A second chat runs it.

that's all you need — not one endless thread

Chat 1 — your first sit-down: the Router and your setup prompts. This chat builds your plan.

Chat 2 — your data chat: your daily uploads and your monthly check-in both live here. You start a fresh one each month (page 90 in Bulk, page 124 in Cut).

Don't run everything in one long conversation. It gets slow, gets confused, and starts contradicting itself.



② **KEEP THEM IN ONE FOLDER** Put every conversation in the same place

so your whole history lives together

In ChatGPT, make a Project — or just a folder — called “**My AI Fitness System**”, and start every chat inside it. Nothing else to it.



③ **RULE ONE** Never leave a chat in the middle of a job

if you stop partway, come back to the SAME chat

Stopping halfway through your first sit-down is fine — life happens. Just reopen **that same conversation** next time and carry on. Do not start a new one mid-job, or you lose everything you'd already told it.



④ **RULE TWO** Never close a finished chat without a summary

the summary is your coach's memory — it's how you carry it forward

When a chat's job is finished, don't just close the tab. Ask for a summary first, then paste it into your next chat as the very first message. That is the whole trick — the summary is the memory.

■ COPY THIS BEFORE YOU CLOSE ANY FINISHED CHAT:

Summarize everything we decided in this conversation — my numbers, my plan, and anything I should carry forward — as plain text I can paste into my next chat.

Save what it gives you anywhere you can copy from later — a note on your phone is fine. Paste it as the first message of your next chat, and your coach picks up exactly where the last one left off.

What this actually looks like

Your whole first two months, in the order it happens. Nothing here is complicated — it's the same two moves on repeat.

Day 1 — CHAT 1 — Run the Router and your setup prompts. You come out with your plan. Before you close it: ask for the summary, and save it.

Day 1 — CHAT 2 — Open a new chat in the same folder and paste that summary in as the first message. This is your data chat.

Days 2–28 — Send your training, weight and food to CHAT 2 every day. Same chat, every time. Nothing else to think about.

Day 28 — still CHAT 2 — Run your check-in and adjustment right there — it already holds your whole month. Then ask for the summary and save it.

Day 29 — CHAT 3 — New chat, paste that summary in, and it's your data chat for month two. Then repeat.

*That's the whole habit: **don't leave mid-job, and never close a finished chat without a summary.** Do that and your coach always knows your history — skip it and every new chat starts from a blank page.*

Five Minutes of Setup, Once

If you already use ChatGPT most days, skim this and move on. If you've never opened it, **this page is the entire learning curve** — seven things, none harder than sending a text, and you don't have to memorize any of them: the guide repeats each move at the moment you need it.

1 — Get an account (free is fine)

Go to chatgpt.com on your phone or laptop and sign up. ChatGPT is what I use here; Claude, Gemini or any current AI works too — **the prompts work word for word anywhere** — and in any language it speaks, so if English isn't your first, tell it to answer in yours. Only the platform bits (what folders are called, which model you're on) differ.

2 — Understand what a “chat” is — this is the one concept that matters

A chat is one conversation thread. **The AI remembers everything inside that thread and nothing outside it.** Open a new chat and it has never met you. That single fact is why this guide is fussy about when you stay in a conversation and when you start a fresh one — and why you'll carry a summary across when you do.

3 — Start a new chat

Look for “New chat” — usually top-left on a laptop, or a + icon on a phone. You'll do this a handful of times: once for your first sit-down, once for your data chat, once a month after that.

4 — Copy a prompt out of this guide

On a laptop: drag to select the text inside the dark box, then Ctrl-C (Cmd-C on a Mac). On a phone: long-press the text, drag the handles over the whole block, tap Copy — if your PDF app won't let you select text, open the guide in another reader. Then paste into the message box and **replace anything in [square brackets] with your own answer, deleting the brackets**. Send. **One exception:** some prompts open with a line reading **[GUIDE PROMPT]**. That one isn't a blank for you to fill in — it's a label your coach is watching for. Copy it exactly as it is, leave it at the top, and don't delete it.

5 — Give it one home

In ChatGPT, create a **Project** (a folder for related chats) called “My AI Fitness System” and start every conversation from this guide inside it. No Projects on your plan? Keep a note with your chat names — nothing breaks without folders.

6 — Send a photo or screenshot

In the message box there's a + or a paperclip. Tap it, choose Photos, pick your image, add your text, send. Ten seconds, and it's your daily habit later.

7 — Turn off cross-chat memory (30 seconds, and it matters)

Most AI apps now remember things about you *between* chats, and it's usually on by default. That quietly breaks step 2: a stale target or an early guess from your planning chat can leak into a chat that's supposed to be starting clean. In ChatGPT: **Settings** → **Personalization** → turn **Memory (and “reference chat history”)** off. Claude

and Gemini have the same setting under similar names. You want each chat knowing exactly what you pasted into it and nothing else — that's what makes the fresh coach every month actually fresh. Can't find it or don't want to turn it off? Then add one line to the top of each setup prompt: "Ignore anything you know about me from memory or other chats — what I've pasted here is the only source of truth."

Two heads-ups if you're on a free plan

Your first sit-down is long, and free plans can switch you to a smaller "mini" model partway through. The AI says so and shows a reset time — stop there and come back; the answers get worse exactly when they matter most. Easier still, plan the split: Prompts 0–5 one day, 6–9 the next. When you sit back down, have your coach restate your profile in a few lines first — a very long chat can quietly lose its earliest messages, and if it's lost yours you just paste them back.

If you're using Claude or Gemini instead

The prompts themselves are the same word for word — nothing in them is ChatGPT-specific. Four practical differences are worth knowing before you start:

The folder

Claude calls it a **Project** too, but it's a paid feature; Gemini has no direct equivalent on the free tier. Neither matters much — folders are organisation, not function. Keep a note with your chat names and carry on.

The length cap — the one real difference

Claude conversations have a hard length limit, and a month of daily image uploads can hit it. When a chat tells you it's too long to continue, don't start an empty one and lose the month: **run Close the Month right then** (the prompt is later in this guide), take the hand-off summary, and open your new data chat early. Your month just ended a few days sooner than planned — nothing is lost. On Claude, treat the monthly reset as a hard rule rather than good hygiene.

Images

Free Gemini generally handles a long, image-heavy chat better than free ChatGPT does; Claude sits in between and caps chat length instead. Whichever you're on, the weekly plain-text log save a few pages ahead is what actually protects your record — it matters more than which app you picked.

Model downgrades

The "mini model partway through" warning above is ChatGPT-specific wording, but every free tier does some version of it. Same fix everywhere: if answers suddenly get vaguer mid-sit-down, stop and come back rather than pushing through.

Tell Your AI Coach Who You Are

● **START HERE** The reading stops. This is where you actually begin.

everything before this page was preparation — this is your first real conversation with your coach

Open your AI, start a **NEW chat** inside your “My AI Fitness System” folder, and run the prompt on this page. From here to the end of your phase you're working *inside* the AI — the guide's job from now on is just telling you what to paste next. Haven't set up an account or a folder yet? The page you just read walks you through both.

These next two prompts are the router. They're the same no matter which phase you end up in, so everyone runs them first. This one is a short intake: you hand your AI coach the raw facts about your body and your life. The next one turns those facts into a recommendation about which phase to start in. Don't skip ahead — run this first. Copy the prompt below into your new chat, replace anything in [square brackets] with your own answer, and send it.

DAY 1 • CHAT 1 **PROMPT 0 — INTAKE**

Your Personal Profile Setup

● **DO FIRST** • The very first thing you do. Run this once before anything else.

Why this matters: This profile is the foundation. Your AI coach can only point you to the right phase — and coach you well once you're in it — if you give it real data. Don't estimate. Get on a scale. Be honest about where you actually are, not where you wish you were.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

You are an experienced strength and physique coach with a strong grounding in exercise science and evidence-based nutrition, and a specialty in helping beginners and everyday lifters — from naturally lean to carrying extra weight — transform their physique. You reason from the specific data I give you rather than generic templates, you explain the “why” in plain language, and when the science is genuinely uncertain or my data is incomplete, you say so honestly instead of guessing or projecting false confidence. One principle you hold throughout: the three training phases follow a logic — bulking to build muscle, cutting to reveal it, and recomposition only as an **EARNED** phase for someone who has already completed at least one full bulk-and-cut cycle. You never recommend recomposition as a starting phase for a beginner — a lean or undermuscle beginner belongs in a bulk. Act as my personal AI fitness coach for this entire conversation. This conversation is for building my plan only — once it's built I'll move my day-to-day data into a separate chat, so don't ask me to start logging here. When I ask, give me a clean plain-text summary of everything we decide — my plan and my targets (calories, protein, split, goal) — so I can carry it across. I'm going to give you my complete profile. Remember everything here — every question I ask after this builds on it. I have NOT decided what training phase I'm doing yet. You'll help me figure that out in my next message, so for now just collect and confirm. Before you do anything else with this message — before you read the rest of my profile, before you summarize anything — find my answer to the age question below and check it **FIRST**, in isolation from everything else I've written. If it's under 18, stop right there: don't process the rest of this profile, don't summarize it, just follow the standing under-18 rule at the end of this prompt. Only move on to the rest of my profile once you've confirmed I'm 18 or over.

Who I am:

Q1: Name?

Your answer: [Your name]

Q2: Age?

Your answer: [Your age. If it is under 18, stop here — see the standing rule at the end of this prompt.]

Q3: Sex? (your coach uses this for calorie math)

Your answer: [Male / Female / prefer not to say — if you skip it, the AI will use ranges that cover both and say so]

Q4: Height?

Your answer: [Your height]

Q5: Current weight?

Your answer: [Get on a scale — don't guess. No scale at home? Use the gym's this week and give your best estimate today; correct it at your first weigh-in. lbs or kg, whichever you use — your coach works in your units]

My body right now:

Q6: Roughly how would you describe my current body fat? Pick the closest: "very lean / can see abs", "lean-ish", "average / soft but not heavy", "carrying noticeable fat", "significantly overweight".

Your answer: [Pick one. If you're not sure, say so — photos (next question) remove the guesswork.]

Q7: Do I want to attach photos for you to assess?

Your answer: [Yes / No — if yes: one front-on and one from the side, neutral light, fitted clothes or shorts. Words like "lean-ish" mean different things to different people — two photos calibrate your real starting point far better than any description. Optional; the guide works fully without them.]

My history:

Q8: Have I trained with weights before? For how long, and how seriously?

Your answer: [Be honest — "never", "on and off", "2 years consistently", etc.]

Q9: Do I know my current lifts / numbers, or am I starting from scratch?

Your answer: [List them if you know them, or say "starting from scratch".]

Q10: What does my CURRENT training actually look like, if I'm doing any right now?

Your answer: [Days per week, your split or routine, and roughly what you do each session — e.g. "push/pull/legs, 4 days, mostly machines" or "just whatever's free at the gym, no real plan." If you're not currently training at all, say "not currently training."]

My life:

Q11: How many days a week can I realistically train?

Your answer: [Your real schedule, not your ideal one]

Q12: What equipment do I have access to?

Your answer: [Full gym / home dumbbells / bodyweight / etc.]

Q13: Outside the gym, what's my typical day like?

Your answer: [Mostly sitting / on my feet a fair bit / physically demanding work — add rough daily steps if you know them]

Q14: Sleep — rough average hours a night?

Your answer: [E.g. "6-7 most nights"]

Q15: Any injuries, pain, or limitations?

Your answer: [Anything that still bothers you, or "none".]

Q16: What do I typically eat in a day right now, and do I track it? Include any dietary restrictions — vegetarian, vegan, allergies, religious rules, foods you refuse — so nothing gets planned around food you won't eat.

Your answer: [A few real examples — e.g. "coffee and toast, a sandwich, whatever's cooked for dinner" — plus "I track calories" or "I don't track anything". Rough is fine; this matters for the phase you get sent to.]

One honest check, before we go further:

Q17: Quick honest check — not a judgment, just so I get matched to a safe starting point. In the last few months: have I felt out of control around food, felt guilty or anxious after eating, had someone close to me express concern about my eating or my weight, or often felt I should eat less even though I'm already eating little?

Your answer: [Yes to any of these / No to all — if yes, say which one(s), even just briefly. This matters more than my body-fat or weight answers, so answer it honestly.]

What I want:

Q18: In plain words, what do I want?

Your answer: [E.g. "get bigger", "lose fat", "build lean muscle without getting fat", "I honestly don't know — you tell me"]

Please confirm you've received my profile, note what you see in the photos if I attached any, and summarize it back to me. Don't recommend a phase yet — we'll do that in my next message.

*One standing rule for this whole conversation: if you ever need more than I've given you, do NOT ask a follow-up question. Make a reasonable assumption, state it clearly, and give me your full answer. I'll correct anything off. The only exceptions are when a prompt explicitly invites you to ask, or when you have a genuine safety concern about my age, an injury, or my eating — those you raise immediately. **And one hard stop that overrides every other instruction here: if the age I gave you is under 18, do not build me a plan and do not recommend a phase. Tell me plainly that this guide is written for adults 18 and over, and that at my age the right move is to talk to a parent, a doctor, or a qualified coach first.** One more standing rule: you are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMS, peptides, or anything similar — now or later in this conversation — don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing, or on-cycle monitoring specifics; tell me plainly that's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. Keep helping me with training, nutrition, and everything else as normal — only the PED specifics are off-limits.*

JASON'S NOTE

Notice this intake doesn't ask about bulk, cut, or recomp anywhere — that's on purpose. You don't pick the phase; your data does, in the very next prompt. Your only job here is to be accurate. The single most common mistake is guessing your weight and softening your body-fat answer because the honest one stings. The coach you're building is only as good as what you feed it — so feed it the truth.

Which Phase Should You Start In?

This is the moment the guide becomes *yours*. You've handed over your profile; now your coach reads it and routes you.

DAY 1 · CHAT 1 **PROMPT 0-A — RECOMMENDATION**

Get Routed to Your Phase

● **DO SECOND** · Run right after the AI confirms your profile, in the same chat.

Why this matters: your coach reads your real data and tells you where to start — it's allowed to disagree with your instinct; that's the point of a coach. The final call is yours.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

Based on my profile, I want your recommendation on which training phase I should start in. Here are the two options and what each is for:

- **BULK** — a calorie surplus to build size and strength. Best if I'm lean or underweight and my main goal is to grow.
- **CUT** — a calorie deficit to lose body fat. Best if I'm carrying more fat than I want and need to lean out before anything else.

(Note: my guide has a third phase called Recomposition, but that phase is for people who have already completed at least one full bulk-and-cut cycle and now want to slowly refine what they've built. It's not a beginner starting point. Do not recommend Recomposition to me here — recommend Bulk or Cut only. If neither seems like a clean fit, still pick the one that gets me closer to my stated goal fastest, and explain why.)

Do this:

1. Tell me which **ONE** phase you recommend I start in, and explain why, in plain language, using my actual numbers and goal.
2. If my stated goal and my body data point in different directions, say so honestly and explain the tradeoff — then give me your best single recommendation anyway.
3. Tell me roughly how long this phase is likely to last for me, and what "done" will look like.
4. If I already told you what I want to do and it's reasonable, confirm it and route me there. If I asked you to decide, decide.

Important criteria for choosing between Bulk and Cut for me:

Rule minus-one, before anything else: work out my BMI from the height and weight I gave you — show your arithmetic ($703 \times \text{lb} \div \text{in}^2$, or $\text{kg} \div \text{m}^2$). If it is under 18.5, OR I answered yes to the honest-check question in my intake, OR anything I've told you suggests I'm already eating well below what I need: do NOT recommend a Cut — whatever I said I want, and do not offer a smaller or 'mini' version of a cut, a short reduced-deficit phase, or any other partial/compromise version of a deficit as a middle ground. The only acceptable recommendation here is Bulk or maintenance. Say plainly that my numbers or my answers put me under a healthy weight or outside a safe starting point, that the right move is to eat more (or hold steady) and train, and point me to real support using these exact details: in the U.S., the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, 1-866-662-1235 (allianceforeatingdisorders.com); in Canada, NEDIC, 1-866-633-4220 (nedic.ca). Both keep limited daytime hours, so also tell me that if I need someone at any hour I can call or text 988 in either country. If I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know the local equivalent, give me that too. Then END YOUR REPLY by asking me directly whether I want to talk to someone before we go on — make that question the last thing you say. Wait for my answer — don't hand me a routing recommendation in the same reply.

Mirror rule: BMI over ~35, or any health condition or medication I mentioned — don't generate specific deficit, surplus, or training-intensity numbers yet. Tell me to get a doctor's clearance first, ask me to confirm I have it or am getting it, and hold the detailed numbers until I do — the phase recommendation itself can still go ahead, but don't send me off to start that phase's section yet: tell me I can read ahead, and that we set my actual numbers together once the doctor conversation is done.

Rule zero, next: if I described my body fat as “carrying noticeable fat” or “significantly overweight” (or my photos clearly show it), recommend CUT. **Cross-check my description against my height and weight before you trust it** — softening that answer is the most common mistake people make here, so if the two disagree, say so plainly and go with the numbers. **That cross-check runs both ways:** if I describe myself as carrying a lot of fat but my height, weight, and photos don't support that at all, don't just take my word for it and route me to a Cut — tell me plainly that what I'm describing doesn't match what my numbers actually show, and go with the numbers. **And treat the borderline band as ambiguous, not as a Cut:** if I called myself “carrying noticeable fat” but my BMI is under about 27 and I have never trained consistently, that is far more likely an untrained body with little muscle than a body with real fat to strip — do NOT let this rule shortcut me into a Cut on the strength of my own adjective. Run the tiebreaker tests below and let them decide. The tiebreakers below are only for the genuinely ambiguous middle — never use them to talk someone clearly carrying a lot of fat into a bulk. And if I said I'm not sure about my body fat AND didn't attach photos, don't guess and don't default me to Bulk — ask me for one honest sentence about how my waist looks and feels before you route me. **The same applies if I did attach photos but you can't or won't assess them (declined, unclear, or any other reason) — don't silently fall back to a guess; tell me plainly you couldn't read the photos and ask me for that one honest sentence instead.**

When my body data is ambiguous (some fat AND undermuscle — the “skinny-fat” case), apply these rules in order:

1. Ask: is my primary problem “not enough muscle” or “too much fat”? Look at what would happen if I stripped fat down to lean levels — would I still look small and undermuscle? If yes, my primary problem is muscle. Route me to Bulk.

2. Ask: would cutting produce a body I actually want? If cutting to a lean weight would just leave me looking smaller with the same soft-and-flat appearance, that is not the outcome I want. Route me to Bulk instead — build the muscle first, reveal it in a later cut.

3. For genuinely 50/50 cases where both tests are close, default to Bulk. Beginners almost always benefit more from building muscle first than from cutting first, because cuts on a small frame just produce a smaller frame.

One negative example, so my goal wording doesn't pull you off these tests: wanting a “flatter stomach”, “less belly”, or “to look leaner” does NOT by itself indicate Cut — that's the near-universal goal of everyone reading this, in every phase, and for a skinny-fat beginner it's usually achieved by building muscle first. Run the tests above on my actual body data and let them decide; don't let how I phrased my goal override them.

Reject the comfort argument. Do not choose Cut because “a bulk might make me feel worse shirtless in the short term.” How I feel in the next 2 weeks is not the criterion. How I will look at the end of a full phase is. Being honest with me about the harder-but-correct choice is more valuable than protecting my short-term comfort. **One important exception to that: impatience and distress are not the same thing.** If what I'm expressing reads as genuine distress about my body rather than ordinary impatience — real anxiety, shame, or something that sounds like it's affecting how I eat or live — don't just override it with the physiologically optimal answer. Name what you're hearing, tell me the phase logic still points where it points and why, and say plainly that if this is weighing on me it's worth talking to someone about, separately from which phase I run.

Then end with one clear instruction: tell me to go to that phase's section of my guide and start at Bulk PROMPT 0 if you routed me to Bulk, or at PROMPT 1 — CUT if you routed me to Cut (Cut's Prompt 0 is only for people who did not come through this router). (My guide labels prompts as “PROMPT N” in the Bulk phase and “PROMPT N — CUT” in the Cut phase, where N is the prompt number.) Keep this profile and recommendation in mind for the rest of our conversation.

Routed? **Don't close this chat.** Your phase's entire first sit-down happens in this same conversation — turn to your phase's Prompt 0 page (Bulk: page 57 · Cut: page 99) and follow its instructions from right here. When your sit-down is done, the guide walks you straight into **THE TRACKING LOOP** — the rhythm every phase runs on.

JASON'S NOTE

The reason this is a separate prompt from the intake — and not just one big question — is that I wanted the recommendation to be a real decision the AI makes out loud, with reasons you can read and push back on, not a number it quietly assumes. If the phase it picks surprises you, ask it why. Most of the time the data is telling you something your ego didn't want to hear. Trust the read, start where it sends you, and remember you can re-route later — your body changes, and so does the answer.

What This Guide Will Do For You

By the end of your phase — whichever one the Router sent you to — you will have, through your own AI-powered discovery process, a clear understanding of:

- **Your personal baseline and what your body actually needs, right now**
- **How to set a realistic goal for your phase, based on YOUR frame and timeline**
- **How to build a nutrition plan that works with your body, not against it**
- **How to choose the compound movements and training that suit your structure**
- **How to structure your training week around your real schedule and recovery**
- **Which supplements are actually worth your money — and which are marketing**
- **How to track your progress so you know you're actually moving forward**
- **How to observe, adjust, and build a feedback loop that compounds over time**
- **When and how to deload or ease off so fatigue doesn't stall your progress**
- **Exactly when your phase is done — and how to transition cleanly to the next one**
- **And underneath all of it: how to run an AI as your coach on a real, ongoing goal**

You won't just have information after this. You'll have YOUR information. That's the difference.

Sanity-Check Numbers

This guide hands you the questions and lets AI fill in the answers for YOUR body — that's the whole point. But AI gets things wrong sometimes, and a beginner can't always tell when an answer is off. So here are the rough ranges a sensible answer should land in. These aren't targets to chase or replacements for what the AI builds around your specific profile — they're a safety net. **If an AI answer falls way outside one of these, don't just trust it. Ask the AI to explain why it's outside the normal range, and cross-check before you act on it.**

Caloric surplus for a lean bulk

Roughly +250 to +500 calories per day over maintenance — or about 0.25–0.5% of your bodyweight gained per week. Bigger isn't better; past this you mostly add fat. If an AI tells a beginner to eat 800–1,000+ over maintenance, be skeptical.

Realistic muscle gain (by training age)

At best, around 1–2 lb of actual muscle per month in your first year (women: roughly half that — normal physiology, not a worse result; past your mid-40s, expect the conservative end too) — less after that. If you're past your first year, halve it: roughly 0.5–1 lb a month is a realistic intermediate pace, and slower gains aren't failure, they're normal. Total scale weight can move faster (food, water, some fat), but muscle is slow. Anyone promising 'gain 10 lb of muscle in a month' is selling something.

Rep range for building muscle

Most working sets land in the 6–20 rep range, taken close to — but not always to — failure (leave roughly 1–3 reps in reserve on most sets). There's no single magic number; anywhere in that range builds muscle if the effort is real.

Weekly volume per muscle group

A common starting point is roughly 10+ hard sets per muscle group per week, spread over however many days you train — two hard full-body days can hit it. Beginners often need less to start and can build up. If a plan has you doing 30+ sets for one muscle in week one, that's too much, too soon.

Exercise count — how to carve that weekly total into a session

The row above gives you a weekly target; this is how to split it up. A practical starting structure, not a research finding: **3–4 working sets per exercise, 1–2 exercises for a smaller muscle** (biceps, calves, rear delts) **and 2–3 for a bigger one** (chest, back, quads) — which lands most sessions around **4–6 total working exercises**. That's a starting point to organize around, not a hard rule — bend it to fit your actual time and recovery, not the other way around.

Rest between sets

Roughly 1–2 minutes for smaller/isolation movements, and 2–3 minutes for heavy compounds. Resting long enough to actually recover between hard sets is normal and good — you don't have to rush.

Daily protein

Around 0.7–1 gram per pound of bodyweight per day covers a bulk; cutting pushes toward the top of that range or slightly above. Your phase's own prompts set the exact number for you. More than that isn't 'more muscle' — it's just more calories and more expense.

Hydration

A simple everyday baseline is roughly half your bodyweight in ounces of water per day — more if you sweat heavily, train in heat, or it's a long/hard session. Pale yellow urine is a good rough check. This applies in every phase and isn't tied to any single prompt.

Quick BMI check ($703 \times \text{lb} \div \text{in}^2$, or $\text{kg} \div \text{m}^2$)

Your Prompt 0-A asks the AI to show this arithmetic because it's what decides whether you're routed away from a deficit — worth verifying yourself. Rough bands: under 18.5 = underweight; 18.5–24.9 = normal; 25–29.9 = overweight; 30+ = obese; over ~35 triggers the mirror rule (doctor's clearance before specific numbers). A couple of reference points: 5'6" / 140 lb $\approx$ 22.6. 5'10" / 175 lb $\approx$ 25.1. 6'0" / 200 lb $\approx$ 27.1. If your coach's number lands far from what these examples suggest for your height and weight, do the math yourself and correct it before you trust anything built on it.

One honest caveat: these are general beginner ranges, not laws. Your AI coach may have a good reason to go slightly outside one of them for your specific situation — that's fine, as long as it can explain why. The goal here isn't to argue with your coach. It's to make sure you'd notice if something were badly wrong.

Set Up Your Personal Profile First

Routed to BULK? Start here. Routed to CUT first? Your phase starts on page 97 — skip ahead now; everything between here and there is the Bulk path, and you'll come back to it after your cut.

You'll run this prompt at the start of **every** bulk — most people alternate bulking and cutting for years, so it's built as a complete fresh start. **Came from the Router, in that same conversation?** Stay in that chat — your basics are already loaded, so answer “covered” wherever you've already given something. **Starting a second bulk after a cut, or opening a fresh conversation?** Paste your carried-over summary as your first message if you have one, then run this prompt — it updates your coach on where your body is NOW, not last season. Copy it, fill in every blank, and send it.

DAY 1 • CHAT 1 PROMPT 0 — BULK

Your Personal Profile Setup

● **START** • Your first sit-down begins here. Run it once, before anything else.

Why this matters: This is a complete fresh start — it works the same whether it's your first bulk or your fourth. The detail you give here — especially your EXACT equipment — is what makes every workout your coach builds actually doable in YOUR gym, not some imaginary one.

Not sure how much detail to give? There's a filled-in example a couple of pages ahead — a real one, messy answers and all. Flip forward and skim it before you start; it takes ten seconds and it'll save you from half-answering this.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

I'm starting a BULKING phase, and I want you to be my personal AI bulking coach for this whole conversation. You are an experienced strength and physique coach with a strong grounding in exercise science and evidence-based nutrition. You reason from the specific data I give you rather than generic templates, you explain the “why” in plain language, and when the science is genuinely uncertain or my data is incomplete, you say so honestly instead of guessing. This conversation is for building my plan only — once it's built I'll move my day-to-day data into a separate chat, so don't ask me to start logging here. If I ask for my log, give me the whole record so far — including my current plan and targets (calories, protein, split, goal) — as clean plain text I can save. Before you do anything else with this message — before you read the rest of my profile, before you summarize anything — find my answer to the age question below and check it FIRST, in isolation from everything else I've written. If it's under 18, stop right there: don't process the rest of this profile, don't summarize it, just follow the standing under-18 rule at the end of this prompt. Only move on to the rest of my profile once you've confirmed I'm 18 or over. Here's where I am right now. If any of these is already in a summary I pasted above, or earlier in this conversation (my Router intake), I'll write “covered” on that line — use what you have, don't ask me to repeat it:

Who I am:

Q1: Name?

Your answer: [Your name — or “covered”]

Q2: Age?

Your answer: [Your age. If it is under 18, stop here — see the standing rule at the end of this prompt]

Q3: Sex?

Your answer: [your coach uses this for calorie math]

Q4: Height?

Your answer: [FILL IN]

Q5: Current weight?

Your answer: [get on a scale — don't guess]

Q6: How I'd describe my body fat right now?

Your answer: ["lean-ish", "average / soft", "carrying noticeable fat"]

Q7: My training history so far?

Your answer: [how long you've trained with real structure and roughly where your main lifts are — or "this is my first structured phase"]

Q8: My sleep?

Your answer: [rough hours per night, honestly]

Q9: Any injuries or limitations?

Your answer: [anything that bothers you, or "none"]

Q10: Quick honest check — not a judgment, just so I get matched to a safe starting point. In the last few months: have I felt out of control around food, felt guilty or anxious after eating, had someone close to me express concern about my eating or my weight, or often felt I should eat less even though I'm already eating little?

Your answer: [Yes to any of these / No to all — if yes, say which one(s), even just briefly. This matters more than my body-fat or weight answers, so answer it honestly.]

Q11: If I just finished a cut: what I cut down to, and how I look and feel now?

Your answer: [FILL IN — or "this is my first phase"]

Training environment:

Q12: Days per week I can train, and the EXACT equipment I have access to?

Your answer: [your real schedule + list EXACTLY what you have, nothing more. Include max dumbbell weight if you know it. If something isn't on your list, assume I don't have it — don't add standard gym equipment I haven't mentioned. If training at home, also tell me whether you have enough open floor space for things like push-ups, lunges, and rows]

Recovery & lifestyle:

Q13: How would you describe your current stress/schedule load?

Your answer: [Work, study, family, etc. — are you generally pretty free, moderately busy, or slammed most days?]

Current diet:

Q14: How many meals do I usually eat per day?

Your answer: [Number]

Q15: What do those meals usually look like?

Your answer: [List a few real examples — e.g. "cereal, then rice and chicken, then whatever my family cooks"]

Q16: Do I currently track calories or protein in any way?

Your answer: [Yes / No]

Where you're at right now:

Q17: Biggest struggle right now — what feels like your #1 problem?

Your answer: [E.g. not knowing where to start, feeling self-conscious, not seeing results, etc.]

Long-term goal:

Q18: In plain words, what do you want your body to look like?

Your answer: [E.g. "broader shoulders and a fuller chest" or "just not skinny anymore" — there's no wrong answer, just say what you actually picture]

Q19: Is there anyone whose physique you'd point to as roughly what you're going for?

Your answer: [A specific person, athlete, or "not sure yet" is fine]

Q20: Target bulk goal weight?

Your answer: [A number, even a rough one — what weight are you aiming for?]

Q21: Timeline — how many months are you realistically committing to this bulk?

Your answer: [If you're not sure, just say "not sure yet."]

OPTIONAL — PHOTOS: If I've attached current photos of myself (front-on and/or from the side) — here or in my intake earlier — use them as a visual baseline for my starting point. If I haven't attached any, that's completely fine — just work from the written profile and don't ask me for photos. Either way, continue normally.

Before you build anything: work out my BMI from my height and weight above — show your arithmetic ($703 \times \text{lb} \div \text{in}^2$, or $\text{kg} \div \text{m}^2$) — so the rule below has a number to work from. Then: if I answered yes to the honest-check question above, or anything I've told you suggests my eating is already restrictive or distressing even though I'm asking to bulk, say so plainly, and point me to real support using these exact details: in the U.S., the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, 1-866-662-1235 (allianceforeatingdisorders.com); in Canada, NEDIC, 1-866-633-4220 (nedic.ca); and, at any hour in either country, call or text 988. If I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know the local equivalent, give me that too. Then END YOUR REPLY by asking me directly whether I want to talk to someone before we go on — make that question the last thing you say. Don't just note it and build the plan anyway.

Mirror rule: if my BMI is over ~35, or I mentioned any health condition or medication, don't generate specific deficit, surplus, or training-intensity numbers yet — tell me to get a doctor's clearance first, ask me to confirm I have it or am getting it, and hold the detailed numbers until I do. When this rule applies, don't send me off to start a phase section either: tell me I can read ahead, but that we set my actual numbers together here once the doctor conversation is done.

Please confirm you've received everything, note what you observe in the photos if I attached any, and summarize my complete profile back to me — my intake from earlier plus what I just gave you. Just confirm and summarize for now — don't evaluate or adjust my goals yet, we'll do that together in the next prompt. Then tell me you're ready for my next prompt.

One standing rule for this entire conversation: if you ever need more information than what I've given you to answer something I ask, do not ask me a follow-up question. Instead, make a reasonable assumption based on what I've already told you, clearly state that assumption, and give me your full answer right away. I'll correct anything that's off after I read it. The exceptions: when a later prompt explicitly invites you to ask me questions — in that case, follow that prompt's instructions, then return to this no-follow-up rule afterward — and any genuine safety concern about my age, an injury, or my eating, which you raise immediately, rule or no rule. Two more standing rules: if I left any of the "Who I am" basics blank and they're nowhere above, stop and ask me for them before we go on — that's a sanctioned ask. And if the age I gave you is under 18, don't build me a plan — this guide is for adults; tell me to talk to a parent, a doctor, or a qualified coach. Otherwise, only ask me clarifying questions once we've gone through all of this phase's prompts — and only if you still genuinely need something from me at that point. One more standing rule: you are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMs, peptides, or anything similar — now or later in this conversation — don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing, or on-cycle monitoring specifics; tell me plainly that's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. Keep helping me with training, nutrition, and everything else as normal — only the PED specifics are off-limits.

JASON'S NOTE

When I started, I didn't know my actual numbers. I guessed, and every calculation was off from the start. Spend 10 minutes getting real numbers before filling this in. The questions are grouped into short sections — training, recovery, diet, goals — on purpose; answer every question in each section, even if your answer is just 'not sure.' Half-answering these means the AI will just ask you the same things back one at a time before it can actually help you. I also added two guardrails at the end of the prompt: a standing no-follow-up-questions rule — the AI makes reasonable assumptions instead of stalling you — and a just-confirm-for-now line, because the AI loves to jump ahead and question your goal weight before you've started. That's Prompt 2's job; we'll stress-test it there together. And if you came through the Router, don't retype a thing — "covered" is a full answer for anything it already collected. I'm not asking for anything you'd need a scale or measuring tape for here, just rough honest answers. These matter more than people think: poor sleep and high stress directly affect how well your body actually uses the surplus you're about to eat, and an old injury can change which exercises are smart for you in Prompt 6.

EXAMPLE OF A FILLED-IN PROFILE (FOR REFERENCE ONLY)

This is what a real answer looks like — not perfect, just complete. Tyler came straight from the Router in the same chat, so he writes "covered" on the basics; starting fresh, you'd fill those in for real. Use your own details — the goal is to answer every part, even messily.

Q1–Q9 (Name, age, sex, height, weight, body fat, history, sleep, injuries): covered — all in my Router intake above

Q10 (Honest check — food, guilt, anyone concerned?): no to all of them. food's not really something i stress about, i just don't eat enough

Q11 (Just finished a cut?): no, this is my first phase

Q12 (Days per week + exact equipment): 4 days a week. I have a membership at a commercial gym, so full equipment — dumbbells all the way up to 100lbs, barbells and a squat rack, bench press, cable machines, lat pulldown, leg press, smith machine, and a few other machines too

Q13 (Stress/schedule load): pretty busy honestly, work plus I help out at my family's store sometimes

Q14 (Meals per day): like 3 meals a day usually

Q15 (What meals look like): cereal in the morning sometimes, then whatever my mom cooks for dinner, rice and chicken a lot

Q16 (Tracking calories/protein): no I don't track anything

Q17 (Biggest struggle): i just dont know where to even start and i feel weird going to a gym

Q18 (What you want your body to look like): just want some muscle on my arms and chest mainly, dont want to look so skinny

Q19 (Physique reference): not sure, no one specific

Q20 (Target bulk weight): maybe like 155-160?

Q21 (Timeline): not sure yet, just want to start and see

Notice the sub-answers don't need to be polished — "not sure" and rough guesses are completely fine, as long as every part gets answered.

Optional — Baseline Photos (Only If You're Comfortable): Two photos — front-on and from the side, normal or fitted clothing, decent lighting — calibrate your true starting point far better than words, and give YOU a 'before' to compare at 4, 8, and 12 weeks. Attach them when you send the intake, and save them somewhere private. You never have to share a photo you're not comfortable with — skip it and your coach works from your written profile. One more two-minute habit while you're here: take three tape measurements — waist at the navel, flexed arm, chest — and write them down with the date. The waist number is the best cheap signal of fat creeping on; send them with your log once a month.

Understanding Your Baseline

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: You can't build effectively without knowing what you're actually working with. Most beginners skip this step and wonder why they're not growing.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Based on my profile, I want to understand my true baseline before I change anything. Can you help me figure out the following:

1. What is my estimated maintenance calorie intake based on my stats? If I chose not to tell you my sex, don't guess one — give me a range that covers both and say plainly that's why it's a range.
2. Based on my training age and body type, how does my body likely respond to a caloric surplus right now — will I gain mostly muscle, mostly fat, or both?
3. What does my natural muscle-building potential look like for someone with my frame and training history?
4. What are the most important factors I need to get right during a bulk given my specific starting point?

Be honest with me — I want realistic expectations, not hype.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I spent my first year thinking I was special and could gain muscle faster than reality allowed. Getting honest about your baseline is humbling, but it's the only thing that sets you up for real long-term progress. One more thing: the exact maintenance calorie number the AI gives you is a starting ESTIMATE, not a fixed fact — if you ask again in a new conversation, you might get a slightly different number, and that's normal. Don't fixate on the exact figure. Use it as a starting point, then let your real weight trend over the next 2-3 weeks tell you whether it needs adjusting.

Setting Your Bulk Goal

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: A bulk without a clear target is just eating more and hoping. You need a specific, realistic goal — or you'll either stop too early or go too far.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

I want to set a clear, specific bulk goal based on my profile. Please help me determine:

1. Given my current weight and target bulk weight, is my goal realistic for my timeline? If not, what would a realistic target look like? **If I said I'm not sure yet about my timeline, don't ask me again — tell me how many months my target would realistically take at a sensible rate of gain, and treat that as my timeline.**
2. How much of that weight gain should ideally be muscle vs fat for someone with my training age and body type?
3. What is a realistic monthly weight gain target that minimizes excessive fat gain while still allowing meaningful muscle growth? **Sanity anchor: 0.25–0.5% of my bodyweight per week is the normal range — show me that calculation on my actual bodyweight, both ends of it, and convert it to a monthly figure before you give me a target. If you recommend outside that range, say so and explain why my case is different.**
4. What are the two or three key milestones I should be hitting over the course of this bulk to know I'm on track?

One honesty rule: if I mention a deadline or an event at any point, remember that a deadline does not change physiology. Give me the realistic version for my timeline, not an inflated one — and if my timeline can't deliver my stated number, say so plainly.

I want this goal to stretch me but not set me up to fail.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, show me the arithmetic rather than asserting the result: write out my target weight minus my current weight, the monthly rate you chose, and the division that turns those into a number of months. If the months don't match a timeline I gave you, say so. Then flag anything in that answer you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

My first bulk I just said 'I want to get big.' That's not a goal — that's a wish. I had no idea when to stop, so I kept going until I was soft and uncomfortable. Specific targets change everything.

Training Stimulus First

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: This is the most important concept in this entire module. Most people get this backwards — they fix their diet first, then wonder why they're getting fat instead of muscular.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

I want to make sure my training is actually demanding enough to signal muscle growth before I change my diet. This is called training stimulus. Based on what I told you about my current training — including if I said I'm not training yet — and my experience level, can you help me understand:

1. Is my current training program likely generating enough stimulus to demand muscle growth? What signs would tell me it is or isn't? **If I told you I'm not currently training, skip the assessment — there's nothing to assess yet. Answer this for the program I'm about to build instead: what will “demanding enough” need to look like for me from day one, and what would tell me I'd undershot it?**

2. What does progressive overload mean for someone at my level, and how should I be applying it session to session?

3. How do I know the difference between training hard enough to grow vs training so hard I can't recover?

4. What is the minimum effective training stimulus I need per muscle group per week to grow, given my training age?

Keep this answer at the level of principles — my exact movements and per-movement rep ranges get chosen in a later prompt, so don't design my program here.

I understand that a caloric surplus is only useful if my training is demanding enough to direct those calories toward muscle.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

This was my biggest aha moment. I was eating in a surplus for months and just getting soft. My training wasn't demanding enough to signal growth, so my body had no reason to build muscle. The food had nowhere to go but fat storage.

Building Your Caloric Strategy

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: Now that your training stimulus is clear, we build the diet around it — not the other way around. The surplus feeds the demand your training creates.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Now that I understand my training stimulus needs, I want to build a caloric strategy for my bulk. Based on my maintenance calories and bulk goals, please help me with: **use the exact maintenance number you already gave me earlier in this conversation — don't quietly re-derive it and land somewhere slightly different. If you do think that earlier number needs correcting, say so explicitly and tell me why before you use the new one.**

1. How large should my caloric surplus be to maximize muscle gain while minimizing fat gain for my body type and training age? (Sanity anchor: +250–500 calories over maintenance is the normal beginner range — if you recommend outside it, say so and explain why.)
2. What is the role of protein specifically — how much do I actually need, and what happens if I go significantly over that number?
3. How should I be thinking about carbohydrates vs fats during a bulk? Which one should be my primary calorie source and why?
4. Give me a simple daily meal structure I can actually follow consistently based on my profile — not a complicated meal plan, just a framework.
5. If I struggle to eat this much — which is the single most common reason a bulk fails for someone lean — what are the highest-leverage ways to add calories without feeling stuffed all day? Cover calorie-dense foods, liquid calories, and meal timing, and tell me which ONE change to make first.

I want this to be sustainable for months, not just a week.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, show me the arithmetic rather than asserting the result: write out my maintenance number, the surplus you added, and the total they sum to. Then do the same for protein — grams per pound times my bodyweight — and show the calories that protein, carbs and fats each contribute and that they add up to my daily total. Then flag anything in that answer you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I used a mass gainer in year one thinking more calories meant more muscle. Most of the weight I gained was from the sugar in that shake. 1g of protein per pound of bodyweight and a moderate surplus was all I ever actually needed.

Supplements: What's Actually Worth It

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: The supplement industry is built on making beginners feel like they need dozens of products to grow. The truth is short, and most of your money is better spent on food. This prompt cuts through the marketing so you know what to actually buy to get started — and what to ignore.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

I want an honest, no-marketing breakdown of supplements so I don't waste money on things that don't work. I know that real food, training, and sleep matter far more than any supplement — I just want to know what, if anything, is actually worth it as I'm getting started. My monthly budget for supplements: [e.g. "\$30–50/month," "keep it as close to free as possible," or "money isn't the constraint, evidence is"]. Based on my profile, goals, and that budget, please help me understand:

1. Which supplements actually have strong evidence behind them for someone trying to build muscle, and what does each one realistically do?
2. For each one worth taking, how much should I take, when, and roughly what should I expect — and not expect — it to do?
3. Which popular supplements are mostly marketing or a waste of money for a natural beginner like me?
4. Is there anything I should be cautious about or avoid entirely, especially given my age and that I'm training naturally?
5. If I only had money for ONE supplement to start with, what should it be and why?

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

In ten years, the only supplements I've ever actually needed were protein powder and creatine — and protein powder is just a convenient way to hit the food target we set in the last prompt, not magic. (Creatine is one of the most-studied supplements out there and widely considered safe for healthy adults, but if you have any medical condition or take medication, talk to your doctor before starting it.) I wasted hundreds of dollars early on chasing pre-workouts, mass gainers, BCAAs, and test boosters that did nothing. Whatever the AI tells you here, cross-check it against Examine.com in the resource list at the back — it's the one place that references every claim to actual research. Spend your money on food first. Always.

Strength Training vs. Hypertrophy Training

Before you pick your exercises and rep ranges in the next prompt, there's a distinction worth understanding first, because it explains why the recommendations coming next look the way they do: strength training and hypertrophy training are not the same goal, and they are not trained the same way.

Strength training chases one number: how much weight you can move, once, with good form — your one-rep max. It lives in low reps (typically 1–5 per set), heavy loads (usually 85% of your max or more), and long rest between sets (3–5 minutes, sometimes longer), because the goal is letting your nervous system fully recover so it can produce maximum force again on the next attempt. In a beginner, most early strength gains come less from the muscle getting bigger and more from your nervous system learning to recruit more of it and coordinate it better — which is exactly why a new lifter can add real weight to the bar surprisingly fast, often before much of that progress shows up in the mirror yet.

Hypertrophy training chases a different target: the size of the muscle itself. It lives in a wider rep range (roughly 6–20 per set), moderate-to-heavy loads (usually 65–85% of your max), and shorter rest between sets (60–90 seconds is typical), because the goal is accumulating enough total tension and fatigue in the muscle across a session — not moving the single heaviest weight you can. This is the training this entire guide is built around, because the goal of this system is your physique, not your one-rep max.

Here's the part that surprises people: **you can't fully separate the two, especially early on.** As a true beginner, nearly everything you do builds both strength and size together — your first months of progress overlap heavily no matter which rep range you favor. The two paths only really diverge once you're more trained: pure low-rep strength work builds a nervous system that's very efficient at producing force in a narrow set of movements, without necessarily building much extra muscle to do it. Pure hypertrophy work builds size efficiently, and you do get stronger as a side effect of that added muscle — you just won't be chasing a one-rep max the way a powerlifter does.

This guide is built for hypertrophy, on purpose. Every rep range, rest period, and exercise recommendation from here forward assumes your goal is a bigger, more defined physique — not the highest number you can put on a barbell once. If pure strength or powerlifting-style performance is actually your goal, the underlying principles still hold — progressive overload, real effort, honest recovery — but the specific numbers would shift: heavier loads, lower reps, longer rest, and a program built around a small handful of competition lifts instead of a wider menu built for muscle. That's a different guide, with a different scope. This one is about how you look and how the muscle you build holds up over the rest of your life — and hypertrophy training, not pure strength training, is how you get there.

DAY 1 • CHAT 1 **PROMPT 6**

Compound & Isolation Selection

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: This is the prompt where your plan turns into actual exercises. Compounds build the base — they train the most muscle per rep and drive most of your growth. Isolations steer the shape — they finish what the compounds start, and they're where the areas YOU care about most get extra attention. The right picks depend on your body, your equipment, and your priorities — not someone else's list. (If you split Session 1 across two days, this is a natural place to stop and pick back up — just reopen the SAME ChatGPT conversation when you return, so the AI still has your profile and earlier answers. A new chat starts from scratch.)

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

I want to choose the exact exercises my bulking program will be built from — both the compound movements that will drive most of my growth and the isolation movements that finish what the compounds start. Based on my body type, frame, training age, the equipment I told you I have access to, and any injuries or limitations I listed, work through the following — then give me my final list:

First, my priority areas — the parts of my physique I most want to grow:

[FILL IN — e.g. “glutes and hamstrings,” “chest and arms,” “shoulders and back width,” or “balanced overall.” This steers my exercise selection, so don't skip it. If I leave this blank, assume balanced overall, say so in one line, and keep going — don't stop and ask me.]

Before you recommend a single exercise: restate my exact equipment list back to me in one line, so we're both working from the same list. Then, as you build my exercise menu below, check every exercise you're about to recommend against that restated list before including it — if something isn't on it, don't recommend it, no matter how standard or common it is.

1. Which compound movements should form the core of my program for each major muscle group (chest, back, legs, shoulders) — using only equipment I actually have access to?

2. My proportions, if I know them:

[FILL IN — e.g. “long arms and legs for my height”, “short limbs, long torso”, or “not sure”. If I leave this blank, say so in one line and answer generally — don't stop and ask me.]

How do limb length and frame size affect which compound movements are most effective for someone like me?

3. If I don't have access to certain equipment (like a barbell or squat rack), what are the best alternative movements that still deliver a similar result?

4. Now the isolation movements: for each muscle group, which 1–2 isolation exercises best complement the compounds you chose for me — and what does each one add that my compounds alone would miss?

5. Weight my selection toward my priority areas: give those areas more exercise slots and your best-fit choices for them, and keep the rest of my body covered with efficient essentials — but do NOT drop any major muscle group entirely. **If I said “balanced overall,” don't invent a bias — spread my slots evenly across muscle groups and tell me plainly that's what you did.** Tell me how you balanced my preference against keeping my whole body structurally sound and injury-resistant.

6. Give me hypertrophy-focused rep ranges and set structures that fit my training age — for compounds vs isolations — and explain why they're different.

7. Explain the order: why do compounds come first in a session while I'm fresh, and isolations after? Is there any case — like the muscle I care about most — where bending that order makes sense for me?

8. Work around the injuries and limitations I told you about. For anything on that list, give me the variation that keeps the muscle working without loading the joint that bothers me, and say plainly which movement you swapped and why. If I listed none, skip this and say so in one line.

Then finish with THE LIST: my complete exercise menu, muscle group by muscle group — the compounds and isolations you've chosen for me, in the order I'd perform them in a session, with my priority areas marked. **For each exercise, add one or two swaps that train the same muscle on different equipment — and run every swap through the same two checks as the exercise itself: it must be possible on the equipment list you restated above, and it must not load any joint I flagged as injured. A swap I can't perform, or that hurts me, is worse than no swap. Don't pad the list to reach two — if only one legitimate swap exists on my equipment, give me one and say so.** I'll keep those in a running list of alternatives (my guide calls it an Inventory note, and sets it up a few pages later), so a busy machine never costs me the session. By the end of this prompt I want zero doubt about exactly which exercises I will be training with.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

Being 6'2" with long limbs means certain exercises like conventional deadlifts and flat barbell bench press are mechanically less forgiving for me than for someone with shorter limbs — longer arms and legs mean a longer range of motion to fight through. I wasted years forcing movements that didn't suit my frame instead of finding the variations that did. Your body determines your best exercises, not YouTube — and your equipment determines what's actually possible. And once the compounds are set, the isolations are where your preferences get a vote: if glutes or arms are what you care about most, that's where the extra slots go. The compounds keep your whole body honest; the isolations make the physique yours.

Structuring Your Training Week

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: You now know which movements suit your body. But knowing the right exercises doesn't tell you how to spread them across a week. Train a muscle too rarely and you leave growth on the table; cram everything in and you can't recover. The right structure depends on your days, your recovery, and your life — not a template off the internet.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

(This is Bulk Prompt 7 from my guide.) Now that I know which compound movements suit my body and equipment, I want to structure them into a weekly training plan that fits MY actual schedule and recovery — not a generic split copied from someone else. Based on the number of days I told you I can realistically train, my training age, my sleep, and my stress load, please help me understand:

1. Given the exact number of days per week I can train, what training structure makes the most sense for me — and what is the actual logic behind that choice for someone with my schedule and recovery?
2. How many times per week should each major muscle group be trained for someone at my training age, and why? **Sanity anchor: most people do well around 10-20 hard sets per muscle per week, with true beginners nearer the low end — if what you build me falls well outside that range, flag it plainly and explain why my case is different.**
3. Lay out a specific week for me — which muscle groups or movement patterns I train on which days — using only the compound movements we already established fit my body and equipment.
4. How should I balance hard training days against rest and recovery days given my sleep and stress situation?
5. If I miss a day in a given week, how should I adjust the rest of that week instead of just skipping or doubling up?
6. Where does cardio fit while I'm bulking, if at all? **First, restate the injuries or limitations I disclosed back to me in one line, and rule out or flag any cardio modality that would load the affected area.** I'm not trying to create a deficit here — tell me honestly how much is useful for health and appetite without eating into my recovery or my surplus, and where to put it in the week so it doesn't compromise my hardest lifting days.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, show me the count rather than asserting it: for each muscle group, list the exercises you assigned it across the week, the sets on each, and the weekly total those add up to. Then say which of those totals fall outside 10–20 hard sets. Then flag anything in that answer you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

From the very beginning I trained with a structure — I started on a classic bro split, five days a week, one muscle group per day, then moved to push-pull-legs, six days a week, as I learned more. Both worked for me. But here's the thing: they worked because they fit MY schedule and my young body's fast recovery at the time. I'm deliberately not telling you which split to run here, because the right one genuinely depends on your days and your recovery — a 3-day week and a 5-day week should not look the same, and what worked for a teenager training six days a week won't automatically work for you. Let the AI build the structure around YOUR real schedule. The one rule I'll give you flat out: don't skip legs. Everyone's tempted to, everyone who does regrets it. One more thing: your training week is only half of recovery — sleep is the other half, and it's where the muscle actually gets built. If you're consistently under 7 hours, make fixing that your first priority — ask your AI coach in this same chat for a simple plan to get closer to 7–9 hours (a consistent bedtime, less screen time late, cutting caffeine after early afternoon). No split works on bad sleep.

Your First Workout

● **DO ONCE** • Run once, right before your very first workout.

Why this matters: This is the moment the plan stops being theory. The single biggest reason beginners fail isn't the wrong macros — it's walking into a gym anxious, not knowing how to start a lift safely, doing too much on day one, and being so sore or discouraged they don't come back. This one can work a little differently: the AI may ask you a quick question or two if it needs to, then it builds your exact first workout — with real starting weights — for you.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

(This is Bulk Prompt 8 from my guide.) This time I want us to work together interactively. I'm about to do my very first workout based on the plan we've built, and I want to walk in prepared and not hurt myself or burn out on day one. For THIS prompt only, you may ask me follow-up questions — but follow these rules: ask AT MOST 2 quick questions, and only if you genuinely can't proceed; never ask anything my profile or our plan already tells you (my experience level, equipment, training days, or goal). **Before you draft a single question, re-skim the profile I already gave you and confirm the answer isn't already sitting in it — re-asking something I've already told you wastes one of your two questions.** After at most 2 questions, build my complete first workout anyway — if you're ever unsure whether to ask another, don't; build the workout. Once you've given it to me, go back to making reasonable assumptions and full answers with no follow-ups for everything after this.

Here's what the finished first workout should cover:

1. How should I warm up before my first session — both generally and for the specific lifts I'm starting with?
2. For each movement in my first workout, how do I find a safe starting weight when I have no idea what I can lift yet? Walk me through how to test it without going too heavy. **If I already gave you my current lifts, don't make me test from scratch — start me from those numbers and tell me where to back off for a first session on a new program.**
3. How do I know I'm using correct form, and what are the most common form mistakes for each of my starting lifts that I should consciously avoid?
4. How much should I actually do on day one? I'd rather start lighter and leave feeling good than wreck myself and skip the next three sessions.
5. What should I expect to feel during and after this first workout — what's normal, and what would be a sign I pushed too hard?
6. Give me a simple, calm game plan for walking in, including what to do if the equipment I planned for is taken or busy.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(For THIS question only: you may ask a couple of follow-up questions — at most two — if you genuinely need them, then build the workout. If you're unsure whether to ask another, don't; build it. After that, go back to making reasonable assumptions and giving full answers without follow-ups for everything after this.)

JASON'S NOTE

Every other prompt in this guide gives you one full answer with no back-and-forth — this one is the deliberate exception. Your first workout is the highest-stakes session for getting hurt or discouraged, so it's worth a quick question or two to get it right — but it's capped on purpose, then it builds your workout. My first ever session I loaded a bar way too heavy because the guy next to me was lifting it, ego-lifted through terrible form, and could barely lift my arms for four days. I almost didn't go back. Start lighter than you think you need to. Nobody in that gym is watching you as closely as you think. And the most important thing I can tell you about your first few weeks: learn the movement before you load it. Form is the one place I'd trust a video over text — before you add real weight to any lift, pull up Athlean-X, Alan Thrall, or Jeff Nippard (all tagged [form] in the resource list at the back) and watch the movement done right. Then film yourself from the side on your phone and compare. Bad form on a heavy compound is the fastest way to end up like me, rehabbing a knee. Ten minutes of watching first saves you months later.

Progressive Overload Tracking

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time, in order.

Why this matters: Progressive overload is the engine of muscle growth. But most people don't actually track it — they just train and hope. Tracking turns hope into data.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

I want to set up a proper progressive overload tracking system for my bulk. Please help me understand:

1. What exactly is progressive overload, and what are all the different ways I can apply it — beyond just adding weight to the bar?
2. How should I track my progress session to session so I always know if I'm actually progressing or just going through the motions?
3. What does a realistic progression timeline look like for my main compound lifts given my training age — how much should I expect to add per week or per month?
4. What should I do when I hit a plateau and I'm no longer progressing on a specific lift?

Build on the movements and rep ranges we already established — don't redesign my program here, just give me the progression and tracking system for it.

Design it around the habit I'll actually use: I capture my sets in the gym as I go (a note on my phone, one per session type). I send my weight and food number to a separate coaching chat every day, and on days I train I add a screenshot of that note — and that chat keeps the running record. Build my progression tracking on that, and don't ask me to maintain a separate spreadsheet.

I want a tracking method I will actually use — simple and honest.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I trained for two years without ever writing anything down. I thought I was progressing but I had no idea. The day I started tracking my lifts in a notes app was the day I started actually growing. You can't improve what you don't measure.

SIT-DOWN PROMPTS COMPLETE — ONE SETUP STEP LEFT. STOP HERE.

Your Plan Exists. Now Learn the Loop That Runs It.

That's every prompt in your first sit-down — your plan exists. **The next PROMPT in this guide isn't for today; it's for four weeks from now.** But your sit-down isn't finished quite yet: **it ends when your tracking chat is open.**

The next section sets that up — go through it now, before you close this chat, and you're ready for your first workout.

The pages ahead are **THE TRACKING LOOP** — the engine every phase runs on. They show you the three things you'll track (your training, your weight, your food), how to capture each one in seconds, and then walk you through **opening your data chat** — the chat you'll actually live in from tomorrow on. That last step is the one thing you still do today, before you close this planning chat.

Then, every day from tomorrow: on a training day, screenshot your workout note and send it with your weigh-in and food number; on a rest day, just those two. Fifteen seconds, and your coach answers in a line or two.

*Read the section and open your data chat — **then your sit-down is truly done, and you're ready for your first workout.** In four weeks you come back and run PROMPT 10 — right there in your data chat, which by then holds every day of the month. Then PROMPT 11, then the month-end close. That's the loop.*

Track. Upload. Check In. Close the Month.

Everything in this guide runs on one engine: **you train, you report, your coach adjusts**. This section is that engine — and it is identical in Bulk, Cut, and Recomposition, so it's taught once, here, and never again. Your sit-down prompts are done and your plan exists — ten minutes here and you'll know exactly how to run it. Two of these pages you'll come back to again and again: the data-chat setup (that one you'll do today, before you close your planning chat), and the month-end close after every check-in.

The loop, end to end

1 — Track three inputs. Your training (a note you fill in between sets), your weight (the scale, most mornings), and your food (an app's daily total). The next pages set each one up so capture costs seconds, not willpower.

2 — Upload daily. To a dedicated **data chat** — training days: a screenshot of your note, plus your weigh-in and food number typed in; rest days: just the last two. Your coach echoes the numbers into a running record and answers in a line or two.

3 — Check in monthly. Once every four weeks, in that same data chat, you run your phase's checkpoint and adjustment prompts — the coach reads the whole month and tunes the plan.

4 — Close the month. A hand-off summary carries everything into a fresh data chat, so every month starts with a sharp coach that knows your whole history. You'll learn the exact move right after your phase's monthly checkpoint and adjustment prompts, ahead.

Whichever phase the Router sends you to, this is the loop you'll live. The phases change your targets; they never change this rhythm.

DATA TO TRACK — INPUT 1: TRAINING

Your Workout Note

● **WRITE IT AS YOU LIFT · SCREENSHOT IT AFTER** · Seconds a set. No typing it out twice, ever.

*Why this matters: everything in this guide has been building toward one loop — you train, you report, your coach adjusts. That loop is the product. It's also the part most people skip, because most tracking systems ask for more effort than the training itself. So the job is deliberately small: **keep one note on your phone, fill it in between sets, and screenshot it when you're done.** You never retype a single number.*

Here's the whole job, up front. Every day, you track three things — your training (on days you train), your weight, and your food — and send them to a dedicated tracking chat you'll set up on page 74. Your coach banks the numbers, gives you a quick line of feedback, and watches your progress build day by day. The next few pages show you how to capture each input in seconds. That's the entire system.

One note per training day in your split

In your phone's notes app, make **one note for each training day in your split** — “Push”, “Pull”, “Legs”, or whatever your plan calls them. If you train four days on an upper/lower, that's four notes. Write the exercise names in once. From then on you're only ever adding numbers. Start here:

PULL — Mon

Lat Pull Down: 120x10; 120x10; 100x12

Cable Row: 100x12; 100x12; 90x10

Face Pull: 40x15; 40x15

Barbell Curl: 50x10; 50x9; 40x8

Felt strong. Last row set was a grind.

One line per exercise. Each set is weight×reps, separated by semicolons. Writing every set out separately means a weight change mid-exercise is captured instead of lost — above, the last set of pulldowns dropped to 100. Add one short note at the bottom for any reflection on that day's training — “barely slept last night, tired the whole session”, or “didn't get enough carbs in beforehand, felt weak under the bar”. That line is often what explains a bad number a month later. Roughly four seconds a set, written while you're resting anyway.

What it looks like once you're deeper in

Here's one of my own notes — the session on top, and underneath it the Inventory for the muscles that day trains, both living in the same note:

PULL 1 (Strength)

Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx4

Lat Pull Down: 180x8; 180x8; 1 drop set (180x5+160x4); 1 drop set (160x5+140x4+120x4)

Cable Row: 160x8; 160x8; 1 drop set (160x6+140x5); 1 drop set (140x6+120x5+100x5)

Rear Delt Ext: 80x12; 80x12; 1 drop set (80x8+70x6)

Face Pull + Cable Curl: superset, 3 drop sets

Shoulder felt good. Rows moving again.

INVENTORY

Back (width)

Cable Lats Pull Down: 70x8; 70x8; 70x8; 70x8

Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx4

Negative Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx6

Back (thickness)

Barbell Bent Over Row: 110x6; 110x6; 110x6; 110x6

Machine Row: 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5

Dumbbell Row: 70x6; 70x6; 70x6; 70x6; 70x4

Biceps

Double Dumbbell Curl: 20x8; 20x8; 20x8; 20x8; 20x4 (*each arm*)

Barbell Curl: 90x5; 90x5; 60x8; 60x8; 60x8

...and so on for every muscle group you train.

This is my own note, and it's where yours ends up after a few months — same idea, denser shorthand. **Don't start here.** It's only shown so you know the simple version above isn't a beginner's compromise; it's the same system, earlier.

Notice the **Inventory** section underneath the session. Group the muscles that day trains, and under each record **the exact volume you hit last time** — same format as the session above. **Put every alternative movement for that muscle in here too**, so when the machine you wanted is taken you already know what to swap to and what you last did on it.

So: one note per training day, each with its own Inventory underneath. Build it once and you're only ever adding numbers. It answers the two questions you actually have in the gym: *what did I do last time?* and *what else can I do instead?*

JASON'S NOTE

For ten years my whole tracking system was the notes app on my phone — no app, no spreadsheet, no setup. The systems I stuck with were never the powerful ones; they were the simplest and most convenient ones — anything longer than the walk to my car doesn't survive a busy month. Inventory is the part I'd fight to keep: walking up to a rack already knowing the number to beat is most of why I kept progressing.

The Other Two Inputs

*Input 1 was your training. These are the other two — and together the three are every number your checkpoint will ever ask for. Both are outsourced the same way training is — a scale, an app — and both go to your coach in the same daily upload. **This is identical in every phase — Bulk, Cut, and Recomp.***

Input 2 — Weight (30 seconds, most mornings)

Weigh yourself in the morning, after the bathroom, before food or water — the same conditions every time. Most mornings is ideal — it's what fills your daily upload — and 3–4 mornings a week still gives your coach a clean weekly average; on days you skip the scale, just send your upload without it. Add it to any log line: "BW 141.8." And if the scale ever starts controlling your mood, drop to two mornings a week and tell your coach why — the trend survives, and so should you. Your weight will bounce 1–3 lbs day to day — that's water and food, not fat or muscle (for women, cycle-related water can swing more than that for a few days — the monthly trend still tells the truth). **Only the weekly average means anything**, and that average is exactly what your coach reads at your checkpoint. Never react to a single day's number.

Input 3 — Diet (log it in an app, not in this guide)

Food tracking is a solved problem, and a food app solves it far better than any prompt could — barcode scanning, a database, saved meals, a running daily total. So this guide doesn't try. **Start with Cronometer**: it has the most trustworthy food database of the free options, which is the only thing that matters here. **MacroFactor** is the stronger paid alternative if you want it adjusting your targets for you. Check current pricing yourself — it moves.

Log your meals as you eat them, the same way you log a set the moment you rack it. Then, each evening, send that day's **calories and protein** — that's all your coach needs here. **Two equally good ways, pick whichever you'll keep doing**: screenshot the app's total, or type the two numbers in ("2,510 cal, 178 p"). The screenshot saves typing; typing has no image limits. Both land the same.

And if you don't want to track food at all, you're not stuck. Eat roughly the same meals day to day, hit your protein target, and let Input 2 do the work: if your training is honest and your eating is consistent, whether you're actually in a surplus or a deficit shows up in the scale within a few weeks. Tell your coach you're not tracking, and it will read your weight trend instead. Consistency beats precision — and a system you abandon in week three teaches you nothing.

And once a month (2 minutes, right before your checkpoint)

Tape your waist at the navel — the best cheap signal of fat creeping on or coming off — and, if you took starting photos, retake the same two: same spot, same light, same poses. Send both to your coach with a log line so they land in your record. Then run your checkpoint.

Same rule as the scale applies here. If taping or retaking photos starts doing something to your head — reaching for the tape between checkpoints, or picking yourself apart instead of reading a trend — **drop them and tell your coach why**. Your weight average and training log carry a bulk or a cut on their own. (In a recomp they matter more, since the scale barely moves by design.)

The whole loop, start to finish: log your workout · log your diet · log your weight — all of it in apps you already have — then **upload it to your data chat daily**, and **run your check-in once a month**. Add your waist and photos to that monthly one. **That is the entire system: fifteen seconds a day, and one real sit-down a month.**

HOW THE CAPTURE ACTUALLY HAPPENS

Capturing Input 1 Without It Becoming a Chore

*Your workout note is what you upload each day. This page is where its numbers come from. Five exercises times three sets is fifteen numbers — nobody remembers that on the drive home, and trying to is why most people quit tracking by week two. So you don't. **You capture in the gym, in time you're already standing around.***

How the pieces fit: the guide and your AI coach are the brain — they build the plan, read your data, and tell you what to change. The recording is deliberately outsourced to whatever tool is already in your hand at the gym. You carry the data from one to the other every day, and that trip is what closes the loop. Brain in one place, notepad in another, you in between.

The rule: capture while you rest, not after you finish

Your program has you resting one to three minutes between sets — twenty-plus minutes a session you're already on your phone. Logging a set the moment you rack the weight spends time that was gone anyway. Rebuilding that session from memory two hours later costs real effort exactly when you have the least left. Same two minutes; completely different odds you're still doing it in month six.

Lane A — the notes app already on your phone (nothing to install)

1. Open the note for today's training day — “Push”, “Pull”, “Legs”, whichever it is. You built these on page 69; the exercise names and last session's numbers are already there.
2. After each set, while you're resting, add it as weight×reps: “Squat: 135x8; 135x8; 135x7”
3. At the bottom, one short line if the day needs it: “slept 5 hours, weights felt heavy.”
4. That's the whole method. Roughly four seconds a set.

The quiet advantage: **last session's numbers are already in the note you're typing into** — and the Inventory underneath holds the number to beat for every movement, even when you swap machines. Progressive overload is only ever a number you can see.

Lane B — a training app, if you'd rather tap than type

A dedicated tracker does one thing a notes app can't: it shows you last session's weights and reps automatically the moment you pick an exercise, so the number you're chasing is already in front of you. **If you want one, start with Hevy** — it's free for everything this system needs, runs on iPhone and Android, and its history screens screenshot cleanly, which is exactly what you'll be handing your coach. **Strong** is the other well-established option and works the same way. **FitNotes** is the no-account, no-frills pick if you're on Android and want something that opens instantly. Free tiers and prices change constantly, so check before you commit to any of them — but all three cover the job. **You do not need any of them**; the notes app does the same work for free.

Lane C — a paper notebook, if you'd rather not use your phone at all

Completely valid, and some people focus better for it. Write the same line — exercise, weight, reps — and photograph the page after each session. Your coach reads handwriting fine as long as it's legible and the light is decent.

Any lane: the daily upload is the same

Each day you carry that day over to your data chat — and you don't have to remember anything to do it. **From a notes app:** screenshot the note. **From a training app:** screenshot the finished session. **From a notebook:** photograph the page. Then add your weigh-in and your food number in the same message. On a day you didn't train, send just those two — a rest day is data, not a gap.

You're not adding a task to your day — you're taking one you were going to do badly, from memory, hours late, and moving it into minutes you already spend resting.

JASON'S NOTE

For years my entire system was remembering. I'd walk in, try to recall what I pressed last week, guess high or low, and either grind a bad set or leave two reps on the table. The day I started typing it into my phone between sets, two things changed: I stopped guessing, and I started beating a real number instead of a feeling. Four seconds a set, in time you were spending anyway. That's the whole trick — it was never discipline.

Now Open Your Data Chat

This is the move you'll make at the end of your first sit-down, whichever phase it's in. Your plan will exist, and **the next prompt won't be for that day — it'll be for four weeks later**. But before you close that planning chat, you set up the one you'll actually live in. *(You'll return to this exact page every month, for the life of your phase — it always means “start a fresh data chat,” not literally your second conversation ever.)*

Why a second chat? This one is full of the reasoning that built your plan — estimates, guesses, assumptions made before you had a single day of real data. You don't want tomorrow's weigh-in landing in the middle of that. **One chat built the plan. The next one runs it.**

AT THE END OF YOUR SIT-DOWN, BEFORE YOU CLOSE THAT CHAT:

1 — Ask this chat for your setup summary

“Summarize everything we decided — my plan, my targets (calories, protein, split, goal), my exercises, my weekly structure, my progression rule, my starting weight and current lifts, and my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries) — as clean plain text I can save.” Copy what it gives you. **Your next coach only knows what's in this summary, so don't trim it.**

2 — Start a NEW conversation in the same folder

Not a new account, not a new project — the same “My AI Fitness System” folder, so everything lives in one home. This new chat is your **data chat**, and it's where the rest of this phase happens.

3 — Paste the prompt below in as its first message

With your setup summary pasted where shown. This tells your coach what its job is from here on: bank your data daily, keep it short, don't re-plan.

4 — Set two phone reminders before your first upload

One recurring daily reminder at the time you'll actually upload (right after training, or with your morning coffee), and one four weeks out for your check-in. The system runs on you showing up — don't leave that to memory.

■ COPY THIS INTO A NEW CHAT:

You're my AI coach for the ongoing part of my training. **This chat is for tracking only**. I'll be using it to upload my training (on days I train), my weight, and my diet data every day — your job is to keep the running record, give me a small piece of feedback each time, and monitor my progress. **Ignore anything you may know about me from memory or from other chats — what I paste below is the only source of truth for my plan and my numbers**. I built my plan in another conversation — here it is:

[PASTE YOUR SETUP SUMMARY HERE]

So, day by day: **I send the data, you keep the record**. Each day I'll send you some or all of:

- **Training** — a screenshot of my workout note (only on days I actually train)
- **Diet** — my calories and protein for the day, either as a screenshot of my food app's total or just typed in as two numbers (both are fine, treat them the same), or a rough line if I'm not tracking
- **Weight** — my morning weigh-in, **typed as a number in my message (e.g. "BW 141.8")**, not as a photo of the scale, so it always lands in your record as text

For every upload, first echo it back as one compact plain-text block — date, bodyweight, calories and protein, and each lift as weight×reps — so my record exists as text, not only as images. Then reply **short**: two or three lines. Acknowledge what I sent, note anything genuinely worth noting, and tell me when something's going well. Do NOT re-plan my program, do NOT lecture me about a missed session or a missing number, and do NOT ask me follow-up questions — if a number's missing, just log what I gave you. On days I send no training, that's a rest day, not a failure. **Bright line on what counts as a pattern worth mentioning: a single low day, missed session, or missing number is never a pattern — log it and move on, with no "if this becomes a habit" commentary. Only raise it if I'm 3 or more consecutive days off the same thing.**

Four conventions: if I send a day late I'll start it with "Backfill Day N:" — log it in place, no comment. And if a number looks impossible (say a 9 lb overnight weight jump), flag it in one line and log it as unverified rather than averaging it in silently. If I go quiet for a week or more and then come back, greet me without commenting on the gap and remind me in one line that PROMPT 11B in my guide exists for exactly this. And if you notice you skipped an echo for a day I sent, echo that missed day now, in place, before continuing.

Three exceptions that override everything above. (1) Pain. If I report sharp pain, joint pain, pain during a movement, swelling, or anything that feels like an injury rather than ordinary next-day soreness — drop the short-reply and no-questions rules completely. **Your response must instruct me to stop that exact exercise this session — not "reduce it", not "take it easier", stop it — and must also flag any other exercise still in my plan that loads the same joint or movement pattern.** Ask whatever you need to ask, and tell me to see a doctor or physio if it doesn't settle in a few days. **(2) Performance-enhancing drugs.** You are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMs, peptides or anything similar, don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing or on-cycle monitoring specifics — tell me plainly it's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. **Keep helping me with my training, my nutrition and everything else as normal — only the drug specifics are off-limits. (3) My eating.** If anything I send suggests I'm eating far too little, losing weight far faster than my plan intends, or that food is becoming distressing, say so plainly and point me to the National Alliance for Eating Disorders helpline at allianceforeatingdisorders.com (or the equivalent service where I am, if I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know one). None of these three counts as lecturing — they are the job.

Once every four weeks I'll ask you for a full check-in and then an adjustment. **Whenever a message from me starts with the tag [GUIDE PROMPT], that's a prompt pasted straight from my guide — a check-in, an adjustment, a deload, a comeback, an exit — and the short-reply, no-re-planning AND no-questions rules are all suspended for that one answer;** you'll have the whole month in front of you, so read it all and give me the full response that prompt asks for. **If a guide prompt explicitly tells you to ask me something, ask it and wait for my reply** — those questions are part of the prompt, not a breach of the no-questions rule. Once the adjustment is settled I'll ask for a **monthly hand-off summary** and retire this chat — a fresh one takes over each month. When I do, give me my updated plan and targets, my current lifts (preserve any substitution verbatim, e.g. "Landmine Press [sub for OHP — shoulder]", rather than normalizing it back to the standard exercise name), my weight trend, my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries, and any standing exercise substitutions and why), the phases I've completed so far with rough dates, and this month's day-by-day record plus the carried summaries of earlier months, as clean plain text complete enough that my next coach needs nothing else. If I ever ask for my log mid-month, same thing: the entire record so far as plain text I can save.

Confirm you've got it in one line, and I'll start sending.

Then, every day from tomorrow

On a training day: screenshot your workout note, add your weigh-in and your food number, and start the message with the date, then send. **On a rest day:** just your weigh-in and your food number. That's it — fifteen seconds, and your coach answers in a line or two. Those daily replies are the point: they're what turns this from a plan you read into a habit you keep. (Free plans cap daily image uploads — if you hit it, type the day's numbers in as text instead. The text is what your coach needs.)

Once a week, ask for your log as plain text and save it — chats can be lost, and a weekly recap means the most recent save always holds the whole month so far as compact text, not just images. Thirty seconds, once a week.

If your coach stops echoing your numbers, or starts re-planning your program mid-month instead of just logging — both are signs it's drifted from the setup rules over a long chat. Paste this and continue: "Re-read your first message in this chat and go back to following those rules."

If the logging itself starts to get heavy

Fifteen seconds is honest for one day. Thirty days in a row is a different thing, and somewhere in most months there's a stretch where the upload feels like one more obligation. **That's tracking fatigue, and it's as normal as a missed session** — the same guide that tells you a rest day isn't a failure will tell you a skipped upload isn't one either. Miss a day, send the next one; don't try to reconstruct the gap from memory. If it's a whole stretch, send what you remember with "Backfill" and move on. And if the daily rhythm is genuinely what's about to make you quit the whole thing, tell your coach that plainly — drop to weight and training only for a couple of weeks, or weekly instead of daily. **A thinner record you actually keep beats a complete one you abandon in week three.**

*In four weeks, run your phase's check-in — PROMPT 10 in Bulk, PROMPT 7 — CUT, or PROMPT 6 — RECOMPOSITION — right there in your data chat, which by then holds every day of the month. And know this now: **each data chat lives one month.** Check in, adjust, hand off to a fresh one — the close-out is ahead.*

Congratulations. Your Consultation Is Done.

You have finished your consultation with your AI fitness assistant. Your plan is built, your data chat is open, and there is nothing left to set up. **Now go train — and start logging your data.**

WHERE YOU STAND

- ✓ Your coach knows you — profile, goal, and phase, from this sit-down's intake.
- ✓ Your plan exists — training, calories, protein, split, built in your first sit-down.
- ✓ Your data chat is open, with your setup summary as its first message.
- ✓ Two phone reminders set — daily upload, and the check-in four weeks out.

YOUR ONLY JOB FROM HERE

Train. Eat to your targets. Sleep. Upload your day — fifteen seconds. That's the whole job, every day, for the next four weeks. No more reading is required today — the rest of this guide waits until the loop calls for it.

IN FOUR WEEKS

Come back and run **PROMPT 10** in your data chat — it reads your whole month and tunes the plan. The pages ahead walk you through that checkpoint, the adjustment that follows it, and — once that's settled — closing the month to start the next one.

Most people never get this far. A plan built on your real numbers, a coach that remembers, and a system that catches you when you drift — you built all of that today. See you in the gym.

The 4-Week Observation Checkpoint

◆ **REPEAT EVERY 4 WEEKS** · Come back to this each month of your bulk.

*Why this matters: Four weeks in, you have real data. Now you use the first pillar — Observation — to assess what your body is actually telling you. **Run this in your data chat — the one you've been sending your daily uploads to. It already holds every day of the month, so there's nothing to paste and nothing to dig up.***

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

This is my 4-week check-in. You already have the whole month above — every daily upload I've sent you.

Read back through all of it before you answer, and reason from what's actually there rather than from my summary of it. First, state the date range of uploads you can actually see, then my start weight, current weight, weekly-average trend (list the daily weights you're averaging), and my main lifts then vs now — and answer for MY actual case, not hypothetical branches. Explain your “why” in plain language, and say so honestly if something's uncertain or if a stretch of days is missing.

I have been on my bulk for approximately 4 weeks. I want an honest observation checkpoint on how my body is actually responding, read from my uploads above.

[FILL IN — My own read first, before you give me yours: in one or two sentences, what do I think my data is showing? e.g. "I think it's working but slower than I expected" or "I think I'm gaining too fast." If I leave this blank, just go ahead with your read.]

Using my data above and what I should be tracking, please help me evaluate:

1. What are the key metrics I should be checking right now — body weight, strength numbers, energy levels, sleep quality, physique changes?
2. What results would tell me my bulk is going well vs going poorly?
3. If I've gained weight faster than expected, what does that likely mean and what should I adjust?
4. If I've gained less than expected, what are the most likely causes for someone with my profile?
5. What visual and physical signs should I be observing in my body to assess muscle vs fat gain — beyond just the scale?
6. How is this actually going for me as a person, not just as a set of numbers? Ask me plainly how my energy and mood have been day to day, and how I'm finding the eating and the daily tracking itself — whether logging has started to feel like a chore or like something I'm anxious about. If anything I've sent this month suggests food or the scale is becoming stressful rather than just informative, say so plainly rather than staying on the numbers.

If I gave you my own read above, tell me where yours agrees with mine and where it differs, and why — I'm trying to learn to read my own data, not just receive a verdict on it.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

The scale will mess with your head if it's the only thing you're watching. I had weeks where I gained 3 lbs in a week — mostly water and food weight. I had weeks where I gained nothing and panicked. Learn to read multiple signals, not just one number.

Trial & Error Adjustment

◆ **REPEAT EVERY 4 WEEKS** · Run right after Prompt 10, every month — they are one job.

Why this matters: Now you use the second pillar. You have your observation data. Now you adjust intelligently — not emotionally. When the adjustment is settled, close the month — hand-off summary, fresh data chat. The next page is the exact move, and it's the same in every phase.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Based on my 4-week observation checkpoint, I want to make intelligent adjustments to my bulk. I am going to share what I've actually observed. (Any line my daily uploads above already cover, I'll write "see my uploads" — read the numbers straight from them.):

[FILL IN — Weight change: Give your starting weight, current weight, and a rough weekly average if you have it. e.g. "Started at 140 lbs, now around 142.5 lbs — weigh most mornings and that's the average. Some days 143, some days 141.5."]

[FILL IN — Strength changes: List your main lifts with actual weights and reps, then vs now. e.g. "Dumbbell chest press: started at 30 lb dumbbells x 8, now 30 lb x 12, 11, 10. One-arm dumbbell row: 35 lb x 8 → 40 lb x 10. Goblet squat improved most — 40 lb → 55 lb x 10. Dumbbell shoulder press still stuck at 20 lb, can do 10 reps but the jump to 25s feels too big." Use whatever lifts and equipment YOU actually trained with.]

[FILL IN — How you look and feel physically: Be honest, even if subtle. e.g. "Don't look dramatically different yet, but shoulders feel slightly rounder, shirts feel a little less empty around the chest. Something is happening but it's not obvious yet."]

[FILL IN — Energy and recovery: How are workouts feeling vs week 1? How's sleep and soreness? e.g. "Energy in workouts is noticeably better, not gassing out as fast. Sleep still 6-7 hours on work nights. Not really sore anymore after sessions, which I think is normal now."]

Based on this real data, please help me:

1. Diagnose what is and isn't working in my current approach
2. Recommend specific adjustments to my calories, protein, or training based on what my data is telling you
3. Explain WHY you're recommending these specific changes for my situation
4. Tell me what I should expect to see change over the next 4 weeks if these adjustments are correct
5. Before you recommend anything, decide first whether anything needs to change at all. If my weight trend is inside the target rate you set me, my lifts are moving, and nothing above is a warning sign, say so plainly and tell me to leave the plan exactly as it is for another four weeks — no adjustment. "Change nothing" is a real answer here and I want it whenever the data supports it. Only if something genuinely is off should you work through 1–4 above.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

Most people adjust based on how they feel emotionally — they had a bad week so they slash calories, or they feel great so they keep doing what they're doing even when the data says otherwise. The second pillar is about adjusting based on honest data, not feelings.

Close the Month: Hand Off to a Fresh Data Chat

Check-in done, adjustment made — one move left, and it takes two minutes. A chat carrying a whole month of daily uploads is a long chat, and long chats slowly get worse: slower, vaguer, more likely to drift from the rules you set on day one. You felt how sharp your data chat was in week one — you don't push a second month into a tired one. So each data chat lives exactly one month. You close it with the same summarize-and-carry-over move from page 42, and the new month starts with a fresh coach that knows everything.

And if closing it feels a bit strange, that's not silly. You showed up to that chat every day for a month — some of those days were hard, and it was the thing that kept the record. Nothing is lost: everything it knew about you walks into the next one in the summary you're about to make. It's the same coach with the same history, just rested.

■ COPY THIS — YOUR LAST MESSAGE IN THE OLD CHAT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

My check-in and adjustment are done, so this chat's month is complete. Give me my monthly hand-off summary as clean plain text I can save: my updated plan and targets (calories, protein, split, goal), my current lifts (preserve any substitution verbatim, e.g. "Landmine Press [sub for OHP — shoulder]", rather than normalizing it back to the standard exercise name), my weight trend across the month, my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries, and any standing exercise substitutions and why), the phases I've completed so far with rough dates, and **this month's full day-by-day record**, plus the carried summaries of earlier months from the summary this chat started with — compress old months to their monthly summaries, but keep this month day-by-day, so nothing is lost and the hand-off stays a manageable length. Make it complete enough that my next coach needs nothing else. I'm starting a fresh data chat for the new month.

Then set up the new chat — same as last time

Start a NEW conversation in your "My AI Fitness System" folder and set it up exactly as you did on page 74 — the same setup prompt, with this hand-off pasted where the summary goes. Tomorrow's upload goes to the new chat, and the old one is never touched again. **Fresh chat, full history, sharp coach — every month.**

*This close-out is the same in every phase — in a bulk it follows PROMPT 11, in a cut PROMPT 8 — CUT, in recomp PROMPT 7 — RECOMPOSITION. Check in, adjust, hand off — **month complete**. The same move, every month, every phase.*

If You Fell Off Track

■ **OPTIONAL** · Only if you've lost consistency for a stretch. Otherwise skip it.

*Why this matters: Use it when life interrupted you and you did NOT choose it: you missed a stretch of workouts, you got sick, an injury kept you out, work or school buried you, or motivation went flat and the gym just stopped happening. **If an injury is what stopped you, get it looked at by a professional first — then use this prompt to rebuild around whatever they tell you.***

The rule of thumb: if you've been off your plan for roughly two weeks or more, or you're avoiding this guide because restarting feels heavy, this prompt is for you. It is NOT for one missed session — miss a workout, just do the next one. And it's not the same as a deload (Prompt 11C): a deload is rest you plan on purpose; this is a comeback from time off you didn't. Why it exists: the damage from falling off is almost never the lost training — it's the guilt spiral that turns two missed weeks into two missed years. This gets you back on without starting over and without the self-punishment.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

I have fallen off track with my current training phase — you already know which phase I'm in. I want to get back on without starting over or beating myself up about it.

Here's what actually happened:

[FILL IN — How long off track: Give a rough number. e.g. "It's been about 2 weeks since I trained consistently, and my eating has been all over the place for maybe 10 days."]

[FILL IN — What got in the way: Be honest, even if it's just motivation. e.g. "School got really busy with exams, I skipped a few sessions, then felt too guilty to go back, and it kind of snowballed from there."]

Please help me:

1. Realistically assess how much this break actually set me back — beginners often assume it's worse than it really is
2. Give me a simple plan to ease back in this week without overdoing it and burning out again immediately
3. Help me figure out what made me fall off track, so I can make my plan more realistic going forward
4. Remind me what actually matters here — I want a perspective check, not just a new program

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now.)

JASON'S NOTE

Everyone falls off at some point — me included, multiple times across 10 years; Covid alone cost me 14 months of training. And it's not a beginner problem. Just recently a friend at my gym — a guy with a phenomenal physique and years of training behind him — told me that lately, what feels best after work is the freedom of going straight home instead of to the gym. I understood completely. From my own falls, two things. First: if your body is genuinely asking for a break, take a couple of weeks — sometimes that's a signal to honor, not weakness. Then, somewhere in the time off, comes a lightning moment: you catch yourself in the mirror and think, I've been off too long, and I don't like what I'm seeing — and that's usually the day training restarts. Second, and deeper: keep asking yourself WHY you train. In my early years the answer was a picture in my head I was determined to turn into reality. Now that I've built it, my why has changed — the gym is my stress relief, my own therapy, what a sauna or a yoga session is for someone else: a place

where I do something I love, feel good about myself, and get to be around people while I do it. When your why is clear, the way back is never far. Use this prompt as many times as you need across your whole journey — there's no shame in coming back to it.

The Deload

▲ **ONLY IF NEEDED** · Use only when you feel run-down. Otherwise skip it.

*Why this matters: **Use this when your body tells you it's run down — not on a schedule.** The mechanism: every hard session digs a small hole your body then has to fill back in. Over weeks and months of consistent training, that fatigue accumulates faster than you clear it, and you hit a plateau that has nothing to do with your program or your effort. The signs: your lifts stall or slide backwards, warm-up weights start feeling heavy, joints ache, sleep gets worse, and motivation drains even though nothing in your life changed. That is not weakness, and it is not a reason to push harder — pushing harder is exactly what turns it into an injury. The fix is to back off on purpose: a deload week (same movements, much lighter or fewer sets), or for deeper fatigue, one to two weeks of near-complete rest. You do not lose what you built — the muscle stays; only the fatigue leaves. You zero out and come back stronger, often hitting weights within a session or two that felt impossible before. Most beginners have never heard of this, wear pushing through fatigue as a badge of honor, and pay for it with a stalled year or a torn something.*

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

I've been training hard for several weeks and I want to understand deloading — planned recovery — so I can keep progressing instead of grinding myself into a plateau or injury. Here's where things actually stand right now. (Any line my daily uploads above already cover, I'll write "see my uploads" — read the numbers straight from them.):

[FILL IN — How hard I've been pushing: recent training intensity/volume and how many weeks you've kept it up. e.g. "About 6 weeks of pushing every set close to failure, added weight almost every session the first month, but the last two weeks progress has stalled."]

[FILL IN — How recovery has actually been: sleep, soreness, joint aches, motivation. e.g. "Sleep's dropped to 5-6 hours some nights, still sore 3 days after leg day, and I've been dreading the gym the last week even though I usually enjoy it."]

Based on my training age and what I just described, please help me:

1. First, help me honestly assess whether I actually need a deload right now. What are the real signs of accumulated fatigue versus just a normal off day or laziness?
2. If I do need one, what should a deload actually look like for someone at my level — how much do I reduce weight, volume, or both, and for how long?
3. How is a deload different from just taking time off or falling off track? I don't want to use this as an excuse to slack.
4. How often should someone with my training age and schedule expect to need a deload during a long training phase?
5. What should I expect to feel during and right after a deload week — and how do I know it worked?

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

For years I thought taking it easy for a week meant I was being lazy and would lose everything I built. So I never backed off — I just pushed through fatigue until something tweaked or my lifts stalled for months. The truth is the opposite of what it feels like: the planned step-back is what lets you keep moving forward. A deload is not falling off track — it's a deliberate part of the plan, and you come back stronger. This is different from Prompt 11B, which is for when life knocks you off unplanned. A deload is something YOU choose on purpose.

Positive Feedback Recognition

● **FINISH** · Run once, when you are ready to end your bulk.

Why this matters: The third pillar. You've observed. You've adjusted. Now you identify what IS working for your specific body and intentionally build more of it. Run this and Prompt 13 in your data chat — between the summary it opened with and this month's uploads, it holds your whole bulk.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

I want to identify what is genuinely working in my bulk so I can build on it intelligently. This is about finding my personal feedback loop. Based on my profile and what I've observed so far, please help me:

1. What specific signs should I be looking for that tell me a particular exercise, rep range, or approach is working specifically for my body?
2. How do I distinguish between something that's working because it's universally effective vs something that's working specifically for me?
3. What does a positive feedback loop look like in practice for a natural lifter during a bulk — what does 'things are working' actually feel like?
4. How do I protect and prioritize the things that are working while I continue to experiment with the things that aren't?

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

By year two I realized that my body responds exceptionally well to push-pull-legs with high frequency and high volume. That was MY feedback loop. (It's not fixed forever, either — in my later years I had to pull volume back to moderate as I couldn't recover as fast as I did when I was younger. Your loop evolves as your body does.) Your loop will look different from mine. Finding it is the whole point of this process.

The Bulk Exit Signal

● **FINISH** · Run once, when you are ready to end your bulk and switch to cutting.

Why this matters: Knowing when to stop bulking is just as important as knowing how to bulk. Most people either stop too early (fear of getting soft) or too late (they go way past what's useful). This prompt helps you identify YOUR exit point.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

I want to understand when and how to end my bulk and transition to a cut. Based on my bulk goals, my body type, and my progress so far, please help me:

1. What are the clear physical and performance signals that tell me I've reached the right point to end my bulk?
2. What's a reasonable, healthy body-composition range to aim for with my frame and goals — and what signs tell me I've bulked long enough, without fixating on a single number?
3. How do I transition from a bulk to a cut without shocking my body or losing significant muscle in the process?
4. What should I be doing in the final 2 weeks of my bulk to set myself up for the best possible cut?
5. Looking at my overall bulk — what were my biggest wins, and what would I want to do differently in my next bulk cycle?
6. Finally — my cut starts with a fresh sit-down in a new chat. Give me my **phase hand-off summary** as clean plain text: final weight, current lifts, my targets as they stand, my profile basics, and anything my next coach should know. I'll paste it at the top of my cutting sit-down.

I want to finish this phase feeling proud of what I built and clear on what comes next.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now.) Since this is the final prompt in the module, if you still genuinely need anything else from me to finish this up, you can ask me now.

JASON'S NOTE

Knowing when to stop was never the hard part for me — I bulk through the winter, and when I'm happy with the size I've built and I'm ready to reveal the muscle underneath, I know it's time to cut. My first bulk, I hit 185 lbs and felt genuinely proud of it. What I got wrong was the transition itself: I just suddenly started eating less and training the same way, and I lost a chunk of hard-earned muscle in the first few weeks of that cut. Picking your exit point is personal — but how you actually make the switch is a skill, and there's a right way to do it. This prompt will help you find it. One more thing: once you finish this bulk AND the cut that follows, you'll have completed a full cycle — and that's when the Recomposition phase at the back of this guide becomes your maintain-and-refine option.

PHASE 2 — CUTTING

Reveal What You Built

This phase is for two people. If the router sent you here because you're carrying more fat than you'd like, this is your starting line — you'll lean out first, then bulk later on a clean base. And if you've just finished a bulk, this is where you strip the fat back to reveal the muscle you spent months building. Either way, the goal is the same: **fat down, muscle protected**. Not starvation. Not misery. A controlled, honest lean-down that shows what's underneath.

Cutting runs on the exact same rhythm you saw in the Bulk map: a first sit-down you do once, a monthly loop you repeat, and an exit you reach when you've revealed enough. Same method, new goal. If you skipped straight here, that's fine — this phase teaches everything specific to cutting, and points you back to the Bulking section for the shared training fundamentals when you need them.

FROM JASON

Before You Start Cutting

The first time I cut, I thought less food and more cardio was the whole game. I lost weight, sure — but I also lost strength, looked flat, and felt terrible. That's not a cut, that's just getting smaller. A real cut is a skill: you eat enough protein and train hard enough that your body has no reason to burn the muscle you built, so the only thing that comes off is fat.

One thing I need you to hear before anything else: a cut should feel *sustainable, not miserable*. If you find yourself thinking about food constantly, feeling weak and hollow, or treating hunger as proof it's working — that's not discipline, that's a mistake, and this guide will help you catch it. If your relationship with food ever starts to feel dark or out of control, stop and talk to a doctor or a professional. No physique is worth that. There's a resource note at the end of this phase.

Whether you built it in a bulk or you're starting here, this phase isn't about loss — it's about revealing what's already there. Let's do it right.

SANITY-CHECK NUMBERS — CUTTING

Guardrails to Catch a Bad Answer

Before you run a single cutting prompt, here are the numbers that tell you whether an AI answer (or your own plan) is sane. If something you're told falls wildly outside these, stop and question it.

Rate of fat loss: Up to about 1% of your bodyweight per week is the *ceiling*, not the target — faster than that and you start burning muscle, not just fat. On the deficit below, most people land at **0.5–1 lb a week, or roughly 2–4 lb a month**. That is the correct speed for most. If you're starting well above your goal weight, the 1%-of-bodyweight ceiling is your real guide, not the pound figure — 2 lb a week at 200 lbs is the same relative pace as 1 lb at 100, and it's fine.

Protein goes UP in a cut: Around 1–1.2g per pound of bodyweight — higher than on a bulk. (Carrying a lot of fat? Base it on your goal weight instead of today's scale weight, or the number gets silly.) When calories drop, protein is the signal that protects your muscle. **This is the one number you never cut.**

Deficit size: A moderate deficit — roughly 300–500 calories below maintenance — is the sweet spot, and it's what produces the rate above (300 calories a day is about 2–3 lb a month; 500 is about 4). Bigger isn't better — it just costs you muscle and energy. One exception that matters: if you're carrying a lot of fat, a deficit of 20–25% below maintenance is both safe and standard — a percentage scales with your body where a flat 500 doesn't. And whatever the math says, total intake never belongs below ~1,200 calories (women) / ~1,500 (men) without a doctor involved.

Timeline: Real cuts take months, not weeks. Jason's own cut ran ~8 months. If a plan promises dramatic results in a few weeks, it's either lying or it's going to cost you muscle.

*Jason's real numbers, for reference: a 300-calorie deficit, protein around 1.2g/lb, losing 2–3 lb a month, over roughly 8–9 months to go from 220 to 195 while staying strong — the deliberate slow end of the range above, and about what a 300-calorie deficit should produce. **If you're losing 2–3 lb a month, you are not behind. You are doing it right.***

Your Cutting Profile Setup

● **START** • Your first sit-down begins here. Run it once, before anything else.

*Why this matters: Two ways people arrive here — and they do different things. **Came from the Router, in that same conversation?** Your profile is already loaded. Do NOT run this prompt — stay in that same chat and go straight to PROMPT 1 — CUT — its opening lines collect the few details the Router didn't. **Finished a bulk, or starting a fresh conversation?** Run this prompt (with your carried-over summary pasted first, if you have one) — it updates your coach on where your body is NOW, so every piece of advice is built on today's reality, not last season's. **Not sure how to answer? There's a filled-in example right after this prompt — see how a real person answered every part, messy and all.***

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

You are an experienced strength and physique coach with a strong grounding in exercise science and evidence-based nutrition. You reason from the specific data I give you rather than generic templates, you explain the “why” in plain language, and when the science is genuinely uncertain or my data is incomplete, you say so honestly instead of guessing. You also know recomp is an earned phase reached only after a full bulk-and-cut cycle, never a beginner's starting point. This conversation is for building my plan only — once it's built I'll move my day-to-day data into a separate chat, so don't ask me to start logging here. When I ask, give me a clean plain-text summary of everything we decide — my plan and my targets (calories, protein, split, goal) — so I can carry it across. I'm starting a cutting phase and I want you to be my AI cutting coach for this whole conversation. Before you do anything else with this message — before you read the rest of my profile, before you summarize anything — find my answer to the age question below and check it FIRST, in isolation from everything else I've written. If it's under 18, stop right there: don't process the rest of this profile, don't summarize it, just follow the standing under-18 rule at the end of this prompt. Only move on to the rest of my profile once you've confirmed I'm 18 or over. Here's where I am right now (if any of these is already in a summary I pasted above, I'll write “in my summary” — use what you have):

1. Name: [Your name]
2. Age: [Your age. If it is under 18, stop here — see the standing rule at the end of this prompt.]
3. Sex: [your coach uses this for calorie math]
4. Height: [FILL IN]
5. Current weight: [get on a scale — don't guess]
6. Roughly how I'd describe my body fat right now: ["lean-ish", "average / soft", "carrying noticeable fat", "significantly overweight"]
7. My training history so far: [how long you've trained with real structure and roughly where your main lifts are — or “this is my first structured phase”]
8. My sleep: [rough hours per night, honestly — it decides how much recovery your plan can spend]
9. If I just finished a bulk: how much I gained, and how I look and feel now: [FILL IN — or write “I didn't bulk, I'm starting here because I have fat to lose”]
10. My goal for this cut, in plain words: [e.g. “see more definition”, “get lean enough to start a clean bulk”, “drop from soft to lean”]
11. Days per week I can train, and my EXACT equipment: [your real schedule + list exactly what you have access to — if it isn't on your list, assume I don't have it]

12. What I typically eat in a day right now, and whether I track anything: [a few real examples — e.g. "coffee and toast, a sandwich at lunch, whatever's cooked for dinner" — plus "I track calories" or "I don't track anything"]

13. Any injuries or limitations: [anything that bothers you, or "none"]

13B. Quick honest check — not a judgment, just so I get matched to a safe starting point. In the last few months: have I felt out of control around food, felt guilty or anxious after eating, had someone close to me express concern about my eating or my weight, or often felt I should eat less even though I'm already eating little? [Yes to any of these / No to all — if yes, say which one(s), even just briefly. This matters more than my body-fat or weight answers, so answer it honestly.]

14. Outside the gym, my typical day: [mostly sitting / on my feet a fair bit / physically demanding work — add rough daily steps if you know them]

15. Photos (optional): [attach one front-on and one from the side, normal or fitted clothing — or write "none". Two photos calibrate my real starting point far better than any description, and give me a 'before' to compare at each checkpoint.]

(If I leave any of the basics above blank, stop and ask me for them before we go on — that check is a sanctioned ask, and it overrides any no-follow-up-questions rule. So does any genuine safety concern about my age, an injury, or my eating: raise those immediately. And the standing rule: if the age I give you is under 18, don't build me a plan — this guide is for adults; tell me to talk to a parent, a doctor, or a qualified coach. One more standing rule: you are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMS, peptides, or anything similar — now or later in this conversation — don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing, or on-cycle monitoring specifics; tell me plainly that's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. Keep helping me with training, nutrition, and everything else as normal — only the PED specifics are off-limits.)

Before you build anything: work out my BMI from my height and weight above — show your arithmetic ($703 \times \text{lb} \div \text{in}^2$, or $\text{kg} \div \text{m}^2$). If it is under 18.5, OR I answered yes to the honest-check question above, OR anything I've told you suggests I'm already eating well below what I need: do NOT build me a deficit plan of any kind — whatever I said I want, and do not offer a smaller or 'mini' version of a deficit as a middle ground; the only acceptable path here is maintenance or a surplus. Say plainly that my numbers or my answers put me outside a safe starting point for a deficit, that the right move is to eat at maintenance or more and train, and point me to real support using these exact details: in the U.S., the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, 1-866-662-1235 (allianceforeatingdisorders.com); in Canada, NEDIC, 1-866-633-4220 (nedic.ca). Both keep limited daytime hours, so also tell me that if I need someone at any hour I can call or text 988 in either country. If I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know the local equivalent, give me that too. Then END YOUR REPLY by asking me directly whether I want to talk to someone before we go on — make that question the last thing you say. Wait for my answer — don't hand me a plan in the same reply.

Mirror rule: if my BMI is over ~35, or I mentioned any health condition or medication, don't generate specific deficit, surplus, or training-intensity numbers yet — tell me to get a doctor's clearance first, ask me to confirm I have it or am getting it, and hold the detailed numbers until I do. When this rule applies, don't send me off to start a phase section either: tell me I can read ahead, but that we set my actual numbers together here once the doctor conversation is done.

Confirm you've got this, summarize it back to me, and tell me honestly whether my goal is realistic for where I'm starting. Don't build the plan yet — we'll do that step by step.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

You just spent months building — or you're carrying fat you're ready to lose. Either way, this phase only works if the AI knows exactly where you are TODAY. The most common mistake is softening the body-fat answer because the honest one stings. Be accurate. The coach you're building is only as good as what you feed it.

EXAMPLE OF A FILLED-IN CUTTING PROFILE (FOR REFERENCE ONLY)

Not sure what a good answer looks like? Here's a real one — not perfect, just complete. This is someone who finished a bulk and is starting their first cut. Don't copy these details, use your own. The goal is to answer every part, even messily.

1 (Name): Maya

2 (Age): 26

3 (Sex): female

4 (Height): 5'6"

5 (Current weight): 148 lbs this morning, first thing

6 (Body fat right now): average / soft — arms and legs look alright but there's softness around my middle and hips, and abs are nowhere in sight

7 (Training history): about eight months of real structure — the bulk I just finished. Before that, spin classes and the odd machine circuit, nothing with a plan

8 (Sleep): about 7 hours, closer to 6 on work nights

9 (If I just finished a bulk): yes — I went from about 136 to 148 over eight months. My lifts went way up (I got my first real pull-up out of it) but I've put on fat along with the muscle and my jeans are telling me about it

10 (My goal for this cut): lean out enough to see some shape in my shoulders and waist again, keep every bit of the strength I built, then go back to building

11 (Days per week + EXACT equipment): 4 days a week. Full commercial gym — dumbbells to 70lbs, barbells and squat rack, bench, cable machines, lat pulldown, leg press, hip thrust setup, plus the usual machines

12 (What I eat + tracking): oats and coffee in the morning, salad or leftovers at lunch, whatever gets cooked for dinner, and I graze in the evening. I tracked for two weeks once and gave up

13 (Injuries or limitations): lower back gets tight after heavy deadlifts, nothing a doctor's ever looked at

14 (Outside the gym): office job, about 6k steps most days, plus two dog walks

15 (Photos): attached one front-on and one from the side, sports bra and shorts, bathroom mirror — not flattering but honest

Notice the answers don't need to be polished — rough descriptions like "abs are nowhere in sight" are completely fine, as long as every part gets answered honestly. The body-fat answer especially: accurate beats flattering. Your coach is only as good as what you feed it.

Understanding What You're Working With

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: Before you strip anything away, you need an honest read on what's underneath — how much of your current weight is muscle you want to keep versus fat you want to lose. That read shapes the entire cut.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

First, three details you may not have yet. (If I already answered these in my Cutting Profile Setup a moment ago, I'll just write "covered" on each line — don't ask me to repeat myself; use what you already have. One exception: if I write "covered" but you genuinely don't have that detail anywhere in this conversation, don't guess or invent it — just ask me for that one specific thing, then continue.)

- My EXACT equipment: [list exactly what you have — if it isn't on this list, assume I don't have it — or "covered"]
- What I typically eat in a day, and whether I track calories or protein: [a few real examples — or "covered"]
- My stress/schedule load: [pretty free / moderately busy / slammed most days — or "covered"]

Now, based on my complete profile, help me understand what I'm actually working with before I start cutting:

1. Roughly how much of my current weight is likely muscle versus fat, given my history and how I've described myself?
2. What does that mean for how I should cut — aggressively or gently?
3. What's realistic for me to reveal underneath once the fat comes off?
4. What am I most at risk of losing if I get this wrong?

Be honest and specific. I want a realistic picture, not encouragement.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

When I cut from 220 to 195, I weighed the same as I had two years earlier — but I looked completely different: thicker, harder, more defined. Same scale number, different body. That's the whole point of a cut. You're not trying to get small. You're trying to get seen.

Setting Your Cut Goal

● **DO ONCE** · Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: A cut without a target is just eating less and hoping. You need a goal you can actually see — and a timeline that protects your muscle instead of racing past it.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Help me set a realistic cutting goal based on my profile:

1. Given where I'm starting, what's a realistic target and timeline that protects my muscle?
2. What weekly rate of loss should I aim for — and what rate would be too fast?
3. How will I know I've revealed "enough" versus cutting too far? **Flag it plainly if what I'm describing as my goal implies sustained body fat below roughly 10-12% (men) or 18-20% (women) — tell me that's a temporary competition-style range, not a lifestyle target, and that holding there long-term isn't what this guide is built for.**
4. Set muscle preservation as the priority — build the goal around keeping the muscle I have, whether I built it in a bulk or I'm starting here, not just around a scale number.

One honesty rule: if I mention a deadline or an event at any point, remember that a deadline does not change physiology. Give me the realistic version for my timeline, not an inflated one — and if my timeline can't deliver my stated number, say so plainly.

Give me a specific target and rate I can hold myself to.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I never cut to chase a number on the scale. I cut until I could see the definition I'd built — then I stopped. Pick a target you can see in the mirror, not one you can only read on a scale. Cut too far and you just look small and flat.

Building Your Caloric Deficit

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: This is the engine of a cut: eating enough below maintenance that fat comes off, but not so far below that your body starts burning muscle and your energy craters. Getting this number right is most of the battle.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Help me build my caloric deficit for this cut:

1. Estimate my maintenance calories based on my current stats and activity. If I chose not to tell you my sex, don't guess one — give me a range that covers both and say plainly that's why it's a range.
2. Set a moderate deficit from there — aggressive enough to see progress, gentle enough to protect muscle and keep me functional. Explain why you chose that size. **Hard ceilings: never more than 500 calories below maintenance — or, if I'm carrying a lot of fat, up to about 20–25% below maintenance, whichever of those two is larger, since a flat 500 doesn't scale to a bigger body; never a target rate faster than 1% of my bodyweight per week; and never a total intake below roughly 1,200 calories (women) / 1,500 (men) without a doctor supervising. If a goal or a deadline I mention would need more than that, tell me plainly it isn't achievable and give me the plan that respects the ceilings instead.**
3. Give me my carb and fat targets. **Do NOT set my protein number here — Cut Prompt 4 owns it and I run that next. Leave protein as a placeholder in this split and say plainly that Prompt 4 will fill it in.**
4. Tell me plainly: what are the signs my deficit is too aggressive, and what should I do if I see them?

Keep this sustainable. I want to finish this cut strong, not crawl across the line.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I used a 300-calorie deficit aiming for 2–3 lb a month — slow and steady. The slower you cut, the more muscle you keep — and muscle is the whole thing you came to reveal. If a plan has you starving, it's the wrong plan.

Protein: The Number You Never Cut

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: In a deficit, protein stops being just a target and becomes protection. It's the single clearest signal that tells your body to burn fat and keep muscle. This prompt makes sure you hit it every day, on fewer calories.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Protein is my priority during this cut. Help me nail it:

1. Set my daily protein target for this cut — you own this number, and Cut Prompt 3 deliberately left it blank for you. Once you've set it, recompute my full daily split around it: protein, carbs and fats in grams, and show that their calories add up to the daily total Prompt 3 gave me. If that total has to move to fit, say so explicitly rather than quietly changing it. (Protein matters even more on a cut than on a bulk). **If I described my body fat as “carrying noticeable fat” or “significantly overweight,” don't just default to ~1g per pound of my total bodyweight — a large share of that weight is fat mass that doesn't need protein support at that rate. Base it on an estimate of my lean mass instead, or use a lower gram-per-pound figure on total bodyweight, and tell me plainly which approach you used and why.**
 2. Show me how to hit that number on my reduced calories — practical foods and rough amounts, built around what I actually eat.
 3. Give me a few high-protein, high-volume, low-calorie options for when I'm hungry.
 4. Warn me about the situations where I'm most likely to fall short on protein, and how to plan around them.
- Keep it realistic — I'm not meal-prepping like a pro, I just need to hit the number.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

On my bulk I ran about 1g per pound. Cutting, I pushed it to 1.2. When calories drop, protein is the thing that keeps your body from burning the muscle you built. Everything else is negotiable. This number isn't.

FIRST TIME TRAINING WITH REAL STRUCTURE? DO THIS BEFORE PROMPT 5

Your cutting setup covered nutrition — but not the training fundamentals. How to choose your lifts, which compound movements to build around, what supplements are actually worth it, and how to structure your training week all live in the **Bulking phase**, and they apply no matter which phase you're in. If this is your first time training with real structure, don't skip them — jump back to the Bulking section and run these, then come back and run Prompt 5:

→ **Bulk Prompt 3** — Training Stimulus First (p64) → **Bulk Prompt 5** — Supplements: What's Actually Worth It (p66)

→ **Bulk Prompt 6** — Compound & Isolation Selection (p67) → **Bulk Prompt 7** — Structuring Your Training Week (p70)

→ **Bulk Prompt 8** — Your First Workout (p72) → **Bulk Prompt 9** — Progressive Overload Tracking (p74)

They're written for a bulk, so paste this line above each one — don't edit anything inside the prompt itself:

"Before the prompt below: I'm in a cut, not a bulk. Read every mention of a bulk as my cut and every mention of a surplus as my deficit. Keep my training and exercise choices the same as they'd be either way."

Already trained before, or ran these in a past bulk? You don't need to repeat them — just fill in the lifts and split you already use in Prompt 5's bracketed line just below.

START YOUR LOG NOW

From your first cutting workout on, the habit is the same as any phase. Keep your workout note **where you already are** — your phone's notes app, a training app, or a notebook, **not in this chat** — and upload it **daily** to a separate data chat along with your weigh-in and your food number. You set that chat up at the end of this sit-down; it's where your 4-week check-in happens too.

DAY 1 • CHAT 1 **PROMPT 5 — CUT**

How to Train While Cutting

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: Here's the counterintuitive part: how you train in a deficit decides whether you keep your muscle or lose it. There are two valid approaches, and your AI coach will help you pick the one that fits you.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

First, an important check before anything else: if I have never trained with weights before AND I have not already run Bulk Prompt 8 earlier in this conversation, do NOT build me a training program yet. Instead, stop and tell me to run Bulk Prompt 8 — Your First Workout in this same chat first — I need to learn form, warm-ups, and safe starting weights before a full routine, and that prompt is built for exactly that. If I already have some lifting experience, OR I already ran Bulk Prompt 8 in this conversation, continue with everything below.

My current lifts and weekly split, if I already have one: [FILL IN — list your main movements with recent weights and reps and how your week is laid out, or write "none yet". If you already ran Bulk Prompts 6–7 or trained before, this is where that goes — it saves rebuilding a program you already have.]

Before you build me anything: restate my equipment list and the injuries or limitations I gave you at intake back to me in one line each — a fresh check, don't just rely on remembering them from earlier in this chat. Then check every movement you're about to put in my program against both lists before including it. If a movement isn't possible on my equipment, don't recommend it, however standard it is. If a movement loads a joint I flagged, give me the variation that trains the same muscle without loading it, and say plainly which one you swapped and why. If I listed no injuries, say so in one line and move on.

I'm about to train in a caloric deficit. Explain both of the main approaches and help me choose:

(a) Keep lifting heavy and brief to hold onto strength, and use cardio to create part of the deficit.

(b) — for experienced lifters only, not my first structured phase — higher volume and reps, with supersets (two exercises back-to-back with no rest) and drop sets (hit failure, drop the weight, keep going) taken close to failure, to keep the training signal high in a deficit. If I'm new to structured training, steer me to (a): recovery is already scarce in a deficit and (a) protects it.

Explain the trade-offs of each, then recommend one based on my profile, equipment, and how I like to train ([e.g. "I like straightforward heavy work," "I enjoy higher-rep pump-style training," or "no strong preference — tell me what fits my situation best"]. Build me a weekly structure around whichever we choose — but if I already built a weekly structure via Bulk Prompt 7 earlier in this conversation, adapt that structure to this approach instead of starting over from a blank page.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

*In a deficit you can't push as hard on one heavy set — so I did the opposite of backing off. I added volume, reps, supersets, drop sets to failure. It kept my size on while the fat came off. But heavy-and-brief works too. Both are valid. Let the AI help you pick the one you'll actually stick to. One more thing — never trained with weights before? **Before** this prompt, flip to Bulk Prompt 8 — Your First Workout (page 72) and run it right here in this same chat. It works in any phase, it walks you through warming up, finding safe starting weights, and checking your form — and it's the one prompt that's allowed to ask you a question or two. Your first session decides whether you come back. Don't wing it.*

Do You Even Need Cardio?

◆ **SIGNAL-BASED** · Use when your progress tells you it's time. Not automatic.

*Why this matters: **This one is not part of today's sit-down — it's printed here so you know where to find it. Come back to it when your progress tells you it's time, which for most people is a few weeks in, not day one.** Cardio is a tool, not a punishment — and most people massively overuse it on a cut. This prompt figures out whether you need it at all, and if so, exactly how much is useful before it starts eating the muscle you're trying to keep.*

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Help me build a smart cardio strategy for this cut:

1. Based on my deficit and goal, do I actually need cardio right now, or is my diet doing the work?

Before you recommend any specific cardio modality: restate the injuries or limitations I disclosed at intake back to me in one line — a fresh check, don't just rely on remembering them from earlier in this chat. Then rule out or flag any option below that would load the affected area (e.g. rowing with a lower-back issue).

2. If I do add it, how much — and what kind — helps fat loss without wrecking my recovery or strength?

If a daily step target or activity number was already set earlier in this chat, restate that exact number and build from it — do not set a new one. If no step target exists yet, say so plainly before you propose one, so I know it's new.

3. How do I read whether cardio is helping or quietly costing me muscle?

4. When should I add more, and when should I pull it back?

I'd rather use cardio as a small nudge than lean on it. Tell me if that's the right call for me.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I never hammered cardio to lean down — the diet did the work. Overdoing cardio on a deficit just eats your recovery and the muscle you're trying to keep. Use it to nudge, not to punish.

Your Plan Exists. Now Learn the Loop That Runs It.

That's every prompt in your first sit-down — your cutting plan exists. **The next PROMPT in this guide isn't for today; it's for four weeks from now.** But your sit-down isn't finished quite yet: **it ends when your tracking chat is open.** The next section sets that up — go through it now, before you close this chat, and you're ready for your first workout.

The pages ahead are **THE TRACKING LOOP** — the engine every phase runs on. They show you the three things you'll track (your training, your weight, your food), how to capture each one in seconds, and then walk you through **opening your data chat** — the chat you'll actually live in from tomorrow on. That last step is the one thing you still do today, before you close this planning chat.

Two cut-specific additions to that loop. Once a month, add your waist measurement to your upload — and **take your waist at the navel today**, so you have a starting number. (Same permission as the scale applies: if the tape starts doing something to your head, drop it and tell your coach — your weight trend carries a cut fine on its own.) And in a cut the daily replies matter more than in any other phase: the scale will lie to you some weeks, and a coach watching the whole picture is what stops you overreacting to it.

One more thing — cutting has no deload prompt of its own, and doesn't need one. If fatigue catches up mid-cut (lifts sliding, joints aching, sleep going sideways), run Bulk Prompt 11C — The Deload (page 93) in your data chat.

*Read the section and open your data chat — **then your sit-down is truly done, and you're ready for your first workout.** In four weeks you come back and run **PROMPT 7 — CUT** — right there in your data chat, which by then holds every day of the month. Then PROMPT 8, then the month-end close. That's the loop.*

Track. Upload. Check In. Close the Month.

Everything in this guide runs on one engine: **you train, you report, your coach adjusts**. This section is that engine — and it is identical in Bulk, Cut, and Recomposition, so it's taught once, here, and never again. Your sit-down prompts are done and your plan exists — ten minutes here and you'll know exactly how to run it. Two of these pages you'll come back to again and again: the data-chat setup (that one you'll do today, before you close your planning chat), and the month-end close after every check-in.

The loop, end to end

1 — Track three inputs. Your training (a note you fill in between sets), your weight (the scale, most mornings), and your food (an app's daily total). The next pages set each one up so capture costs seconds, not willpower.

2 — Upload daily. To a dedicated **data chat** — training days: a screenshot of your note, plus your weigh-in and food number typed in; rest days: just the last two. Your coach echoes the numbers into a running record and answers in a line or two.

3 — Check in monthly. Once every four weeks, in that same data chat, you run your phase's checkpoint and adjustment prompts — the coach reads the whole month and tunes the plan.

4 — Close the month. A hand-off summary carries everything into a fresh data chat, so every month starts with a sharp coach that knows your whole history. You'll learn the exact move right after your phase's monthly checkpoint and adjustment prompts, ahead.

Whichever phase the Router sends you to, this is the loop you'll live. The phases change your targets; they never change this rhythm.

DATA TO TRACK — INPUT 1: TRAINING

Your Workout Note

● **WRITE IT AS YOU LIFT · SCREENSHOT IT AFTER** · Seconds a set. No typing it out twice, ever.

*Why this matters: everything in this guide has been building toward one loop — you train, you report, your coach adjusts. That loop is the product. It's also the part most people skip, because most tracking systems ask for more effort than the training itself. So the job is deliberately small: **keep one note on your phone, fill it in between sets, and screenshot it when you're done.** You never retype a single number.*

Here's the whole job, up front. Every day, you track three things — your training (on days you train), your weight, and your food — and send them to a dedicated tracking chat you'll set up on page 109. Your coach banks the numbers, gives you a quick line of feedback, and watches your progress build day by day. The next few pages show you how to capture each input in seconds. That's the entire system.

One note per training day in your split

In your phone's notes app, make **one note for each training day in your split** — “Push”, “Pull”, “Legs”, or whatever your plan calls them. If you train four days on an upper/lower, that's four notes. Write the exercise names in once. From then on you're only ever adding numbers. Start here:

PULL — Mon

Lat Pull Down: 120x10; 120x10; 100x12

Cable Row: 100x12; 100x12; 90x10

Face Pull: 40x15; 40x15

Barbell Curl: 50x10; 50x9; 40x8

Felt strong. Last row set was a grind.

One line per exercise. Each set is weight×reps, separated by semicolons. Writing every set out separately means a weight change mid-exercise is captured instead of lost — above, the last set of pulldowns dropped to 100. Add one short note at the bottom for any reflection on that day's training — “barely slept last night, tired the whole session”, or “didn't get enough carbs in beforehand, felt weak under the bar”. That line is often what explains a bad number a month later. Roughly four seconds a set, written while you're resting anyway.

What it looks like once you're deeper in

Here's one of my own notes — the session on top, and underneath it the Inventory for the muscles that day trains, both living in the same note:

PULL 1 (Strength)

Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx4

Lat Pull Down: 180x8; 180x8; 1 drop set (180x5+160x4); 1 drop set (160x5+140x4+120x4)

Cable Row: 160x8; 160x8; 1 drop set (160x6+140x5); 1 drop set (140x6+120x5+100x5)

Rear Delt Ext: 80x12; 80x12; 1 drop set (80x8+70x6)

Face Pull + Cable Curl: superset, 3 drop sets

Shoulder felt good. Rows moving again.

INVENTORY

Back (width)

Cable Lats Pull Down: 70x8; 70x8; 70x8; 70x8

Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx4

Negative Pull Ups: BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx6; BWx6

Back (thickness)

Barbell Bent Over Row: 110x6; 110x6; 110x6; 110x6

Machine Row: 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5; 170x5

Dumbbell Row: 70x6; 70x6; 70x6; 70x6; 70x4

Biceps

Double Dumbbell Curl: 20x8; 20x8; 20x8; 20x8; 20x4 (*each arm*)

Barbell Curl: 90x5; 90x5; 60x8; 60x8; 60x8

...and so on for every muscle group you train.

This is my own note, and it's where yours ends up after a few months — same idea, denser shorthand. **Don't start here.** It's only shown so you know the simple version above isn't a beginner's compromise; it's the same system, earlier.

Notice the **Inventory** section underneath the session. Group the muscles that day trains, and under each record **the exact volume you hit last time** — same format as the session above. **Put every alternative movement for that muscle in here too**, so when the machine you wanted is taken you already know what to swap to and what you last did on it.

So: one note per training day, each with its own Inventory underneath. Build it once and you're only ever adding numbers. It answers the two questions you actually have in the gym: *what did I do last time?* and *what else can I do instead?*

JASON'S NOTE

For ten years my whole tracking system was the notes app on my phone — no app, no spreadsheet, no setup. The systems I stuck with were never the powerful ones; they were the simplest and most convenient ones — anything longer than the walk to my car doesn't survive a busy month. Inventory is the part I'd fight to keep: walking up to a rack already knowing the number to beat is most of why I kept progressing.

The Other Two Inputs

*Input 1 was your training. These are the other two — and together the three are every number your checkpoint will ever ask for. Both are outsourced the same way training is — a scale, an app — and both go to your coach in the same daily upload. **This is identical in every phase — Bulk, Cut, and Recomp.***

Input 2 — Weight (30 seconds, most mornings)

Weigh yourself in the morning, after the bathroom, before food or water — the same conditions every time. Most mornings is ideal — it's what fills your daily upload — and 3–4 mornings a week still gives your coach a clean weekly average; on days you skip the scale, just send your upload without it. Add it to any log line: "BW 141.8." And if the scale ever starts controlling your mood, drop to two mornings a week and tell your coach why — the trend survives, and so should you. Your weight will bounce 1–3 lbs day to day — that's water and food, not fat or muscle (for women, cycle-related water can swing more than that for a few days — the monthly trend still tells the truth). **Only the weekly average means anything**, and that average is exactly what your coach reads at your checkpoint. Never react to a single day's number.

Input 3 — Diet (log it in an app, not in this guide)

Food tracking is a solved problem, and a food app solves it far better than any prompt could — barcode scanning, a database, saved meals, a running daily total. So this guide doesn't try. **Start with Cronometer**: it has the most trustworthy food database of the free options, which is the only thing that matters here. **MacroFactor** is the stronger paid alternative if you want it adjusting your targets for you. Check current pricing yourself — it moves.

Log your meals as you eat them, the same way you log a set the moment you rack it. Then, each evening, send that day's **calories and protein** — that's all your coach needs here. **Two equally good ways, pick whichever you'll keep doing**: screenshot the app's total, or type the two numbers in ("2,510 cal, 178 p"). The screenshot saves typing; typing has no image limits. Both land the same.

And if you don't want to track food at all, you're not stuck. Eat roughly the same meals day to day, hit your protein target, and let Input 2 do the work: if your training is honest and your eating is consistent, whether you're actually in a surplus or a deficit shows up in the scale within a few weeks. Tell your coach you're not tracking, and it will read your weight trend instead. Consistency beats precision — and a system you abandon in week three teaches you nothing.

And once a month (2 minutes, right before your checkpoint)

Tape your waist at the navel — the best cheap signal of fat creeping on or coming off — and, if you took starting photos, retake the same two: same spot, same light, same poses. Send both to your coach with a log line so they land in your record. Then run your checkpoint.

Same rule as the scale applies here. If taping or retaking photos starts doing something to your head — reaching for the tape between checkpoints, or picking yourself apart instead of reading a trend — **drop them and tell your coach why**. Your weight average and training log carry a bulk or a cut on their own. (In a recomp they matter more, since the scale barely moves by design.)

The whole loop, start to finish: log your workout · log your diet · log your weight — all of it in apps you already have — then **upload it to your data chat daily**, and **run your check-in once a month**. Add your waist and photos to that monthly one. **That is the entire system: fifteen seconds a day, and one real sit-down a month.**

HOW THE CAPTURE ACTUALLY HAPPENS

Capturing Input 1 Without It Becoming a Chore

*Your workout note is what you upload each day. This page is where its numbers come from. Five exercises times three sets is fifteen numbers — nobody remembers that on the drive home, and trying to is why most people quit tracking by week two. So you don't. **You capture in the gym, in time you're already standing around.***

How the pieces fit: the guide and your AI coach are the brain — they build the plan, read your data, and tell you what to change. The recording is deliberately outsourced to whatever tool is already in your hand at the gym. You carry the data from one to the other every day, and that trip is what closes the loop. Brain in one place, notepad in another, you in between.

The rule: capture while you rest, not after you finish

Your program has you resting one to three minutes between sets — twenty-plus minutes a session you're already on your phone. Logging a set the moment you rack the weight spends time that was gone anyway. Rebuilding that session from memory two hours later costs real effort exactly when you have the least left. Same two minutes; completely different odds you're still doing it in month six.

Lane A — the notes app already on your phone (nothing to install)

1. Open the note for today's training day — “Push”, “Pull”, “Legs”, whichever it is. You built these on page 104; the exercise names and last session's numbers are already there.
2. After each set, while you're resting, add it as weight×reps: “Squat: 135x8; 135x8; 135x7”
3. At the bottom, one short line if the day needs it: “slept 5 hours, weights felt heavy.”
4. That's the whole method. Roughly four seconds a set.

The quiet advantage: **last session's numbers are already in the note you're typing into** — and the Inventory underneath holds the number to beat for every movement, even when you swap machines. Progressive overload is only ever a number you can see.

Lane B — a training app, if you'd rather tap than type

A dedicated tracker does one thing a notes app can't: it shows you last session's weights and reps automatically the moment you pick an exercise, so the number you're chasing is already in front of you. **If you want one, start with Hevy** — it's free for everything this system needs, runs on iPhone and Android, and its history screens screenshot cleanly, which is exactly what you'll be handing your coach. **Strong** is the other well-established option and works the same way. **FitNotes** is the no-account, no-frills pick if you're on Android and want something that opens instantly. Free tiers and prices change constantly, so check before you commit to any of them — but all three cover the job. **You do not need any of them**; the notes app does the same work for free.

Lane C — a paper notebook, if you'd rather not use your phone at all

Completely valid, and some people focus better for it. Write the same line — exercise, weight, reps — and photograph the page after each session. Your coach reads handwriting fine as long as it's legible and the light is decent.

Any lane: the daily upload is the same

Each day you carry that day over to your data chat — and you don't have to remember anything to do it. **From a notes app:** screenshot the note. **From a training app:** screenshot the finished session. **From a notebook:** photograph the page. Then add your weigh-in and your food number in the same message. On a day you didn't train, send just those two — a rest day is data, not a gap.

You're not adding a task to your day — you're taking one you were going to do badly, from memory, hours late, and moving it into minutes you already spend resting.

JASON'S NOTE

For years my entire system was remembering. I'd walk in, try to recall what I pressed last week, guess high or low, and either grind a bad set or leave two reps on the table. The day I started typing it into my phone between sets, two things changed: I stopped guessing, and I started beating a real number instead of a feeling. Four seconds a set, in time you were spending anyway. That's the whole trick — it was never discipline.

Now Open Your Data Chat

This is the move you'll make at the end of your first sit-down, whichever phase it's in. Your plan will exist, and **the next prompt won't be for that day — it'll be for four weeks later**. But before you close that planning chat, you set up the one you'll actually live in. *(You'll return to this exact page every month, for the life of your phase — it always means “start a fresh data chat,” not literally your second conversation ever.)*

Why a second chat? This one is full of the reasoning that built your plan — estimates, guesses, assumptions made before you had a single day of real data. You don't want tomorrow's weigh-in landing in the middle of that. **One chat built the plan. The next one runs it.**

AT THE END OF YOUR SIT-DOWN, BEFORE YOU CLOSE THAT CHAT:

1 — Ask this chat for your setup summary

“Summarize everything we decided — my plan, my targets (calories, protein, split, goal), my exercises, my weekly structure, my progression rule, my starting weight and current lifts, and my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries) — as clean plain text I can save.” Copy what it gives you. **Your next coach only knows what's in this summary, so don't trim it.**

2 — Start a NEW conversation in the same folder

Not a new account, not a new project — the same “My AI Fitness System” folder, so everything lives in one home. This new chat is your **data chat**, and it's where the rest of this phase happens.

3 — Paste the prompt below in as its first message

With your setup summary pasted where shown. This tells your coach what its job is from here on: bank your data daily, keep it short, don't re-plan.

4 — Set two phone reminders before your first upload

One recurring daily reminder at the time you'll actually upload (right after training, or with your morning coffee), and one four weeks out for your check-in. The system runs on you showing up — don't leave that to memory.

■ **COPY THIS INTO A NEW CHAT:**

You're my AI coach for the ongoing part of my training. **This chat is for tracking only**. I'll be using it to upload my training (on days I train), my weight, and my diet data every day — your job is to keep the running record, give me a small piece of feedback each time, and monitor my progress. **Ignore anything you may know about me from memory or from other chats — what I paste below is the only source of truth for my plan and my numbers**. I built my plan in another conversation — here it is:

[PASTE YOUR SETUP SUMMARY HERE]

So, day by day: **I send the data, you keep the record**. Each day I'll send you some or all of:

- **Training** — a screenshot of my workout note (only on days I actually train)
- **Diet** — my calories and protein for the day, either as a screenshot of my food app's total or just typed in as two numbers (both are fine, treat them the same), or a rough line if I'm not tracking
- **Weight** — my morning weigh-in, **typed as a number in my message (e.g. "BW 141.8")**, not as a photo of the scale, so it always lands in your record as text

For every upload, first echo it back as one compact plain-text block — date, bodyweight, calories and protein, and each lift as weight×reps — so my record exists as text, not only as images. Then reply **short**: two or three lines. Acknowledge what I sent, note anything genuinely worth noting, and tell me when something's going well. Do NOT re-plan my program, do NOT lecture me about a missed session or a missing number, and do NOT ask me follow-up questions — if a number's missing, just log what I gave you. On days I send no training, that's a rest day, not a failure. **Bright line on what counts as a pattern worth mentioning: a single low day, missed session, or missing number is never a pattern — log it and move on, with no "if this becomes a habit" commentary. Only raise it if I'm 3 or more consecutive days off the same thing.**

Four conventions: if I send a day late I'll start it with "Backfill Day N:" — log it in place, no comment. And if a number looks impossible (say a 9 lb overnight weight jump), flag it in one line and log it as unverified rather than averaging it in silently. If I go quiet for a week or more and then come back, greet me without commenting on the gap and remind me in one line that PROMPT 10B — CUT in my guide exists for exactly this. And if you notice you skipped an echo for a day I sent, echo that missed day now, in place, before continuing.

Three exceptions that override everything above. (1) Pain. If I report sharp pain, joint pain, pain during a movement, swelling, or anything that feels like an injury rather than ordinary next-day soreness — drop the short-reply and no-questions rules completely. **Your response must instruct me to stop that exact exercise this session — not "reduce it", not "take it easier", stop it — and must also flag any other exercise still in my plan that loads the same joint or movement pattern.** Ask whatever you need to ask, and tell me to see a doctor or physio if it doesn't settle in a few days. **(2) Performance-enhancing drugs.** You are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMs, peptides or anything similar, don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing or on-cycle monitoring specifics — tell me plainly it's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. **Keep helping me with my training, my nutrition and everything else as normal — only the drug specifics are off-limits. (3) My eating.** If anything I send suggests I'm eating far too little, losing weight far faster than my plan intends, or that food is becoming distressing, say so plainly and point me to the National Alliance for Eating Disorders helpline at allianceforeatingdisorders.com (or the equivalent service where I am, if I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know one). None of these three counts as lecturing — they are the job.

Once every four weeks I'll ask you for a full check-in and then an adjustment. **Whenever a message from me starts with the tag [GUIDE PROMPT], that's a prompt pasted straight from my guide — a check-in, an adjustment, a deload, a comeback, an exit — and the short-reply, no-re-planning AND no-questions rules are all suspended for that one answer;** you'll have the whole month in front of you, so read it all and give me the full response that prompt asks for. **If a guide prompt explicitly tells you to ask me something, ask it and wait for my reply** — those questions are part of the prompt, not a breach of the no-questions rule. Once the adjustment is settled I'll ask for a **monthly hand-off summary** and retire this chat — a fresh one takes over each month. When I do, give me my updated plan and targets, my current lifts (preserve any substitution verbatim, e.g. "Landmine Press [sub for OHP — shoulder]", rather than normalizing it back to the standard exercise name), my weight trend, my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries, and any standing exercise substitutions and why), the phases I've completed so far with rough dates, and this month's day-by-day record plus the carried summaries of earlier months, as clean plain text complete enough that my next coach needs nothing else. If I ever ask for my log mid-month, same thing: the entire record so far as plain text I can save.

Confirm you've got it in one line, and I'll start sending.

Then, every day from tomorrow

On a training day: screenshot your workout note, add your weigh-in and your food number, and start the message with the date, then send. **On a rest day:** just your weigh-in and your food number. That's it — fifteen seconds, and your coach answers in a line or two. Those daily replies are the point: they're what turns this from a plan you read into a habit you keep. (Free plans cap daily image uploads — if you hit it, type the day's numbers in as text instead. The text is what your coach needs.)

Once a week, ask for your log as plain text and save it — chats can be lost, and a weekly recap means the most recent save always holds the whole month so far as compact text, not just images. Thirty seconds, once a week.

If your coach stops echoing your numbers, or starts re-planning your program mid-month instead of just logging — both are signs it's drifted from the setup rules over a long chat. Paste this and continue: "Re-read your first message in this chat and go back to following those rules."

If the logging itself starts to get heavy

Fifteen seconds is honest for one day. Thirty days in a row is a different thing, and somewhere in most months there's a stretch where the upload feels like one more obligation. **That's tracking fatigue, and it's as normal as a missed session** — the same guide that tells you a rest day isn't a failure will tell you a skipped upload isn't one either. Miss a day, send the next one; don't try to reconstruct the gap from memory. If it's a whole stretch, send what you remember with "Backfill" and move on. And if the daily rhythm is genuinely what's about to make you quit the whole thing, tell your coach that plainly — drop to weight and training only for a couple of weeks, or weekly instead of daily. **A thinner record you actually keep beats a complete one you abandon in week three.**

*In four weeks, run your phase's check-in — PROMPT 10 in Bulk, PROMPT 7 — CUT, or PROMPT 6 — RECOMPOSITION — right there in your data chat, which by then holds every day of the month. And know this now: **each data chat lives one month.** Check in, adjust, hand off to a fresh one — the close-out is ahead.*

Congratulations. Your Consultation Is Done.

You have finished your consultation with your AI fitness assistant. Your plan is built, your data chat is open, and there is nothing left to set up. **Now go train — and start logging your data.**

WHERE YOU STAND

- ✓ Your coach knows you — profile, goal, and phase, from this sit-down's intake.
- ✓ Your plan exists — training, calories, protein, split, built in your first sit-down.
- ✓ Your data chat is open, with your setup summary as its first message.
- ✓ Two phone reminders set — daily upload, and the check-in four weeks out.

YOUR ONLY JOB FROM HERE

Train. Eat to your targets. Sleep. Upload your day — fifteen seconds. That's the whole job, every day, for the next four weeks. No more reading is required today — the rest of this guide waits until the loop calls for it.

IN FOUR WEEKS

Come back and run **PROMPT 7 — CUT** in your data chat — it reads your whole month and tunes the plan. The pages ahead walk you through that checkpoint, the adjustment that follows it, and — once that's settled — closing the month to start the next one.

Most people never get this far. A plan built on your real numbers, a coach that remembers, and a system that catches you when you drift — you built all of that today. See you in the gym.

The 4-Week Checkpoint

◆ **REPEAT** · Come back and run this every 4 weeks.

*Why this matters: Every month, you come back here and read what your body actually did — not what you hoped it did. In a cut this matters even more than in a bulk, because the scale lies and you need to learn to read the real signals. **Run this in your data chat — the one you've been sending your daily uploads to. It already holds every day of the month, so there's nothing to paste.***

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

This is my 4-week check-in. You already have the whole month above — every daily upload I've sent you. **Read back through all of it before you answer**, and reason from what's actually there rather than from my summary of it. First, state the date range of uploads you can actually see, and list the daily weights you're averaging before you conclude anything from them — and answer for MY actual case, not hypothetical branches. Explain your “why” in plain language, and say so honestly if something's uncertain or if a stretch of days is missing.

[FILL IN — My own read first, before you give me yours: in one or two sentences, what do I think my data is showing? e.g. "I think it's working but the scale scared me a couple of times" or "I think I'm cutting too hard." If I leave this blank, just go ahead with your read.]

It's been about 4 weeks. Give me an honest read. Anything my uploads already cover, take from them — I'll only fill in what they don't:

- Weight change over the 4 weeks: [start weight → current weight]
- How my lifts are doing: [holding / dropping / which ones]
- How I look in the mirror vs. a month ago: [more defined / same / not sure]
- Energy and mood day to day: [fine / dragging / rough]
- Waist vs. last month (if I measure it): [FILL IN — or "not tracking"]

Based on this, tell me: is my cut working the way it should? Am I losing fat while keeping muscle, or are there warning signs I'm cutting too hard? Read the scale, the mirror, and my strength together — not the scale alone.

Then ask me plainly how I'm finding the eating and the daily tracking itself — whether logging has started to feel like a chore, or like something I'm anxious about. If anything I've sent this month suggests food or the scale is becoming stressful rather than just informative, say so plainly rather than staying on the numbers.

If I gave you my own read above, tell me where yours agrees with mine and where it differs, and why — I'm trying to learn to read my own data, not just receive a verdict on it.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

The scale lies during a cut. I learned to read strength, energy and the mirror together. If your lifts are holding and you're seeing more definition, it's working — whatever the scale says that week. Weight bounces; the trend tells the truth.

Adjusting Based on the Data

◆ **REPEAT** · Run this after each checkpoint, as needed.

*Why this matters: This is where you turn the checkpoint into a decision. Your coach reads whether your deficit is too aggressive, too soft, or just right — and adjusts on the data, not on impatience or emotion. This is the most important safety step in the whole phase. **When the adjustment is settled, close the month — hand-off summary, fresh data chat. The next page is the exact move, and it's the same in every phase.***

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Based on my last checkpoint, help me adjust intelligently:

1. Is my rate of loss on target, too fast, or too slow?
2. If it's too fast or I'm losing strength and energy — what specifically should I change, and by how much?
3. If it's too slow — **before you just cut calories further, ask me one diagnostic question first: has my activity outside the gym quietly dropped this month** — less walking, more sitting, fidgeting less, general daily movement down — since that alone can stall a cut without my deficit being wrong at all. If that's likely what happened, say so and suggest closing the gap by moving more before cutting calories again. Only then tell me what's the smallest adjustment that gets me moving again without overcorrecting.
4. Be honest with me: are any of my signals telling me I'm cutting too hard and should ease off?

Adjust based on my actual data, not on impatience.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

The signs you cut too hard show up fast — strength craters, you're dragging, you're miserable. That's not discipline, that's a mistake, and the fix is to eat more, not push harder. Adjust on the data, not on how impatient you feel. And if food ever starts to feel like something you can't control, step back and talk to someone — a doctor or a professional. That's not weakness, it's the smart play.

Close the Month: Hand Off to a Fresh Data Chat

Check-in done, adjustment made — one move left, and it takes two minutes. A chat carrying a whole month of daily uploads is a long chat, and long chats slowly get worse: slower, vaguer, more likely to drift from the rules you set on day one. You felt how sharp your data chat was in week one — you don't push a second month into a tired one. So each data chat lives exactly one month. You close it with the same summarize-and-carry-over move from page 42, and the new month starts with a fresh coach that knows everything.

And if closing it feels a bit strange, that's not silly. You showed up to that chat every day for a month — some of those days were hard, and it was the thing that kept the record. Nothing is lost: everything it knew about you walks into the next one in the summary you're about to make. It's the same coach with the same history, just rested.

■ COPY THIS — YOUR LAST MESSAGE IN THE OLD CHAT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

My check-in and adjustment are done, so this chat's month is complete. Give me my monthly hand-off summary as clean plain text I can save: my updated plan and targets (calories, protein, split, goal), my current lifts (preserve any substitution verbatim, e.g. "Landmine Press [sub for OHP — shoulder]", rather than normalizing it back to the standard exercise name), my weight trend across the month, my profile basics (age, training age, sleep, any injuries, and any standing exercise substitutions and why), the phases I've completed so far with rough dates, and **this month's full day-by-day record**, plus the carried summaries of earlier months from the summary this chat started with — compress old months to their monthly summaries, but keep this month day-by-day, so nothing is lost and the hand-off stays a manageable length. Make it complete enough that my next coach needs nothing else. I'm starting a fresh data chat for the new month.

Then set up the new chat — same as last time

Start a NEW conversation in your "My AI Fitness System" folder and set it up exactly as you did on page 109 — the same setup prompt, with this hand-off pasted where the summary goes. Tomorrow's upload goes to the new chat, and the old one is never touched again. **Fresh chat, full history, sharp coach — every month.**

*This close-out is the same in every phase — in a bulk it follows PROMPT 11, in a cut PROMPT 8 — CUT, in recomp PROMPT 7 — RECOMPOSITION. Check in, adjust, hand off — **month complete**. The same move, every month, every phase.*

Recognizing What's Working

◆ **REPEAT** · Run this whenever you want to check you're on track.

Why this matters: Just as important as catching problems: learning to see the real wins so you know when to leave a working plan alone. In a cut, the win is never just the scale dropping — it's the scale dropping while your strength holds.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Help me recognize whether my cut is genuinely succeeding:

1. What are the real signs that I'm preserving muscle while losing fat — the things I should be looking for beyond the scale?
2. Looking at my strength, my measurements (if I take them), and how I look — is it working?
3. If it is working, confirm that I should leave the plan alone and keep going rather than changing things.

Help me trust the process when the data says it's working.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

The win isn't the scale dropping — anyone can lose weight by starving. The win is the scale dropping while your lifts hold. When you see that, don't change a thing. Let it ride. That's the sign you've got the balance exactly right.

If You Fell Off Track

▲ **ONLY IF NEEDED** · Skip this unless you've fallen off. It'll be here if you need it.

Why this matters: A bad week, a vacation, a stretch where the diet fell apart — it happens to everyone. This prompt gets you back on without the shame spiral and without the dangerous urge to "make up for it" by starving.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

I fell off my cut for a bit. Here's what happened:

[FILL IN — e.g. "a week of vacation and I ate everything" / "a rough stretch where I stopped tracking"]

Help me get back on track. I do NOT want to punish myself or crash-diet to compensate — I know that backfires. Give me a calm, realistic plan to return to my normal cut, and remind me honestly how much (or how little) this actually set me back.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I lived through a Covid lockdown where I ate everything in sight and gained more than I ever had. One bad stretch doesn't undo your progress — quitting does, and so does punishing yourself for it. Get back to the next good meal and the next session. Don't try to starve off a bad week; that's how a cut turns into something unhealthy.

Taking a Diet Break

▲ **ONLY IF NEEDED** · Use when a break is genuinely warranted.

Why this matters: Cutting for months on end grinds you down — physically and mentally. A planned break at maintenance isn't falling off; it's a deliberate reset that lets you finish the cut stronger. This prompt tells you when one is warranted and how to take it.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Help me decide whether I need a diet break, and how to take one properly:

1. Based on how long I've been cutting and how I feel, is a planned break at maintenance a good idea right now?
2. If so, how long should it last and roughly what should I eat during it?
3. How do I take a break without undoing my progress or sliding into a full fall-off?
4. How will I know when I'm ready to resume the cut?

Be honest — tell me if I'm just looking for an excuse, or if I genuinely need this.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

Cutting for months straight wears you down. Stepping back to maintenance for a week isn't falling off — it's a deliberate reset that lets you come back and finish stronger. The trick is planning it, not just drifting off the plan and calling it a break.

Knowing When to Stop

● **FINISH** · The last prompt of the phase. Run it once, when you're close.

Why this matters: The final skill of a cut is knowing when you're done — before you cut into the muscle you worked to reveal. This prompt helps you read the finish line and transition out cleanly without rebounding. Run it in your data chat — between the summary it opened with and this month's uploads, it holds your whole cut.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Help me figure out whether I'm ready to end this cut:

1. Based on my goal, my current look, and my strength, have I revealed enough — or should I keep going a bit longer?
2. What are the signs I've cut far enough and pushing further would just cost me muscle?
3. How do I transition out of the deficit without rebounding and undoing the work?
4. What comes next for me — a lean bulk to build more, or a recomp to hold and refine? Point me to the right next phase. **If I haven't actually completed a full bulk-and-cut cycle, don't offer me recomp — point me to a bulk.**
5. Whichever phase it is, it starts with a fresh sit-down in a new chat. Give me my **phase hand-off summary** as clean plain text: final weight, current lifts, my targets as they stand, my profile basics, and anything my next coach should know. I'll paste it at the top of that new sit-down.

Help me finish at the right moment, not an arbitrary number.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I stop cutting when I can see the definition I built — not at some arbitrary low number on the scale. Cut too far and you just look small and flat, and you start eating into the muscle you came here to show. Reveal it, then stop. That takes more discipline than cutting harder does.

A NOTE ON THE HARD PART

If the Cut Starts to Feel Wrong

Cutting is the phase where a healthy goal can quietly turn into an unhealthy one. If you notice food taking over your thoughts, guilt after eating, an urge to punish yourself with restriction or exercise, or the number on the scale controlling your mood — please take that seriously. Those aren't signs of discipline; they're signs to step back.

*There's no physique worth your health or your peace of mind. Talk to a doctor, or reach out to a support line. **In the U.S.:** the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, **1-866-662-1235** (allianceforeatingdisorders.com), staffed by licensed clinicians. **In Canada:** NEDIC, **1-866-633-4220** (nedic.ca). Both keep limited daytime hours — so if you need someone right now, at any hour of any day, you can **call or text 988** in either country. Elsewhere, search for your own country's eating disorder association. Asking for help is the strongest thing you can do.*

Build Muscle and Lose Fat at Once

Recomp is the slow, precise path: you eat around maintenance and let your body composition shift gradually — muscle up, fat down, scale weight roughly stable. It's the hardest phase to rush and the easiest to stick with, because nothing about it feels extreme. It's for someone who has completed a bulk-and-cut cycle and wants to refine without the swings of another dedicated phase.

Are you sure you should be here? Recomposition is not a beginner starting phase — and here's the honest reason why. *It isn't that your body can't do it. If you're new, or coming back after a long layoff, you'll likely get some recomposition for free in your first months — beginners build muscle while losing fat more readily than anyone else, and you don't have to program for it to get it. The problem is reading it. Recomp is the slow lane: the scale barely moves by design, so telling “working” apart from “stalled” takes a trained eye and months of your own data to compare against. Run it as your first phase and you'll spend your first year unable to tell whether anything is happening — which is exactly when people quit. So you earn this phase by running one clean bulk and one clean cut first: not because your body isn't ready, but because **you** won't be able to read the signal until you know what your own data looks like when it's moving. If you haven't completed a cycle, close this section and go back to the Router (Prompts 0 and 0-A). If you got here from a completed cycle — welcome. This section teaches recomp the same way Bulk and Cut are taught: the AI reads your data and coaches you through, one prompt at a time.*

And one straight piece of honesty about that gate: Prompt 0 asks for proof of the cycle you finished, and your coach will send you back to the Router without it. But it's an AI reading what you type — **you could talk your way past it in ten seconds.** There's no lock here and never was: it's a check against yourself, not against me, and the only person a fake cycle costs is you.

Two heads-ups before you start. First: the prompt numbers in this phase jump — from 3 to 6, and from 8 to 12. Nothing is missing: recomp folds two setup steps into Prompts 2 and 3, and keeps 12 as the exit, matching the Cut phase's exit number. Your monthly loop is **Prompts 6 then 7** — checkpoint, then adjustment — and you close the month straight after 7, like every other phase. **Prompt 8 sits outside that loop:** run it whenever you want to read whether the recomp is actually working. Second: recomp has no dedicated deload or fell-off prompt because the Bulk ones are written to work in any phase, word for word, with nothing to change — genuinely run-down after months of pushing? Run PROMPT 11C — The Deload (page 93) in your data chat. Lost consistency for a stretch? PROMPT 11B (page 91) is journey-wide.

Sanity numbers for recomp: *the scale should hold roughly steady — drifting about 2–3 lb around your line is normal. If it drifts more than that over a full month, nudge intake by 100–150 calories, not 500. Protein stays around 1g per pound. And read progress over months, not weeks — strength, the mirror, and (if you use one) the tape tell the truth here; the weekly scale doesn't.*

Your Recomposition Profile Setup

● **DO FIRST** · The first thing you run in this phase. Once, before anything else.

Why this matters: Recomp lives or dies on precision, so your coach needs an accurate picture of where you are. Start the new chat by pasting the hand-off summary from the cut you just finished, then run this — it updates your coach on where your body is NOW, before it sets a single number. This intake captures your current composition and training so everything that follows is dialed to you.

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

You are an experienced strength and physique coach with a strong grounding in exercise science and evidence-based nutrition. You reason from the specific data I give you rather than generic templates, you explain the “why” in plain language, and when the science is genuinely uncertain or my data is incomplete, you say so honestly instead of guessing. This conversation is for building my plan only — once it's built I'll move my day-to-day data into a separate chat, so don't ask me to start logging here. When I ask, give me a clean plain-text summary of everything we decide — my plan and my targets (calories, protein, split, goal) — so I can carry it across. I'm starting a body recomposition phase and I want you to be my AI recomp coach for this whole conversation. Before you do anything else with this message — before you read the rest of my profile, before you summarize anything — find my answer to the age question below and check it **FIRST**, in isolation from everything else I've written. If it's under 18, stop right there: don't process the rest of this profile, don't summarize it, just follow the standing under-18 rule at the end of this prompt. Only move on to the rest of my profile once you've confirmed I'm 18 or over. Here's where I am:

1. My age, sex, and height: [FILL IN — sex matters for the calorie math in Prompt 2, so don't skip it; “prefer not to say” is fine and the AI will use ranges that cover both]
2. Current weight: [get on a scale]
3. How I'd describe my current body: ["lean but want more muscle", "decent shape, some fat to lose while I build", etc.]
4. My training experience so far — how long I've trained, how consistently, and my current lifts if I know them — plus the bulk-and-cut cycle I completed before arriving here: [FILL IN]
5. My goal for this recomp, in plain words: [e.g. "add muscle and lose a bit of fat without changing weight much"]
6. Days per week I train and my equipment: [your real schedule + gym/home/etc.]
7. My typical day outside the gym, my average sleep, and my current stress load: [mostly sitting / active job — rough daily steps if known; hours of sleep a night; pretty free / moderately busy / slammed — recomp runs on maintenance precision, and these set my maintenance number]
8. What my eating currently looks like day to day, and whether I track: [a few real examples + yes/no on tracking — recomp runs on maintenance precision, so be honest here]
9. Any injuries or limitations: [or "none"]

9B. Quick honest check — not a judgment, just so I get matched to a safe starting point. In the last few months: have I felt out of control around food, felt guilty or anxious after eating, had someone close to me express concern about my eating or my weight, or often felt I should eat less even though I'm already eating little? [Yes to any of these / No to all — if yes, say which one(s), even just briefly. This matters more than my body-fat or weight answers, so answer it honestly.]

10. Photos (optional, but recomp is the phase where they matter most): [attach one front-on and one from the side in normal or fitted clothing — or write "none". Recomp changes are slow and the scale barely moves, so photos are often the only place progress shows up. If you attach them, note what you see about where I carry muscle and fat, and use it to calibrate my starting point.]

11. My starting tape measurements, if you'll use them: [take them today, before anything else: waist at the navel, flexed arm, chest — or write "none, I'll read this off my log and the mirror." Recomp is the phase where the scale tells you least, so if you want a number to compare against, this is it.]

12. Proof of the cycle I just finished: [paste my saved log or summary. If I don't have one, give me the numbers instead — my starting weight, my peak bulk weight, my end-of-cut weight, and my main lifts at each point. **If I can give you neither, treat my cycle claim as unverified and send me back to the Router.** These are also the best starting estimate for the calories and program you're about to build.]

(Note: my guide treats Recomposition as a phase for people who have already completed at least one full bulk-and-cut cycle. If what I've told you shows I'm just starting out or haven't completed a cycle, do NOT build me a recomp plan — tell me plainly to go back to my guide's Router (Prompts 0 and 0-A, pages 45 and 49) and start with Bulk or Cut instead.)

(Safety overrides any no-follow-up rule: raise a genuine concern about my age, an injury, or my eating immediately — and if the age I give you is under 18, don't build me a plan; this guide is for adults. One more standing rule: you are a natural-training coach. If I ask about steroids, SARMs, peptides, or anything similar — now or later in this conversation — don't give me protocols, doses, sourcing, or on-cycle monitoring specifics; tell me plainly that's outside what this system covers and is a conversation for a physician. Keep helping me with training, nutrition, and everything else as normal — only the PED specifics are off-limits.)

Before you build anything: work out my BMI from my height and weight above — show your arithmetic ($703 \times \text{lb} \div \text{in}^2$, or $\text{kg} \div \text{m}^2$). If it is under 18.5, OR I answered yes to the honest-check question above, OR anything I've told you suggests I'm already eating well below what I need: do NOT build me a deficit plan of any kind — whatever I said I want, and do not offer a smaller or 'mini' version of a deficit as a middle ground; the only acceptable path here is maintenance or a surplus. Say plainly that my numbers or my answers put me outside a safe starting point for a deficit, that the right move is to eat at maintenance or more and train, and point me to real support using these exact details: in the U.S., the National Alliance for Eating Disorders free helpline, 1-866-662-1235 (allianceforeatingdisorders.com); in Canada, NEDIC, 1-866-633-4220 (nedic.ca). Both keep limited daytime hours, so also tell me that if I need someone at any hour I can call or text 988 in either country. If I'm clearly outside the US/Canada and you know the local equivalent, give me that too. Then END YOUR REPLY by asking me directly whether I want to talk to someone before we go on — make that question the last thing you say. Wait for my answer — don't hand me a plan in the same reply.

Mirror rule: if my BMI is over ~35, or I mentioned any health condition or medication, don't generate specific deficit, surplus, or training-intensity numbers yet — tell me to get a doctor's clearance first, ask me to confirm I have it or am getting it, and hold the detailed numbers until I do. When this rule applies, don't send me off to start a phase section either: tell me I can read ahead, but that we set my actual numbers together here once the doctor conversation is done.

Confirm you've got this, summarize it back, and tell me honestly whether recomp is the right phase for me or whether I'd be better served by a bulk or a cut first. Don't build the plan yet.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I didn't reach recomp overnight. I ran the bulk-and-cut cycle at least five times over the years — build mass, lean it down, build again — until I finally hit a size I was happy with and decided I didn't need to chase more. That's when recomp made sense: not adding, not stripping, just refining what I'd already earned. The first thing I did wasn't set a plan — it was get brutally honest about where I stood: exact weight, exact lifts, how I actually looked. Recomp margins are small — start with a fuzzy picture and your progress becomes invisible. Give your coach the real numbers.

Is Recomposition Right for You?

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: Recomp isn't the best choice for everyone. This prompt gives you an honest read on whether your current situation actually suits a recomp — or whether a short bulk or cut first would get you there faster.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

(If Prompt 0 already told me to go start with a Bulk or Cut instead of recomp, I'll skip this prompt and do that — this one is for confirming fit, not re-opening a settled no.)

Based on my profile, help me confirm recomp is the right call:

1. Given my current composition and training age, will I likely see good recomp results, or am I a better candidate for a bulk or cut first?
2. Who gets the best results from recomp, and do I fit that profile?
3. What realistic pace of change should I expect — and over what timeframe?
4. What would make me switch strategies later?

Answer within my situation — but if my intake above didn't actually establish a completed bulk-and-cut cycle, say so and send me back to the Router instead of answering. Otherwise: the question is whether recomp fits me NOW, not whether recomp works for beginners in general.

Be honest — if recomp is the slow road for me and another phase would serve me better, say so.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I earned this phase by living the other two first — the bulk that took me to 220, the cut that revealed what I'd built at 195. If I'd tried to recomp at 150 lbs, I'd have spent a year chasing two goals at once and hitting neither. Recomp is the right call when you're already lean-ish and trained, and what you want is refinement, not transformation. That's where I am now. It's the phase I live in.

Setting Maintenance and Protein

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: The engine of a recomp is eating right at maintenance with high protein — close enough to even that your weight holds, while protein and training drive the composition change. This prompt sets both numbers precisely.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Help me set my nutrition for a recomp:

1. Estimate my maintenance calories from my stats and activity, and set my intake at or very close to that number. Explain the logic.
2. Set a high daily protein target suited to building muscle while staying lean, and give me a floor I shouldn't drop below.
3. Give me my carb and fat targets around that.
4. Tell me how tightly I need to hit these — recomp is less forgiving of sloppiness than a bulk or cut, so how precise do I really need to be?

Keep it realistic for how I actually eat.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

After eight months of cutting on a 300-calorie deficit, moving to maintenance felt like taking my foot off the pedal. It isn't. I hold my intake steady and keep protein high — the same discipline as the cut, pointed at a different job. Because there's no big surplus or deficit doing the work, precision matters more here than in any other phase. Small, consistent, and honest beats aggressive.

WHAT RECOMP ASSUMES YOU ALREADY HAVE

You earned this phase by finishing a bulk and a cut, so recomp doesn't re-teach the fundamentals — it assumes you're carrying them forward. Exercise selection, weekly structure, warm-ups and technique, and supplements all live in the Bulking phase and apply unchanged here. If any of them have gone fuzzy, go run them again before the next prompt builds your program on top of them:

- **Bulk Prompt 5** — Supplements (p66) → **Bulk Prompt 6** — Exercise Selection (p67)
- **Bulk Prompt 7** — Structuring Your Week (p70) → **Bulk Prompt 8** — Your First Workout (p72)
- **Bulk Prompt 9** — Progressive Overload Tracking (p74)

*Cardio isn't required for a recomp, but it's a legitimate lever for maintenance calories and daily activity. To add it, use Cut Prompt 6 (p109) — **don't edit anything inside it**. Paste this line first, then that prompt underneath:*

“Before the prompt below: I'm in a recomp, not a cut. Read every mention of a cut as my recomp and my deficit as my maintenance target. Keep cardio light and off my hardest lifting days.”

DAY 1 • CHAT 1 **PROMPT 3 — RECOMPOSITION**

Training for Recomposition

● **DO ONCE** • Part of your first sit-down. Run it one time.

Why this matters: In a recomp, training is what actually drives the change — your nutrition just holds the line. That means progressive overload isn't optional; it's the entire mechanism. This prompt builds a program that earns the composition shift.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

Build me a training approach for a recomp based on my profile:

1. What training style best drives muscle gain while I hold weight steady — and why?
2. How central is progressive overload here compared to a bulk, and how should I structure it?
3. Build me a weekly structure around my available days and equipment.
4. What's the most common training mistake that stalls a recomp, and how do I avoid it?

Give me something I can start this week and actually progress on.

When you answer, give me a short plain-language explanation first, then the specific numbers or plan in a clear list I can act on today.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

When my food stopped changing, my training became the entire engine. I still track every lift, and the bar moving up is the only proof the recomp is working. The day I stop pushing progressive overload is the day I'm not recomping anymore — I'm just maintaining. Eight years in, the log is still the boss.

KEEP YOUR LOG GOING

Your setup ends here — the next prompt is for four weeks from now. Set up your data chat before you close this one (the full instructions are on page 117), then upload **daily**: your workout note on days you train, plus your weigh-in and food number every day. You've done this before, so you know the drill. Once a month add your waist measurement, and if you took starting photos retake the same two — or tell your coach you'd rather not, and have it read your lifts and the mirror instead. Recomp is the phase where those two carry the signal the scale won't. Once a week, ask for your full log as clean text and save it outside the chat — this phase runs longer than the others, so losing the record costs more. (The whole capture system is in THE TRACKING LOOP section, pages 111–120; it applies here word for word.)

DAY 28 • YOUR DATA CHAT **PROMPT 6 — RECOMPOSITION**

The 4-Week Checkpoint

◆ **REPEAT** • Come back and run this every 4 weeks.

*Why this matters: Recomp progress is subtle by design — the scale barely moves, so you have to learn to read the quieter signals. This monthly check-in teaches you to see the change that a scale alone will completely miss. **Run this in your data chat — the one you've been sending your daily uploads to. It already holds every day of the month, so there's nothing to paste.***

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

This is my 4-week check-in. You already have the whole month above — every daily upload I've sent you. **Read back through all of it before you answer**, and reason from what's actually there rather than from my summary of it. First, state the date range of uploads you can actually see, and list the daily weights you're averaging before you conclude anything from them — and answer for MY actual case, not hypothetical branches. Explain your “why” in plain language, and say so honestly if something's uncertain or if a stretch of days is missing.

[FILL IN — My own read first, before you give me yours: in one or two sentences, what do I think my data is showing? e.g. "I think my lifts are climbing but I can't see a difference" or "I think I'm actually just maintaining." If I leave this blank, just go ahead with your read.]

It's been about 4 weeks of recomp. Here's what happened — read it honestly:

- My training: take it from my daily uploads above — don't ask me to retype it.
- Weight change: [start → current — probably small, that's expected]
- My lifts: [which went up, which held]
- The mirror and how clothes fit vs. a month ago: [tighter in some places, looser in others?]
- Measurements if I have them: [waist, arms, etc.]

Since my weight is supposed to stay roughly stable, help me read the REAL signs of recomp: strength climbing while measurements and the mirror show fat coming off. Is it working?

Then ask me plainly how I'm finding the eating and the daily tracking itself — whether logging has started to feel like a chore, or like something I'm anxious about. Recomp runs longer than the other phases, so this matters more here, not less. If anything I've sent this month suggests food, the mirror or the scale is becoming stressful rather than just informative, say so plainly rather than staying on the numbers.

If I gave you my own read above, tell me where yours agrees with mine and where it differs, and why — I'm trying to learn to read my own data, not just receive a verdict on it.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

My scale has sat at 193–195 for months — and that's the plan working. I never touched a tape measure for this. I read recomp in two places: the log and the mirror. The lifts kept climbing, slowly but surely, and I looked more defined and more muscular month over month even though the scale barely moved. Strength going up while the mirror shows a harder, more built version of you — that combination is the whole win. The scale is the least informative number I track.

Adjusting a Recomposition

◆ **REPEAT** · Run this after each checkpoint, as needed.

*Why this matters: Because recomp changes are small, adjustments have to be small too — the biggest mistake is overreacting to a slow month and blowing up a plan that was quietly working. This prompt keeps your adjustments proportionate. **When the adjustment is settled, close the month — hand-off summary, fresh data chat. Page 124 is the exact move, and it's the same in every phase.***

■ **COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:**

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Based on my last checkpoint, help me adjust:

1. Are my lifts progressing while my weight stays stable — the sign recomp is working?
2. If nothing seems to be changing at all, what's the smallest adjustment to make — and should I consider tipping slightly toward a bulk or a cut instead?
3. If my weight is drifting up or down more than expected (my guide calls 2–3 lbs of drift normal, and a 100–150 calorie nudge rather than 500), how do I nudge back to maintenance?
4. Talk me out of overreacting if this is just a normal slow month.

Keep adjustments small and based on the data.

Before you finalize, sanity-check your own numbers against what's realistic for my stats, and flag anything you're estimating rather than calculating.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

Recomp demanded a patience the bulk and cut never asked of me. There are flat months — stretches where nothing seems to move and the temptation is to blow it all up and go cut or bulk again. Don't. Read the data over months, not weeks, and make the smallest adjustment that answers it. Sometimes the right adjustment is none.

Recognizing a Recomposition Is Working

◆ **REPEAT** · Run this whenever you want to check you're on track.

Why this matters: Recomp asks for more patience than any other phase, so learning to see and trust the slow wins is what keeps you from quitting a plan that's actually succeeding. This prompt trains your eye for real progress.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Help me recognize whether my recomp is genuinely working:

1. What are the true signs of a successful recomp over a couple of months — the things I should be tracking beyond the scale?
2. Looking at my strength, my measurements, and my photos if I've been taking them, is the composition actually shifting?
3. If it's working, confirm I should stay the course rather than get impatient and change things.

Help me trust a slow process when the data says it's working.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

The proof sneaks up on you. A shirt fits differently. A lift that sat still for weeks adds five pounds. The photo from three months ago looks softer than you remembered being. Nothing about recomp is dramatic week to week — but stack a few quiet months and the change is undeniable. When the data says it's working, your only job is to not interrupt it.

NO FIXED SCHEDULE FROM HERE — KEEP GOING UNTIL IT'S TIME

Recomp doesn't run on a fixed prompt count the way Bulk and Cut do — there's no Prompt 4, 5, 9, 10 or 11 here on purpose — recomp reuses the Bulk versions. Keep training, logging, uploading daily, and running Prompts 6–8 every month for as long as recomp is working. The next and last prompt in this phase, Prompt 12, isn't for today — it's for whenever you start wondering if it's time to move on, which might be months from now.

PHASE END · YOUR DATA CHAT **PROMPT 12 — RECOMPOSITION**

When to Move On From Recomposition

● **FINISH** · The last prompt of the phase. Run it once, when you're ready.

Why this matters: Recom can run for a long time, but eventually you'll either be happy with where you are or ready for a more aggressive push in one direction. This prompt helps you read that moment and pick the right next phase. Run it in your data chat — between the summary it opened with and this month's uploads, it holds your whole recomp.

■ COPY THIS INTO CHATGPT:

[GUIDE PROMPT]

Help me decide whether it's time to move on from this recomp:

1. Based on my progress and my goals, should I keep recomping, or would a dedicated bulk or cut now serve me better?
2. What are the signs I've gotten what recomp has to offer and further progress needs a different phase?
3. If I move on, which phase makes sense next for me, and how do I transition cleanly?
4. Whichever phase it is, it starts with a fresh sit-down in a new chat. Give me my **phase hand-off summary** as clean plain text: current weight, current lifts, my targets as they stand, my profile basics, and anything my next coach should know. I'll paste it at the top of that new sit-down.

Help me choose the next step based on where I've actually landed.

(Reminder: no follow-up questions — if you need to, make a reasonable assumption, state it, and give me your full answer now. The exception is any question this prompt has explicitly told you to ask me: ask those, and wait for my answer.)

JASON'S NOTE

I'm still living this phase — 195 and holding — but I know what the exit sign looks like: the day refinement stops being enough and I want a real push in one direction again, the Router is right there. Phases aren't life sentences, they're tools. Recom taught me you don't need to be chasing a transformation to train with purpose. But when you want one again — pick a direction and commit.

Your Own Research

This guide gives you the questions. These resources give you the deeper knowledge behind the answers — and, just as importantly, somewhere to actually SEE the lifts performed correctly before you load them. Not everything here is beginner-level. But these are the sources worth trusting: they're either written by credentialed researchers, backed by peer-reviewed science, or both. **If you only use these for one thing, use them to learn proper form — watch a movement demonstrated before you try it heavy. The channels best for that are tagged below.**

WEBSITES & ONLINE RESOURCES

Evidence-Based Science

01. Stronger By Science

strongerbyscience.com

Founded by Greg Nuckols (MSc Exercise Science, all-time powerlifting world records). Deep, referenced breakdowns of training and nutrition research. One of the most rigorous free resources available.

02. Renaissance Periodization (RP Strength)

rpstrength.com

Founded by Dr. Mike Israetel (PhD Sport Physiology). Covers training volume, frequency, hypertrophy mechanics, and nutrition. Their free YouTube content alone is worth bookmarking.

03. Examine.com

examine.com

The definitive database for supplements and nutrition science. Every claim is referenced to peer-reviewed research. Use it any time someone tells you a supplement will "transform your gains."

04. PubMed / NCBI

pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

The actual scientific literature. Search topics like "hypertrophy," "protein synthesis," or "progressive overload" to read the studies everything else cites. Free to access.

05. Alan Aragon's Research Review (AARR)

alanaragon.com

Alan Aragon is one of the most respected nutrition researchers in the industry, with over 25 years of evidence-based work and peer-reviewed publications. His monthly research review is for serious learners.

Practical Training & Programming

06. Bodybuilding.com [form]

bodybuilding.com

The largest fitness resource on the internet. Best for exercise libraries, form guides, and beginner program templates. Skim past the supplement ads — the training content is solid.

07. BarBend

barbend.com

Well-written training and nutrition articles by certified coaches, with a focus on strength and muscle. Good for staying current on research without needing a science background.

08. T-Nation

t-nation.com

Long-running strength and muscle publication. Some content is advanced, but their article archive on training principles, hypertrophy, and programming is extensive and practical.

09. Jeff Nippard's Website

jeffnippard.com

Jeff's written resources and programs. If you've watched his videos and want something more structured, his programs are science-based and beginner-accessible.

10. Menno Henselmans / Bayesian Bodybuilding

mennohenselmans.com

Menno holds an MSc and is known for rigorous, data-driven analysis of training and nutrition science. Higher reading level than most fitness sites, but extremely accurate.

WEBSITES & ONLINE RESOURCES (continued)

Nutrition & Calorie Tracking

11. Cronometer

cronometer.com

The most accurate free food tracking app/website. Uses verified USDA and research databases rather than user-submitted entries. Better data quality than most alternatives.

12. USDA FoodData Central

fdc.nal.usda.gov

The official US government nutrition database. Look up the exact macro breakdown of any whole food. The source most reputable tracking apps pull from.

13. Precision Nutrition

precisionnutrition.com

Evidence-based nutrition coaching organization. Their free articles and guides on eating for muscle, body composition, and habit change are practical and well-researched.

14. MacroFactor Blog

macrofactorapp.com/blog

Written by the team behind one of the most science-forward nutrition apps. Covers calorie tracking methodology, TDEE science, and progressive nutrition adjustments clearly and honestly.

Beginner-Friendly Overviews

15. r/Fitness Wiki (Reddit)

reddit.com/r/fitness/wiki

Community-maintained wiki covering beginner programs, nutrition basics, and common myths. Not academic, but practically excellent and consistently updated. Good first stop for common beginner questions.

16. Muscle & Fitness

muscleandfitness.com

One of the oldest fitness publications. Best used for workout ideas and general training inspiration. Cross-check any nutrition claims with more rigorous sources.

17. Set For Set [form]

setforset.com

Practical exercise guides, muscle anatomy explanations, and workout breakdowns written by certified trainers. Good for understanding the 'why' behind specific exercises.

18. Healthline Fitness

healthline.com/fitness

Medically reviewed articles on training and nutrition basics. Conservative and accurate — good for checking health-adjacent questions like sleep, recovery, and general wellness.

19. 3D Muscle Journey

3dmusclejourney.com

Run by a team of natural competitive bodybuilders. Focuses specifically on natural physique development — no steroids, no shortcuts, just real-world training and nutrition for natural athletes.

20. Layne Norton's BioLayne

biolayne.com

Dr. Layne Norton holds a PhD in Nutritional Sciences and is a natural pro bodybuilder and powerlifter. His content bridges academic research and practical application better than almost anyone in the industry.

Top 20 YouTube Channels — Who to Watch and Why

Split between science-based educators and practical real-world coaches. They cover different things — read what each is best for before subscribing to all 20. The ones tagged **[form]** are your go-to for learning how to actually perform each lift safely — watch the movement before you load it.

Science-Based & Evidence-Driven

01. Jeff Nippard **[form]**

youtube.com/@JeffNippard

Best for: evidence-based training and nutrition, beginner to advanced. BSc Biochemistry, natural competitive bodybuilder and powerlifter. Breaks down peer-reviewed research into practical, beginner-accessible videos. One of the most trusted names in online fitness.

02. Renaissance Periodization (RP Strength)

youtube.com/@RPStrength

Best for: hypertrophy science, training volume, nutrition principles. Dr. Mike Israetel (PhD) leads. Highly detailed content on training mechanics and nutrition. More advanced than most channels — very high signal-to-noise ratio.

03. Stronger By Science

youtube.com/@StrongerByScience

Best for: deep research analysis, programming principles. Greg Nuckols' channel. Rigorous, well-referenced breakdowns of exercise science. Lower frequency, higher depth — for those who want to understand the research, not just the conclusion.

04. House of Hypertrophy

youtube.com/@HouseofHypertrophy

Best for: muscle growth research, visualized study breakdowns. Focused entirely on hypertrophy research. Summarizes recent studies with clear visuals. No fluff — one of the most efficient channels for staying current on muscle-building science.

05. Layne Norton (BioLayne)

youtube.com/@BioLayne

Best for: nutrition science, natural bodybuilding, debunking myths. PhD in Nutritional Sciences, natural pro bodybuilder and IPF World powerlifting champion. Covers nutrition research honestly, including what the evidence doesn't support.

06. Brad Schoenfeld

youtube.com/@BradSchoenfeld1

Best for: foundational hypertrophy research, academic-level content. Dr. Brad Schoenfeld is arguably the most published researcher on muscle hypertrophy in the world. Less frequent but authoritative — primary source material.

07. Menno Henselmans

youtube.com/@MennoHenselmans

Best for: advanced training methodology, evidence-based physique coaching. MSc, founder of Bayesian Bodybuilding. Data-heavy approach to training optimization. More advanced viewing, but extremely accurate on topics most channels get wrong.

TOP 20 YOUTUBE CHANNELS (continued)

Practical, Real-World Application

08. Athlean-X (Jeff Cavaliere) [form]

youtube.com/@athleanx

Best for: exercise form, injury prevention, muscle activation. Physical therapist and strength coach. Exceptional for understanding which exercises work which muscles, and how to perform them safely. Best used for form guidance rather than programming.

09. Sean Nalewanyj

youtube.com/@SeanNal

Best for: no-BS beginner advice, myth-busting, natural bodybuilding basics. Known for cutting through fitness misinformation. Practical, honest, consistently accurate. One of the best channels for first-year lifters who want straight answers.

10. Omar Isuf

youtube.com/@OmarIsuf

Best for: natural lifting, programming advice, no-nonsense practical guidance. Long-time natural lifter with a no-BS style. Good for beginners who want practical, experience-based advice without the academic deep-dives.

11. Alex Leonidas

youtube.com/@AlexLeonidas

Best for: natural bodybuilding, calisthenics, hypertrophy for beginners. Evidence-based creator focused on natural muscle development. Well-regarded for making hypertrophy science approachable.

12. Alan Thrall [form]

youtube.com/@AlanThrall

Best for: barbell fundamentals, strength training form, beginner programming. Gym owner and coach known for exceptionally clear exercise instruction videos. Best for learning the foundational movement patterns before you add load.

13. Natacha Ocean

youtube.com/@NatachaOcean

Best for: training for aesthetics, functional fitness, honest body image content. Science-informed content on training, nutrition, and mindset. Particularly strong on sustainable approaches to building a physique without obsessing over the scale.

14. Mike Thurston

youtube.com/@MikeThurston

Best for: training lifestyle, practical workout content, aesthetics-focused bulking. Less academic, more practical. Good for visual motivation and real-world training content. Best used alongside more evidence-based channels for balance.

15. MPMD (More Plates More Dates)

youtube.com/@MorePlatesMoreDates

Best for: advanced pharmacology, bloodwork, performance enhancement science. Highly analytical content on the science of performance — including topics most channels avoid. **Aimed at advanced, non-natural audiences and well outside what this guide covers** — listed for completeness, not as a recommendation for anyone training naturally, and not a beginner resource.

TOP 20 YOUTUBE CHANNELS (continued)

Motivation, Mindset & Real Journey Content

16. Brendan Tietz

youtube.com/@brendantietz

Best for: natural bodybuilding journey, authentic transformation content. One of the more honest and grounded natural bodybuilding channels. Covers the mental side of training in a way that resonates with people who aren't competing.

17. CT Fletcher

youtube.com/@officialctfletcher

Best for: motivation, mental toughness, training philosophy. Seven-time World Strict Curl Champion. Less science-based, more about mindset and training mentality. Watch when you need to remember why you started.

18. Chris Bumstead (CBum)

youtube.com/@cbum

Best for: elite physique training, lifestyle and contest prep insight. Multiple Olympia champion. Vlog-style content showing what elite-level training and lifestyle looks like. Less instructional, more inspirational.

19. Vitruvian Physique

youtube.com/@VitruvianPhysique

Best for: natural bodybuilding, long-term physique development, honest content. Canadian natural competitor with a candid, experience-first approach. Good for understanding what real, sustained natural progress looks like over years, not weeks.

20. Will Tennyson

youtube.com/@willtennyson

Best for: engaging, entertaining fitness content, diet experiments, training variety. High-quality production, honest approach to training and eating. Less evidence-based than the top tier, more lifestyle-driven. Good for staying engaged between more serious viewing.

A final note: no single channel or website has all the answers, and even the best ones occasionally get things wrong. Cross-reference anything that surprises you. The real skill isn't finding the right guru — it's learning to evaluate information critically. That's what the guide you just finished is actually teaching you how to do.

WHAT'S NEXT

You've Just Built Something Most People Never Have

If you worked through your phase honestly, you now have something most gym-goers spend years trying to find: a real understanding of your own body, built through your own discovery process.

Ask your data chat for the whole record as clean plain text, and save it somewhere. This is your personal training manual — built specifically for your body, your stats, and your goals. Nobody else has this document. That's the point.

The Journey Continues

One phase is one lap, not the whole race. The cycle keeps going — and every leg of it is already in your hands, in this guide:

→ **Finished a bulk?** PHASE 2 — CUTTING is waiting to reveal what you built: deficit strategy, muscle preservation, cardio, and the cut exit signal.

→ **Finished a cut?** Head back to BULKING and build again on your lean base — or, once you've completed a full bulk-and-cut cycle and you're happy with your size, PHASE 3 — RECOMPOSITION is your maintain-and-refine home.

Remember: the prompts in this guide are not one-time-use. Every time you start a new phase, come back to its section. Your stats will be different. Your training age will be different. Your AI answers will be completely different. This guide travels with you for the entire journey.

A Final Word From Jason

I started this journey as a 16-year-old kid who had just landed in a brand-new country. I couldn't really speak the language, I was shy and introverted, and I had no idea how to navigate any of it on my own — new place, no friends, no map. On top of all that I was skinny, soft, stuck in a frame I didn't ask for and didn't know how to change. I felt invisible.

So I get it — maybe more than you think. If you're starting out skinny, unsure of yourself, not feeling powerful in your own body yet, I was exactly there. Everything I know came from years of trial, error, observation, and a stubborn refusal to give up on figuring out what actually works. Nobody handed it to me. I built it one honest adjustment at a time, and slowly the kid who felt invisible turned into someone who walks into a room differently. Not because of genetics — I had none of the advantages — but because I kept showing up and kept learning.

I didn't hire a coach for any of this, either. No personal trainer, no custom meal plan handed to me by somebody else — just food, protein powder, creatine, and years of getting it wrong before I got it right. I'm not telling you that to brag. I'm telling you because it means the barrier was never talent, and it was never luck. Here's the actual truth about succeeding at anything: you don't have to be special. You have to be what most people simply aren't — consistent, determined, and willing to do the boring work with no shortcuts. That's the whole edge, and it's the same one available to you.

That's the whole point I want you to take from this: if that version of me — a shy, skinny kid in a country he didn't understand, with a bad frame and zero confidence — could build this, then **you can too**. There is nothing special about where I started. There's only what I did with it — and that's the whole belief this guide runs on: with the right approach and a system, the road is there for anyone willing to walk it. This guide is me handing you the map I

never had, so your version of the journey can be faster and less lonely than mine was.

Use it. If it helps you, point the people you care about to it so they can get their own copy. And when you've built something you're proud of — when you feel stronger and more like yourself in your own skin — share your story, because someone out there is exactly where you started, and your proof might be the thing that makes them believe it's possible. That's how we build a community around this.

Your body is the proof. Go build it.

ONE LAST THING

Tell me how it went. *I'll be straight with you: it takes five or ten minutes, not two. But I read every single one myself, and right now it is the only thing telling me whether any of this actually works. What worked, what confused you, where you got stuck, and whether you'd actually keep using it. Don't be polite — be useful. This system has been rebuilt more times than I can count off the back of exactly that kind of feedback, and the rough edges you name are the ones the next person won't have to hit.*

Tell me how it went:

jasonxroad.com/feedback

There are three short forms there, not one — pick whichever matches where you actually are. One for the day you build your plan, one for the end of your first week, and one for after your first monthly check-in. That last one is the part of this system nobody has tested yet, and your answers would be the first evidence either way.