

# YEAR TWO

The Advanced Fat-Loss & Muscle Guide for  
People Past the Basics



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Training progression, lean bulking and the advanced layer

## 01

## Beginner to Intermediate — What Actually Changes

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- Progress usually slows as training experience builds
- Your body may need a clearer training stimulus than it did in the first few months
- Progress now needs structure and intent, not more motivation
- More load and volume are not automatic. Increase them when performance, technique and recovery support it
- Recovery still matters, but soreness or one poor session is not a diagnosis
- The shift is from repeating the same sessions to making measured changes and checking the result

## 02

## Progressive Overload — The Real Mechanics

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Overload isn't just "add weight to the bar." Four levers, used deliberately:

- **Load** — the weight on the bar. Increase in small, sustainable jumps
- **Reps** — more reps at the same weight before you add load
- **Volume** — total sets × reps × weight across a week, not just per session
- **Frequency** — hitting a muscle group more often per week at the same total volume
- Rotate which lever you push — don't chase heavier weight every single week, it stalls
- Track it. If you're not writing numbers down, you're guessing, not progressing
- Use an app to log this — **Strong** or **Hevy** both do it free, or a plain spreadsheet works just as well if you actually use it

## 03

## Deloads Are A Tool, Not A Calendar Rule

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A lighter week can help manage fatigue. Research does not support one mandatory schedule for every lifter.

- Plan a lighter period around a hard block, travel, competition or a known recovery squeeze if that helps your programme
- Use one responsively when performance and recovery have been poor for more than a session and sleep, food, stress and illness have been checked
- A stalled lift or one bad night is not enough on its own
- Reducing weekly sets is common. Load, effort and exercise choice can also change
- There is no universal half-the-sets or 60%-of-working-weight formula. Keep enough training to practise the lifts without extending fatigue
- Persistent pain or unusual symptoms need proper assessment, not a harder deload

## 04

## Fasting — Optional, Not A Reset

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- Fasting is an eating schedule. It is not an insulin or appetite reset
- Some people find a shorter eating window convenient. Others train, recover and manage hunger better with meals spread across the day
- Total energy, protein, hydration and food quality still matter
- Check what happens to your own training and recovery instead of following a rigid fast-day rule
- Do not use fasting as punishment for eating more than planned
- If you have diabetes, take medication affected by food, are pregnant or breastfeeding, are under 18, or have an eating-disorder history, get individual clinical advice before fasting

## 05

## Controlling Tempo — Concentric vs Eccentric

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**Concentric** = the lifting phase. **Eccentric** = the lowering phase under load.

- Both phases contribute to the training stimulus
- A controlled rep makes technique and range of motion easier to repeat
- A wide range of normal repetition durations can build muscle. Slower is not automatically better
- Tempo alone has not been shown to make a lift injury-proof
- Use a notation such as 3-1-1-0 when a planned pause or lowering speed helps you repeat the same rep
- Pick a tempo you can control and log. Do not turn every set into a stopwatch test
- Tempo work can be useful for technique and accessory work. It is not a shortcut around load, effort and progression

## 06

## Lean Gaining — Start Small And Review

- Faster bodyweight gain usually adds fat faster. A bigger surplus is not a guaranteed muscle shortcut
- Use **nononsensefitness.ie/tdee-calculator** for a maintenance estimate, then make a small adjustment rather than treating the result as exact
- Track the weekly weight trend alongside waist measurements and gym performance
- There is no universal 200–300 calorie surplus or 0.25–0.5kg weekly target. Body size, training age and the purpose of the phase change what is sensible
- If weight and waist are rising faster than planned without better training performance, review the intake
- Adequate protein supports training adaptation, but training, total food intake and recovery still do the work together

### TODAY'S ACTION

Track the intake and the weekly trend before changing either. Create a free account at **nononsensefitness.ie/tracker** to use the current tracker and sync your diary. The barcode scanner is included.

## 07

## Steps and Cardio Still Matter — Even While Bulking

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- Heart health doesn't take a break because you're in a building phase
- Cardio and daily movement can stay in the plan while you gain. Fit the amount around your training and recovery
- Steps are a useful way to monitor daily movement, not a universal 8,000–10,000 prescription
- Ireland's adult guidance is 150–300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week, or 75–150 minutes vigorous, plus muscle strengthening on at least two days. Build towards it from your current ability
- If extra cardio repeatedly harms lifting performance or recovery, adjust the dose or timing
- Not sure what intensity those sessions should be? Plain-English breakdown of the 5 heart rate zones:  
[nononsensefitness.ie/blog/cardio-training-zones-explained](https://nononsensefitness.ie/blog/cardio-training-zones-explained)

## 08

## Cutting After The Bulk — The Other Half

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The bulk builds it. The cut reveals it. Most people only plan the first half.

- End the gaining phase when the planned block ends or the trend no longer matches the goal
- Use the maintenance estimate as a starting point and make a modest, individual reduction. Do not assume every cut needs the same 300–500 calories
- Resistance training and adequate protein can help retain lean mass. Performance may still fluctuate during an energy deficit
- Choose the rate from body size, training history, health and how well you are recovering. One percentage does not fit everyone
- Diet breaks are optional. They may help adherence or give a planned pause, but research does not show that everyone needs one after 10–12 weeks or that they automatically repair metabolism

## 09

## Sleep Optimization for Recovery at This Volume

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At beginner volume, sleep is "get enough of it." At this volume, it has to be actively managed the same way you'd manage a training block.

- **Target 7–9 hours**, protect the last hour before bed the same way you'd protect a training session
- Keep sleep and wake times reasonably consistent when life allows
- Keep the room dark, quiet and comfortably cool. There is no single correct temperature for everyone
- Caffeine timing and sensitivity vary. HSE guidance suggests avoiding it for eight hours before bed; move it earlier if sleep is still affected
- If late training regularly delays sleep, test an earlier session or a longer wind-down and compare the result
- Track something simple — resting heart rate or just how you feel on waking. A pattern over 2–3 weeks means something, one bad night doesn't

## 10

## Reading Your Own Bloodwork Trends Over Time

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Keep copies of results if your clinician orders tests. Interpretation and repeat timing belong with the clinician who knows why the test was ordered.

- A result can be affected by hydration, recent training, illness, medication, time of day and the test itself
- Follow the preparation instructions for that test. Fast only when the clinician or laboratory tells you to
- Record the date, marker, value, units and reference range. Different laboratories can use different methods or ranges
- Do not diagnose yourself from a spreadsheet trend or compare one marker with somebody else's result
- There is no general every-8–12-weeks testing rule. Your GP decides whether a repeat is useful and when to do it
- Contact the clinician who ordered the test if a result is outside range, changes unexpectedly or does not make sense

## 11

## Research Peptides — Keep Research And Fitness Advice Separate

No peptide stack belongs in a general fitness progression guide. The research library reviews individual compounds and the limits of the evidence. It does not provide a personal stack or protocol.

- A pathway, animal study or early human signal does not prove a fitness or recovery benefit in people
- Research-only and unapproved status matters. So do product quality, legality and the absence of reliable human safety data
- Blood tests do not make self-treatment safe and do not turn monitoring into medical approval
- Approved medicines and hormone care belong with a qualified clinician
- Read compound-by-compound evidence at **[nononsensefitness.ie/peptides](https://nononsensefitness.ie/peptides)**. Check the study design, participants, outcome and uncertainty before trusting a claim

### NOTE

For education only. No diagnosis, prescribing, dosing or stacking. Speak to a qualified healthcare professional before considering a medicine or any unapproved compound.

## 12

## Where I Buy The Supplement Side

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Supplements are the last 5% of this — nothing here replaces the training, food and recovery above. Two Irish suppliers I've been buying from myself for about three years:

- **MyCore Supplements** — mycoresupplements.ie. Code **NNF10** takes 10% off. The code does not apply to items already on sale or on special offer
- **HardCore Supplements** — hardcoresupplements.ie. Code **NNF10** takes 10% off. The code does not apply to items already on sale or on special offer
- No Nonsense Fitness takes no commission on anything you buy from either. The code is a discount for you, not a payment to me — if the sale price is better than 10%, take the sale price

## 13

## What Comes Next

If you've read this far, you're past the point of needing basics explained — the next step is depth, not more starter content.

- **The full peptide research library:**  
[nononsensefitness.ie/peptides](https://nononsensefitness.ie/peptides) — every compound I've written about, mechanisms and research context, no dosing-as-prescription
- **More free tools like this guide:** [nononsensefitness.ie/free-tools](https://nononsensefitness.ie/free-tools)
- **Follow along day to day:** TikTok [@nononsensefitness](https://www.tiktok.com/@nononsensefitness), Instagram [@nononsensefitness](https://www.instagram.com/nononsensefitness)

### NOTE

**Evidence notes:** Deload practice is common but published evidence does not establish one compulsory schedule ([PubMed 36619355](#); [39446750](#)). Normal repetition durations from about 0.5 to 8 seconds produced similar hypertrophy in a meta-analysis ([PubMed 25601394](#)). A small trial found faster weight gain mainly increased fat gain ([PubMed 37914977](#)). Diet breaks did not improve body composition or metabolic rate versus continuous restriction in a resistance-trained female trial ([PubMed 37181269](#)). Activity and sleep guidance comes from [HSE Every Move Counts](#) and the [HSE Brain Health Guide](#).

## Nothing above is a sales pitch

It's the same thing this whole guide has been — the actual information, so you can make your own call from there.

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