

KICKSTART YOUR NUTRITION

Step-by-step guide to nutrition

This is a short written guide designed to accompany the five day live series - 'Kickstart your Nutrition' which can be found on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) (@therunningrules). If you would like to know more, please contact me at alan@therunningrules.com.

1. Record your current intake

The first task is to either write down what you ate last week (if you can remember) or start recording a food diary from today. If you can, write down times as well but don't judge any of your choices at this stage. Just be honest.

Be aware that your normal choices may be overridden once you start recording because you may become more conscious of what you are eating. Try and get a picture of what you would normally do even if you decide to do something differently. Use the plan from the last page of this guide to get an overview of what a normal week looks like.

2. Write down your nutritional goal(s)

We can't evaluate our nutritional choices until we know what our goals are.

Set your goal for nutrition and ensure it aligns with your core values - i.e. something you truly believe in. Keep asking 'why' to do this.

Make sure your goal is specific and based in the here and now. Vague goals way off in the future will be difficult to follow through on. Use the SMART model:

S - Specific

M - Measurable

A - Achievable

R - Relevant

T - Time-bound

3. Understand calorie balance

Work out from your goal whether you need to reduce or increase calories by understanding calorie balance.

'**Calories in**' is the energy in the food we eat and '**calories out**' is the energy our body uses for all bodily functions. An excess of 'calories in' will create fat storage whilst a shortfall will be compensated by using fat stores.

Start looking at labels and on the internet for how many calories are in certain foods. You may be surprised at what is low and high in calories.

However, don't assume that this means 'good' or 'bad', there are other factors to consider and ultimately food choices will only move you slightly closer or further away from your goals.

4. Evaluate food choices

Concentrating on a balanced varied diet that includes mostly unprocessed foods is likely to cover your nutritional bases and move you towards your goals.

However, giving yourself unconditional permission to eat what you want once you've weighed it up with your goal is important for sustainability.

- What foods can you add to your diet to improve it?
- What foods that are sub-optimal and you would not miss could you eliminate?
- What foods could you moderate by reducing how much you buy or swap for something else that will still satisfy you but be more optimal?

Try to cover any nutritional gaps caused by lack of foods you can't or won't eat.

Get a balance that suits you. You could try 80/20 or 90/10. 100% is likely to be too restrictive and lead to failure in time.

Remember, there are no good or bad foods, just ones that will move you towards or away from your goal at that particular time.

5. Track your approach

Tracking what you are doing with your nutrition allows you to tweak things over time if necessary. Tracking is a sliding scale from lightweight to very detailed which you can change at any time. Options are:

- Mindful Eating
- Planning
- Food Diary (written or photos)
- Weighing portions
- Tracking calories on an app
- Tracking macronutrients

6. Measure success

Measuring success allows you to assess whether things are working for you. This should be included in your **SMART** goal. Things you might track:

- Running performance (times, distance, volume, frequency, consistency)
- Weight
- Photos
- Body measurements
- 1-10 scores for energy / health / recovery / sleep / stress

7. Calories and Macros

Calorie expenditure can be estimated using the calculator at:

www.therunningrules.com/nutrition-calculator

Protein is the most important macronutrient and for endurance athletes focusing on performance, I recommend **1.4 - 2g per kg of body weight**. It is used for repairing and building muscle and must be taken in through the diet. It can be used as fuel with **4 calories available per gram**.

Fat provides **9 calories per gram** so is a rich fuel source but also required in tissues and the brain. **Saturated fat** should be moderated to a **third** of total fat intake. **Omega 3** is a particularly important **polyunsaturated fat** found in oily fish and seeds.

Carbohydrate makes up the rest of calories and is the most important fuel at higher intensity providing **4 calories per gram**.

Fat-carb ratio is more of a preference but I recommend **15-30%** calories from fat and the remainder (after protein) from carbohydrate.

Remember that looking at macros comes only after getting consistency, calorie balance and food choices sorted!

8. Revisit and tweak your plan

The last thing to do is to revisit your plan and see what bits you are going to tweak to help you towards your goals. Do this periodically by reviewing your goal, your success metrics and what you are actually doing.

Thank you for reading! If you have enjoyed this guide but feel you need more guidance in your nutrition and running then please reach out to me:



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