

## Simple Things You Can Do to Lose Weight

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If you're like most people, you might have trouble controlling your weight. Or maybe it's under control, but it won't go down to where you'd like it to be.

**Weight loss, however, doesn't have to be stressful or complicated. A few simple habit changes could make a big difference — over the long term.**



Photo by [Gunna](#)

Will these changes take you from being 100 pounds overweight to slim and sexy in four weeks? Not at all. These are simple things that are designed to make gradual and sustainable changes.

Create some simple habits, and the weight will come off. Eventually.

This is not a step-by-step guide, and you will probably not want to implement every suggestion. Choose those that would work best for you.

**1. Weigh yourself and chart it.** Each morning, weigh yourself on a digital scale and log it immediately. Your weight, of course, will fluctuate from day-to-day, and your sense of accomplishment or disappointment shouldn't hinge on your daily weight. However, your weight can be used as a useful feedback system to see what you're doing right and to motivate you. I'd recommend using the trend-oriented spreadsheet used in the [Hacker's Diet](#).

**2. Plan your meals.** This is probably the No. 1 thing you can do to lose weight. First, use a [calorie calculator](#) to estimate how many calories you need to maintain your current weight. Now, if you want to lose a pound a week, you'll want to cut that total by 500 calories per day to hit that goal (3,500 calories equals a pound of fat). If you want to lose weight slower, you can cut your total daily calories by less. I wouldn't recommend more than a pound a week (which is about 50 pounds a year).

Once you have your target calories per day, you want to allocate them throughout the day. For example, if your target is 2,000 calories, you could allocate 400 calories per meal for 4 meals (7 a.m., 11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. for example) with two 200-calorie snacks. How you allocate your calories is completely up to you — you might want to experiment to find the best distribution.

Now plan each meal so that you fit within the calorie limit for that meal. This might take some time to calculate (try [FitDay](#)), but once you have your favorite meals planned, this isn't too hard. You can have a listing of 400-calorie meals and 200-calorie snacks that are interchangeable. The key, of course, is sticking to the meal plan — don't let yourself deviate. You'll get used to it after a few days.

**3. Plan healthy snacks.** Just as you plan your meals, you should plan your snacks. See the above item on

allocating your daily calories to snacks. Instead of just snacking on whatever's available, or rushing to a vending machine or convenience store when you get really hungry, you should plan to have healthy snacks in between meals. Fruit, veggies, yogurt, dried fruit and similar snacks are all good choices.

Be sure to plan some unhealthy snacks sometimes too. You don't want to completely deprive yourself — make it a fun thing. Some dark chocolate on one day, some berries on another, and an occasional binge work for me.

**4. Find lower-fat alternatives.** Take your favorite foods and find lower-fat alternatives. If you love burgers, for example, you can make turkey burgers or soy burgers (there are some good ones, trust me). If you like French fries, make your own and bake them. Bake chicken instead of frying it. Get low-fat milk and yogurt instead of the higher-fat versions. Baked chips instead of greasy ones. While you shouldn't give up fat completely, and in fact some types of fat are good for you in moderation, it's important to remember that fat is high in calories (more than twice as calorie-dense as protein or carbs), and lowering your fat intake to a more moderate amount will also lower your calorie intake. Adding fruits and veggies is another good way to lower fat intake, as they take up a lot of space in your stomach without adding too many calories or fat.

**5. Eat slowly, and then wait 20 minutes.** If you scarf down your meals, you are probably overeating because of it. I know, because I have to slow myself down a lot. The thing is, it takes awhile for our brains to get the message that we're full. So if we eat quickly, we will actually eat past fullness. You've probably had that painful, "I've eaten way too much!" feeling, and it's because of fast eating. The trick is to teach yourself to eat slowly. You'll get full on less food.

Another trick is to eat a sensible serving (a moderate plate, not stacked up is a good rule of thumb) without eating seconds right away. If you're still a little hungry, wait for at least 20 minutes before eating any more. Often your hunger will go away.

**6. Think long term.** You won't lose weight overnight. Well, you could lose weight quickly, but you don't want to — it'll come back just as quickly. What you want is gradual weight loss that stays lost. A pound a week is a good rate — again, that's 500 calories a day less than you need to maintain your current weight, and it's about 50 pounds a year. Both are achievable, and both are sustainable. Of course, you'll need to make adjustments as you go along, in case you're taking in too little or too many calories, but the main thing is not to try for immediate and quick weight loss, but long-term loss. Don't worry about the ups and downs every day, but look at trends over weeks and months. It'll happen, if you stick with it and do it moderately.

**7. Stop drinking calories.** Calories in soda, coffee, tea, alcohol, juice and other beverages are very sneaky, because you don't realize how many calories you drink a day. Juice, for example, seems healthy, but really you're getting none of the fiber of fruit and all of the calories. Eating an orange would give you the same benefits, and make you more full.

Instead, drink water. Lots of it, all day long. Water makes you full, without giving you calories. It's the perfect weight-loss drink, available at your local tap.

**8. Read about weight loss.** This might seem like a weird tip, but I've found it to be true. If you keep your focus on your goal, you will most likely achieve it. But if you lose focus, you'll lose motivation, and soon you'll stop any progress. What you should do is read about weight loss — success stories, tips, etc. — to return you to that focus and motivation. Any time you're losing motivation, read some articles about weight loss or exercise or eating healthy.

**9. Exercise for just 5 minutes.** In the grand scheme of things, eating fewer calories is much more effective than trying to burn the calories through exercise. For example, you could burn a few hundred calories with 30 minutes of hard exercise, but you could easily gain those back with a bowl of cereal or some other snack. So if you really want weight loss, you'll have to focus on what you eat.

However, exercise does help. Burning even 200 calories a day can add up (an extra couple of pounds a month), and you don't need to exercise too long to do that. And even better, exercise makes you feel good, and feel like you're getting in shape. It makes you healthier, of course, and will get you toned.

My recommendation is to start with just 5 minutes a day. That won't get you to 200 calories, but it's a start, and that's what's important. Just do 5 minutes a day for the first week. Any kind of exercise will do — try a few

pushups, a few crunches, a few jumping jacks, and a couple minutes of running in place. After a week, increase it by 2 minutes. Do that for a couple of months, and soon you're doing 20-25 minutes a day. That's about all you need.

**10. Just get through a tough 3 days.** If you reduce your caloric intake, as per Item #2 above, you will feel hungry at first. And that's not easy. Hunger makes us want to give in. But just tell yourself that it's just for 3 days. After that, it will start to get easier. You'll get used to it, and it won't seem like deprivation.

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