



FINLAY FITNESS SYSTEMS

TRAINING · NUTRITION · LIFESTYLE

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR BODY



INTRODUCTION

First up, this is not a guide on how to crash diet and over train to try and reach an unattainable goal. We will be discussing how to create sustainable, long-term changes to your physique so that you can keep your progress and be happy with the way you look forever. **So, if you are just looking for short cuts you may as well stop here, but if you want to see real results then lets dive on in...**

When we talk about body transformations, for most people the goal is a minor or major reduction in bodyfat while also having an increase in muscle development. Most of the time, this is with the idea of changing body composition to feel confident and happier with the way that they look.

This resource is designed to guide you through all the things that are required to change your physique and give you an idea on how to implement these ideas and processes into your life. The major factors that will contribute to whether or not you are successful will be the decisions you make in regard to the following:

- **Training:** Why you should prioritise resistance training, considerations for a good training program, how many days per week you should train, how to incorporate cardio.
- **Nutrition:** Finding your energy requirements, calculating macronutrients, creating an energy deficit, body re-composition
- **Lifestyle:** Prioritising your goals, navigating a busy schedule, consistency, setting a timeline.

For some it may be enough to know what to do and what to expect if you decide to have a crack at changing your physique, while for others it may be an eye opener as to why other people choose to outsource these decisions to a coach. A coach can take care of the decision making and you can be left to simply execute. Whatever you decide, the hurdles you will face and the effort you will need to put into execution remain the same.

SET GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

When we look to begin a body transformation, it is super important to look at what is involved and what it's going to take. We all have good intentions in the beginning and want to change, but in my experience there can sometimes be a large gap between what people are willing to do or what they expect it will take, and what actually needs to be done. A good rule of thumb is when considering long you think it is going to take, double it. This may sound harsh but think of it this way, if you do reach your goals earlier than expected then that's awesome, it's not a bad thing to finish a task earlier than you thought you would. But again, these things usually take a lot longer than expected, and having unrealistic time frames will only lead to frustration and an increased likelihood of giving up. It's always best to plan for the worst and hope for the best.

As you may now be realising, this is not a guide to a rapid body transformation in as little as 6, 8, or 12 weeks. You've probably seen these advertised and maybe even tried those in that past, but almost every time these either don't happen or they don't last once the 12-week diet or training program is over. This is a guide to sustainable, long-term change. Read that again, "sustainable" and "long term". This means that it won't be quick and easy (otherwise you would have done it already). It will take sacrifice, effort, consistency, showing up and making decisions to prioritise your fitness that will likely have some impact on other parts of your life.



SETTING A TIMELINE

With that in mind, you can begin to create a timeline in your head for how long you think it will take to transform your physique. Now this can vary tremendously depending on your situation and how far away from your goal you are. There is no exact length time I can give you here that will be correct for you, but few of the big factors are:

- What your goal physique looks like
- How new you are to training
- How much excess bodyfat you currently have
- How much muscle mass you have
- What you are willing to sacrifice in terms of lifestyle (usually related to nutrition around social events)
- How often you are willing to train
- What level of nutritional tracking you are willing to do

This is where it can start to get tricky if you are tackling this transformation on your own, as taking all these factors into consideration and spitting out an exact time frame can be difficult. To give you an idea of what someone who has been training for a while and wants to commit to a “transformation” style change might be looking at, let’s use a contest prep as an example when creating a timeline.

Most contest preps can range between 16 to 24 weeks to achieve the “transformation” that the athlete is looking for. Now, for a regular person not looking to get on stage, we can assume you would want to look like a physique competitor when they are at the 8-10 weeks out stage, I say this because this is a level where the majority of people would say they look “good”, without having to dive into the major caloric restriction of the last few weeks of prep where things can get dangerous. We can also assume that this athlete already has a decent amount of muscle mass when they begin their transformation and need to remember that this person will be giving prep 100% commitment.

To relate this back to you, if someone who is already training consistently and has a decent amount of muscle mass is looking at a 10 to 12 week process to get lean, you can see how setting your sights on a quick 6-10 week “summer shred” is probably unrealistic. For a regular person looking to transform, anywhere between 16 to 20+ weeks is probably needed and should be planned for.

GETTING INTO THE RIGHT MENTALITY

Expect to be busy. When we look into however long we have decided it may take to transform, don’t plan for everything to be perfect. Expect things to be busy, expect work to happen, expect events to come up, expect your friends, family and partner to demand time of you. Do this so that when these things come up it doesn’t throw you completely off track. Anyone could transform their physique if they had all the time in the world and no other commitments, but it is likely you have other things in life that you need to dedicate time to other than just training.

Your environment isn’t going to change so your mentality needs to. You don’t have to be perfect 100% of the time, but these things have to be dealt with and you will need to make decisions around these things that either move you closer or further away from your goals. Don’t fall into the trap of waiting until everything is perfect, because it likely never will be.

Actually set a deadline. Having a time sensitive goal will give you something to work towards. If you need to achieve a certain result before a certain time it will help you stay on track and allow you measure your progress against an exact end point. It also creates a sense of urgency which can help us knuckle down and push through when we encounter temptations that can derail our progress or slow us down. So instead of a situation where we are tempted by a night out on the beers, if we didn’t have time sensitive goal it can be hard to see the impact that the night might have. However, if we have a deadline and a plan in place to meet said deadline, it becomes more obvious how that big night will impact your ability to meet the deadline you have set for yourself.

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR BODY



A QUICK TOUCH ON 'BODY-RE-COMPOSITION'

Before we jump into specific dieting, I just wanted to touch on a term called "body re-composition". This is when we build muscle and lose fat at the same time. So, while this sounds great in theory and is what most people are aiming to do long term, it is actually quite difficult to achieve simultaneously because of the way our body works. Our body builds muscle best in a caloric surplus (consuming more calories than we are burning) and only burns fat when we are in a caloric deficit (burning more calories than we are consuming) so you can see where it can become an issue if trying to do these both at the same time.

Now, there are some situations where body re-composition is possible, however they are quite specific. If you don't fall into one of the following categories, while it is technically possible to achieve, the process can be painfully slow and requires a hell of a lot of attention to detail that doesn't really work while trying to live a somewhat "normal" life. Think of it like trying to chase and catch two rabbits at the same time as opposed to chasing one single rabbit a time, it's possible to catch both, but it is really hard.

Anyway, the three situations where body re-composition is likely to occur are:

- You are new to the gym and have never done any sort of strength/hypertrophy resistance training before
- You are coming back from a long-time off training
- You are new to a proper training system, that being a structured training program usually designed by a coach for you

As you can see, these situations mainly relate to people who haven't spent time developing much muscle mass, so the re-composition is possible because their muscles are so sensitive to stimulus that they will grow regardless of calories consumed. If you have been training for a while, it is highly likely you will have already gone through a body re-composition phase, sometimes without even realising. Chances are you have likely put on some muscle and lost some fat resulting in your bodyweight staying roughly the same, which is a reason why just using bodyweight as a measurement of progress can be misleading.

CREATING YOUR DIET

Establishing Maintenance

For the purposes of this example, we are going to assume that the primary goal is fat loss while looking to maintain your current level of muscle. In my experience most people looking to "transform" the way they look don't need to put on a massive amount of muscle first, nor do they want to. Therefore, we want to find your **predicted maintenance calories** (the number of calories which if you consumed daily your weight would remain the same) and use this as our start point to then peel back from. If fat loss is your main goal, I would suggest **eating at maintenance for at least 10-14 days** before diving into a specific fat loss phase.

As the calculations we will use are just a prediction, we can use this time to adjust for accuracy depending on what your weight does and it gives us time to establish the habit of tracking intake. Think of it like this, if you are struggling to hit your calorie targets at maintenance, you probably shouldn't be going into a deficit as this is more difficult. **This phase will help you answer questions like; can you adhere to your diet on weekends? Is your sleep and stress handled? Are you in the right space mentally? Are you consistent with your training? Is your current lifestyle going to allow you to tackle this transformation goal?** Think of it like earning the right to diet.

Calculating your Calories and Macros

There are several ways to calculate your estimated Total Daily Energy Expenditure (TDEE), which is your predicted maintenance calories. You'll likely be able to find several calculators online which do this, but most will either use the Mifflin St Jeor formula or the Harris-Benedict formula. Here we will simplify things and use this simpler method that you can use instantly:

Females: 30-35 kcal per KG of bodyweight / Males: 35-40 kcal per KG of bodyweight. (Use the lower end of the range if you are relatively sedentary, use the higher end if you are more active) So, for a 70kg female with a desk job: **70kg female X 30kcal = 2100kcal.** Eating 2100 calories every day **should** maintain her bodyweight.

Remember, this is simply a prediction to find a starting point, so whatever method you use will be sufficient. In practice you would have a 10 to 14 day period to assess the accuracy. If your bodyweight is trending down, you would therefore be in a deficit, so you would need to consume more calories. If weight is trending up, you are in a surplus, so you need to eat less calories. Yes, there will be fluctuations in your bodyweight from one day to another. That's why you want to track daily and use a 5-7-day weight average and have allow for about a 1% deviation, on either side of your starting weight.

***A quick note for females,** if you generally experience large fluctuations in bodyweight around the week of your period, avoid using that week as a data point.

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR BODY

CREATING YOUR DIET (CONTINUED)

Making a Timeline

Now that we have our maintenance, we can start to configure our deficit. Generally, we want to deduct anywhere from 10-20% off our maintenance calories depending how aggressive we want to be. Note that the more aggressive you are, the less overall time we want to spend in a deficit as the side effects are greater (lack of energy, moodiness, hunger, mental fog, etc). **Technically, to drop 1kg of fat you will need to be in a calorie deficit of 7,700 calories over a period of time.** You'll need to decide how much weight you want to lose and compare that to A) how long you are willing to diet for and B) how aggressive you want your deficit to be. Here is an example:

If you wanted to lose 5kg of fat:

Example: 5kg of fat to lose = 38,500 calories

You plan on dieting for 12 weeks:

Divide that by 12 weeks which roughly equals a 3200kcal deficit per week

Which then equals roughly 400kcal deficit per day (3200kcal divided by 7 days)

With this rate of loss, you should be losing about 400g of body weight per week

If this is starting to sound a bit complicated, you may now be realising why so many people choose to hire a coach to do these calculations and track progress for them.

Macronutrients

For the best body transformation possible, you must think about the composition of your diet when it comes to protein, fats and carbs. This part can be personal preference to a degree, but because you are likely an active individual who weight-trains, the recommendations will be higher than the average population who are less active.

Protein

Protein recommendations can vary **from 1.6g per kg to 2.2g+ per kg**. The leaner you are, or you want to get, you may want to consider going higher on the protein scale. This is because with lower levels of body fat, your body may try to convert proteins for fuel - so having a higher protein intake can negate this.

Fats

Dietary fats are important for health, hormone function and energy supply. The amount of fat will vary per person based on their preferences. Typically, females prefer higher fat intakes to males but, overall, it is personal preference to a degree. A total fat intake of **0.5g - 1.5g of fat per KG bodyweight or 20 to 30% of total calories**. The lower the fat allocation the higher the carbohydrate quantities in the diet. If you are more active overall, you may need more carbs in your diet than fats.

Carbohydrates

Your carbohydrates will make up the remainder of your calories, after calculating your protein and fat. Carbohydrates are the primary fuel source of the body for moderate to vigorous activity. Carbohydrates also have muscle-sparing qualities, which is why they are found in abundance in strength athletes' diets.

Example:

100kg bodyweight, with a TDEE of 3500 kcs

Protein: 2.2g per kg x 100kg= 220g x 4 (calories per gram) gives us 880 kcs

Fat: 0.8g per kg x 100kg= 80g x 9 (calories per gram) gives us 720 kcs

880 (protein calories) + 720 (fat calories) = 1600 kcs

3500 (TDEE) -1600 = 1900 kcs

1900 / 4 (calories per gram of carbs) = gives us 475g of carbs

Once again, quite a bit of math, but you can still tackle this by yourself. There are several calculators online which may be able to help you with this if you don't want to grab the pen and paper and do the maths on your own.



HOW TO TRAIN TO TRANSFORM YOUR BODY

So now you have your diet sorted we can focus on the training side of the equation. Your training is of paramount importance when it comes to your transformation, what you do in the gym will mould your physique and will be what allows you to retain your muscle mass (which will give you the lean, toned look that you are likely after). **So, if you want to look lean, strong and have muscle tone you will need a good strength training program**

In terms of training days per week, if you are serious about your transformation and want to really put yourself in the best position to achieve your goals. **4 days per week of resistance training is what I would recommend.** If you can get to the gym 5 days, then even better! While I can't tell you exactly what you should be doing every session, as this will change greatly depending on you as an individual, here are some general considerations for your strength training:

- For most sets, you will want to train close to failure (0-3RIR), but you don't necessarily need to train to failure all the time.
- In terms of rep ranges, it can be quite broad – I find anywhere between 5-15 reps can be applied to almost any exercise effectively.
- Longer rest periods (around 2-3 mins) are favourable for optimising performance. If time is an issue, you can use opposing muscle supersets (chest/back, quads/hamstrings, etc), or smaller rest periods for exercises targeting smaller muscle groups.
- Compound exercises are great for efficiency as they can target multiple muscle groups at once.
- Machines and Cables are a great tool for targeting specific muscle groups and can be handy if you are newer to training or not as comfortable using a loaded barbell.
- As much as possible you should abide by the principles of progressive overload, meaning each week you should be aiming to lift more total volume, whether that be more weight or more reps. If in an aggressive fat loss phase, you should still be aiming to at least maintain your strength.

I always advocate to be on at least some sort of structured strength training program. A good training program is individualised, makes progress measurable, it helps keep you consistent, challenges your capabilities and by doing the same movements you will be developing your body's skill at performing exercise. All these things lead to an increase in muscle development which is what we want.

What about cardio?

As I mentioned earlier, if you want to lose fat you need to create an energy deficit. The main way of doing this is to either decrease our energy intake or increase our energy expenditure. While controlling our intake will be our primary focus, if for whatever reason we may not want to reduce our intake anymore we can instead increase our energy expenditure in the form of cardio. So, while not compulsory by any means, it can be a good idea to incorporate some sort of cardio into your plan, as this means you can eat more food, and is beneficial for our overall health, heart and lungs (which are pretty important too).

The easiest way to do this is by either **increasing your daily step count or having specific cardio sessions.** Whichever you choose the net result will be mostly the same, it primarily comes down to personal preference and what suits your lifestyle better.

If you track your steps, it can be a great way to standardise your movement and increase when necessary. An "active" daily step count sits at around **7,500 steps per day**, which is great for overall health and wellbeing, let alone aiding energy expenditure. People can work to upwards of 10,000-15,000 steps per day depending on their time commitments and level of leanness they want to obtain.

Structured cardio on the other hand can be more time-efficient because you can simply go into the gym, jump on a cross-trainer, treadmill, bike, or Stairmaster, and see how far you can go within a certain time period. You can also increase the time period as you see plateaus in results. Just like your steps, the theme here is that they can both be progressed as time goes by.



MEASURING PROGRESS

Last but certainly not least you'll want to actually track your progress to make sure you are moving in the right direction. Without actual data to go off you'll just be guessing and hoping for the best. Here are the main variables I would keep track of:

- **Progress photos:** Front/rear double bicep poses are great, and/or front + side + back shots. Comparing photos every 1 to 2 months can be a great way to see progress. Remember to take your photos in the same location with the same lighting, at the same time of day.
- **Trending bodyweight:** Trending your bodyweight average week to week is a good gauge of progress. What's important to understand here, is that the average over the week is more important than a single, isolated reading. 3 to 5 readings per week, with the same scales first thing in the morning, is best for accuracy.
- **Girth measurements:** These can be a great way to record changes in certain areas of the body like your waist, hips, thigh, and arm. If you have someone who can measure for you consistently, this is a great tool. Be wary if you don't have someone to reliably measure you though, as inaccuracy can make this variable useless.
- **Training performance:** Training performance is important to show we are maintaining or increasing strength throughout our transformation. A dramatic or gradual decrease in training performance can be due to many factors like overtraining, poor technique, high stress-load... to name a few. If we do not track our training performance, we have no idea how to address these issues.

If you have these variables covered it will be easy to assess if you are making progress, and simple to make changes if you are not. Remember we always want to be Tracking, Reviewing and Adjusting to ensure we are moving in the right direction!

You should now have all the tools and considerations needed to transform your physique. Before you start, it's important that you are sure you can establish good, life-long habits to not only achieve results but keep them.

Going forward, you should ask yourself:

- Can I keep this training schedule up?
- Can I stick to these eating habits long-term?
- Do I understand that I don't need to be in a deficit forever?
- When I achieve my goal, will I be able to maintain it?

Keep these in the forefront of your mind and best of luck on your body transformation.

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