

Meal Plan Builder: How It Works and When Plans Look Off

The builder starts every plan with realistic portions that land the day within 3% of the calorie and macro targets. When the targets and the number of meals pull against each other, something has to give. This page explains what the builder does on its own, what each message means, and what usually makes a plan look odd.

What the builder does, in order

- 1 Keeps portions realistic.** Every food has a minimum and maximum serving (table below). A plan never starts with 1 oz of chicken.
- 2 Hits the daily targets.** Calories, protein, carbs and fat must each land within 3% of the target.
- 3 Loosens the ranges only if it has to.** If strict ranges cannot hit the targets, side foods and snacks loosen first, then the main protein. A note is shown when this happens.
- 4 Skips a food that does not fit.** Not every meal needs a protein, carb or fat. If what is left for a meal is far below the smallest realistic portion, that food is left out instead of forced in.
- 5 Turns a too-small meal into a snack.** If an even split leaves a main meal under 300 calories, the last main meal becomes a snack and the day is split again.

Starting serving ranges

Food group	Starting range
Chicken, turkey, fish, beef and other cooked meats	100 to 340 g (3.5 to 12 oz)
Rice, potatoes, pasta and other starches	50 to 300 g
Egg whites	90 to 400 g
Whole eggs	1 to 6 eggs
Greek yogurt	120 to 340 g
Canned tuna	85 to 200 g
Protein powder	1 to 2 scoops
Nuts and nut butters	14 to 64 g
Olive oil	6 to 28 g
Fruit	60 to 300 g
Vegetables	60 to 350 g
Bread, tortillas, bagels, muffins	Whole pieces only, within a set count

Snack protein foods start at half the meal minimum. Custom foods you add yourself have no range. Any amount can be edited afterward, and an edited line locks.

Messages you may see

Message	What it means	What to do
Not enough for balanced meals, so a meal was made into a snack	The calories split across your meals left a main meal under 300 calories.	Accept it, or choose fewer meals.
Targets are very low or very high, so some portions went outside the usual range	Strict ranges could not hit the targets within 3%, so the builder loosened them.	Check the portions that look small or large and adjust those lines.
With 4 or more meals at this calorie level, serving sizes may not look typical	Four or more meals on a low calorie target. The builder is trying to keep every meal balanced, so portions get squeezed.	Consider fewer meals, or adjust any line.

Why a plan can look off

- **Too many meals for the calories.** 1,400 calories over 5 meals is under 300 each. There is no way to give every meal a full protein, carb and veg.
- **Protein target is low for the number of meals.** A 3.5 oz chicken portion is about 30 g of protein. With 4 or 5 meals and a protein target near 100 g, there is not enough protein to give every meal a full portion.
- **Very high calories.** Large targets push portions toward the top of their ranges, and some foods may exceed them to hit the numbers.
- **Many snacks.** Snacks use smaller portions, and the snack shake is a fixed half scoop.
- **Deleting or locking foods.** After an X or an edited (locked) amount, the rest of the day rebalances around it. If the rebalance cannot hit the targets, it quietly loosens side-food ranges before giving up, so a starch can end up smaller than its usual minimum.
- **Custom foods.** They have no serving range, so the builder can use any amount of them.
- **Unusual macro splits.** Very low fat, very low carb or very high protein targets can leave the picked foods unable to reach all four numbers.

Suggested meals and snacks by calorie range

These layouts keep each main meal near 400 calories or more, which is where a full protein, carb and veg portion fits. Amounts are approximate calories per meal and per snack, using the builder's own split (a snack gets about half the share of a main meal).

Daily calories	Suggested layout	Per main meal	Per snack	Notes
1,200	3 meals, no snacks (or 2 meals + 2 snacks)	about 400 (or 435)	about 165	Do not go past 3 meals.
1,400	3 meals + 1 snack	about 400	about 190	5 meals here gets converted to snacks.
1,600	3 meals + 1 snack, or 4 meals	about 460 (or 400)	about 220	4 meals is the most that stays balanced.

Daily calories	Suggested layout	Per main meal	Per snack	Notes
1,800	3 meals + 2 snacks, or 4 meals + 1 snack	about 470 (or 400)	about 200	Four meals starts to squeeze portions.
2,000	4 meals + 1 snack, or 3 meals + 2 snacks	about 445 (or 520)	about 220	Comfortable range for most plans.
2,200	4 meals + 1 snack	about 490	about 240	5 meals + 1 snack also works at about 400 each.
2,500	4 meals + 1 snack, or 5 meals + 1 snack	about 555 (or 455)	about 230 to 275	Full portions in every meal.
3,000	5 meals + 1 snack	about 545	about 275	Plenty of room, no squeezing.
3,500	5 meals + 1 snack	about 635	about 320	Portions move toward the top of their ranges.
4,000	5 meals + 1 snack	about 725	about 365	Large portions are expected here.

What each meal usually looks like

- **Breakfast:** whole eggs plus egg whites or yogurt, with oats or another carb and a fruit.
- **Lunch and dinner:** one cooked protein (about 3.5 to 8 oz), one starch (about 50 to 300 g), a vegetable, and a small fat such as almonds when there is room.
- **Snack:** Greek yogurt or tuna with a fruit and a little honey, or a half scoop of protein powder. Snacks do not need a full protein, carb and fat.

Below about 1,400 calories, protein does not have to be in every meal. Put the protein in two or three meals at full portions and let the rest be lighter.

Quick fixes

- 1 Reduce the number of meals, or move a meal to a snack.
- 2 Raise calories or protein slightly if the plan allows it.
- 3 Edit the odd line, then use Reset to auto to hand it back to the builder.
- 4 Swap the protein or starch for one with a different density.
- 5 Use Generate Plan again for a different food selection.

What is not changing

Trainers can still override any amount. The ranges set the starting plan only, so fewer edits are needed.