

How to Track Your Progress Toward a Goal

Get your phone out and get ready to take some progress photos—you'll want to see how much progress you have made a month from now! So far, you have learned how to shape workouts toward specific fitness goals and how to adjust your diet toward those goals. Now we will focus on tracking progress so you can know if your diet and workout program is effective. For most goals, you'll want to measure progress on a weekly or monthly basis.

How to Measure

It is important to measure your goal in a way that is relevant to the most important factor of your goal. For example, if your goal is to increase your endurance, it makes sense to measure your progress to show that—perhaps do a timed 5k race every month to compare your results to the last race.

Here are a few helpful hints on what to measure, based upon your goals:

- For a weight loss goal, measure your weight and BMI (i.e., [Body Mass Index](#)).
- For an endurance goal, measure your speed over a long distance.
- For strength gain, measure your maximum weight on a specific lift.
- For weight gain, measure your weight and body circumferences using a tape measure.

Some people find it helpful to track additional “bonus” measurements because it allows them to see more specific information. Here are some optional measurements you can take:

- Progress photos (front, side, and back) allow you to see body composition changes over time.
- Some people measure body fat percentage to know exactly how much of their weight is body fat. This is usually most helpful for competitive athletes who need to minimize body fat, but anyone can do it. Using [fat-pinching calipers](#) is the cheapest way to measure your body fat. When trying to lose weight by dieting and eating healthy, many people can see a decrease in body fat percentage of about .5% each week if they are willing to work hard.

Let's Celebrate

When you see that you're making progress in managing your weight, you should celebrate! Seeing results in your tracking means your hard work in developing new healthy habits is paying off. How do you celebrate? That's up to you, but experts recommend that it's something healthy—don't go out and order an unhealthy meal. Treat yourself to a new shirt, tell a family member, give yourself \$5 to spend on a fun item, or if you're brave, post your progress on social media!

Summary

When you work toward a goal, you will need to measure your results frequently in order to see how your body is changing. The measurements that you take need to be specific to your goal and measured in a way to quantify your progress within that area. Once you begin to see results, it's important to reward yourself, to reinforce the healthy behavior and celebrate!