



RODDY GIBBS

RESEARCH-BACKED GUIDE

The Body **Recomposition** Blueprint

Losing fat and building muscle at the same time — what the research actually says, and how to start.

RODDY GIBBS BODY TRANSFORMATION COACHING

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START HERE

What's inside

This guide answers three questions in order: whether body recomposition is real, why it works, and how to begin. Every claim is anchored to peer-reviewed research, numbered in the text and listed in full on page 14.

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Is it possible?

The short answer, the honest nuance, and who recomposition works best for.

02

How is it possible?

The mechanism behind simultaneous fat loss and muscle gain — and the two levers that drive it.

03

How to start

A simple starting framework, a checklist, and realistic expectations for your first phase.

A note on honesty: recomposition is not magic and it is not equally available to everyone. Where the research sets limits, this guide says so plainly — that is what makes a plan trustworthy.

SECTION ONE

Is it **possible?**

The bulk-then-cut binary is real advice — for some people. It is not the whole map.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Yes — under the right conditions.

Conventional advice says muscle gain and fat loss are opposing goals that demand separate phases: a calorie surplus to bulk, a deficit to cut. For lean, advanced athletes that framework still holds. But a large body of research shows that many people can do both at once — a process called body recomposition.

A 2020 review in the *Strength & Conditioning Journal*¹ found simultaneous muscle gain and fat loss documented across beginners, people with higher body fat, and even trained lifters, with two consistent drivers: progressive resistance training and evidence-based nutrition.

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CONSISTENT DRIVERS

Progressive resistance training + adequate protein appear in nearly every recomposition result.¹

+2.6 lb

LEAN MASS GAINED

In a landmark trial, men in a 40% deficit gained muscle while losing fat — with enough protein.²

-10.6 lb

FAT LOST

Same trial, same four weeks: substantial fat loss alongside that muscle gain.²

Primary sources: Barakat et al., 2020; Longland et al., 2016. Full references on page 14.

WHO IT WORKS BEST FOR

The four green lights

Recomposition is most reliable when your body has both a strong growth signal and plenty of stored energy to draw on. Four groups fit that description especially well:¹

New to lifting

Untrained muscle adapts fast to any reasonable stimulus — the classic “newbie gains” window.

Returning after a break

Muscle memory (myonuclear and epigenetic changes) lets previously-built muscle come back quickly, even in a deficit.

Carrying higher body fat

Abundant fat stores supply the energy needed to fuel muscle growth while overall weight drops.

In the first year of training

Novel stimulus plus internal energy reserves keep meaningful recomposition on the table.

THE HONEST NUANCE

If you are already lean and have trained hard for years, recomposition still happens — but slowly. For you, dedicated building and cutting phases usually produce better results than trying to do both at once.¹

SECTION TWO

How is it **possible?**

Fat loss and muscle gain are not a strict zero-sum — they draw on different systems.

THE MECHANISM

Two ledgers, not one

The old assumption is that building muscle requires a surplus and losing fat requires a deficit, so you can only do one at a time. The reality is more forgiving: your body can pull energy from fat stores to help fund muscle repair and growth, as long as the growth signal from training is strong and protein is plentiful.

Think of it as two separate ledgers. Fat is your energy account — a modest calorie deficit draws it down. Muscle is your building account — resistance training plus protein pays into it. When the deficit is modest and the training and protein are dialed in, both ledgers can move in your favor at the same time.¹

Newbie gains

Untrained muscle responds to almost any real training stimulus with rapid growth — growth that can occur even in a slight deficit.

Muscle memory

Previously-trained muscle rebuilds faster than it was first built, thanks to lasting cellular changes.

Stored energy

Higher body-fat individuals carry a large internal fuel reserve that can subsidize muscle growth during weight loss.

Mechanisms summarized in Barakat et al., 2020 (see page 14).

THE TWO NON-NEGOTIABLES

Training + protein

Across the research, the same two levers show up every time. Miss either one and recomposition stalls.

LEVER ONE

Progressive resistance training

Lifting weights is the signal that tells your body to keep — and build — muscle while you lose fat. It must be progressive: gradually add reps, weight, or sets over time. A practical starting point is training the whole body 2–4 days per week, prioritizing compound movements.

LEVER TWO

Adequate protein

Protein preserves and builds muscle in a deficit.² Meta-analysis puts the threshold for maximizing muscle gains around 0.7 g per pound of body weight per day.³ When you are leaner or in a steeper deficit, needs climb higher.⁴

General muscle gain	≥ 0.7 g / lb body weight / day
Lean or in a deficit	up to 1.0–1.4 g / lb fat-free mass / day

A NOTE ON THE TARGET

You may know the gym rule of “1 gram per pound.” The research puts the amount that maximizes muscle a bit lower — around 0.7 g/lb of body weight. Eating up to ~1 g/lb is perfectly fine and simply adds a margin; consistently hitting your target matters far more than the exact figure.

Primary sources: Morton et al., 2018; Helms et al., 2014; Longland et al., 2016. See page 14.

PROOF POINT

The study that settled it

LONGLAND ET AL., 2016 — AM. J. CLINICAL NUTRITION

40 men. A 40% calorie deficit.

Muscle up, fat down.

Forty young men ran a steep 40% calorie deficit for four weeks while lifting and sprinting six days a week. The only difference between groups was protein.

HIGH PROTEIN (1.1 G/LB)

+2.6 lb

lean mass gained

-10.6 lb

fat mass lost

LOWER PROTEIN (0.5 G/LB)

held

lean mass maintained

-7.7 lb

fat mass lost

The takeaway: even under an aggressive deficit, higher protein plus hard training turned weight loss into recomposition. Both groups improved strength equally — the extra protein bought body composition, not strength.²

IF YOU'RE ON A GLP-1

Same rules, higher stakes

If you are losing weight on semaglutide or tirzepatide, recomposition principles are not optional — they are your muscle-insurance policy. In recent trials, roughly a quarter to 40% of the weight lost on these medications came from lean tissue, not fat.⁵ That is where training and protein change your outcome.

THE RISK

Appetite suppression makes it easy to under-eat protein and skip training — exactly the conditions that let muscle slip away alongside fat.

THE PROTECTION

A 2025 case series found patients who trained 3–5 days a week and prioritized protein preserved — and in two of three cases increased — lean tissue while dropping 13–33% of body weight.⁵

BOTTOM LINE

The medication handles appetite and fat loss. Resistance training and protein decide how much of what you keep is muscle. Recomposition is how you come out the other side leaner and stronger, not just smaller.

Primary source: SAGE Open Medicine case series, 2025. See page 14.

SECTION THREE

How to **start.**

Nothing exotic. A modest deficit, real protein, progressive lifting, and patience.

YOUR STARTING FRAMEWORK

Five moves to begin

You do not need a perfect plan to start — you need the right levers pointed the right way. These are general starting points; your coach personalizes the numbers to you.

1 Set a modest deficit
Aim for a small calorie deficit (roughly 10–20% below maintenance), not a crash diet. A gentler deficit leaves room to build.

2 Anchor your protein
Build meals around protein — target at least ~0.7 g per pound of body weight daily,³ higher if you are lean or dieting hard.⁴

3 Lift progressively
Resistance-train the whole body 2–4 days a week. Add a little weight, a rep, or a set over time — that progression is the signal.

4 Protect recovery
Prioritize sleep and manage stress. Muscle is built during recovery, and both hormones and results suffer without it.

5 Be patient & measure right
Recomposition is slower than pure cutting. Track more than the scale — photos, tape, strength, and how clothes fit.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The starter checklist

- ☐ Calorie target set at a modest deficit (or maintenance if new to lifting)
- ☐ Daily protein target calculated from your body weight
- ☐ A simple full-body resistance program, 2–4 days per week
- ☐ A way to progress — log your lifts so you can add over time
- ☐ Baseline captured: photos, measurements, and a starting strength number
- ☐ Sleep and recovery routine you can actually keep

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Slower than cutting

Because you are not simply losing weight, the scale may barely move while your body changes underneath it.

When to phase instead

If you are already lean and well-trained, dedicated build and cut phases usually beat recompotion.¹

Trust the tape, not just the scale

Body-composition change hides from the scale. Measurements, photos, and strength tell the real story.

SOURCES

The research behind this guide

Superscript numbers in the text point to the sources below. Every core claim traces to peer-reviewed work so you can read it yourself.

- 1** Barakat C, Pearson J, Escalante G, Campbell B, De Souza EO. (2020).
Body Recomposition: Can Trained Individuals Build Muscle and Lose Fat at the Same Time? Strength & Conditioning Journal, 42(5), 7–21.
Establishes that recomposition is documented across untrained, higher-body-fat, and trained populations, driven by resistance training and evidence-based nutrition.
- 2** Longland TM, Oikawa SY, Mitchell CJ, Devries MC, Phillips SM. (2016).
Higher compared with lower dietary protein during an energy deficit combined with intense exercise promotes greater lean mass gain and fat mass loss: a randomized trial. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 103(3), 738–746.
Direct demonstration of recomposition: the high-protein group gained lean mass and lost fat in a 40% deficit.
- 3** Morton RW, Murphy KT, McKellar SR, et al. (2018).
A systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-regression of the effect of protein supplementation on resistance training-induced gains in muscle mass and strength in healthy adults. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 52(6), 376–384.
Identifies ~0.7 g/lb/day as the point beyond which added protein yields no further muscle gains.
- 4** Helms ER, Zinn C, Rowlands DS, Brown SR. (2014).
A systematic review of dietary protein during caloric restriction in resistance-trained lean athletes: a case for higher intakes. International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, 24(2), 127–138.
Supports 1.0–1.4 g/lb of fat-free mass for lean athletes dieting hard.
- 5** Preservation of lean soft tissue during weight loss induced by GLP-1 and GLP-1/GIP receptor agonists: A case series. (2025).
SAGE Open Medicine.
Lean tissue was 26–40% of weight loss in recent GLP-1 trials; patients who resistance-trained and prioritized protein preserved or increased lean mass.



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YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's build your **recomposition plan**

This guide is the map. A Transformation Diagnostic turns it into your plan — a 90-minute session that builds your protein target, training, and a personalized roadmap around your goals.

BOOK YOUR TRANSFORMATION DIAGNOSTIC

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This guide is educational and not medical advice. Body-composition change varies by individual. If you take a GLP-1 or any medication, coordinate changes to diet and training with your prescribing clinician.

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