



FREE GUIDE · NO HYPE

INTERMITTENT FASTING.

The honest, no-nonsense guide to eating in a window — what it actually does, what it doesn't, and whether it's even worth it for you.

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A QUICK WORD FIRST

READ THIS BEFORE YOU SKIP A MEAL

There's more nonsense talked about intermittent fasting than almost anything else in fitness. People treat it like a magic switch. It isn't. But used properly, it's one of the simplest, most freeing tools I give clients. This guide is the version I wish everyone read before they tried it.

I'm Pete. I've coached people in Leeds and online for over fifteen years, and I've watched intermittent fasting (IF) help some people lose two stone without ever feeling like they're "on a diet" — and watched it make others miserable, binge every evening, and quit in a fortnight. The difference is never the fasting itself. It's whether it fits the person.

So I'm not here to sell you on it. I'm here to tell you the truth: what fasting is, why it works when it works, who it suits, who should leave it alone, and exactly how to start without hating your life. If by the end you decide it's not for you — brilliant, that's a win too. You'll have saved yourself a month of hunger and disappointment.

THE ONE-LINE SUMMARY

Intermittent fasting doesn't burn fat by magic. It helps you eat fewer calories without counting every one — **if** that's a problem you actually have. That's it. Everything else in this book is detail.

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CHAPTER 01

WHAT FASTING ACTUALLY IS

You already fast every single night. We just don't call it that — we call it sleeping.

Here's the whole concept in one sentence: every day is split into a **feeding window** (the hours you eat) and a **fasting window** (the hours you don't). If you finish dinner at 8pm and have breakfast at 8am, you've just fasted for twelve hours. That's a 12/12. Nobody calls it intermittent fasting, but it is.

"Intermittent fasting" just means deliberately making that fasting window a bit longer and the feeding window a bit shorter. Instead of 12 hours off and 12 hours on, you might do 16 off and 8 on. You're not eating anything exotic. You're not taking anything. You're just choosing *when* you eat, not changing *what* you eat — at least not directly.

THE THING NOBODY TELLS YOU ABOUT HUNGER

Most people panic about four or five hours after their last meal. The stomach grumbles, the brain shouts "feed me", and we obey. But here's what you learn the first time you push past it: **hunger isn't an emergency, it's a wave**. It rises, it peaks, and — if you don't feed it — it falls again on its own. Twenty minutes later you've forgotten about it.

That single realisation is, for a lot of my clients, worth more than any diet plan. Once you know hunger won't kill you and won't last, you stop eating out of panic and start eating out of choice. Fasting is one of the easiest ways to learn that lesson on purpose.

REAL VS HEAD HUNGER

Real (physical) hunger builds slowly and any food sounds good. Head hunger comes on suddenly, is usually for something specific (crisps, chocolate, that thing in the cupboard), and is often really boredom, stress or thirst. Fasting trains you to tell them apart.

CHAPTER 02

WHY IT WORKS (AND IT'S NOT MAGIC)

If you take one thing from this whole guide, take this: fasting works because it helps you eat less — not because the clock does something mystical to your fat cells.

The internet will tell you fasting "switches your body into fat-burning mode", "spikes your metabolism", and "resets your hormones". There's a sliver of truth buried in some of that, but it's mostly noise. The honest, boring, repeatedly-proven reality is this: **when you shrink the window in which you're allowed to eat, most people naturally eat fewer calories.** Fewer calories over time means fat loss. That's the engine. Everything else is a passenger.

Think about your own day. If you can't eat until midday, that's breakfast and the mid-morning biscuits gone. If you stop at 8pm, that's the late-night picking gone. You haven't "dieted" — you've just closed the kitchen for a few more hours, and the calories you'd have mindlessly grazed simply never happened.

SO WHAT ABOUT ALL THE HEALTH CLAIMS?

There *is* genuine research suggesting fasting may help with things like blood-sugar control and giving the digestive system a rest, and longer fasts trigger cellular "housekeeping" processes. It's promising. But a lot of the dramatic stuff comes from animal studies or very small trials, and it's years away from being settled science. So treat the health benefits as a nice possible bonus — not the reason you're doing it.

**CONTROL THE CALORIES AND THE PROGRESS LOOKS
AFTER ITSELF.
FASTING IS JUST ONE WAY TO DO THAT.**

This matters because it sets your expectations correctly. If you fast all morning and then eat 3,000 calories of pizza in your window, you will not lose a pound — and you'll wrongly conclude "fasting doesn't work for me." It worked fine. The maths didn't.

CHAPTER 03

THE PROTOCOLS — PICK YOUR WINDOW

There isn't one "intermittent fasting". There's a family of approaches, from gentle to hardcore. Here are the ones worth knowing, with my honest take on each.

PROTOCOL	HOW IT WORKS	BEST FOR
12/12 BEGINNER	Fast 12h, eat in a 12h window. Basically "don't eat after dinner, don't eat first thing." The natural baseline.	Total beginners, late-night snackers, anyone easing in.
14/10 GENTLE	Fast 14h, eat in 10. Push breakfast back to ~10am, finish by 8pm.	Most women, busy parents, the best "everyday" option for many.
16/8 THE CLASSIC	Fast 16h, eat in 8. Skip breakfast, first meal ~midday, last by 8pm. The most popular by far.	People who aren't hungry in the morning anyway. The default.
5:2 INTERMEDIATE	Eat normally 5 days, drop to ~500–600 cal on 2 non-consecutive days.	People who hate restricting every day and prefer two hard days.
OMAD ADVANCED	One Meal A Day — a ~1–2 hour window, fast the other 22.	Experienced fasters who genuinely prefer it. Not a starting point.
24h fast OCCASIONAL	Dinner to dinner, once a week or now and then. "Eat-Stop-Eat" style.	A skills exercise for managing hunger, not a daily habit.

PETE'S PICK FOR MOST PEOPLE

Start at 14/10 and only tighten to 16/8 if it feels easy. 16/8 gets all the headlines, but 14/10 delivers most of the benefit with a fraction of the misery, and it's far more sustainable for women and for anyone who actually enjoys breakfast.

HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM

Don't pick the hardest one to prove a point. Pick the one you can still be doing in three months, because consistency is the only thing that moves the needle. Run yourself through these questions:

- ◆ **Am I actually hungry in the morning?** If yes — keep breakfast and shorten the evening instead (eat 7am–5pm). If no — skipping breakfast with 16/8 will feel effortless.
- ◆ **Do I train early?** Hard morning sessions on a long fast can wreck performance for some people. Put your window around your training (more on that in Chapter 7).
- ◆ **Is my social life mostly evenings?** Then a window that closes at 8pm is a nightmare. Shift it later, or use 5:2 so most days are normal.
- ◆ **Do I prefer a little restriction daily, or a lot occasionally?** Daily-restriction people love 16/8. "Just get it over with" people love 5:2.

And one rule above all: **you can change your mind**. The window isn't a contract. Some weeks 16/8 will feel easy; some weeks (stress, poor sleep, your cycle) it won't, and you drop back to 12/12. That's not failing. That's using the tool intelligently.

**THE BEST PROTOCOL IS THE ONE
YOU'LL STILL BE DOING IN THREE MONTHS.**

CHAPTER 04

WHO IT SUITS — AND WHO SHOULD SKIP IT

Fasting is a tool, not a moral test. For some people it's the easiest thing they've ever done. For others it's the wrong tool entirely — and there's no shame in that.

YOU'LL PROBABLY LOVE IT IF...

- You're not hungry in the mornings and only eat breakfast "because you're supposed to".
- You're a grazer — your calories sneak in through constant little snacks rather than big meals.
- You like simple rules. "Don't eat before noon" is easier to follow than "weigh everything".
- You're busy and skipping a meal frees up time and headspace.
- You prefer one or two big satisfying meals over five small ones.

YOU SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS — OR SKIP IT — IF...

- You have any history of disordered eating. Fasting can tip "restrict then binge" cycles. This one's important — please don't ignore it.
- You're pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You're a type-1 diabetic or on medication that affects blood sugar — talk to your doctor first, this is medical, not optional.
- You're a teenager, underweight, or trying to build serious muscle (a tight window makes hitting enough protein and calories hard).
- You're a woman whose cycle, sleep or mood gets noticeably worse when you fast — your body is telling you something (Chapter 9).

READ THIS TWICE

If skipping meals makes you feel out of control around food, or you find yourself "earning" food by fasting and then bingeing — stop. Fasting is the wrong tool for you, and that is completely fine. A simpler, steadier eating pattern will get you there with none of the risk.

CHAPTER 05

HOW TO START WITHOUT HATING IT

The biggest mistake is going from three-meals-plus-snacks straight to 16/8 overnight. You'll be ravenous, irritable, and you'll quit by Thursday. Ease in.

THE FOUR-WEEK GLIDE-IN

- ◆ **Week 1** — Just stop eating after dinner. No late-night picking. You're now roughly at 12/12 without trying. Notice how it feels.
- ◆ **Week 2** — Push breakfast back by one hour. If you normally eat at 7am, make it 8am. That's it.
- ◆ **Week 3** — Push it back another hour or two — towards 14/10. Black coffee and water carry you through the gap.
- ◆ **Week 4** — If (and only if) it feels easy, nudge your first meal towards midday for 16/8. If 14/10 already feels great, just stay there. There's no prize for a longer fast.

MAKE THE FASTING HOURS EASY

- ◆ **Stay busy in the morning.** Hunger you don't notice isn't hunger. The fast is hardest when you're sitting around thinking about it.
- ◆ **Front-load fluids.** Black coffee, tea and water genuinely blunt appetite. A big glass of water often kills "hunger" that was really thirst.
- ◆ **Don't go to bed starving.** If your window closes too early and you're lying awake hungry, your window is too aggressive. Shift it later.
- ◆ **Protein at your first meal.** Break your fast with protein and fibre, not a pastry. It keeps you full and stops the rebound over-eating.

THE FIRST THREE DAYS ARE THE WORST

Appetite hormones take a few days to adjust to a new eating schedule. Push through the first 3–4 days and the morning hunger that felt unbearable usually fades to a mild, ignorable background hum. Don't judge fasting by day one.

CHAPTER 06

WHAT YOU CAN HAVE DURING THE FAST

"Does this break my fast?" is the question I get most. For fat loss — which is why most of you are here — the only thing that truly matters is calories. Here's the simple version.

FINE DURING THE FAST	BREAKS THE FAST
Water (still or sparkling)	Anything with real calories
Black coffee (no milk, no sugar)	Milk, cream or sugar in your coffee
Plain tea, green tea, herbal tea	Lattes, smoothies, juice
Black coffee with a tiny pinch of cinnamon	"Just a splash" of oat/almond milk (it adds up)
Electrolytes / a pinch of salt in water	Bone broth (it's food — fine, but it ends the fast)

THE GREY AREAS

- ◆ **Diet drinks / zero-calorie sweeteners** — technically no calories, so they won't break a fat-loss fast. But for some people the sweetness triggers cravings and makes the window harder. Try without them first.
- ◆ **Milk in coffee** — the classic fast-killer. A flat white is around 100+ calories and, more importantly, it gets the digestion going. If you must, keep it to a literal splash — but black is cleaner.
- ◆ **BCAAs / amino drinks** — they contain calories and provoke an insulin response, so strictly they break the fast. For pure fat loss, water and black coffee do the job for free.

DON'T OVERTHINK IT

If your goal is fat loss, keep it simple: water, black coffee, plain tea. If it has calories, it ends the fast. You do not need expensive "fasting supplements" — that's marketing, not nutrition.

CHAPTER 07

TRAINING ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

"Does fasted cardio burn more fat?" Short answer: barely, and not in any way that matters. What matters far more is total calories across the day and whether you can train hard. Here's how to combine fasting and training sensibly.

FASTED CARDIO — THE HONEST TAKE

Yes, in a fasted state you'll burn a slightly higher *proportion* of fat during the session. But over 24 hours, total fat loss comes out about the same once calories are equal. So do fasted cardio if you **like** it and it fits your day — a brisk fasted morning walk is a genuinely lovely habit — but don't do it believing it's a fat-loss cheat code. It isn't.

LIFTING WEIGHTS FASTED

Light-to-moderate sessions are usually fine fasted. But for heavy, hard, performance-driven training, most people lift better with some fuel on board. If your big sessions feel flat and weak on an empty stomach, that's your answer.

THE SIMPLE FIX: BUILD YOUR WINDOW AROUND TRAINING

- ◆ **Morning trainer?** Either accept lighter fasted sessions, or open your window earlier so you can eat before you train.
- ◆ **Lunchtime/evening trainer?** A 16/8 window (noon–8pm) lines up beautifully — you train fuelled and eat after.
- ◆ **Always get protein in after lifting.** Whenever your window opens, make the post-workout meal protein-rich to support recovery and hold onto muscle.

PROTECTING YOUR MUSCLE

The fear that fasting "burns muscle" is overblown for normal windows — your body is well able to handle 14–16 hours. Keep lifting, hit enough protein across your feeding window (aim for a palm of protein at each meal), and your hard-earned muscle stays put.

CHAPTER 08

THE MISTAKES THAT WRECK IT

When fasting "doesn't work", it's almost always one of these. Avoid them and you're most of the way there.

1. TREATING THE WINDOW AS A FREE-FOR-ALL

The single most common failure. You fast all morning, feel virtuous, then demolish whatever you like because "I've earned it". Fasting only works if your total calories still land in the right place. The window is a boundary, not a buffet.

2. BREAKING THE FAST ON JUNK

Opening your window with pastries or a giant carb hit spikes you, drops you, and has you ravenous and over-eating an hour later. Break it on protein, fibre and something filling.

3. IGNORING PROTEIN

A short eating window makes it easy to under-eat protein, and protein is what keeps you full and protects muscle. Make it the priority at every meal, not an afterthought.

4. GOING TOO HARD, TOO FAST

Jumping straight to OMAD or 20-hour fasts from a standing start is how you end up bingeing and quitting. Earn the longer fasts — most people never need them anyway.

5. FORGETTING SLEEP AND STRESS EXIST

Bad sleep and high stress crank up hunger hormones and make any fast brutal. If you're not sleeping, fix that first — fasting on four hours' sleep is fighting yourself.

FASTING DOESN'T OVERRIDE A **BAD DIET.
IT JUST CHANGES THE CLOCK ON A GOOD ONE.**

CHAPTER 09

FASTING FOR WOMEN

This deserves its own chapter, because the standard "just do 16/8" advice was mostly written for men — and women's bodies can respond differently to longer fasts.

Women tend to be more sensitive to the hormonal signals that come with going long without food. For some women, aggressive fasting can knock sleep, mood, energy and even the menstrual cycle out of rhythm. That's not a reason to avoid fasting — plenty of women thrive on it — but it is a reason to be smarter and gentler about it.

HOW TO DO IT WELL

- ◆ **Start at 12/12 and settle at 14/10.** Most women get the benefits here without poking the hormonal bear. You rarely need to push past 14 hours.
- ◆ **Listen to your cycle.** Many women find fasting feels easy in the first half of the cycle and harder in the week before their period. Ease off in that window — eat a little earlier, drop to 12/12. Flexibility is a feature, not a failure.
- ◆ **Watch the warning signs.** Disrupted cycle, rotten sleep, hair changes, mood crashes, runaway cravings — any of these mean back off. Your body is telling you the dose is too high.
- ◆ **Prioritise protein, hard.** A short window plus high activity can leave protein too low, which is rough on recovery and hormones. Make protein non-negotiable.

BOTTOM LINE

Gentler and more flexible beats longer and stricter for most women. If 14/10 leaves you feeling good and progressing — that *is* the optimal protocol. There are no bonus points for suffering.

CHAPTER 10

MAKING IT STICK (OR KNOWING WHEN TO QUIT)

Intermittent fasting is a tool, not a religion. The goal was never "to fast" — the goal is to feel good, look how you want, and have a relationship with food that you don't have to think about all day.

If fasting gives you that — easier calorie control, more freedom, less snacking, steady progress — fantastic, keep going. You've found something that genuinely fits, and the fact it doesn't feel like a diet is exactly why it'll last.

But if you've given it a fair go — eased in over a few weeks, kept protein up, slept properly — and it still makes you miserable, obsessive or prone to bingeing? Then it's the wrong tool for you, and the smart, strong move is to put it down. There are a dozen other ways to get lean. Picking the one that suits *you* is the whole skill.

THE FIVE THINGS THAT DECIDE WHETHER IT LASTS

- ◆ **Sustainability over optimisation.** A 14/10 you keep beats a 20/4 you quit, every time.
- ◆ **Flexibility.** Real life has holidays, birthdays and bad weeks. Fast around your life, don't bend your life around the fast.
- ◆ **Protein and sleep.** Get these two right and fasting feels easy. Get them wrong and nothing feels easy.
- ◆ **Honesty in the window.** The fast only counts if the eating is sensible. No tool fixes a window full of junk.
- ◆ **Permission to stop.** If it's not serving you, quitting isn't failure — it's good coaching.

**THE BEST DIET ISN'T THE STRICTEST ONE.
IT'S THE ONE THAT FITS YOUR LIFE.**



YOUR NEXT STEP

WANT IT BUILT AROUND YOU?

This guide gives you the rules. But the magic is in the fit — the right window for *your* schedule, the right calories for *your* goal, and someone in your corner keeping you honest. That's what I do.

Whether it's a one-off meal plan or full coaching, online or in my Leeds studio — if you want a plan built around your life instead of a generic template, I'd love to help.

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