

# Making Weight for Competitions

By James Rush

## Do You Really Need to 'Make Weight'?

When it comes to making weight for a competition whether it be combat sports, strongman/woman, powerlifting, Olympic lifting etc., the first thing you should consider is your long-term plan for the sport you are taking part in. Ask yourself, is lowering your weight for a competition ideal for your long-term progress? If the competition is a novice or intermediate, then perhaps the drop in weight should be avoided to allow you to continuously get better/stronger at your given sport.

If you compete multiple times a year and for each competition, you have to diet to hit your weight category, then these are phases of your training in which you are going to be in a **calorie deficit** and therefore a **catabolic state**. At best, your performance will stay the same, but it is more likely to degrade while losing weight.

My suggestion for people who can relate to this is to train hard and eat their maintenance level calories, maybe slightly more leading into the comp and let their weight fall where it falls on comp day and simply try to improve on their lifts and performance from their last performance. For some, unless you are sitting around your given comp weight at your normal state, this might mean going up a weight category. At a novice to intermediate level, we are not too worried about this.

However, if you're going to be competitive at a higher level by dropping weight to make a weight class and the drop isn't too

far below your normal weight, then dieting and making weight for this purpose makes more sense. Generally speaking, you don't want to be trying to lose more than 5-7% of your total body weight in the hopes of dropping down a category for a comp. If you're further away than this from your goal weight then you may want to break your weight loss plan into two phases and diet a little in readiness for your "making weight" diet.

If you can't get close enough to the comp weight 4-6 weeks out from the event date, then perhaps consider postponing this competition and looking on to the next one. You want to be within a water cut away from your comp weight during the last mesocycle of your training plan as losing weight building up to comp is likely to have a detrimental effect on your performance.

Weight cutting is different in every sport. Some sports have a same day weigh-in and so water cutting becomes very tricky. Rehydration is an issue and how your body redistributes the weight is hard to manage in such a short period of time. Combat sports often have a 48-hour weigh in window to allow people to drop massive amounts of weight and rehydrate adequately, and it's common to see 24-hour weigh-ins in some powerlifting and strongman federations, giving the athletes time to rehydrate and re-fuel in the short space before event day.



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## Diet and Water Cutting

My recommended guidelines to making weight as used on several clients:

- **12-16 weeks from comp:**

Begin diet phase aiming to drop around 5% of total body weight by reducing caloric intake. You can expect to be in a calorie deficit and not see much in the way of strength progression in your training because of this. When we eat below our maintenance calories our bodies cannot gain muscle and therefore strength, so at best we can hope to remain as strong as we were, if not look at losing some of our strength. Daily calories, macronutrients and supporting supplements tailored to the individual should be followed in order to try and get down to near comp weight, leaving the option of a water cut closer to the time if required.

- **4-6 weeks from comp:**

Make sure you are sitting at a weight that is close to your weight category. In this period leading up to your competition you will need to be on top of your training and therefore we should be eating at least our maintenance level calories to feed our bodies adequately. This is a weight at which we can perform a water manipulation at if you need to budge the last few pounds of body weight going into the event. It is vital that we don't continue to diet and restrict calories during this phase as to not inhibit training performance and to continue getting stronger. Increasing performance and adequately recovering from training is a priority here.

- **Competition week:**

If you still have a few pounds to lose leading up to the competition then we would look at manipulating water and sodium rapidly, drastically increasing and then suddenly reducing the intake of water

to dehydrate you in time to make weight on weigh-in day.

Once you've stood on the scales, you should begin rehydrating your body as soon as possible. The way you rehydrate is ultimately down to you - but it should consist of water, sodium and carbohydrates to replenish glycogen stores, to hydrate cells adequately. It should be noted you could in fact super compensate and gain more weight from the rehydration process than you started before you began water manipulation.

Water cutting is as much science as it is an art. After doing it a couple of times you'll soon learn how well your body drops the weight, how far away from comp weight you can be to successfully cut for your goal weight, and how well you can rehydrate and still perform in your competition.

***For a step-by-step, in depth and tailored weight cut plan, contact me. Below you can read client testimonials from two ladies whom I helped to make weight for their events.***

## Client Making Weight Testimonials

### Emma

When I first met James, I weighed around 64kg, didn't eat a gram of carbs and was eating around 1,300kcal a day. I yearned for what most women want, a toned figure and to feel in control of my nutrition.

What I really needed was confidence, which after much badgering from James came with me entering my first strongwoman competition. I realised that I really needed to get my nutrition on point in order to have any chance of achieving my goal. The start was certainly the most difficult process, but I had to put my faith in James' advice. The hardest battle came with being educated on the importance of carbohydrate intake for sports performance, getting my head around the fact that I needed to increase calories in order to gain muscle and accompany this with resistance training.

By mid-September 2017 James had got me to a healthy and strong 68kg, I needed to be sub 63kg for comp, and I began to panic that I would not make competition weight. James always assured me that I would, and I put my trust in him to know when to cut calories and increase cardio. I begrudgingly listened to him. By comp in November 2017 I weighed 60.8kg, I achieved PBs in all my events and I was the leanest and strongest I had ever been. This taught me that anything you set your mind to is achievable if you put in the effort. James will not do this for you (it certainly wasn't James running on that bloomin' treadmill for hours each week), but what he will do is give you the tools to make it happen.

The prep for my second comp was much easier as I already knew and trusted the

process – I again increased weight to around 67kg and similarly weighed in at 62.8kg on comp day. I went a bit nuts on the weight loss though as I only needed to be sub 65kg for this comp, but this did not affect my performance, when I again gained PBs and went home with a bronze medal.

James attended and supported me at both of my competitions and provided me with pre, during and post nutritional plans which were first class; he ensured that I had everything I needed to compete and most importantly, recover.

I've learnt from seeing James that if you find your calorie maintenance, track your calories daily, don't cheat yourself and most of all have confidence, you will achieve things that you once never thought possible. It may sound obvious, but once you gain an understanding of the importance of good nutrition you will only ever find success in your fitness goals.

James has taught me over the years that the only person in control of your weight and strength is you. If you need nutritional support, then my advice is to contact James. Be warned, he will not sugar coat anything, he will tell you how it is and what you need to be successful. We still disagree over things, it will always be a case of trial and error, just never be afraid to try new things as this really is where the greatest progress happens.

Good luck all.  
Emma 😊

## **Kelly**

James provided me with ongoing support throughout my journey to compete in a novice strongwoman competition. Weight was never on my side as I wanted to drop into the smaller weight category and knew that this would be something of a challenge. James worked with me from the beginning helping me track my macros and helping me to lose the weight slowly but surely. Unfortunately for me, my weight loss began to plateau, and I never thought that I would make weight.

James continued his support and, in the end, agreed that I would complete a water cut in the week leading up to the comp. James planned the entire process for me ensuring it was 'idiot' proof and easy to understand. He also included macros and supplements to ensure I remained as healthy as possible throughout the whole process. The water cut itself was ultimately the hardest thing I have ever done but what helped was James' daily messages to see how I was doing and how much the weight was coming down.

Trying to work full time whilst either drinking gallons or drinking nothing at all was intense to say the least and the crazy looks I got sitting in a sauna with my clothes on was interesting but it was these small things that made all the difference and helped me to achieve my goal of making weight on the day.

James was always on hand to answer any questions and advise me of small changes that would help and even sometimes make things a little easier to bear. James certainly knows his stuff and if I was ever to do something like this again I know exactly where I will be going for help.