CalorieCue

Calorie Counting Made Simple

A practical beginner's guide



01

Start with the basics

Calorie counting helps you notice patterns in what you eat. The goal is to make informed choices that fit your life.

What is a calorie?

A calorie is a unit of energy. Your body uses energy throughout the day, including at rest.

How it works

1. **Be aware** — Notice meals and portions.
2. **Keep it simple** — Choose a manageable method.
3. **Look at the big picture** — Focus on habits over time.



Practical tip

Start by noticing a typical day of eating.

02

Build a balanced plate

Use this flexible guide to bring variety to meals you enjoy.

Produce

Enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables.



Protein

Try poultry, fish, eggs, tofu or beans.

Grains

Add rice, pasta, potatoes or whole grains.

Simple portion tips

- Include produce.
- Add a protein food.
- Adjust portions to your needs.

Meal tracker (preview)

Meal	What I ate
Breakfast	☐
Lunch	☐
Dinner	☐
Snack	☐

03

Find your starting point

Your calorie needs depend on your body, activity and health. A calculator offers an estimate, not a prescription.

1. **Estimate** — Use the CalorieCue TDEE calculator if a number is useful.
2. **Observe** — Notice hunger, energy and your routine over time.
3. **Adjust** — Seek individualized advice when needed.

My starting point

- [ ] Estimate
- [ ] Observe
- [ ] Adjust

Try one ordinary meal

Log each part of a familiar lunch: 1 cup cooked rice, 4 oz cooked chicken, and any cooking oil or sauce. Match your food entry to the way you weighed it: raw or cooked.

Practical tip

Avoid judging progress from a single day.

General education for adults. Seek professional advice for pregnancy, medical conditions or a history of disordered eating.

04

Portions made practical



Palm

A rough cue for protein foods.



Fist

A rough cue for a starch or fruit portion.



Thumb

A rough cue for fat-rich foods.



Two hands

A visual for vegetables or salad.



Practical tip

Hand sizes and food densities vary. These are visual cues, not calorie measurements.

05

Read the label

ILLUSTRATIVE LABEL

Nutrition Facts

Serving size	**1 cup**
Calories	**200**
Total Fat 8g	
Saturated Fat 1g	
Trans Fat 0g	
Total Carbohydrate 24g	
Dietary Fiber 0g	
Total Sugars 10g	
Protein 8g	

Fictional teaching example, not a product label. Real labels also list % Daily Value and other nutrients.

Check the serving first

The label describes one serving. Compare that with the amount you eat.

2 servings × 200 calories
= 400 calories

Match your entry

Check the brand, serving weight and whether the food is raw or cooked.

Practical tip

A label serving is a reference amount, not a recommendation.

06

Everyday food reference

Approximate calories per listed serving

Proteins

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Chicken breast (cooked)	4 oz	185
Chicken thigh (skinless)	4 oz	200
Salmon (farmed)	4 oz	235
Tuna (canned in water)	4 oz	130
Shrimp	4 oz	110
Ground beef (90% lean)	4 oz raw	200
Ground turkey (93%)	4 oz raw	170
Sirloin steak (lean)	4 oz	205

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Lean pork chop	4 oz	210
Eggs	2 large	145
Egg whites	3 large	50
Greek yogurt (plain, 0%)	1 cup	145
Cottage cheese (2%)	1 cup	185
Tofu (firm)	4 oz	165
Black beans	1 cup	225
Whey protein	32 g	115

Grains & Carbs

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
White rice (cooked)	1 cup	205
Brown rice (cooked)	1 cup	220
Pasta (cooked)	1 cup	195
Quinoa (cooked)	1 cup	220
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	80
Bagel	1 medium	275

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Oatmeal (cooked)	1 cup	165
Sweet potato	1 medium	105
Baked potato	1 medium	160
Corn tortilla	1	60
Flour tortilla	1 medium	145
Corn flakes	1 cup	110

Rounded USDA reference estimates. Meat and fish weights are cooked, except ground meats marked raw; tuna is drained. Plain dairy, no added cooking fat. 4 oz ≈ 113 g; 1 oz ≈ 28 g. Cups are U.S. measures; food weights vary. Beans provide both protein and carbohydrate.

07

Everyday food reference

Approximate calories per listed serving

Fats & Nuts

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Avocado	75 g	120
Olive oil	1 tbsp	120
Butter	1 tbsp	100
Almonds	1 oz (23)	165
Peanut butter	1 tbsp	95
Walnuts	1 oz	185

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Cheddar cheese	1 oz	115
Mozzarella (part-skim)	1 oz	85
Cream cheese	1 tbsp	50
Mayonnaise	1 tbsp	95
Chia seeds	12 g	60

Fruits & Vegetables

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Banana	1 medium	105
Apple	1 medium	95
Orange	1 medium	60
Strawberries	1 cup	50
Blueberries	1 cup	85
Grapes	1 cup	105

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Broccoli (cooked)	1 cup	55
Spinach (raw)	2 cups	15
Lettuce (romaine)	2 cups	15
Carrots	1 cup	50
Bell pepper	1 medium	30
Cucumber	1 cup	15

Rounded USDA reference estimates. Fruits and vegetables are raw unless marked cooked; avocado is weighed edible flesh. Portions and preparation change calories. Weigh foods when precision matters and check packaged-food labels.

08

Everyday food reference

Approximate calories per listed serving

Drinks

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Black coffee	8 fl oz	2
Latte (whole milk)	12 fl oz	180
Orange juice	8 fl oz	110
Whole milk	8 fl oz	150
Skim milk	8 fl oz	85

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Almond milk (unsweet.)	8 fl oz	30
Soda (cola)	12 fl oz	140
Beer (regular)	12 fl oz	155
Wine	5 fl oz	125
Sweet tea	16 fl oz	165

Snacks & Treats

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Protein bar	53 g	220
String cheese	28 g	85
Trail mix	¼ cup	175
Tortilla chips	1 oz	135
Potato chips	1 oz	150

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Dark chocolate	1 oz	170
Popcorn (air-popped)	3 cups	95
Hummus	2 tbsp	70
Rice cake	1	35
Ice cream	½ cup	135

Condiments & Sauces

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Ketchup	1 tbsp	15
Mustard	1 tbsp	10
Soy sauce	1 tbsp	10
BBQ sauce	1 tbsp	30
Ranch dressing	2 tbsp	130

FOOD	SERVING	CAL.
Salsa	2 tbsp	10
Honey	1 tbsp	65
Maple syrup	1 tbsp	50
Marinara sauce	½ cup	65

Representative USDA and brand-label estimates, rounded for quick reference. Drinks use U.S. fluid ounces (8 fl oz ≈ 237 mL). Latte assumes no syrup; brands, recipes and bar sizes vary. Use the label on your own product.

09

Make meals satisfying

Breakfast

Eggs, Greek yogurt or tofu.

Lunch

Chicken, tuna, beans or lentils.

Dinner

Fish, lean meat, tofu or legumes.

Snack

Yogurt, cheese or edamame.

Simple swaps

Try sparkling water, yogurt as a creamy topping, or vegetables alongside a favorite dish.

Practical tip

Choose foods you enjoy. Compare labels when a calorie difference matters.

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Restaurants & real life

1

Look ahead

Check published nutrition information when available.

2

Notice extras

Sauces, oils, toppings and drinks affect estimates.

3

Choose what you enjoy

Consider a protein, produce and a satisfying side.

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Estimate and move on

Portions and recipes vary.

A restaurant estimate

If the menu lists a bowl at 650 calories, then a sauce at 80 and a drink at 120, log all three: **650 + 80 + 120 = 850 calories.** These are example numbers; use the restaurant's figures when available.

Practical tip

One meal does not define your progress.

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Make it sustainable

Keep it manageable

Choose a routine you can return to.

Notice how you feel

Hunger, energy, mood and satisfaction matter.

Make room for life

Sleep, movement, stress and health also matter.

Make tomorrow easier

If breakfast is usually yogurt, oats and berries, save it as a meal in your tracker. Reuse the entry and adjust the portions each time. A useful routine can stay simple.

Practical tip

If tracking becomes stressful or rigid, take a break and seek support from a qualified professional.

12

Your first week

Days 1–2
Notice

Record a typical day without judging it.

Days 3–4
Learn

Notice meals that satisfy you and moments that feel rushed.

Days 5–7
Try

Make one small change and reflect on what helped.

Practical tip

A missed entry is simply a missed entry. Resume when it feels useful.

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Your 7-day tracker

Day	Meals & portions	Notes
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

What felt easy?

What would help next week?

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Keep learning

USDA MyPlate

Food groups and balanced meals.

myplate.gov

FDA Nutrition Facts

Serving sizes and labels.

fda.gov · Understanding labels

CDC Healthy Weight

Nutrition, activity and habits.

cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth

CalorieCue

Daily energy estimate.

caloriecue.app/tdee-calculator

Food tables: USDA FoodData Central, with representative package-label examples. Values describe the listed portions, not recommended amounts. View serving details and sources.

Closing tip

Choose one idea to try this week. Adjust it until it works for you.