One of the most important aspects of an effective nutrition plan is that it’s honest and outcome based.

What this means is that you are completely honest about what you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat. Honest with us and, most importantly, honest with yourself.

Research was done on the discrepancy between self-reported and actual caloric intake. What the researchers found was that regardless of their good intentions, subjects across every age group reported their food intake incorrectly.
This is not because they were wanting to lie or cheat. They didn't do it intentionally at all. It's simply the fact that our perception for this kind recall and reporting doesn't always reflect what really happened.

In the study, men and women of all ages:

- More grains, fats, oils, and sweets than they thought they had eaten.
- Fewer fruits, vegetables, meat, and milk than they thought they had eaten.

This means they ate more carbohydrate-dense and high-calorie foods, and less nutrient-dense, fibrous, and lower-calorie foods than they thought they were eating.

![Energy Intake Graph](source: Discrepancy between Self-Reported and Actual Caloric Intake and Exercise in Obese Subjects. The New England Journal of Medicine1992.)

Again, these subjects were not trying to lie or cheat their way through the study, they just honestly did not have a good idea of what their food intake really looks like unless it is measured and recorded properly.

**This is devastating!**

If your nutrition approach is not completely honest and matching the desired outcome, then over a long period of time it can have a devastating effect to your progress, health, and motivation to continue.

Food journals can teach you some fascinating things about your eating habits:

- Why you're eating when you're not hungry.
- How your dining companions affect your habits.
- How fast you eat your food.
- How you feel after eating certain foods.
- If your perception matches reality.

Now, before you start looking up every nutrition label and calculating the exact calories of each bite you take, we suggest starting with the simplest and least inconvenient techniques first.
JUST WRITE IT DOWN

Yep, that's it. Each time you put something into your mouth you simply write it down.

Use the notes app on your phone, send yourself an email, update your Facebook status with it (no don't really, please!), write it on a piece of paper, write it on your hand, whatever you need to do.

Don't wait until bed time or the next morning to think about what you ate that day. Write it down right before / during / right after you eat a meal or snack.

Simply writing down what you eat dramatically increase how mindful of what you eat and how much you have eaten. You become more conscious of your eating behaviour, whether you really are hungry or not, and whether it's a good choice or a bad choice.

Remember, be honest about what you write down.

TAKE A PHOTO

This is super quick and easy by using modern technology to your advantage.

Every time you are about to eat something, snap a quick photo of it using your camera phone (or if need be, actual camera). This is makes it really easy to review later what you ate and spot mistakes or remind yourself about great meal ideas that you really enjoyed.

YouFood is a great app for this (download for iOS or Android). Here is a sample screenshot of my day using the app:
ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

Building on both the writing it down and the taking a photo techniques, a killer accountability tool is to send everything you eat either as a photo or a text via WhatsApp, email, or similar to someone else.

Both of you agree to send each other the details of anything you are about to put in your mouth, and if you want you can offer some feedback or encouragement too.

Elan wrote about using this method to help his dad dramatically improve his health.

"My dad has always been overweight since a kid and had Type 2 Diabetes for as long as I can remember. Since my mom passed 5 years ago his tummy has expanded even more to 114kgs and his sugar was consistently high at round 14. That is bad.

As a leader of a health community watching your dad face potential health complications at age 63 is not easy when all you want for him is the best quality of life. The irony is often that your own family members can be the hardest to help.

I tried for over a year and lost some hope. He was stuck saying he could not do it, that he could not change his habits and that he was a food addict. He even said he was ashamed to be my father as a leader of a health community. I considered getting him to a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist to deal with the “food addiction”...

Then one day I had a great idea. I created a Whatsapp Group for just the two of us and so we started our food accountability log 2 months ago.

The reason was because I wanted to see exactly what he was eating and so the deal we made was to post EVERYTHING that passed our lips. No exceptions. Even if you have a slip up. So at least 3 times a day we shared images and sometimes a brief description. It was cool and we bonded over it.

The results were fantastic!"

I
START A BLOG, SHOW THE WORLD

One of the best things I ever did for my health was start a blog.

I challenge myself to a 12-week challenge where I would do my best to transform my body from overweight, unfit, and unhealthy to the best shape of my life.

This was the first time I ever seriously tackled my state of poor health. I knew it would be incredibly hard, but I was determined to make it work.

I made a commitment to myself. Every single day of the 12 weeks I would publish a blog post at least once a day. Every day I posted my workout and my meals. I also posted about my successes and failures, obstacles and tips, as well as any useful resources or motivational videos that I came across along the way.

It was a fantastic experience and I couldn't have been happier with the results. I would highly recommend creating your own free Wordpress or Blogger blog, or even just create your own Facebook Page to blog on.

Not only will you help keep yourself accountable, on track, and honest with your nutrition - you will also help to inspire others.

ESTIMATE PORTIONS

Don't worry too much about being meticulous when it comes to calories unless it's just a short-term strategy. Rather, we suggest finding the easiest and least inconvenient technique that will help keep you honest and on track, then do that.

You can always try something more complicated or detailed later, for now just focus on being mindful of what you eat.

For simply estimating portions, we like to measure using our palm, fist, cupped hand, and thumb sizes for simplicity and convenience.

Guys get 2 servings per meal.
Girls get 1 serving per meal.
Easy.
TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER

We will talk about how to work out your caloric goals and how to count calories a bit later on, but for now a few steps to help you take logging and journaling a step further include:

- Note what time of day you ate at. This is useful in making you more mindful of how often (or infrequently) you eat, let’s you analyze your day-to-day consistency, and spot any possible trends that might explain any binges or periods of lack of energy.
- Note roughly how much you ate using the above mentioned portion guidelines, or anything else you prefer to use.
- Note how you were feeling at the time (ravenous, bored, sad, energetic, stressed, social, etc).

3 AWESOME TOOLS

Beyond these food logging and journaling strategies, here are 3 more tools that we find incredibly useful:

- **Tool #1: The Rubber Band**
  Keep a rubber/elastic band (or even better - one of our Sleekgeek wristbands) on your wrist. Then every time you eat a snack or meal that wasn’t great or you didn’t plan to have, you swap the band over to the other hand. The goal is to essentially keep the band on one wrist for as long as possible. This is a great way to increase your mindfulness of what you are eating.

- **Tool #2: Ticks and Crosses**
  Make a chart for yourself where you track every meal you eat. You then either give yourself a tick or a cross depending on whether you ate well or not respectively. The goal is to never get more than 2 crosses (2 bad meals) in a row. As you get better you can then start rather giving yourself a tick or a cross based on your entire day’s eating. A tick means all your meals were healthy and a cross means that you ate something that day which wasn’t great. The goal again is to never get more than 2 crosses (2 bad days) in a row.

- **Tool #3: Donations Jar**
  Finally something that will both benefit you as well as any sort of charity or cause that you believe in is by having a donations jar that you put R5 or R10 or R50 into depending on your financial ability for each time you do not eat how you meant to eat. Want to make it even more effective? Choose a charity/cause/political part that you strongly dislike and then donate the contents of the jar there instead.