

Building a Balanced Plate

Supports: Building Block 6 — Portions & the Balanced Plate

Why It Matters

A simple picture can take the guesswork out of putting a meal together. When you build your plate around vegetables, add a source of protein and a whole grain, and reach for a mix of colors, you give your body steady energy and a meal that actually feels good to eat. There is no perfect plate and no food you have to earn or avoid here. This is a flexible guide you can lean on for any meal, at home or on the go. Think of it as a starting point you can adjust to your day, your tastes, and what sounds good.

What to Know

Picture your plate in parts

An easy way to balance a meal is to divide your plate without measuring anything. Fill about half with non-starchy vegetables, about a quarter with a protein you enjoy, and about a quarter with a whole grain or starch. Fruit and dairy round things out whenever you like them.

- About half the plate: non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, peppers, broccoli, green beans, or tomatoes.
- About a quarter: a protein such as chicken, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, or tofu.
- About a quarter: a whole grain or starch like brown rice, quinoa, oats, whole-grain bread, or a sweet potato.
- Add fruit and dairy as you wish for extra flavor, texture, and staying power.

Eat a rainbow of colors

Different colors in food often signal different nutrients, so a colorful plate is a natural way to get variety without tracking anything. Bright, varied plates also simply look more appealing, which can make a meal more enjoyable and satisfying. If your plates tend to look one shade, that is just useful information, not a problem to fix all at once.

Aim for all three macros

Carbohydrates, protein, and fat are the three macronutrients your body uses in large amounts, and each plays a role in energy, repair, and feeling full. Most balanced meals include all three. Notice which one comes easily for you and which tends to be missing, and you will spot small ways to round out a meal.

No perfect day required. Perfect eating does not exist, and your intake naturally balances out over time. A little intention meal to meal is all it takes to give your body what it needs.

Try This

Take a look back at what you ate over the past day or two and picture it on the plate model. You are just noticing patterns, not grading yourself.

- ? Which part of the balanced plate shows up most easily for you, and which is hardest to include?
- ? What colors do you eat often, and which ones rarely make it onto your plate?
- ? What is one small swap or addition that would make your next meal feel more balanced or satisfying?