



# PREPARING FOR A POWERLIFTING MEET

Everything you need to know to compete in  
your first powerlifting meet.

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She has prepared athletes for their first local meet, compete at the national level, and international levels across multiple federations.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PREPARATION AND PACKING LIST

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# PREPARING FOR & PICKING A MEET

"How do you know if I am ready to compete?" is probably one of the more common questions I receive from people. If you are thinking about wanting to compete, you're ready to do so. The desire to compete is a great reason to get started.

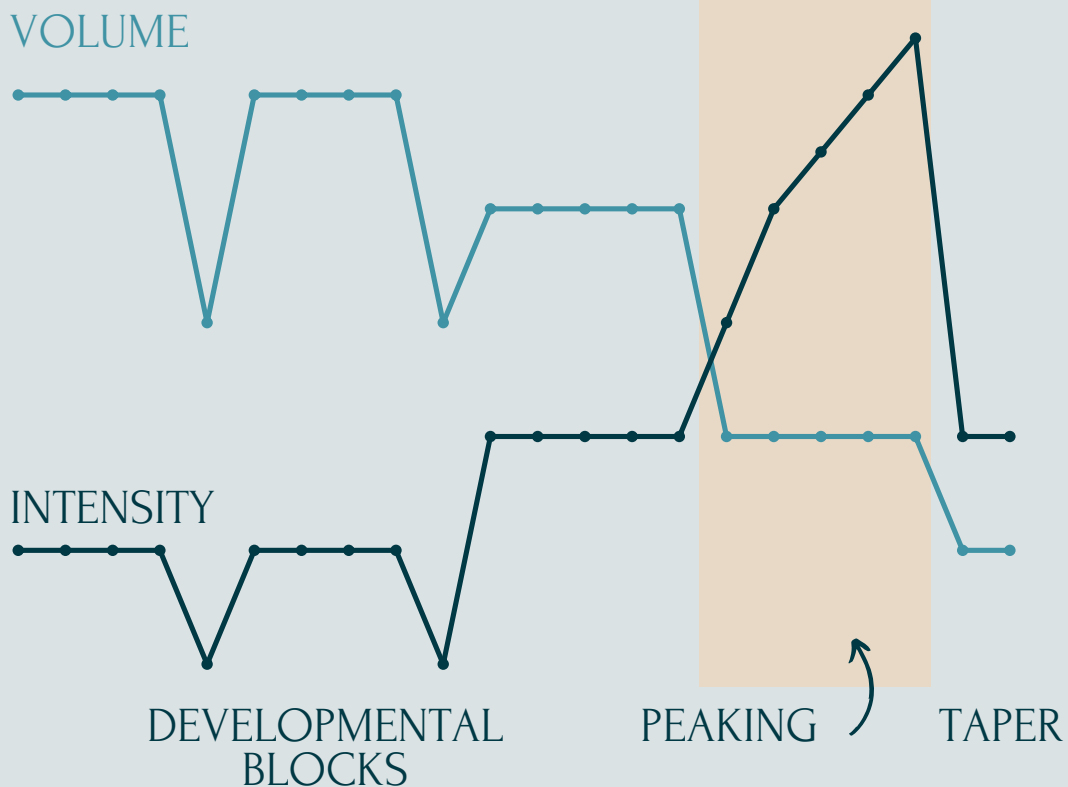
When looking for meet I suggest trying to find a meet in your area, if you live in the United States the most common federations are Powerlifting America, USAPL, and USPA.

Each of these federations has their calendar listed on their website and you can search by state. There is no reason to pick one of these meets over another one for your first meet. Find the most convenient meet for you and give yourself 2-3 months to prepare for that meet. During that preparation you will ideally be training the powerlifting movements and you will be doing them to the standard of competition set by each federation.



# PEAKING

CHANGES IN INTENSITY AND VOLUME



## PEAKING FOR A MEET

Peaking for a meet is a term we use to describe the changes in programming that occur in the weeks prior to the meet. As you approach a meet the volume will accutely drop while the intensity (percentage of your 1 rep max) increases. This shifts the adaptations you have to focus more on maximal strength over other physical skills and attributes. This isn't absolutely necessary but it can improve your chances to hit PR's on meet day.

# THE POWERLIFTING MEET

Whether it is your first lifting meet or you're an experienced lifter, powerlifting meets are meant to be fun. This book is written for most people to be prepared to compete in their first meet and so the goal, especially for you, is to have fun, make friends, and hit personal records.

A powerlifting meet is a test of our 1 rep maximum strength using the barbell in three different exercises: the squat, the bench, and the deadlift. For each lift you will have a separate warm-up and 3 attempts to achieve a total. Your total is comprised of your best completed lifts. Judges will be present to help ensure that everyone meets the standards of movement for each lift

Powerlifting meets happen at multiple levels. There are local meets, which most people do for their first meet and many subsequent meets. They are convenient, close to home and you can often

bring a lot of friends and family with you.

Powerlifting meets also happen at the regional, national and international level. Reaching these higher levels of meets can be a great goal. Meeting new people across the sport is amazing.

Powerlifting meets are run by federations, it is important to check the rules and equipment lists of the meet you are competing in before you arrive at the venue.

Once you arrive at the venue, you will notice that there are three main areas. There is the spectator portion that is facing the platform, there is the platform itself where the lifter will perform their movement and the judges are close by to examine the rep. Lastly there is the warm-up room, where you will spend most of your time, warm-ing up and hanging out with your fellow lifters.

# LET'S TALK EQUIPMENT

## SINGLETS

A singlet is a single unit of clothing that starts as shorts and essentially connects over your shoulders. The use of singlets is to allow judges to see if you have hit depth, and keep unnecessary clothing out of the way.

## KNEE SLEEVES

Knee sleeves are neoprene tubes that fit snug around your knee and serve to keep the joint warm. Knee sleeves are typically worn during the squat. They can add some additional weight on the barbell. These are not a necessary part of your meet day attire.

## WRIST WRAPS

Wrist wraps provide stability to the wrist during squat and bench press. These are not required but many lifters feel that these lifts are more comfortable with these pieces of equipment.

## MEET SHIRT

Most federations require a shirt to be worn under your singlet to protect you and other people from germs that could pass between people. Some federations don't require you to wear a shirt for the deadlift. Your shirt needs to cover your delts and must have a normal round neck-line.

## CHALK

Most meet directors supply chalk, but if you are particular, you can bring your own. Chalk helps keep your hands dry so that your sweat doesn't make the bar slippery.

## SOCKS

In powerlifting you will need two different kind of socks. For squats, your socks can't touch your knee sleeves and for deadlifts, your socks must reach up to the bottom of your knee cap. These taller deadlift socks are there to again protect you from fluids excreted by your fellow lifters.



# LET'S TALK EQUIPMENT

## BELT

A powerlifting belt is made of layers of leather glued together that you can brace against during a lift. Belts are not required in meets but if you have one make sure it meets the federation guidelines

## SHOES

There are two different kinds of shoes that people will wear in powerlifting competitions. One is a heeled shoe with a non-compressible sole. The heel drop makes reaching depth on the squat more comfortable.

The other shoe is a low profile flat shoe, again with a noncompressible sole. These are worn on the deadlift to reduce the range of motion of your lift.

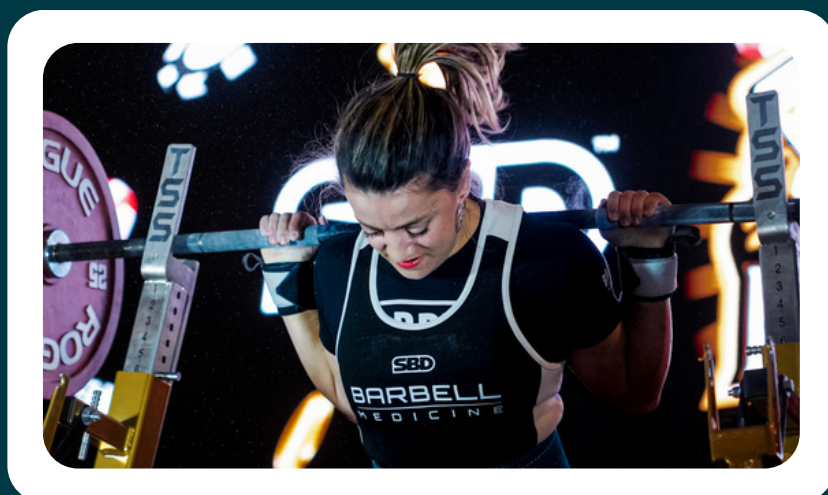
For the bench press you can wear either shoe.

## AMMONIA

You may see lifters take whiffs out of little bottles just before they go on the platform. These are ammonia salts and they make the inside of your sinuses burn. Some individuals find that this allows them to get more hyped.

## BABY POWDER

During the deadlift, you may see lifters applying baby powder to their legs. This reduces the friction between their legs and the barbell. Don't step in the baby powder and don't touch it with the palms of your hands. You want friction on your hands and feet.



# PACKING LIST

## CHECK-IN MATERIALS

- Member #
- ID Card
- Openers in KGs

## COMPETITION ATTIRE

- Singlet
- Meet Shirt
- Knee Sleeves
- Wrist Wraps
- Hair Ties
- Shoes for all three lifts
- Deadlift Socks
- Baby Powder
- Chalk
- Belt

## SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

- Phone/Camera w/power source
- Snacks/ Food
- Music & headphones
- Sweatshirt
- Caffeine
- Ammonia (if you like it)
- Attempt card/ attempt plan
- Water
- Clean, dry clothes and shoes for after



# CHAPTER 2

## MEET WALK THROUGH

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# CHECK-INS AND WEIGH-INS

When you arrive at the meet you will be required to check-in and prove who you say you are. At this point you will need an ID and your membership card.

The judges at this point will also go through all of your equipment to ensure that it is approved by the federation and hasn't been tampered with.

Then you will also weigh-in to confirm that you are within the weight class that you

registered for.

This process will occur either the day before or two hours prior to the start of the meet. For 24 hour weigh-ins (USPA) it will happen the day before, and for two hour weigh-ins it will happen just prior.

As you weigh in you will give the judge your first (opening) attempts in kilos.



# WARM-UPS



Warm-ups occur before each lift. Most people need about 20 minutes from the start of warming-up with the barbell to the time they are ready to go. It takes approximately a minute for each person to complete a lift so you can count backward from lifters in the flight in front of you to guess how much time you need.

Generally you will start warming-up about halfway through the second attempts of the flight before you.

Warm-up rooms are crowded and everyone is nervous. You will have to share racks and you should work and communicate with other lifters to maximize your ability to get everyone through a warm-up together.

There will often be people at meets with more experienced coaches and you can work with them to make sure you get the warm-up you need to be successful.

# WARM-UP GUIDELINES



The goal of the warm-up is to make you feel prepared for the big lifts you are about to take without tiring yourself out.

Typically you need 3-6 sets to feel this way depending on how heavy your weights are.

Between each warm-up you will have 3-5 minutes of time where other lifters are hitting their top sets.

## GENERAL GUIDE

- 5-10 reps with just the barbell
- 5 reps with 30%
- 3 Reps with 45%
- 1 rep with 60%
- 1 rep with 72%
- 1 rep with 82 %

You can make this individual to you and how you would like to prepare for heavy lifts.

# ATTEMPTS

Once you have warmed up it is time to take your attempts.

Each person in your flight will go in order of how much weight they are lifting, this order may change with each attempt so pay attention to the order listed on the board.

You will complete your first attempt and everyone else will also complete their first attempt and as a group you will move onto your second attempt.

You will complete all attempts for your squat, then go back to the warm-up room and get ready for bench. Then you will complete all your attempts for bench. After bench, you will warm-up for deadlift and then complete all your deadlift attempts.

After this if there are other sections of the meet they will go through the same process before the award ceremony.



# OVERVIEW

## SQUAT

Warm Ups  
Attempt 1  
Attempt 2  
Attempt 3



## BENCH

Warm Ups  
Attempt 1  
Attempt 2  
Attempt 3

## DEADLIFT

Warm Ups  
Attempt 1  
Attempt 2  
Attempt 3

Depending on the size of your meet this can take anywhere from 3 to 8 hours. If your meet is broken down into sections (multiple flights per section, it will go faster.





# CHAPTER 3

## ATTEMPT SELECTION

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# ATTEMPT SELECTION

Good attempt selection is part of a good meet day performance. The weights that you select for each attempt are going to help you maximize your overall total.

Your first attempt is used to get on the board, you want to pick something that you know you can achieve on any day. Typically a weight you can hit for a triple is a good start.

Your second attempt is used

to determine how strong you are on that specific day. It should be challenging and give you an idea of how much weight you can add to the bar for your third attempt.

Your third attempt is where you hit max weights, hopefully this is a PR, but it doesn't always work out that way.

On average, jumps between attempts should be 5% or smaller.



# COMMANDS

## SQUAT

- Squat -
  - Given after unracking when the knees are locked and the lifter is motionless
- Rack
  - Given at the end of the squat after the knees are locked and the lifter is motionless



## BENCH

- Start
  - Given after unracking, when the butt is in contact with the bench and the lifter is motionless
- Press
  - Given after the bar has stopped moving on the lifters chest
- Rack
  - Given at the end of the bench when the elbows are locked and the lifter is motionless



## DEADLIFT

- Down
  - Given after the lifter has completed the pull and is standing with their hips shoulders behind the bar and their hips and knees are locked out.



# ATTEMPT SELECTION

# 1

## GET ON THE BOARD

- Something you can hit no matter what
  - Unquestionable on
  - form
  - depth
  - keeping your butt on the bench
  - fully locking out your deadlift
- A weight you can hit for a 3 RM is a good proxy.

# 2

## DETERMINE STRENGTH FOR THE DAY

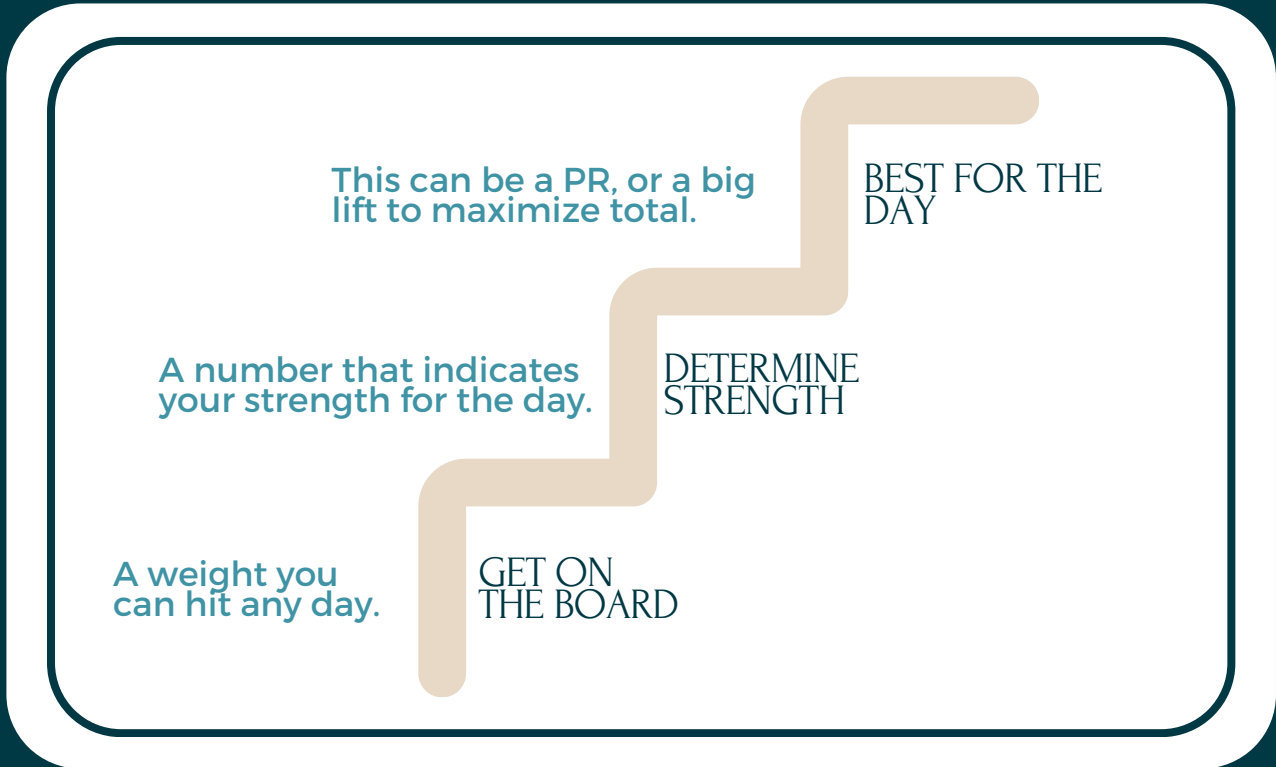
- This attempt should be hard, you are approaching your max weight
- You want to use this as a test to determine how high you can go for the day.
- A single at 8.5 is typically a good proxy

# 3

## HIT PR'S AND MAXIMIZE YOUR TOTAL

- Take a jump you think you can hit.
- Going 9 for 9 maximizes the total you can hit for the day
- If you are competing at a high level, this is where you can make or break the meet

# VISUAL PLAN



## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Have your attempts planned out beforehand, know what your reasonable jumps are.
- If weights feel heavier than expected, it's ok to take a smaller jump.
- Scratching a lift if you have hit your max is ok - it saves your strength for later lifts.
- If you miss an attempt, take it again, don't go up.



# CHAPTER 4

## THE MENTAL GAME

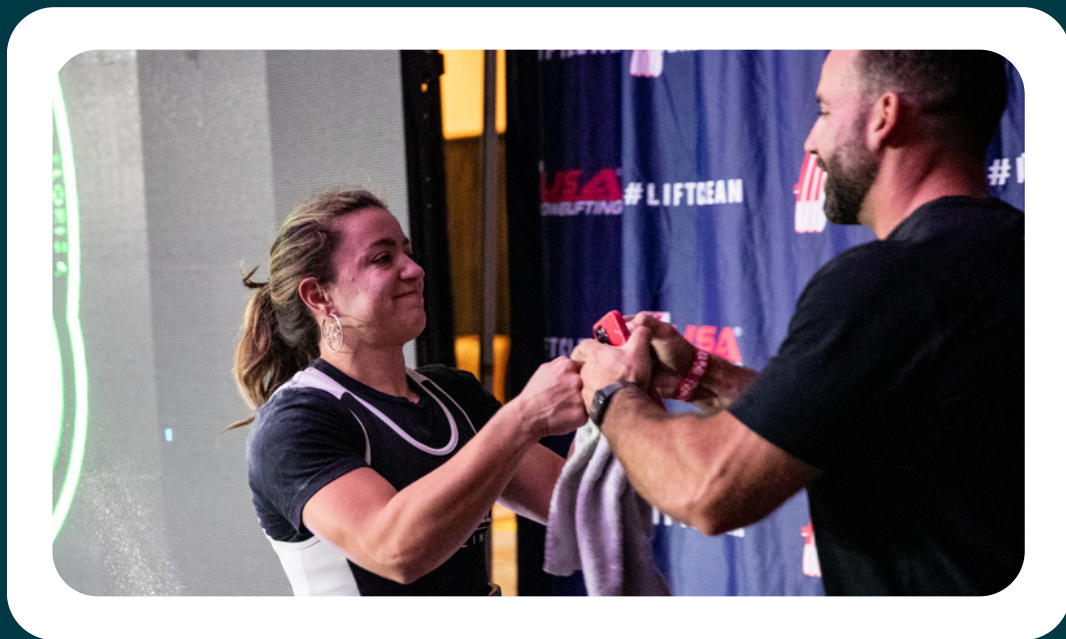
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# MENTALLY PREPARING

## NERVES AND BUTTERFLIES

Being nervous for a meet means that you understand the gravity and impact of what you are about to do. Nerves are an indication that you care about the outcome. So it's ok to be nervous, lean into it and use that energy to fuel big lifts.

Secondly, you know what to do, you have completed these lifts before and by the time you get to the third attempt when you are taking possible PRs, you are going to know how the meet works.



On the following pages I have listed some ways you can help manage nerves and the environment a bit to set yourself up for a very successful and fun meet.

Find what works best for you.

# MENTAL TIPS



## MUSIC

Music can be a very powerful part of accessing a certain level of arousal.

- Having a song or playlist that is different for warm-ups and between attempts
- Having a song or playlist that is meant for the last few minutes before an attempt to get you hyped up.

You can use music to increase or decrease arousal

## REFOCUSING STRATEGIES

Thoughts wander during competition, staying focused on the present task at hand can be important.

You can work on this skill through meditation away from competition.

- Create a set of mental instructions or a mantra to draw you back to the present moment.
- Using breath work to moderate arousal and focus you can also be helpful;

## POSITIVE SELF TALK

Self talk is the dialogue you have with yourself in your head to reinforce, direct and evaluate actions and events. (Hatzigeorgiadis et al. 2014)

Using positive self-talk can increase your belief in yourself, reduce anxiety and push you toward a more positive performance.

Self-talk can also maximize effort and increase self-efficacy.



# MENTAL TIPS

## PHYSICAL CUES

A movement or cue that indicates that it is go time. This will spike arousal just before the attempt, you would probably only do this on the last warm-up or only on the platform.

- Can include:
  - Leg slapping
  - Yelling
  - Specific arm movements
  - Asking for crowd hype
  - etc

This cue will mean there is no going back to set up again.



## VISUALIZATION

Visualizing your lift both from the internal and external viewpoints.

- **INTERNAL:** imagine what the bar will feel like, what the room sounds like, what the lights look like. If you have the ability to see the platform before the meet, do so, so you can incorporate what it looks like in your visualization. Visualize what you will do during, before and after the rep and how each of those parts will feel.
- **EXTERNAL:** visualize what the platform will look like as if you are a spectator. See yourself complete the lift to full competition standards and see the white lights on the board.

## CONTROLLING ENVIRONMENT

Creating a quiet or controlled environment even with-in a meet can be helpful.

Some individuals are distracted by other competitors, some people like to talk.

- You can use a hoodie or face your chair toward a wall to create a space that is just for you where other competitors don't impact you as much.

Respect the environment other competitors are trying to create for themselves.



## CUES

Cues or focusing on the immediate technique you want to implement during a lift can shift focus to what you need to do on the platform.

Pick one or two cues that you can focus on right before the lift, you can have a coach or handler say these to you right before you go on the platform.



# CHAPTER 5

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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# FAQ

## WHAT IS A WATER CUT?

A water cut is manipulating your body weight by manipulating the amount of fluid in your system. We can do this by loading water and then taking advantage of our bodies ability to upregulate fluid expulsion. This results in a lower body weight without reducing the amount of tissue. For individuals competing in their first meet, I don't recommend weight manipulation of any kind. Compete at your living weight.

## WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

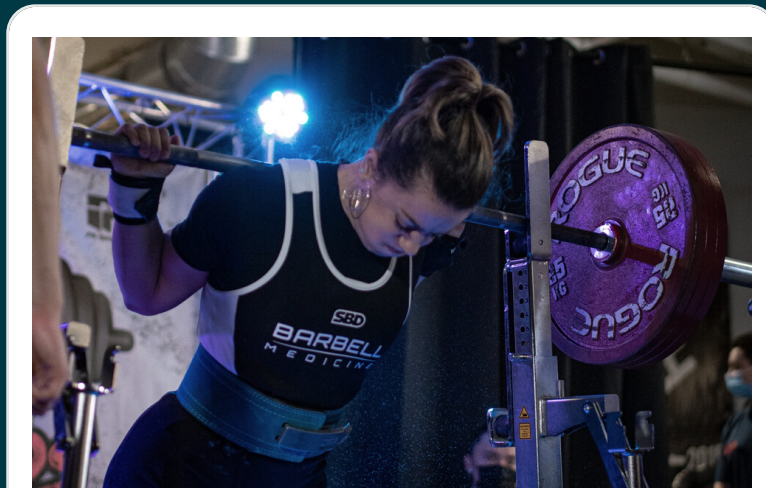
Your dietary pattern should look as normal as it possibly can. Don't introduce any new foods. I suggest eating things that are relatively carb heavy. Eat after weigh-ins and then again before bench. If you eat before deadlift, that is up to you and if you would like to have food in your stomach for that lift.



# FAQ

## SHOULD I CUT WEIGHT

For most individuals, I don't suggest cutting weight. There are a few circumstances where cutting weight can be helpful to achieve a goal but generally it is a lot of work and requires significant change to your daily habits and patterns that is not going to result in massive positive differences on the platform. When looking to break records, compete at national meets, or win prize money it is reasonable to evaluate if cutting weight is worth the work.



## GOOD LUCK AT YOUR FIRST MEET

You are now ready to compete at your first powerlifting meet. Please reach out if you have further questions or would like to pursue coaching.

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