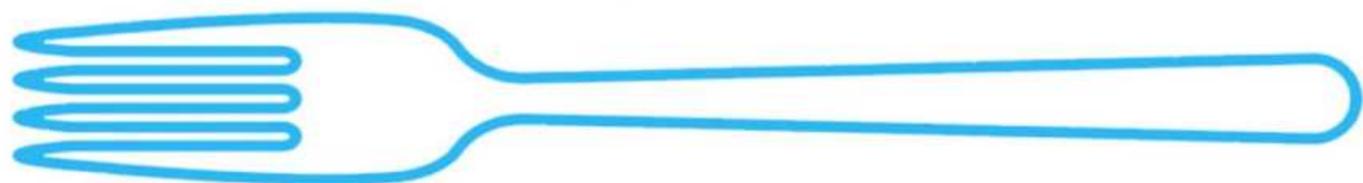


THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF

FAST. FEAST. REPEAT.

GIN STEPHENS



28-DAY

FAST

START

DAY-BY-DAY

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO STARTING
(OR RESTARTING) YOUR INTERMITTENT FASTING
LIFESTYLE SO IT STICKS



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WELCOME! START HERE

I'm so glad you picked up a copy of this book, or maybe a good friend or family member who is an intermittent faster gave you a copy to introduce you to intermittent fasting (which we call *IF*).

First, I want to explain what this book *is* and what it *isn't*.

My goal with this book is to take you by the hand and walk with you as you begin your journey down the IF path. As we go along together throughout the next month, I want to equip you with the tools you need so that IF sticks.

Here's what this book is:

As it says right in the title, it's your 28-Day FAST Start day-by-day guide to starting (or restarting) your IF lifestyle so it sticks.

What this book *isn't*: a complete guide to all-things IF. That's a different book: *Fast. Feast. Repeat.: The Comprehensive Guide to Delay, Don't Deny Intermittent Fasting.*

I want to be very clear:

The book you are holding is a companion to *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* If you could only get *one* book, that's the one you want. (Don't tell my publisher I said that.)

But you really need BOTH books. *And this is not just me selling you two books. I promise. You're going to save so much money on food and fancy coffee drinks this month that you could afford to buy thirty books with the money you'll save. Another benefit of IF! You're welcome.;-)*

So, why do you need two books, when *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* has everything you need to begin and implement an intermittent fasting lifestyle successfully, and to tweak it till it's easy?

You could say that's *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*'s greatest strength: it's comprehensive.

But you could also say it's the book's greatest *weakness*.

What do I mean by that? It's so complete that it can be overwhelming.

I hear comments like this one all the time: "*I gave a copy of Fast. Feast. Repeat. to my sister and she says it's too long and she won't read it.*"

Or someone will read *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* cover to cover and then feel like their brain is so overflowing with information that they don't know what to do next.

Information overload.

And that is why this day-by-day guide was born. Not everyone is ready for ALL of the science found in *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* on day 1 of their journey.

“Just tell me exactly what to do, Gin!”

That’s what you have here. For the next month, I’m going to guide you through each day. This book is consumable and designed for you to write in as you go. If it helps, think about it as your IF success journal. I was a teacher for twenty-eight years, so my expertise is curriculum design: I’m trained to present content and to make sure it sticks. And I’m using many of the strategies I learned as an effective teacher here in this book.

Every day, you’ll begin the day by confirming your daily fasting plan and setting your intention by creating achievable goals. There will be a daily lesson from me designed to give you the knowledge and motivation you need to keep going (even when it gets hard). All but a few of these lessons are short and sweet on purpose so you don’t get bogged down by too much information.

You’ll also hear from a past *Intermittent Fasting Stories* podcast guest in a Daily Inspiration Spotlight. Along with reading an update, where they share what’s been happening since their interview, you may want to find their podcast episode (on your favorite podcast app or at intermittentfastingstories.com) to hear their entire inspiring story. The Daily Inspiration Spotlights will provide even more inspiration to your day.

At the end of each day, you’ll take a few minutes to reflect on how the day went, including both the fast *and* the feast. You’ll identify what went well and what might have been a struggle. You’ll also think about the next day, always looking ahead and planning for success.

But don’t forget that while you work through this book for the next month, you’re also going to need a copy of *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* as a reference. After a few of the daily lessons, I’ll point you toward sections of *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* where you can go for more in-depth information about the daily topic. I’m calling them your “extra credit reading” assignments. Yep—I’m still a teacher at heart. Since it’s extra credit, I know that you might not have time to get to each of them, but they are there for you when you want or need more information.

If you don’t yet have a copy of *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*, go ahead and order it now. You won’t be sorry—it’s going to be an integral part of your long-term success. Also, all the scientific research and references are contained

in *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*, as are the next steps that you'll need after your FAST Start is over.

But for now: it's most important that you stick with me *here* in this day-by-day guide and concentrate on one thing only: building up your fasting muscle and establishing IF as a habit. When you take it day by day, you won't be overwhelmed, and you'll set yourself up for long-term success.

Are you excited? Let's do this!

WHAT IS “INTERMITTENT FASTING”?

If you are new to IF, you may wonder: What exactly is intermittent fasting? Even if you eat three meals a day plus snacks like most people in our modern society, you are somewhat of a faster, whether you realize it or not. We all fast while we sleep, and we wake up every morning in a fasted state. Most intermittent fasters simply extend that fasted state throughout the day rather than eating a traditional breakfast in the morning. Just like everyone else, we break-fast, but it may be when most people are having their lunch or dinner. *Breakfast* literally means “break the fast.” We all do it, just at different times of the day. For me, break-fast, which I usually eat in the late afternoon or early evening, really is the most important meal of the day!

For intermittent fasters, there’s a period of the day when we intentionally fast, sticking to clean-fast-approved beverages only (plain water, black coffee, plain tea, and unflavored sparkling water)—and there’s a period of the day when we eat, which is called our *eating window*. I’ll help you choose your preferred eating window approach for the FAST Start before you begin, so keep reading.

It’s important to understand that IF is a flexible lifestyle that doesn’t have to be exactly the same from day to day, but the most common eating windows vary between one and eight hours a day.

To illustrate how this looks, let’s say someone follows an intermittent fasting lifestyle with a four-hour daily eating window. Since a day has twenty-four hours, twenty hours of each day (including the time you are asleep) would be spent fasting, and all your eating for the day would take place during the consecutive four-hour eating window that you choose. We would call that approach 20:4, representing twenty hours of fasting and a four-hour eating window. Most people who use the daily eating window approach end up with anything between 16:8 (sixteen hours of fasting and an eight-hour eating window) and 23:1 (a twenty-three-hour fast and a one-hour eating window). Because it’s a flexible lifestyle, your eating window can vary from day to day, based on your schedule and even your varying appetite.

Here’s how this might look as a day in my life. Every morning, I wake up and start the day with black coffee. After my coffee, I switch over to

water and unflavored sparkling water until I am ready to eat. I usually open my eating window at some point between 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. with a snack of some type. A couple of hours later, I prepare dinner for my husband and me, and we eat together. After dinner, I will often have a dessert of some type, or just a little something sweet to close my window. Overall, my eating window lasts for somewhere between two and six hours most days.

The daily eating window approach isn't the only way to live an intermittent fasting lifestyle, and there are other options that involve longer fasts of up to thirty-six to forty-two hours. These are based on the concept of alternate daily fasting (ADF), which is a well-researched practice. ADF isn't something you're going to implement during your FAST Start, so I won't explain it here. It's a tool that is described fully within *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*, and something you can consider for later in your IF journey. You may be wondering:

Is intermittent fasting extreme or dangerous?

For people who have never heard of intermittent fasting or who don't understand the many health benefits that come along with the IF lifestyle (which I will cover on day 4), this type of schedule may seem bizarre or even possibly dangerous. What?!?!?! You go most of the day without eating? Every *day*? You might even fast for thirty-six hours? Don't you have headaches? Don't you collapse from lack of food? How do you have energy to do day-to-day tasks?

Many intermittent fasters have gotten the speeches from well-meaning friends and family members:

"Of course you're losing weight, you're starving yourself!"

"Everyone knows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day! You need energy to start your day."

Neither of those statements is true, even though we have probably all heard them. You aren't starving yourself, and you won't collapse without breakfast. Let's dig into each of them:

Are we starving ourselves? Absolutely not. My comprehensive book is called *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* after all, not *Fast. Eat a little tiny diet meal. Repeat.*

When I eat, I eat well, and that's true for most IFers. I choose foods that make me feel great, and I eat until I am satisfied. Back in my lowcalorie diet days, whenever I wanted to lose a few pounds, I would restrict my calories

throughout the day to about 1,200 (because that's what "they" said I should do), and *that* felt like I was starving myself. I'll explain more about how IF is different from a low-calorie diet on day 3.

What about breakfast? Do we need breakfast first thing in the morning to fuel our bodies? The surprising answer to that question is no. If you have ever been hangry, you know the feeling. You need to eat NOW. Many people imagine that is what IF feels like. While it may feel like that over the brief adjustment period, once we are adapted, *hangry* goes away. The key is that we are well fueled during the fast ... by our fat stores, which exist for that very purpose. One of the most common things we hear from new IFers is that they can't believe how great they feel during the fast. Most of us are a lot less hungry while fasting than back in our low-calorie or frequent-small-meal days. The difference is astounding. Instead of getting worse over time, like most low-calorie diets, IF gets better and better as we adjust. More about this on days 9 and 16.

For now, what you need to remember is this: as we progress through the 28-Day FAST Start Day by Day, I'll teach you everything you need to know about intermittent fasting so that you understand the basics and have the tools you need to set a firm IF foundation ... and ensure that your IF lifestyle *sticks*.

WHY DO IFERS QUIT? AND HOW TO KEEP IT FROM HAPPENING TO YOU

Maybe you have never heard of IF before today, and you think it sounds too good to be true. Good news! It *isn't* too good to be true, as you will learn for yourself over time. The intermittent fasting lifestyle has changed thousands (if not millions) of lives, and yours is about to be one of them.

Or maybe you've dabbled with IF in the past but couldn't make it stick. The book you are holding is designed to equip you with all the tools you need to make sure it sticks this time. There are a few common mistakes you may have made in the past that I'm going to help you identify. And once you identify what was holding you back, you'll be prepared for success.

It's even possible that you lived as an IFer for a significant period of time, but for whatever reason, you have wandered off the path and are looking for your way back to the lifestyle that you *know* is right for you. The next month is designed to ease you back into IF. Think of it as your *fresh* start.

You may be reading this and asking:

If IF is so great, why would anyone quit?

That's a great question, and I am glad you asked. I've had amazing success with IF, but for years I fit into the category of "couldn't make it stick." You see, I was an IF dabbler. In my heart of hearts, I had the feeling that intermittent fasting was the answer. Unfortunately, however, I didn't have the tools that I needed to make IF into a *lifestyle*.

I treated IF as if it were another diet. I would start, last a few days, and then get discouraged for whatever reason:

- » **Results were neither quick nor dramatic.** I had unrealistic expectations. (*Blame the tabloids at the checkout counter of the grocery store that tell you you'll lose _____ pounds by _____. You won't, because that is not how the body works. But it makes you think you **should** be able to do it. When you don't, you blame yourself, of course, when really it was the unrealistic expectations that failed you.*)
- » **It was *hard*.** I didn't understand the adjustment period, or what needed to go on within my body during the adaptation process. So, as soon as it felt hard, I quit.
- » **Food soothed me in times of stress.** I was an elementary school teacher, a mom of two school-aged boys, a wife, and I also had a second (and third, and fourth) job teaching adults in two online universities and our school district's gifted teacher endorsement program. When I wasn't busy with family or work, I turned to food. Food was always there, and it didn't talk back.

Is it any wonder that I kept quitting?

I'm not going to let that happen to you. Not this time.

I've been around the intermittent fasting world since 2009, first as a *dabbler* (2009–2014) and then as a ***newly determined IFer*** who felt like this was her final shot (2014–2015). Starting in 2015, I transformed into an ***excited IFer*** who had finally reached her goal weight (after years of failed diets), and I started my first IF support group on Facebook. That allowed

me to mentor hundreds of thousands of IFers from around the world, and inspired me to write my first book (*Delay, Don't Deny*, in 2016) and become a podcaster in 2017.

Since that happened, I have gone on to reach millions of listeners and readers through my books and podcasts and to write the *New York Times* bestseller *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to continue to mentor intermittent fasters through my online support community. We are no longer on Facebook these days, and you can find us by going to ginstephens.com/community.

In my IF evolution, I am now an ***experienced IFer***. As of the writing of this book, I have gone through *nine* holiday seasons as an intermittent faster. Nine summers, vacations and all. This is the first time in my adult life that I have stuck to something for this long.

And I know this:

I will never stop living the intermittent fasting lifestyle.

My experience, plus the experience of thousands of other successful IFers, illustrates that IF is a lifestyle that works long term.

Just ask Dr. Mark Mattson, who I interviewed for episode 204 of my podcast, *Intermittent Fasting Stories*. He is one of the world's leading experts on intermittent fasting, and he has been living the IF lifestyle since the 1980s. Dr. Mattson is the former chief of the Laboratory of Neurosciences at the National Institute on Aging, and he is best known for cutting-edge neurological research during his time at Johns Hopkins University. When someone with that level of scientific expertise tells me that he chooses to live the intermittent fasting lifestyle because he is sold on the profound health benefits, I listen.

And he's not the only researcher who is sold on the health benefits of IF. Dr. Gil Blander appeared on episode 96 of the *Intermittent Fasting Stories* podcast. He received his Ph.D. from MIT with a focus on aging research, and he is considered to be an expert in the area of longevity. As of my interview with him in 2020, he had been living the IF lifestyle for eight years, and he told me: "The best intervention we have available for us today to live longer is IF. It is natural and simple. It's not easy for the first couple of weeks. But once it becomes a routine, then it's easy." (He's right, by the way. Even though it might not be easy on day 1, once you are fully adapted, it becomes something you simply *do*.)

Besides talking to scientists and experts who choose to live the IF lifestyle, I have interviewed hundreds of IFers from the real world who are

just like you and me. They are like your neighbor, your mom, your friend, your son or daughter ... real-life people who have made the intermittent fasting lifestyle work for them long term.

It is the greatest joy of my life to talk to successful intermittent fasters and hear how IF has transformed them and their lives in ways they never expected.

Even so, sometimes I talk to people who have struggled to make IF work for them. Not every story begins as a success story. Mine didn't.

You're probably not surprised (especially if you've ever listened to me on podcasts) that I love to talk to people about IF. And that includes perfect strangers. Just imagine how many grocery store checkout lane conversations or random encounters I have had that ended up turning to IF. Oops. What can I say? I'm passionate about the topic. You don't lose eighty pounds and keep it off and not want to shout it from the mountaintops.

In the early years of my IF journey, it was common for people to have never heard of IF. Frankly, many of them thought it sounded crazy. "Thank you, Crazy Grocery Store Lady. Please allow me to check out with my groceries now."

But somewhere around 2019, the tide began to shift. Now, when I bring up IF with a stranger, it seems they all know someone who has had great success with it.

These days, it's very common that the person I'm talking to even tried it themselves at some point. For those who have tried it, the conversation usually goes something like this:

STRANGER: *I tried it, and it didn't work for me.*

ME: *Tell me about that. What were you drinking during the fast?*

BOOM!

That's when they tell me about the energy drinks, or the coffee with cream, or the flavored sparkling water, or the herbal tea, or the _____—you can fill in the blank with any number of beverages that break a fast, making it *much* harder to get through the day. More about why in the next chapter, where I will give you the basics of what I call the *clean fast*. Trust me when I tell you that the clean fast changes everything.

Sometimes, however, the person I'm talking to *did* fast clean. Maybe they only drank plain water, and they stuck to black coffee.

When someone who was fasting clean tells me that IF "didn't work for them," my next question is usually:

How long did you give it, and how did you determine it wasn't working for you?

Every time, the answer is some sort of combination of only giving it a couple of weeks at the most, and they were usually using the lack of dramatic scale movement to determine that IF “wasn't working.”

If you've tried IF in the past and quit, I bet you either weren't fasting clean, or you didn't give it long enough.

But that doesn't apply to someone who lived the IF lifestyle successfully for a time, fasted clean, had great results, and then quit. Why does that happen? Did that happen to *you*, by any chance? There can be many reasons you stopped fasting:

- » **You followed bad advice**—There's a lot of conflicting information out there, and if you go down every path, you can lose your way. Instead, keep it simple: fast clean, and learn to listen to your own body and to trust yourself.
- » **Life got in the way**—Maybe a vacation happened and you never went back to intermittent fasting, or a stressful period of time caused you to stop fasting. Before you knew it, you were not fasting at all.
- » **Diet brain took over**—Maybe your friend started a new diet plan and was losing weight more quickly than you were, so you decided fasting wasn't “working” and you jumped ship to this other plan.
- » **You began to question fasting in general**—Maybe you saw a blog post or news article that made you question either the safety or efficacy of IF. *(As an example, in late 2022, a bunch of articles came out that claimed certain dangers associated with IF, but when I looked into the study the articles were based on, I realized **it wasn't a fasting study** ... by the way, this is actually a common tactic in what passes for health journalism these days—sensational headlines that don't reflect what the study actually found or even what it actually studied. Always go to the source rather than trusting the headlines.)*
- » **Naysayers got into your head**—Sadly, this is very common. Someone you know (or even someone you love) plants a seed or disparages fasting, or makes you feel silly or even guilty about your choices. So, you quit.

If you quit, don't let that stop you from trying again. Think about a toddler who is learning to walk. That toddler doesn't fall down once and say, "Welp. Looks like walking isn't for me." No. That toddler gets up and tries again, as many times as it takes.

Have you heard the Japanese proverb:

Fall down seven times, get up eight.

If this is your first time as an IFer, the tools in this book will give you a great foundation to ensure you get up each time you fall down. If you've tried IF in the past, maybe you already know where you went wrong, and you're ready to get it *right* this time.

Either way, I hope you're excited, because this time, you are *not going to quit*.

Write it down:

I am not going to quit.

And sign your name to it. Date it. Make that promise to yourself today.

WHAT IS THE "CLEAN FAST"?

THE BASICS

The clean fast is the one nonnegotiable rule that I will never waver on, and you shouldn't, either: when you fast, fast clean. Otherwise, you are not really fasting.

The clean fast is so important that I devoted *two* chapters of *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* to the topic. In chapter 4, "The Magic Is in the Clean Fast! Learn *Why We Fast Clean*," I explain the rationale behind the clean fast, with all the scientific explanations as to why it matters and why we care. In chapter 5, "Keep It Clean! Learn *How We Fast Clean*," I share all the details of what it means to fast clean, followed by ten pages of stories from forty-three IFers who share how the clean fast was instrumental in their success.

You need to read both of those chapters, because understanding *why* is a lot more powerful than simply hearing me tell you what to do. When you understand why, you'll never want to sacrifice the clean fast, and you'll prize that time of your day even more, recognizing how powerful it truly is.

So, your homework assignment is to read the clean fast chapters of *Fast. Feast. Repeat.* at some point in the near future to fully comprehend the *why* and the *how*.

For now, use this diagram to understand the clean fast.

WHAT IS A "CLEAN FAST"?		
YES!	MAYBE ...	NO!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water (unflavored) • Black coffee (unflavored) • Any plain tea brewed from actual dried leaves only (black tea, green tea, etc., unflavored varieties only, loose or in tea bags) 	<p><i>We call this the "gray area":</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peppermint essential oil for breath freshening only, NOT for water-enhancing (<i>select foodgrade and use sparingly</i>) • Herbal tea with a bitter flavor profile • Vitamins and supplements (<i>There is no easy answer for all vitamins and supplements. Any</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • Flavored water • Flavored coffee Fruity, sweet, or matcha teas • Diet sodas Natural or

- Mineral water, club soda, sparkling water, or seltzer water (unflavored)
- Minerals/electrolytes/salt (with no additives or flavors)
- Medications as prescribed by your health care provider

that are clearly food-like or listed in the “No” column should be taken within your eating window.)

- artificial sweeteners
- Gum
- or mints
- Food-like flavors of any type (*fruit juices, fruit flavors, etc.*)
- Bone broth, broth, or bouillon
- Fat, including coconut oil, MCT oil, butter, etc.
- Cream, creamers, milk, or milk substitutes (*of any amount or type*)
- Supplements such as collagen, pre-workouts, BCAAs, exogenous ketones, etc.

Whenever you aren't sure if something is okay for the clean fast, take a look at the ingredients and compare them against this chart. If the item only contains ingredients from the “Yes” column, it's fine. If it has ingredients from the “No” column, it doesn't work. And, if it is something in the gray area, it may or may not work for you.

IMPORTANT: Don't experiment with anything from the gray area until after you complete the 28-Day FAST Start. At that point, you should know how your body feels during the clean fast. If you then experiment with a gray area item and you find it makes you hungry or shaky/nauseous within about an hour (or sooner), that is a clear signal that it doesn't work well for you during the fast. If the item is okay for you, you probably won't notice any difference in hunger or energy levels. You'll feel the same as you did when fasting clean. If that happens, congratulations! That item is probably fine for you. **By the way: This is never an excuse for trying anything from the “No” list. The “does it make me hungry/shaky” test isn't foolproof, and remember that you don't want to risk breaking your fast. Everything on the “No” list is always a no, for reasons that are fully explained in *Fast. Feast. Repeat.***

CHOOSE YOUR FAST START APPROACH

Much of this chapter is taken directly from *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*, and I'm including it here because I know you might not have had time to get a copy yet.

Before you begin your FAST Start, it's important to understand its purpose and choose your approach. This chapter will help you do that. In the FAST Start, you will:

F = Fast Clean

A = Adapt

S = Settle In

T = Tweak

These are the four cornerstones of the FAST Start:

F=Fast Clean	This is not negotiable. Every minute you are fasting, follow the guidelines for the clean fast. During the first twenty-eight days, stick to items from the "yes" column only, and don't experiment with any of the items that are in the gray area.
A=Adapt	You will ignite your fat-burning superpower, and your body will physically adapt, learning how to tap into your fat stores over time.
S=Settle In	For each of the four weeks, you will settle in to a predictable fasting routine. Embrace the changes that you experience along the way (even the challenging ones!) and take note of how you feel as the weeks progress.
T=Tweak	While I will suggest an overall fasting routine for each week based on your personality type, feel free to change from one approach to another if you need to. Just because you decided you wanted to "rip off the Band-Aid" on day 1, that doesn't mean that you are stuck there! Head on down to the Easy Does It approach if you need to. It's okay! You can also tweak the time of day where your eating window falls from day to day to see what feels right to you.

Think of this first twenty-eight-day period as the time when you will lay the foundation for your intermittent fasting practice.

It's time to decide which of the three FAST Start plans is the best fit for you. Take this short quiz to figure it out. *(Or you can skip the quiz and go straight to the three plans and make your own choice. I have to admit: I am a sucker for a quiz, since I am a retired teacher. If you don't want to take a quiz, I forgive you. This is one more way that we are all different.)* This isn't a quiz that you can fail, which is good news.

- 1. In the past, when you have started a new eating plan, which best describes you?**
 - a. I like to read about the plan, spend several weeks gathering resources, and then ease my way in.
 - b. I make do with the foods I already have in my kitchen and gradually implement the suggestions over time.
 - c. I throw away all noncompliant foods and restock my kitchen completely to match my new plan. Let's go!

- 2. Which describes your decision-making process?**
 - a. I like to take my time before coming to a decision, carefully weighing out all the pros and cons. I usually make some sort of list or ask for the opinion of others before deciding. I may have trouble making the decision.
 - b. I think about the options carefully and then feel confident in my decision.
 - c. I immediately know what my decision will be based on intuition and what feels right.

- 3. What has tripped you up the most on past diet or health plans?**
 - a. I am easily overwhelmed when there are too many changes at once.
 - b. I don't always give myself enough time to adapt to the plan.
 - c. I am usually impatient and looking for quick results.

- 4. How do you face a difficult challenge?**
 - a. If it seems too difficult, I may be discouraged and give up.
 - b. With time and effort, I usually accomplish what I set out to do.
 - c. Bring it on! I can do anything I set my mind to.

- 5. How is your health?**
 - a. I have some health challenges, but my doctor said it is okay for me to start IF.
 - b. I am in pretty good health overall.
 - c. I am as healthy as a horse, thank you very much.

TIME TO SCORE THE QUIZ!

Give yourself 0 points for every A, 2 points for every B, and 4 points for every C.

If you scored 0–4, you should start with the *Easy Does It* approach. If you scored a 6, you should consider either the *Easy Does It* or *Steady Build* approach.

If you scored an 8–12, you should start with the *Steady Build* approach.

If you scored a 14, you should consider either the *Steady Build* or the *Rip Off the Band-Aid* approach.

If you scored a 16–20, you should start with the *Rip Off the BandAid* approach.

Feel free to ignore this quiz if you find it to be hokey, and choose whatever plan feels right to *you*. Remember: *you* are in charge at all times.

NOTE: Based on an informal survey of intermittent fasters, I found that 61 percent of IFers in my online community prefer an evening window while 25 percent prefer a midday eating window. For that reason, the FAST Start plan has been designed with an early-evening eating window as the goal. Feel free to adjust the window timing on any of these approaches as it feels right to you.

Let's dig into the three FAST Start approaches and see just how to implement each of them. Even though there are many tools in your intermittent fasting toolbox, the FAST Start will focus on the eating window approach to IF. After the first twenty-eight days are over, you will be free to pull out other tools and experiment with the other approaches. The other tools are fully explained in *Fast. Feast. Repeat.*

The *Easy Does It* Approach

Days 1–7	12-hour window	Low-carb ease-in breakfast, Low-carb ease-in lunch, Regular dinner
Days 8–14	10-hour window	Late low-carb ease-in breakfast <i>or</i> early low-carb ease-in lunch, Low-carb ease-in snack, Regular dinner
Days 15–21	8-hour window	Low-carb ease-in lunch, Regular dinner

Days 22–28	6-hour window	Low-carb ease-in lunch <i>or</i> low-carb ease-in snack, Regular dinner
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In this approach, you’re starting out in week 1 with three meals a day in a twelve-hour eating window. Notice that this plan includes some low-carb “ease-in” meals that will help your body lower insulin levels (*our bodies release less insulin in response to lower-carb meals*) while still eating three times a day at first. Have a low-carb breakfast, a low-carb lunch, and then eat the type of dinner that you’re used to (dinner doesn’t need to be low-carb unless you have already been living a low-carb lifestyle; remember that other than these low-carb ease-in meals, we aren’t changing *what* we eat during the FAST Start, only *when* we eat).

Each week, you tighten up your eating window by a couple of hours, until you finally end up with a window of about six hours containing either two meals or a snack and a meal.

The Steady Build Approach

Days 1–7	8-hour window	Lunch, Dinner
Days 8–14	7-hour window	Lunch, Dinner
Days 15–21	6-hour window	Lunch <i>or</i> snack, Dinner
Days 22–28	5-hour window	Snack, Dinner

In this approach, you start off skipping breakfast on day 1, and BOOM! You’re doing it! Stick to clean-fast-approved beverages all morning, and eat your typical lunch followed by your typical dinner within an eight-hour eating window.

Each week, you shorten your eating window by an hour, and you end up in week 4 with an eating window of five hours that contains a snack and a meal.

The Rip-Off-the-Band-Aid Approach

Days 1–7	6-hour window	Lunch, Dinner
Days 8–14	6-hour window	Lunch <i>or</i> snack, Dinner
Days 15–21	5-hour window	Lunch <i>or</i> snack, Dinner