

# *Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee*

Researched & Written by Robert J. Bovee Certified Master PPT, RTS, ETS, FTS, LMS, WMS, HWFS, SNS,SSCS, MES, E/FT, PSCS, PRCS

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## **WHAT IS “IDEAL” WEIGHT?**

For years fitness professionals and nutritionists used the term “ideal weight” to refer to the weight that a person should weigh, were they to have a good body composition. There are several problems with this term.

To begin with, what exactly is “good” body composition? What is a body composition that tends to be associated with good health? What are good looks? Body composition certainly varies widely as a function of body type, genetics and many other factors. Picking a “good” number for body composition is difficult. If you estimate body composition, you probably give you clients a range of values that are considered normal or healthy, rather than one number.

It is also difficult to pick one number to represent the best weight for a person. Weight depends on body composition to some degree. Since some body composition measures are estimates, even these values are somewhat inaccurate. So even if you know your client’s body composition, the error of measurement makes it difficult to calculate one number that would represent a “best” weight.

When thinking in terms of ideal weight, we have to also ask, ideal for what or who? Ideal weight for a sprinter has a different meaning from ideal weight for a hockey goalkeeper. The word “ideal” also gets us into trouble because most people think that ideal weight means lower weight, given the current ideas of what type of physique is attractive.

Should the phrase “normal weight” be used instead of “ideal weight”? There is a problem with this too because norms have become increasingly heavy. In the U.S. “normal” is overweight, at least according to weight-for-height measures such as body mass index.

When an individual asks the question “What is my ideal weight?” it is important to understand the real meaning of their question. Sometimes what they are really asking is “Is my weight OK?” It is probably better to use the term “healthy weight”. The focus with this term should also be to develop a healthy life style with good food and plenty of physical activity. Those individuals who are not really overweight may just need to be reassured that their weight is not the issue, but exercising regularly is.

Other individuals may ask this question as a way of seeking advice on setting a weight-loss goal. Setting this goal is very tricky. Most overweight individuals never reach their goal weight, becoming very discouraged to the point where they quit eating well and exercising.

Almost anyone can lose weight with just about any diet. Many individuals have dreams of losing **25** per cent of the body weight or more. They should really be encouraged to think more realistically and focus on life style change rather than a dramatic unrealistic weight loss. Crazy diets and regaining weight is hard on a person’s body. Ironically you could end up fatter than before you started the diet.

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Along with eating healthy, physically activity should be a focus when an individual is interested in losing weight.

The research done on this touchy area has shown that the best strategy for overweight individuals to follow is to set realistic goals rather than unrealistic text book “Movie star, look a like” goals. For good health and long-term weight control, maintaining body weight is the ultimate goal. If an individual needs to lose weight, a better strategy is to lose a small amount. But most individuals regain the weight they lost with in a few months or a few years. Most individuals who lose 5 to 10 per cent of their body weight also experience improvements in many other health areas such as lowered blood pressure, blood sugar and blood lipids. This amount of weight is more likely to be achieved and maintained.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.