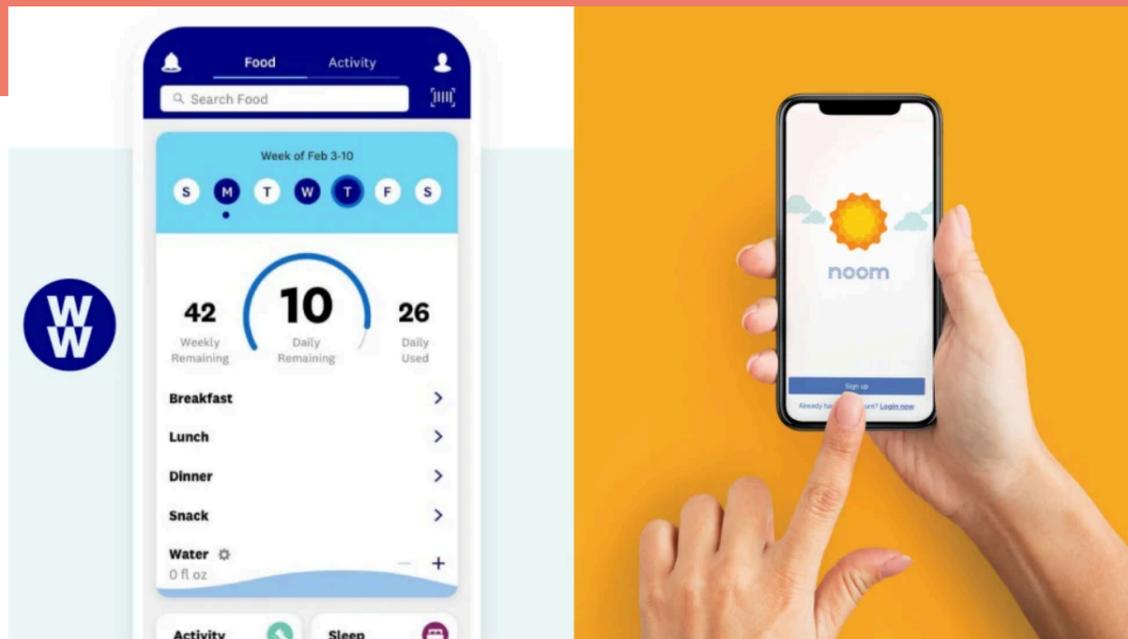


## LIFESTYLE

# WEIGHTWATCHERS AND NOOM MAKE LOSING WEIGHT EASIER—WHICH ONE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Here's how the two compare.



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## Editor's Note: Sept. 9, 2022

Since publication, WeightWatchers has debuted a new initiative called "PersonalPoints," which we've **tested** and incorporated into this review. Noom's pricing information has also been updated.

Weight loss can be challenging, to say the least. It takes discipline and motivation to reach your goals. And while your health is more than a number on the **scale**, there are times that you might find that you want to lose a few pounds to feel your best. You already know it's not worth trying those crazy crash diets, juice cleanses, and pills. But a better and healthier approach to weight loss is something more sustainable. That's where **WeightWatchers** and **Noom** come in.

## What are WeightWatchers and Noom?

**WeightWatchers** uses a food point system that is personalized based on your age, weight, height, and sex to help you lose weight in a healthy way. You track everything you eat and drink, as well as your workouts, on the app or website.

**Noom** is similar, in that it is also a food-tracking platform. Solely app-based, Noom helps you track your weight and monitor what you eat and when you work out. Like WeightWatchers, it encourages you to eat in moderation and focus on plants. While WeightWatchers gives every food a point value, Noom assigns colors to foods to make it easy to eat more healthy foods and avoid less nutritionally-sound ones. The biggest difference is that Noom focuses on the psychological aspects of weight management, teeing up articles and quizzes in the forms of daily "tasks" designed to get you to think about food and fitness differently. WeightWatchers provides support for overall wellness through its blog, as well as certain features like sleep tracking, but these are more like a bonus than a fundamental aspect.

## What do WeightWatchers and Noom cost?

With **WeightWatchers**, there are a few plans you can choose from. For each, you pay by the week with at least one month of commitment required—after all, healthy weight loss doesn't happen overnight (unfortunately).

- The **Digital plan**, which costs \$5.29 per week or about \$21 a month, gives you a more self-guided program with access to the app and website. From there, you get food and fitness tracking capabilities, access to recipes and fitness guides, and a social platform where you can interact with other members and share your successes or frustrations.
- The **Unlimited Workshops + Digital plan** (\$13.83 per week, or about \$55 a month), gives you digital access and unlimited face-to-face (virtual or in-person) Coach-led sessions with other members (the famous meetings that have been WeightWatchers' hallmark since its founding).

**Noom's** pricing can be opaque. Its blog lists month-by-month costs for several different plans, but it's not easy to find.

A month of Noom costs \$60, though Noom claims that most new users opt for a four-month auto-renew subscription that costs \$159, which lowers the monthly fee to \$39.75. From there, Noom allows you to increase the length of your subscription in one-month increments, with five month to annual plans that cost \$164 to \$199, respectively.

Though we're testing the 2022 program to find out what else changed, users have previously been able to save on memberships in a number of ways: When we first signed up for Noom in 2019, the "introductory period" was a two-week free trial; in 2020, going through the sign-up process led us to an offer for a six-month subscription for \$159, with a waived starter fee (normally \$20).

Opacity aside, the cost per month can be reasonable. The \$169-for-six-months plan works out to \$28.16 per month and includes the daily lessons, a private support coach, and a text-based support group lead by a coach and about two dozen or so other #NoomNerds taking the program at the same time, with add-on options available at an additional cost.

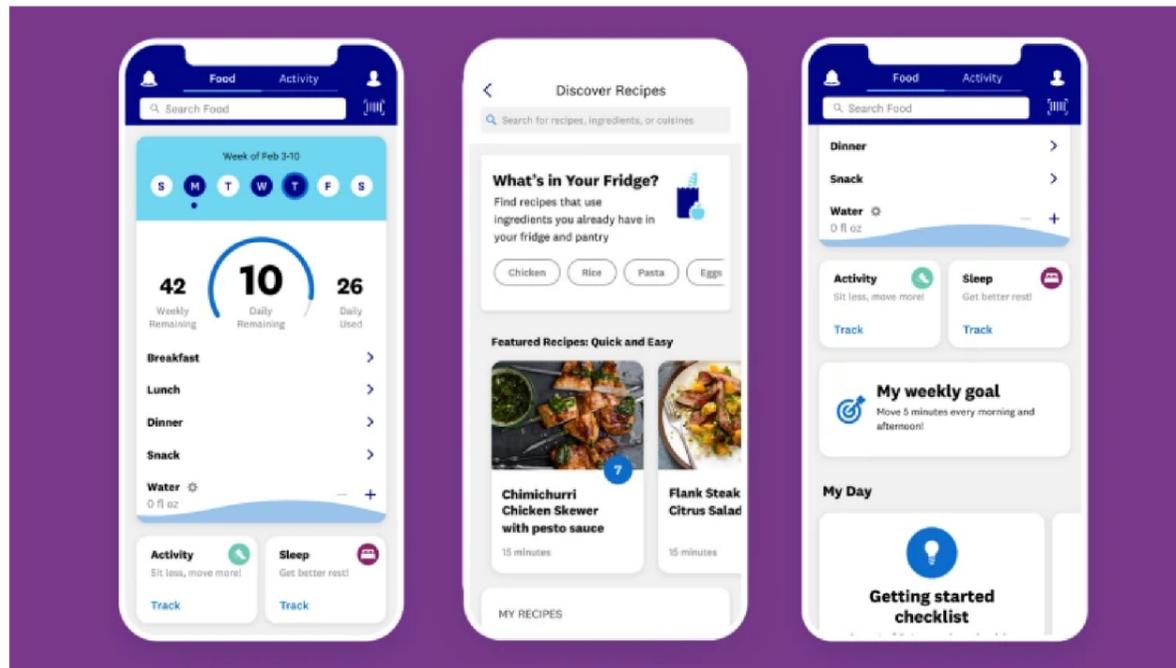
## How does the food logging on WeightWatchers and Noom work?



Both WeightWatchers and Noom have different food tracking capabilities that make weight loss easier.

**WeightWatchers** allots you a specific number of "Points" each day. Every food and drink has a corresponding Point value, with the healthiest foods being freebies with no points at all. Saturated fat and added sugar drive the Points value up, while fiber and protein drive it down. In theory, if you consume the equivalent of your daily Points (or below that number), you should lose weight, which you also record once a week on the platform. Upon joining, you'll take an assessment about your lifestyle, eating habits,

goals, activity levels, and so on. These results will dictate the point budget you'll be working with, as well as your list of ZeroPoint foods (or foods with 0 Points value, all of which are nutritional powerhouses that form the foundation for a healthy eating pattern).



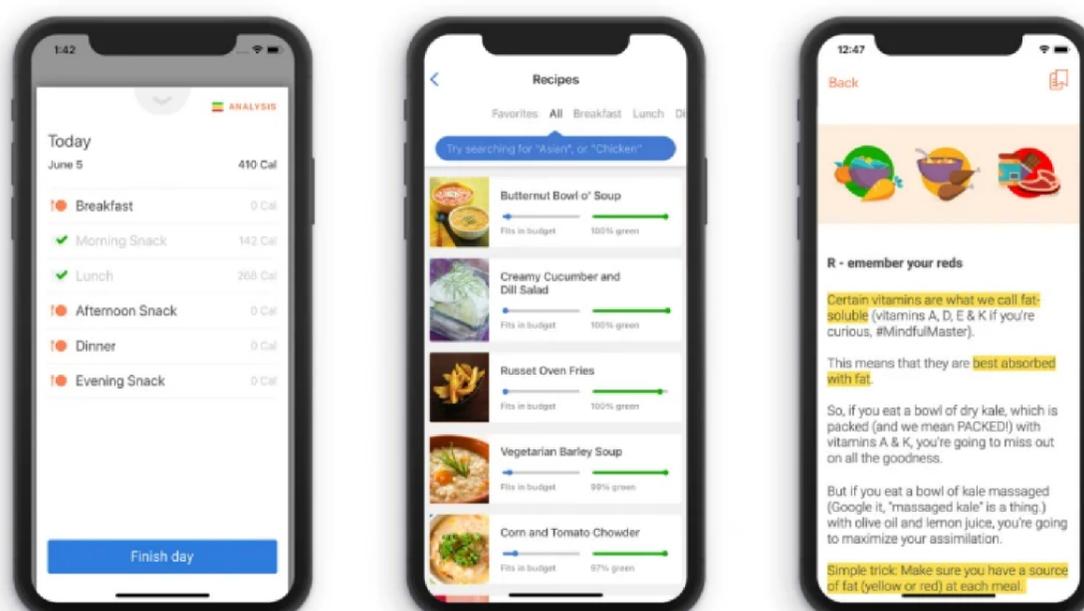
On WeightWatchers, you track everything you eat and drink, as well as your workouts on the app or website.

In general, these ZeroPoint foods include most fruits and vegetables, eggs, lean proteins (chicken breasts, 99% lean ground turkey, most fish) and non-fat dairy. Drinks that contain zero Points include things that have no sugar or fat, such as black coffee, black tea, water, and some diet beverages.

There is also a diabetes-tailored plan available.

**Noom**, much like WeightWatchers, aims to change your relationship with food, using a slightly different approach. In addition to daily food logging, the Noom app provides motivation with daily “tasks” you’re asked to complete. Most of these are short articles to read, usually about nutrition but often about psychological approaches—mindfulness, for instance—that reframe your outlook on dieting, or life in general. Instead of assigning point values to individual foods as WeightWatchers does, Noom uses color codes in its program to classify foods into three categories, based on the caloric density:

- **Green foods** are ones that you should include most in your diet. These are low-caloric-density foods such as vegetables, fruits, and other foods with high water content, as well as low-fat dairy.
- **Red foods** are the most calorie-dense, and include nuts, cheese, and other items that should be consumed sparingly.
- **Yellow foods** fall in the middle—things like chicken, eggs, avocados—and should be consumed in moderation.



In addition to the daily food logging, the Noom app provides motivation with about eight daily “tasks” you’re asked to complete.

The idea is that you can eat a larger quantity of food that contains fewer calories per ounce (say, 100 calories of spinach, or an entire pound of the salad greens) than the same amount of higher-caloric-density foods (like 100 calories of Skittles, or a measly 25 of the tiny candies). As the lower caloric-density foods tend to contain more water and fiber, it's likely that those foods will also keep you satiated for longer. And if you feel less hungry, you'll be less likely to overindulge.

## What happens if you go over your daily totals on WeightWatchers and Noom?

It comes with the territory of weight loss that if you eat more than you should, you won't lose weight or you may even gain. These programs both have proven track records, but each program is what you make of it. If you aren't disciplined in your food decisions and tracking, you won't see results. However, both WeightWatchers and Noom make success more feasible by allowing for some flexibility, which is what many reviewers say is the key to what makes them work.

*If you aren't disciplined in your food decisions and tracking, you won't see results.*

With **WeightWatchers**, you're given weekly points, or "weeklies" on top of your daily points. These can give you the freedom to indulge. If you choose to go over your daily point budget on any given day, points are taken from your weekly points. If you don't reach your daily max, up to 4 points will roll over into your weekly point bank. You may save up those weeklies for a decadent treat on the weekend, use the weeklies sparingly throughout the week, or not use them at all. It's your choice, but the flexibility means never having to give up your favorite foods entirely.

**Noom's** color classifications are more *guidelines* than rules. If you go over your red food allotment for the day but stay within your calorie range—or even exceed your daily calorie count—there are no repercussions beyond seeing the bar chart exceed your target ceiling. And, really, that's enough: If you see that you're exceeding your totals day after day, you're only cheating yourself in the long run.

## How does fitness fit into WeightWatchers and Noom?



Noom and WeightWatchers both aim to help individuals improve every aspect of their lifestyles, including fitness.

Physical activity is one of the four core pillars at **WeightWatchers**, in addition to food, mindset, and sleep. Members can track how many points they'd added from activity, and you can even expand your daily budget by working out.

For every point added from activity, a point will be added to your weekly Points Budget. High-intensity or strength workouts will add the most points, but all movement counts. The Points you add are calculated by the intensity of your activity and your metabolic rate. You can even link up your WeightWatchers app to your phone or **fitness tracker**, and members can track their programs within the app, such as number of steps a day or minutes of activity. In addition to hundreds of workouts on the WeightWatchers app, being a member gives you free access to on-demand, instructor-led cardio, core, yoga, pilates, and stretching workouts through Obé Fitness.

**Noom** has a paid add-on option for a custom workout plan. Beyond that, the app encourages you to exercise on a daily basis, whether that's walking or taking a yoga or spin class. There is a daily box to check whether or not you've exercised. You can sync Noom with your phone's health data (e.g., Apple Health or Google Fit), a **Fitbit**, or other fitness trackers so that you don't have to enter in fitness information manually. If you do that, Noom will set a daily step goal for you that varies based on your history. It starts off at 2,000 steps per day and goes up from there, as long as you complete that day's goal. If you miss a day, it regresses.

## How do WeightWatchers and Noom support your overall wellness?



Sleep, mindset, and other factors contribute to your overall wellness.

**WeightWatchers** takes a more holistic approach to weight loss by looking at not only food but other contributing factors to your health, such as your **mindset** and sleep, and offers you tools to help you in those areas. There's an activity dashboard that helps you move more and find workouts that you enjoy. You can listen to 5-minute audio lessons from expert coaches to help manage stress-eating, find motivation, reset your mindset, and more. And there are sleep tools that aim to help you get to bed on time and enjoy a better night's sleep based on science-backed strategies. And the link between good sleep and maintaining a healthy weight is paramount.

The **Noom** app refreshes every day with about eight "tasks" that you are asked to complete. Most of the tasks are short articles to read, usually about nutrition, but often about psychological approaches—mindfulness, for instance—that reframe your outlook on dieting, or even life. Users complete the program with better sleep habits, higher self-esteem, and healthier body images, in addition to the desired number on the scale. There's even an entire program dedicated to improving your mindset called the Noom Healthy Mind program, which empowers participants to better manage their daily stress and anxiety in a fun, engaging way.

## How do WeightWatchers and Noom provide social support?

Both WeightWatchers and Noom have active and supportive communities, in which you may or may not participate, based on your preferences and what motivates you.

**WeightWatchers** has been around for nearly 60 years, so the user base is gigantic. You can find brand ambassadors and forums on Facebook and Instagram, sharing their health journeys, asking questions, swapping recipes, and inspiring each other with their accomplishments. On the WeightWatchers platform itself, there are several native social support systems. No matter what plan you purchase, you get access to a chat function to ask any technical questions. There are countless recipes and resources on the WeightWatchers website. Additionally, there is a feed very similar to an Instagram feed that allows you to share photos, follow other users, and interact with comments.

**Noom** also offers access to a support specialist, as well as a group chat with other Noom users who started around the same time as you. The support specialist seems useful if you have any questions. The group chat is hit-or-miss, depending on the makeup of the group you're assigned to. Over several weeks, there can be moments when the chatroom is very active and lots of people are participating, and there are other times where it's mostly crickets. You'll also find Noom and "#NoomNerds" on Facebook and Instagram, though not nearly to the extent of WeightWatchers's presence.

## What are the downsides of WeightWatchers and Noom?

Neither WeightWatchers nor Noom are perfect. There are some downsides to each, and mostly the downsides overlap. Food tracking can be tedious on both programs and it's especially annoying when products aren't in the database so you have to assemble recipes from scratch.

With both programs, it can also be easy to burn out on mainly eating "healthy" foods, unless you have a game plan for how you'll switch it up. If you're constantly having the same zero-point (WeightWatchers) or green (on Noom) foods without varying the preparation, seasonings, or even trying completely new things (such as veggies you've never considered before), you'll get bored or flat-out fed up.

One potential problem with **WeightWatchers** is that you may not like the initial plan you sign up for. While some users don't like having a coach, other people love it. Some enjoy having more freedom with tracking and food, but others want more discipline. It may take some time and experimenting to figure out what will work best for you and your goals.

A **Noom**-specific concern is that the articles and quizzes have a particular language to them that some people may find off-putting. Some of the messages, quiz answers, and button language can come across as a little condescending. There is also a technical problem where you can't edit a custom meal once you've added it. Our tester accidentally typed "puttanesca dauce," and was irked that she couldn't fix the typo (and customer support was no help on such a minor—but maddening—issue).

## Which program is right for you: WeightWatchers or Noom?

At the bottom line, both WeightWatchers and Noom aim to change your relationship with food by simply encouraging you to eat more healthy foods than unhealthy ones. Both use food and weight logging, and both implement a structure to categorize foods to help you make better food choices.

**WeightWatchers** may be a better choice for folks who aren't as knowledgeable about good nutrition; its plans offer more structure and guidance when it comes to points counting, which goes beyond calorie-counting and nudges you toward foods that promote a healthy eating pattern. Its programs also offer greater hand-holding in the forms of one-on-one coaching and very active social communities. For some, this may be motivational; for others, unneeded or even annoying.

**Noom** may be a better choice for those who'd like their weight-loss journey to be more personal rather than public, and for those who suspect they might need a reset in their mentality toward eating and exercise. There are no meetings to attend or calls to coordinate, just simple food tracking and a willingness to complete the daily tasks that are part of the program.

***The most successful customers are the ones who ultimately no longer need to use the programs because they establish better long-term eating and workout habits.***

The most successful customers are the ones who ultimately no longer need to use the programs because they establish better long-term eating and workout habits. As neither plan has forbidden foods, there's no feeling of deprivation, and there's no explaining yourself to anyone that you're on a special diet. The freedom in these programs makes weight loss much easier than going it alone, and both offer a great place to begin if you feel lost in redirecting your health journey.

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