

# How to Win a Hot Dog Eating Contest

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Stretch out your stomach. Hot dog eating legend Takeru Kobayashi begins a unique training regimen 2 months before an event. Be sure that you are training and competing safely to avoid dangers such as acid reflux, choking, stomach rupture, and inflammation or even tearing of the esophagus.



Make room by stretching your stomach. Gradually eat more and more every day, eating bulky, fibrous foods like watermelon or cabbage and drinking plenty of water. The human stomach has the capacity of about 1 liter (a little more than 1 quart) but can be distended up to four times that capacity (more than a gallon). Write down your goals for consumption and run them by your doctor or dietitian before you start--a hot dog eating trophy is not worth a trip to the hospital or a permanent medical condition.

Exercise to avoid gaining weight. Most eating champions are lean, and many contend that having fat on your stomach actually impedes its ability to expand, referring to it as the "band of fat theory". Also, exercising will keep your eating regimen from jeopardizing your health. Kobayashi weight trains in order to build muscle and increase metabolism.

Develop techniques of eating them that will work for you. Find one that puts that hot dog down fast and smooth. The intuitive approach is to eat the hot dog all at once. Alternatively, you can eat the frankfurters and the buns separately. You can also dip the bun into water before eating it. Kobayashi uses what he calls the

"Solomon method" in which he separates the frankfurter from the buns, breaks the frankfurter in half, puts the two pieces in his mouth simultaneously, dips the buns in water, 7-up or Sprite and eats them next. This is done to cut down on chewing time.

Sonya "The Black Widow" Thomas, who holds over 20 world records for speed-eating, stresses the importance of coordination. Use your hands to eat and drink as quickly as possible, and watch videos of hot dog eating champions to see how they coordinate their movements to speed up the process. Pack it down. Wiggle your body as you're eating to help the food down and encourage it to settle more compactly in the stomach. Some people refer to this as the "Kobayashi wiggle".

Suppress the "gag" reflex. Vomiting during the competition will guarantee a loss. Just like the sword swallower, train your mind to ignore the urge to upchuck. Hot dog eating contests are not about taste or appetite. They're about control. Remember, however, that gagging is your body's defense against choking, so do not take steps to overcome it unless you're striving to become a competitive speed eater and you never eat without someone else present to help if you choke.

Time yourself. Find out how much time the contest will give you. For example, Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest lasts 12 minutes. Clock yourself as you practice eating as many hot dogs as you can within that time frame. Track your progress and try to break your previous record.