Brewing Tea Without Equipment: The Office and Travel Method

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Brewing without equipment, in summary:** Really good loose leaf tea with nothing but a cup and hot water: grandpa style, the saucer pour off, and what you still cannot skip.

The whole teaware cluster argues for the right kit, so here is the counterweight: you can make excellent loose leaf tea using just a mug and hot water. This page is the no equipment method, for the office, travel, or proving the point that leaf and water matter most.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.

Grandpa style: the original no kit method

The Chinese "grandpa style" is exactly this: put loose leaf directly in a cup or glass, add hot water, and drink it as it steeps, topping up with more water as the level drops. The leaf sinks, you sip above it, and it re infuses all day. It works best with leaf that sinks and does not over extract harshly, good green, white, oolong and many blacks, and it is the purest demonstration that the leaf, not the gadget, makes the tea. It has its own fuller treatment in grandpa style brewing.

Why it works better than it should

With no cramped infuser the leaf has total room, the room principle taken to its logical end, so extraction is full and even. The trick is leaf choice and quantity: a modest amount of whole leaf, not a heap of dust, so it does not turn bitter as it sits, the same logic as the brewing guide.

The mug and saucer pour off

If you want it stronger then stopped, brew loose in the mug and use a saucer or a second cup to decant the liquor off the leaf, holding the leaf back with the lid or saucer, essentially a gaiwan improvised from a mug. It is less elegant but reproduces the key move: separating liquor from leaf at the right moment.

Travel and office tactics

A simple lidded mug, or even cling film over a cup, traps heat and aromatics like a covered brew should, see why covering matters. Carry a small tin of decent leaf rather than relying on whatever bagged tea is around, and you out drink most offices with no equipment at all.

What you do still need

Hot water at the right temperature remains non negotiable: boiling for black and herbal, off the boil for green, the one rule no method escapes, see the water temperature guide. And decent leaf. Everything else here proves teaware is an enabler, not a requirement.

The point of this page

It is the bookend to teaware essentials: buy the few things that really help, but never believe you cannot make excellent tea without them. Leaf and water first, kit second, attention always, the throughline of the entire wiki.

Which no pot method is which

Method	Kit	Best for	Watch out for
One cup brewing	mug + large basket infuser + lid	a clean single cup, leaf removed on time	must lift the infuser out, no pot to decant
No equipment / office	just a cup and hot water	travel, the office, proving leaf beats kit	needs a saucer pour off to stop it
Grandpa style	a mug, nothing else	all day forgiving leaf, topped up	broken or very astringent leaf turns bitter

They are three points on one idea, leaf and water matter more than equipment, so pick by situation: a basket infuser for a precise single cup, the bare cup method when you have nothing, grandpa style when you want it to look after itself across a working day.

Want to actually buy a good one?

Once you have seen what a cup and hot water can do, the next step is to buy one good tea and let the cup be your judge, not the marketing. Everything displayed here was matched to the question of brewing without kit, which makes it the natural starting point. To see the wider range, browse tea and herbal infusions at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop. On the road or at the office the rule stays the same: buy by the cup and the description, ignore the marketing, weigh up the cost of each cup, and use the free UK delivery over £35.

Browse the tea range ?

Related on the wiki: Tea Equipment Buying Guide.

For the cupboard, see the English tea range and loose leaf range.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · The mug you drain is the one that worked. Add the gadgets after that.

More teaware reading

- Teaware essentials
- The gaiwan explained
- Loose leaf vs tea bags
- Water temperature guide

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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