Tea for Beginners: How to Start Without Overspending

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea for beginners, in summary:** A UK beginner guide to tea: fix brewing first, sample broadly, buy equipment selectively. Avoid the specialty-tea spending trap.

Getting into tea looks complicated and is not. The beginner secret is that technique beats spending and you should start narrow. This sits at the centre of the getting started cluster beside how to get into tea.

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

Fix the free things first

Fresh good water, correct temperature for the type, sensible steep time, and removing the leaf on time. These four cost nothing and improve the cup more than expensive leaf, see the temperature guide. Use freshly drawn cold water, boil the kettle just before pouring, give black tea 3-4 minutes, and add milk only after the bag is out.

Start with one or two types

Do not buy one of everything. Pick a type or two you are drawn to, learn them, then widen. A black tea plus one herbal covers most daily needs; after a few weeks you will know whether you want stronger blacks, a different flavour, or to explore green. Depth before breadth builds a palate fast, see the tasting guide.

Loose leaf is the big upgrade

Moving from dusty bags to whole loose leaf in a roomy infuser is the single biggest quality jump for the money. A basic teapot, a mesh strainer and a sealed tin (around £25-£40 all in) is the whole entry kit, see loose leaf tea and using an infuser.

Choose by character, not name

Decide brisk, light, malty, floral or caffeine free, then pick. Category tells you more than a brand label: "Darjeeling first flush" or "Japanese sencha" says more about the cup than the name on the box. Character beats romantic names every time, see how to choose tea.

Do not over buy

Tea fades; buy small amounts you will drink within months rather than hoarding. Finish one pack before buying the next variety, so you build real preference instead of a drawer of half-used teas, see keeping tea fresh.

Ignore the snobbery

You do not need ceremony or jargon to enjoy tea. A daily kitchen-table cup is as legitimate as any specialty ritual. Brew well, taste attentively, drink what you like, see common mistakes.

Bottom line

Fix water, temperature, time and timing; start with one or two types loose leaf; choose by character; widen slowly. That is the whole beginning, see how to get into tea.

Quick reference: Tea for beginners

Stage	What to do
Step 1 (free)	Brew your current tea properly: 95-100C water, 3-4 min, press the bag, fresh kettle water
Step 2 (£0-£10)	Buy a Brita filter jug if you're in hard-water area; biggest cup-quality upgrade for the money
Step 3 (£10-£20)	Try 3-4 mainstream brands side-by-side: PG Tips, Yorkshire, Tetley, Twinings English Breakfast
Step 4 (£15-£30)	Try one Earl Grey, one green tea, one herbal infusion to taste category differences
Step 5 (£20-£40)	If interested, try loose-leaf with a basic teapot and strainer; meaningful step up in cup quality
Step 6 (specialty)	Sample specialty single-region teas: Darjeeling, Assam, Ceylon, Tieguanyin oolong, Japanese sencha
What to skip	Premium "wellness" tea kits at £30+, complicated teaware sets, expensive specialty before you know what you like
Budget reality	You can develop a satisfying tea practice for under £50 lifetime spend on equipment; ongoing tea budget £30-£80 annually

What to buy to start

For mainstream exploration buy PG Tips, Yorkshire Tea, and Twinings English Breakfast in standard packs. For a flavoured variant try Twinings Earl Grey. For category exploration try green tea and a chamomile or peppermint infusion. For loose-leaf entry try Yorkshire Loose Leaf or Twinings loose. The only essential bit of kit is a Brita filter jug if you have hard water. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery is over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Start cheap, stay cheap until something stops you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

More tea reading

For specific brand picks see the PG Tips wiki, the Yorkshire Tea, and the Twinings brand guide. For tasting technique see the practical tea tasting guide. For brewing see how to make tea properly. For equipment see the teaware essentials.

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