Tea for Beginners

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea for beginners, in summary:** Start where you are, fix water and temperature, try one loose-leaf, explore the families, and ignore the snobbery. The common early mistakes are covered below.

If tea feels intimidating, it should not. Here is the no-snobbery start. It sits alongside the ultimate guide to making tea.

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

Step	What to do
1. Start where you are	If you drink PG Tips or Yorkshire Tea, start there; improve brew before changing brand
2. Fix water and temperature	Fresh water, full rolling boil; bottled spring water in hard-water areas
3. Try ONE loose-leaf	Buy a small bag of decent loose-leaf (Darjeeling or Assam) and basket infuser; experiment
4. Explore tea families	Try one black, one green, one oolong over a few weeks
5. Ignore the snobbery	Milk, sugar, and bags aren't shameful; preference governs
Common mistake 1	Boiling water on green tea (produces bitter cup); use 70-80C
Common mistake 2	Under-using leaf (produces weak cup); 1 tsp per cup minimum
Common mistake 3	Stale storage (open packets in cupboard); use airtight tins
Beginner budget	GBP 25-50 total for basic upgraded setup
Time investment	20 minutes to learn upgraded brewing; 10 minutes weekly thereafter

Start with what you already like

The common beginner mistake is to abandon familiar tea and chase exotic leaves in order to "drink properly". If you enjoy Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips with milk and sugar, start there and improve how you brew what you already know: fresh water, a full rolling boil, around four minutes for builder's strength. Premium tea tried before the basics are fixed usually disappoints, because it is rarely brewed well. Get the familiar cup right first; gradual exploration makes far more sense from that foundation. See how to make tea properly.

Fix water and temperature first

Before buying anything new, sort the water and the heat. Use fresh-drawn water rather than water left standing in the kettle, and let it reach a full rolling boil. In hard-water areas such as London and the South East, try filtered or bottled spring water once and compare. Black tea wants near-boiling, so pour the moment after the boil; green tea wants cooler, around 70 to 80C, or it turns bitter. This fix is free or nearly so, and it improves the cup more than switching brand ever will. See best water for tea.

Try one loose-leaf, then explore by family

You do not have to switch overnight. Buy one small bag (50 to 100g) of decent loose-leaf close to what you already drink (Assam, Ceylon or English Breakfast are all comparable to mainstream teabag tea) and a basket infuser for a few pounds. Brew it alongside your usual bag for a few weeks and see what you make of it. Some people convert, some keep loose-leaf for weekends and bags for weekdays, and both are fine. Once you are comfortable, taste one example from each main family (black, green, white, oolong, herbal) over a few weeks to learn your own preference rather than following hype. See how to brew every type of tea.

Ignore the snobbery

Tea has its gatekeepers; ignore them. There is no shame in milky-sweet tea, in teabags, in drinking the same brand for decades, or in preferring Earl Grey to Darjeeling and rooibos to green. The only "correct" tea is the one you genuinely enjoy. Most real quality differences are small next to personal preference, and snobbery about "proper" tea is more class marker than meaningful distinction. Drink what you like, explore for your own interest, and ignore anyone who tries to make you feel inadequate about it.

Common beginner mistakes

A handful of mistakes cause most early disappointment:

- Boiling water on green tea, which makes it bitter; use 70 to 80C.
- Under-using leaf, which makes a weak cup; one heaped teaspoon per cup minimum.
- Stale storage; transfer open packets to airtight, opaque tins straight away.
- Over-steeping; four minutes for black, one to two for green, longer only makes it bitter.
- Reusing exhausted bags; one bag, one cup.
- Buying expensive tea before the brewing is fixed; premium tea brewed badly tastes worse than mainstream tea brewed well.

See tea troubleshooting.

What to buy

For your first loose-leaf, a small bag of Darjeeling, Assam or Ceylon with a stainless-steel basket infuser is all you need. To explore the families, add a green tea, an oolong or a herbal tea. Buy on the cup and the per cup price, never the marketing; free UK delivery is over £35.

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (beverage)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Try the cheapest plain version of the style first. Upgrade only after you've decided you like the style.

Beginner reading

- Ultimate guide to making tea
- How to brew every type of tea
- Loose leaf vs tea bags
- Tea troubleshooting FAQ

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/