Do you really need to warm the teapot?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Yes, and it is not fussiness. A teapot is a lump of cold ceramic, and when you pour boiling water into it, some of that heat goes straight into warming the pot instead of brewing your tea. Heavy stoneware takes more; thin porcelain takes less; glass sits somewhere in between. The physics is simply that heat moves from the hotter thing to the colder one until they meet in the middle. OpenStax: heat and specific heat

The practical result: your black tea starts brewing several degrees cooler than you intended, and black tea wants to start near boiling.

How to do it

1. Fill the pot (or mug) with boiling water from the kettle.
2. Swirl it and leave it for 30 seconds while the kettle re-boils, or while you fetch the tea.
3. Tip it out.
4. Add the leaves and brew as usual.

That is it. It costs half a minute and a little water.

When it matters most

Situation	Warm the pot?
Black tea in a heavy stoneware pot	Definitely
Any tea in a big cold mug	Yes, warm the mug
Rock oolong or pu-erh, brewed hot	Yes
Green tea at 80°C	Barely: you are cooling the water anyway
A quick tea bag in a small mug	Optional; it helps a little
Cold winter kitchen	Yes; the colder the room, the bigger the loss

Why it matters more in winter

A pot that has been sitting in a cold kitchen is colder to start with, so it takes more heat from the water. That is part of why the same tea can taste thinner in January than in July.

The other half of the job

Warming the pot keeps the brew hot; a **lid and a cosy** keep it hot while it brews and while it sits. If your pot loses heat fast, a tea cosy does more for the second cup than anything else.

For a single mug, the same logic applies: warm it first, or accept a cooler brew. Our best mug for tea page covers heat retention, and why tea tastes weak in a big mug covers the other big-mug problem.

Try it yourself

Make two mugs of the same tea, one in a cold mug and one in a warmed mug, with the same water, dose and time. The difference in colour at two minutes is usually visible, and the warmed one tastes fuller. If you have a kitchen thermometer, measure the water in each mug straight after pouring: that is where the difference shows up most clearly.

Common questions

Does it make the tea stronger?
Indirectly. Hotter water extracts faster, so the same brewing time gives you more.

Is it worth it for a tea bag in a mug?
A little. It matters more the bigger and colder the mug is.

Can I just brew for longer instead?
You can, but longer brewing extracts more tannin as well, which is a different taste from a properly hot brew. See how to make tea properly.

Should I warm a glass teapot?
Yes, gently: warm it with hot rather than boiling water if it is not toughened, and follow the maker's instructions.

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