Making Tea at Work Without a Kettle: The Remote Worker's Guide

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea at a kettleless desk, in summary:** Cold-brew bags, mini-kettles, thermos prep and the office hot water tap: the four solid routes for proper tea at a kettleless desk.

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

Hot desking and remote working have created a tea problem: how do you make a proper cup without a kitchen kettle of your own? Solutions range from cold brew bottles to portable kettles to office hot water taps to instant tea, each with trade offs.

The situations

Hot desking / WeWork

Shared communal kitchen with kettle. Often busy, sometimes the kettle is missing or limescale coated.

No kitchen office (small startups, retail floor staff)

No kettle access at all. Solutions need to work without hot water on demand.

Coffee shop "third place" working

You're at a coffee shop working all day. They have hot water but charging £3 per tea bag is outrageous.

Hospital / care setting

Limited kitchen access; specific dietary considerations.

Long travel / transit

Trains have hot water taps; planes have hot water (on long haul); hotels have kettles. Buses and shorter journeys typically don't.

The solutions

Solution 1: Cold brew bottle (best)

Brew tea cold the night before; drink throughout the day at desk:

1. 2 tea bags + 500ml cold water in a screw top bottle.
2. Refrigerate overnight.
3. Take to work in the bottle.
4. Drink straight from the bottle, refilling with water if you want a weaker afternoon cup.

Pros: real tea, no equipment, no hot water needed. Best cup quality of the no kettle options. Cons: cold tea (some drinkers prefer hot).

More on cold brew.

Solution 2: Portable USB kettle (£15-30)

Personal portable kettles run off USB C or mains power. Designed for travel and desk use. Boils 200-300ml in 5-10 minutes. Quiet, discreet, doesn't disturb officemates.

Pros: real hot tea at your desk. Cons: needs power; takes desk space.

Solution 3: Travel mug + office hot water tap

If your office has a hot water tap (often called "boiling water tap" or "Quooker"), use a travel mug + tea bag + hot water. The mug keeps tea warm for 1-2 hours.

Pros: real hot tea, fast. Cons: requires the office to have the tap.

Solution 4: Instant tea sachets

Drink Me Chai sachets, Lift instant tea, just need hot water. Useful when no kettle but instant tea quality is the trade off.

More on instant tea.

Solution 5: Coffee shop hot water (free)

Most UK coffee shops will give you hot water for free if you ask politely (sometimes for a nominal charge). Bring your own tea bags. Cup of "third place tea" for the price of nothing.

Pros: free, real tea. Cons: requires a sympathetic barista; some chains refuse.

Solution 6: Microwave

If the office has a microwave, you can heat water in a mug. Use a microwave safe mug; 90 seconds typically boils. Add tea bag. Brew normally.

Pros: works anywhere with a microwave. Cons: water quality slightly inferior to kettle boiled (less aerated).

Solution 7: Tea concentrate + cold water

Brew strong tea concentrate at home. Bring concentrated tea + cold water to work. Mix as needed.

Equipment recommendations

Travel mug (£15-30)

Insulated, leak proof, holds 350-500ml. Hario, Stojo, Klean Kanteen, Yeti, all reliable. Get a wide mouth design that fits a tea bag comfortably.

USB kettle (£15-30)

Pendragon, Tomighty, MagicalButter, others. Check power requirements (some need mains, some run off USB C with appropriate power source).

Cold brew bottle (£10-25)

Hario, Bodum, similar designs with built in strainers. Or just use any screw top bottle with tea bags.

Tea storage

Keep a small tin of your favourite tea bags at your desk. Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips, Twinings, whatever your daily driver is.

Best teas for office drinking

- **Cold brew at desk:** Sencha, Long Jing, Earl Grey, mint, hibiscus, all cold brew well.
- **Hot tea via portable kettle:** Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips for familiar comfort. Earl Grey or green for variety.
- **Instant sachet:** Drink Me Chai for chai latte; Lift for basic tea.
- **Avoid:** Premium specialty teas you'd struggle to brew properly without proper equipment.

The afternoon caffeine question

If you're drinking tea throughout the workday, watch caffeine accumulation. 4-5 cups of black tea = 200-250mg caffeine. Switch to decaf or low caffeine after lunch. More on decaf English Breakfast.

FAQ

Best way to make tea at work without a kettle? Cold brew bottle prepared night before; drink throughout day. Real tea, no equipment.

What about coffee shop hot water? Most cafés give free hot water if asked politely. Bring your own tea bag.

Are USB kettles any good? Reasonable for personal use. Slower than mains kettles but workable for one cup at a time.

Best portable cup? Insulated travel mug from Hario, Stojo, or Klean Kanteen. Holds heat 1-2 hours.

What about instant tea? Drink Me Chai sachets are a reasonable convenience option; Lift instant tea works in emergencies.

Curator's note: cold brew bottle is the office tea hack I use most. 2 tea bags + cold water + screw top bottle in the fridge overnight, drink throughout the next day. Real tea, no equipment, no hot water needed. Real upgrade for hot desking. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

In short: making tea at work without a kettle

Method	Setup	Best leaf	Effort
Hot water tap (coffee station)	None; use bottled water if tap is unsafe	Strong black tea (English Breakfast, Assam)	Low; tap may be under 95C, brew 5 min
Microwave + mug	Microwave-safe ceramic mug; 1.5 min on high (250ml)	Any teabag; works less well with delicate green or white	Low; agitates water unevenly so stir before steeping
Thermos (prep at home)	Vacuum flask; brew at home, pour through day	Black tea, herbal infusions; avoid green (over-extracts)	Medium one-off; zero per cup
Cold-brew bag (overnight in fridge)	None; just cold water + bag	Specialist cold-brew bags or quality green/black	Zero per day; needs 8-hour lead time
Personal mini-kettle	£15 travel kettle + UK plug	Any; same as home brewing	Medium one-off; full home experience

What to buy now

For a kettleless desk, the strongest two routes are cold-brew bags and a personal mini-kettle. Cold-brew tea bags from Lipton, Tetley, or specialist independents (£3 to £5 per box) need only cold water and 8 hours; the cup is clean, low-tannin, and refreshing. A travel mini-kettle for £15 to £30 gives full home-brewing capability at the desk. For thermos prep, a quality vacuum flask plus a loose-leaf black tea brewed at home and decanted runs the day. A stainless mesh infuser turns any boiling-water source into a proper loose-leaf cup.

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · At a desk or a kitchen counter, price your tea per cup. Loose leaf usually wins there, though desk friendly bags sometimes do.

Kettleless tea reading

For brewing technique see the how to brew black tea guide, the cold brew tea piece, and the ideal water temperatures overview. For equipment see the teapots and infusers guide. For more on tea at work, see the office tea habits piece and the remote work tea 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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