

How to Smoke a Tobacco Pipe

The art of pipe smoking is the oldest form of tobacco use, and the one most often overlooked by the modern smoker. In this day and age of instant gratification and fast-paced living, replete with instant coffee and five-minute cigarettes, the pipe remains a comforting safeguard against the general flow. Pipe smoking is a remarkably challenging, yet extremely rewarding hobby for those with patience, and can easily be regarded as the most sophisticated form of smoking.

1. Find a pipe that suits you. Tobacconists are more than happy to help you find your perfect pipe. Prices can vary from cheap to a small fortune.
2. Experiment with different tobaccos in order to find a preference. There are many varieties of pipe tobacco, including Aromatics, American blends, English blends, Virginia's, Burley's, amongst others. A tobacconist will be able to help advise you on their individual characteristics. People completely new to smoking may enjoy an aromatic or lighter tobacco, while on the other hand a habitual cigarette or cigar smoker might prefer a heavier blend. Buy small amounts representing several different styles.
3. Pack the pipe. Fill the pipe loosely with tobacco and compress it lightly. Compressed halfway from the bottom of the bowl to the top. Fill again to the top and compress with a little more force. This time halfway from the top of the previous packing to the top. Now top it off and compress a bit harder. Again half way from the last point to the top. It must not be so dense as to prevent air from being drawn through the pipe; you should be able to draw air through with little or no resistance. The tobacco should be springy to the touch. It's best to have your tobacconist or an experienced pipe smoker demonstrate the correct process. Correct packing takes practice, and has a major impact on how enjoyable your experience will be.
4. Light the pipe with a wooden match or a butane pipe lighter. If using a match, let the sulfur burn off for a few seconds. Move the flame around the surface of the tobacco while drawing gently until evenly lit, tamp it gently with a tamper. Let it go out, and relight the same way.
5. Puff slowly and rhythmically. Patience is rewarded with aroma and a cool smoke. Puffing too fast will result in tongue bite, a burning sensation on the tongue.
6. Tamp the tobacco gently and periodically throughout the smoke to ensure the bowl remains correctly packed while smoking. Don't worry if the pipe goes out from time to time. Simply relight, after the pipe has cooled.
7. Make sure you smoke your pipe to the end to create a nice 'cake' (layer of carbon deposits) at the bottom and side of your pipe bowl.
8. Relax and enjoy. Pipe smoking is the quintessential art of smoking.

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Tips on smoking a pipe:

- Get support and advice. There many great forums out there and great people to help you discover this wonderful hobby and pastime. Many give up from lack of answers to some of the simplest questions. We are out there and we love to help.
- Above all, be patient, and take things slowly. For most part, the pipe smoking experience isn't pleasant until one is fully proficient in packing, lighting, tamping and smoking cadence. It takes time to discover favorite tobacco blends and pipes that suit your tastes. Novice smokers often struggle with tongue bite. If you don't like it at first, keep experimenting, and discuss your new hobby with experienced smokers.
- Keep a pipe cleaner handy. At the first sign of moisture coming through the stem of the pipe, stick the pipe cleaner into the stem and let it absorb any condensation in order to ensure that the pipe does not sour.
- If the pipe gets hot, let it go out and cool down. Smoking a pipe too hot won't taste good, and it may damage your pipe or your tongue. A good rule-of-thumb, is to hold your bowl against your cheek.
- Allow briar pipes time to rest between smokes - common knowledge dictates at least a day. Consider adding some corn cob pipes to your rotation while you build your collection of briar pipes. A meerschaum pipe is a great investment due to their smoking quality and the fact that they don't need to rest between smokes.
- Avoid buying the cheap "basket" or department store briar pipes. A corn cob pipe will smoke much better than a cheap briar, and cost much less if finances are a problem.
- Never buy a metal (brass or silver) pipe. They look very unusual and striking but remember - metal conducts heat. These are for show. You may burn yourself with these.
- Allow a nice 'cake' (layer of carbon deposits) to grow in the bowl of the pipe. This protects the bowl from cracking. After a while, it will become necessary to scrape some of the cake off, but you may want to consult your tobacconist for advice on how to do this.
- Whenever you are finished with a pipe, allow it to cool and then polish it using pipe polish and a clean, lint free cloth. This helps to preserve the shine and appearance, as well as protecting the bowl from heat, dirt, and corrosion.