

A Short Guide to Brewing Coffee at Home

Prepared for beginners who want better coffee without expensive equipment

1. Why your water matters more than your beans

Coffee is roughly 98 percent water, yet most beginners spend all of their attention on beans and none on the kettle. Water that has just finished boiling is too hot for most brewing methods: it scalds the grounds and draws out bitter compounds before the sweeter ones have a chance to dissolve. Letting the kettle rest for about thirty seconds after boiling brings the temperature down to a range of 90 to 94 degrees Celsius, which suits the majority of filter methods.

Hard water, which is rich in dissolved minerals, tends to mute acidity and can leave a chalky aftertaste. If your tap water tastes flat on its own, it will not improve once it passes through coffee. Bottled water with a moderate mineral content is a simple, if slightly wasteful, fix.

2. Grinding: the step most people skip

Ground coffee begins to lose its aroma within minutes of grinding, because the volatile compounds that carry most of the flavour evaporate quickly once the bean's structure is broken. Buying whole beans and grinding them immediately before brewing is the single cheapest upgrade available to a home brewer. An inexpensive hand grinder produces a more even grind than the blade grinders sold in most supermarkets, and evenness matters: uneven particles extract at different rates, producing a cup that is somehow both sour and bitter.

3. Choosing a brewing method

There is no single correct method, only trade-offs between effort, cost, and the style of cup you prefer. The table below compares four common approaches.

Method	Brew time	Grind size	Character of the cup	Difficulty
Pour-over (V60)	2.5–3 min	Medium-fine	Clean, bright, tea-like body	Moderate
French press	4 min	Coarse	Heavy body, rich, some sediment	Easy
AeroPress	1.5–2 min	Fine	Smooth, concentrated, versatile	Easy
Cold brew	12–18 hours	Very coarse	Low acidity, sweet, mellow	Very easy

If you are starting from nothing, the French press is the most forgiving choice: the coarse grind hides the flaws of a cheap grinder, and the four-minute steep requires no technique at all.

4. The first thirty seconds: blooming

Freshly roasted coffee releases carbon dioxide when hot water first touches it. If you pour all of your water at once, this escaping gas pushes the water away from the grounds and the early stage of extraction becomes uneven. Instead, pour just enough water to wet the grounds — roughly twice the weight of the coffee — and wait thirty seconds while the bed swells and bubbles. This pause, called the bloom, costs nothing and improves almost every filter brew.

5. A note on ratios

A ratio of 1 gram of coffee to 16 grams of water is a widely used starting point: for a single 240-millilitre mug, that means about 15 grams of coffee. Stronger is not always better; over-concentrated coffee hides the origin flavours that justify buying good beans in the first place. Adjust by one gram at a time, and change only one variable per brew, or you will never know which change mattered.

Above all, keep notes. The difference between a lucky cup and a repeatable one is a record of what you did.