

# Home Brewer's Quickstart Guide

Brew a delicious first beer this month — simple process, proven recipe, zero guesswork.

## What you'll get

A one-evening brew plan, day-by-day fermentation guide, and a first recipe that's hard to mess up. Exact shopping list, equipment alternatives, and carbonation timeline so you can drink your beer with pride.

## 4 keys to a drinkable first beer

- Sanitize smart: anything touching cooled wort or beer must be Sanitized and spotless.
- Keep it simple: start with extract + a forgiving ale yeast.
- Control temperature: aim for 65–70°F (18–21°C) during fermentation.
- Take notes: ingredients, temps, timings, and tasting help every batch improve.

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# Your First Beer: Easy-Blonde Ale

5 gallons • ~4.7% ABV • clean, refreshing, citrusy hop aroma

## Taste Notes

Crisp, light-gold beer with gentle malt sweetness and a touch of citrus from Cascade hops. Pairs with pizza, burgers, tacos, or a sunny afternoon.

## Targets (approx.)

Original Gravity (OG): 1.046 • Final Gravity (FG): 1.010 • ABV: ~4.7% • Bitterness: ~22 IBU • Color: pale gold •  
Brew day: ~3–4 hours • Ready to drink: ~3–4 weeks

## Batch Yield

About 46–50 bottles (12 oz) or ~5 gallons into the bottling bucket.

# Shopping List

Exact ingredients + equipment alternatives for success

## Ingredients (for 5 gal)

- Light malt extract (LME): 6.6 lb (3 kg). Optional: add 0.5 lb (225 g) dry malt extract (DME) for a touch more body.
- Cascade hops: 2 oz (56 g) total — 1 oz bittering, 0.5 oz flavor, 0.5 oz aroma.
- Yeast: SafAle US-05 (11.5 g) or similar clean American ale yeast.
- Priming sugar for bottling: 4.5 oz (128 g) dextrose (corn sugar).
- Water: Enough to make 5.0 gallons (use filtered or spring water if your tap water is strongly chlorinated).

## Essential Equipment

- Brew kettle (at least 5 gallons; bigger is safer).
- Fermenter with airlock (6–6.5 gal bucket or carboy).
- Thermometer (32–212°F / 0–100°C).
- Siphon (auto-siphon recommended) + food-grade tubing.
- Bottling bucket with spigot + bottling wand.
- Bottle capper + caps + ~48–50 clean bottles.
- Sanitizer (no-rinse preferred) or unscented bleach per label.

## Nice-to-Have

- Immersion wort chiller (faster cooling = cleaner flavor).
- Hydrometer or refractometer (to confirm fermentation finish).
- Large fine-mesh bag to contain hops if you prefer less trub.

## Brew Day — Step by Step (Extract)

- 1 Fill kettle with ~3.0 gal (11.4 L) water and start heating. While you wait, clean and sanitize fermenter, lid, bung, airlock, spoon, siphon, and tubing.
- 2 When near a boil, turn off heat and slowly stir in malt extract until fully dissolved (prevents scorching).
- 3 Return to a rolling boil. Start a 60-minute timer.
- 4 Minute 0: Add 1.0 oz (28 g) Cascade (bittering).
- 5 Minute 50: Add 0.5 oz (14 g) Cascade (flavor).
- 6 Minute 58: Add 0.5 oz (14 g) Cascade (aroma).
- 7 Minute 60: End boil. Chill wort quickly to  $\leq 75^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $24^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) using an ice bath or immersion chiller.
- 8 Transfer to fermenter. Top up with cool filtered water to exactly 5.0 gal (19 L).
- 9 Aerate by shaking/splashing for 60–90 seconds. Pitch yeast (sprinkle dry or rehydrate per packet).
- 10 Seal fermenter. Use a blow-off tube for 48 hours if fermentation is vigorous, then swap to airlock.
- 11 Place somewhere dark at  $65\text{--}70^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $18\text{--}21^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

### Cooling Tips

- Ice bath: Put kettle in sink/tub with ice + water; stir gently to speed cooling.
- No chill backup: If you can't chill fully, cover the kettle and wait until wort is  $\leq 75^{\circ}\text{F}$  before pitching yeast.

# Fermentation Schedule — What to Expect

**Days 1–2:** Bubbling airlock, foamy head (krausen). Keep temp steady (ideally 66–68°F / 19–20°C).

**Days 3–5:** Activity slows. Beer is still fermenting. Avoid opening the fermenter.

**Days 6–10:** Yeast finishes and cleans up off-flavors. Take a gravity reading on Day 10; repeat Day 11. If stable, it's done.

## Bottling (Days 12–14)

- Dissolve 4.5 oz (128 g) dextrose in 16 oz (475 ml) boiling water for 5 minutes; cool; add to bottling bucket.
- Siphon beer gently onto the solution; fill bottles to just below the neck; cap.

## Carbonation & Conditioning

Store at 65–70°F (18–21°C) for ~14 days. Chill 24 hours before opening for best clarity and head.

# Sanitation Mastery

Simple habits that protect flavor

- Clean first, then sanitize. Dirt and residue block sanitizers.
- Anything touching cooled wort/beer must be sanitized (fermenter, lid, airlock, siphon, tubing, spoon, hydrometer jar).
- Mix sanitizer exactly per label; respect contact time; air-dry on a clean rack.
- Don't touch inside surfaces with your hands after sanitizing.
- Keep pets, fruit flies, and dust away during transfers.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Adding extract while the burner is on (scorching). Turn off heat, dissolve fully, then resume boil.
- Pitching yeast into hot wort. Always cool to  $\leq 75^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $24^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).
- Fermenting too warm ( $> 72^{\circ}\text{F}$  /  $22^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) — causes fruity/solvent flavors.
- Splashing/oxidizing finished beer during bottling.

## Troubleshooting Quick Fixes

- No bubbling on Day 1: Check lid/airlock seal; yeast may still be working. Wait 24 more hours.
- Sulfur/egg smell: Often normal early; improves as fermentation completes and beer is chilled.
- Thin or watery: Ensure you hit 5.0 gal final volume; consider adding 0.5 lb DME next time.
- Flat beer after 2 weeks: Warm bottles to ~70°F and wait another week; gently invert once to rouse yeast.
- Gushers/over-carbonated: You bottled too early or used too much sugar. Chill more, vent carefully; next time verify stable gravity.

## When to Worry

Fuzzy or colorful growth on beer surface (rare) — likely contamination. Don't package; clean thoroughly and start fresh.

# Easy Temperature Control

- Swamp cooler: Fermenter in a tub of water with a T shirt wick; rotate in frozen water bottles to hold ~66–68°F.
- Coolest room: Avoid garages/attics that swing hot. Aim for consistent temps.
- Warm-tolerant yeasts: In a warm home, choose Kveik or a hefeweizen yeast for friendlier results.

## Next Steps & Variations

- Dry hop with 1–2 oz Cascade for 3–5 days after primary fermentation.
- Add lemon/orange zest (sanitized) in the last 5 minutes of the boil for a citrus lift.
- Swap in different hop combos (Centennial, Amarillo) while keeping the same base recipe.
- When ready, try all grain with brew in a bag (BIAB) for deeper control.

You brewed your first beer. Cheers! • [processofmakingbeer.com](http://processofmakingbeer.com)