



## **PIPE CARE 101 : BREAKING IN A NEW PIPE**

It is important to “break-in” a pipe in order to ensure that it lasts and offers an enjoyable experience. Some people find that a pipe smokes great from the first smoke while others feel that it takes as many as 20 bowls before a pipe smokes well. What isn't personal and subjective is that for protection against overheating and burnout, a pipe should have a lining of carbon at least the thickness of a dime. Building up this cake is called "breaking in" a pipe.

Brigham pipes come with a unique protective coating in the bowl to assist the buildup of carbon and offer extra protection during the breaking in period. Adding a thin coating of honey to the inside of the bowl prior to first use will also speed up the process of carbon build-up. For the first few smokes, alternate between half-filled bowls of tobacco and fully filled bowls until an even cake has developed, being certain never to let the bowl become too hot. If it feels uncomfortably warm when held against your cheek, this means briar is in danger of burning and the pipe should be rested.

### **PACKING AND LIGHTING**

#### **Filling**

A pipe-full of tobacco that burns evenly without going out can only be obtained by careful packing. If the tobacco is packed too loosely, it will burn too quickly, overheating the pipe and likely burning your tongue. If the tobacco is packed too tightly, you will have difficulty drawing on the pipe and keeping it lit. Use the following procedure to pack a bowl:

- 1) Take a pinch of tobacco and loosely trickle into the tobacco chamber until it is full. Tap the side of the bowl repeatedly until the tobacco is settles to the bottom.
- 2) Using a tamper or your finger, press the tobacco down until it evenly fills the bottom 1/3 to 1/2 of the bowl. The tobacco should have some spring left in it but should be pressed down enough to form a flat top surface. Test to make sure you can still draw air easily through the stem. If not, empty and repeat but packing the tobacco a bit more loosely.
- 3) Repeat filling this process until the pipe is as full as you want it. Each time you add a layer of tobacco, draw on the pipe to ensure that you have not packed it too tightly. At each stage, there should be more resistance in the draw, with the final draw about as firm as drinking a milkshake through a straw.

## **Lighting**

Lighting a pipe may be done with just about any flame although many prefer something taste-neutral such as a butane lighter (not a torch) or a match. Whatever the choice in ignitor, lighting should be done thusly:

A) Move the flame over top of the tobacco in a circular motion in order to ensure the full top layer is lit. While moving the flame, draw on the pipe using long slow puffs. As you do this, the lit tobacco will rise out of the bowl. This is called the *Charring Light*.

B) After the *charring light*, tamp down the tobacco until it is flat again. Do not push so hard that you make it difficult to draw, just enough to even out the top.

C) Using a circular lighting motion and long slow puffs again to relight the pipe. Gently tamp this ash down while puffing and your pipe should be well lit. If not, repeat from step B.

Make sure that you light all of the tobacco, not just one side. This will help you keep the pipe lit and will avoid overheating one area of the pipe.

## **Smoking**

- Smoke your pipe gently and evenly. Puffing too vigorously will burn your tongue and may cause damage to the bowl from overheating. If the bowl becomes too hot to hold against your cheek, you need to set your pipe down and let it cool. After the pipe has cooled, you may relight it.
- If you feel your pipe is about to go out, tamp down your ash and place two fingers over the bowl while drawing. This localizes the draft and aids in the relighting of your pipe without the use of a flame.
- Occasionally you may want to remove some of the accumulated ash in the bowl. Use your pick and gently loosen the ash without disturbing the tobacco. Dump the ash out and, holding the bowl in your hand, tap the pipe on a soft surface. This is called fluffing out the pipe. **DO NOT HOLD THE PIPE BY THE STEM WHEN TAPPING OUT.** This could cause the shank or the stem to break.
- For best results, only smoke a clean and dry pipe. A pipe should be allowed to rest at least 24 to 48 hours before smoking it again. Briar can become foul if not cared for. See Preventative Maintenance (below) for how to clean your pipe.

## **Preventative Maintenance**

Proper care and cleaning are a major factor in the life span of a pipe. Done well and consistently, it can preserve a pipe for generations. Failure to do so will often cause the eventual ruin of even the most well made pipe.

## **Rules to live by**

Pipes require a certain amount of care in order to keep them fresh. Follow these basic rules and you should be able to keep your pipe in good order.

1. Rest your pipe between smokes no matter how much you like it.
2. Run a pipe cleaner through your pipe after each smoke. It is recommended that you continue to run pipe cleaners through the stem and shank until the cleaner comes out clean. When the pipe has cooled, you may gently twist the stem off the bowl and clean more thoroughly.
3. If your pipe has a filter, follow the pipe maker's instructions regarding when to replace it or if possible, how to clean it.
4. Depending on how often you smoke your pipe you may need to use a pipe freshener (available at any reputable tobacconist) to remove tar and smoking residue that builds up in the smoking channel of your pipe. Separate the stem from the shank and using a pipe cleaner dipped in pipe freshener, run it through the stem. Run dry pipe cleaners through the stem until they all come out clean. Repeat this with the shank of the pipe (the briar arm into which the pipe is inserted). Allow at least two days for the pipe to dry completely before smoking it again. Do not allow freshener to spill on the outside of the bowl as it may affect the finish.
5. Ensure that you do not leave wet tobacco bits (dottle) in the bowl after a smoke. Gently remove them with a bent pipe cleaner, pipe spoon or other blunt (i.e. not sharp) instrument.
6. You definitely want an even layer of carbon to build up in the bowl of your pipe. This helps protect the wood from excessive heat and makes the smoke cooler. Ensure the cake does not get more than the thickness of about a nickel - a thick cake can cause the bowl itself to crack or split.
7. Store your pipe away from direct sunlight, fluorescent or strong incandescent lights as this will fade a vulcanite stem, leaving it bitter tasting.
8. Do not attempt to clean a Vulcanite pipe stem with water. This will cause serious discoloration and an awful taste which can only be removed by a professional. If you are unsure about whether your pipe is Vulcanite or not, err on the side of caution.
9. Avoid smoking your pipe where there is a draft or wind. This movement of air can cause your tobacco to burn quickly and hotter increasing the potential for burnout.
10. Do not empty the pipe by holding the stem and banding the bowl on a hard surface. This will cause stress to the pipe and eventually cause it to break, fracture or split.
11. Use a proper pipe reamer with no sharp or pointed edges to remove excess carbon. Uneven removal of cake or accidental puncture of the inside of the bowl will create weak spots that may become susceptible to burnout.