

Home Espresso Starter Guide

Dial in your first shot — and stop dumping espresso down the drain

Home espresso has one learning curve: dialing in your grind. Once you understand the relationship between grind size, dose, and yield, a good shot is reproducible every morning. This guide walks you through it.

The equipment hierarchy

- The grinder matters more than the machine. A \$200 grinder + a decent machine beats a \$2000 machine + a bad grinder.
- Minimum: a machine that reaches 9 bars of pressure and holds 200F (93C). Pump machines, not pod machines.
- Nice to have: a scale, a distribution tool, and a WDT (stirring tool for clumps).

The dialing-in process

- Standard recipe: 18g dose in → 36g yield out (a 1:2 ratio), in approximately 25-30 seconds.
- Shot runs too fast (under 20s)? Grind finer. Shot runs too slow (over 40s)? Grind coarser.
- Sour espresso = under-extracted (grind finer or increase dose). Bitter = over-extracted (grind coarser).
- Change ONE variable at a time. If you change grind AND dose, you won't know what fixed it.

Milk for espresso

- Whole milk froths most easily. Oat milk (barista blend) is the best non-dairy option.
- Steam until the pitcher is too hot to touch (140-160F). Never go past 165F — it scalds and loses sweetness.
- A good microfoam has no bubbles: swirl the pitcher after steaming to incorporate.

Insider glossary

Puck — The compressed disc of grounds left in the portafilter after pulling a shot.

Channeling — When water finds a path of least resistance through the puck — produces uneven extraction.

Dialing in — The process of adjusting grind/dose/yield until your shot is balanced.

Single origin — Espresso from one region/farm — usually fruitier and more nuanced than blends.

Starter checklist

- A burr grinder (step zero)
- An espresso machine with a pump
- A kitchen scale (0.1g precision)
- A tamper
- Fresh whole beans (roasted within 2-4 weeks)
- A timer

Dialed In — home barista tee at I5d0.com/shop/homebarista/