

There are a lot of different ways to load your pipe for smoking. There is no exact set of rules for packing your bowl. The goal in packing your pipe is to get a proper draw, it doesn't matter how or which method you use to do it. The most commonly accepted draw should feel like you are drinking through a straw. When it feels like that, you should not have any problems. I prefer my draw to be a little looser than that.

I don't use any one method exclusively and quite often, I hybridize the methods that I know to create ones that work for me at a particular time, situation, or certain pipe. Another thing to remember is that it is easier to tighten up the tobacco while smoking than it is to loosen it up. That is why I always tend to pack looser and adjust the tightness of the tobacco, if needed, by tamping during the smoke.

1) The Stuff and Puff Method - The stuff and puff method seems to be used by the older more experienced pipers. After years of experience, they have acquired the ability to stick their pipe into a pouch or jar of tobacco and fill it by scooping the tobacco into the bowl with their finger and knowing when they have the right amount of pressure applied for a proper draw. This is done all in one step. When they pull the pipe out, they light it.

2) The Three Step Method – This method is the most taught to and most used method by beginning pipers. It consists of; you guessed it, three steps. The key to this method is using small pinches of tobacco.

- The first pinch of tobacco should be very small and placed in the heel of the bowl and applied with very little or no pressure at all.
- The second step is a slightly larger pinch of tobacco. The pinch is put into the bowl and a little pressure is applied pushing the tobacco to the half way point in the bowl.
- The third step is placing another pinch of tobacco in the bowl and using a little more pressure, pushing the tobacco down leaving a space of about 1/4 of an inch from the rim.

The amount of pressure used for each step is commonly described as; the first pinch should be done with the pressure of a child, the second pinch with the pressure of a woman, and the third pinch with the pressure of a man.

Note — when breaking in a new briar pipe, many people fill to 1/3 or 1/2 the depth described here the first few smokes. This helps form a protective cake of charcoal, although not all smokers agree with this approach.

3) The Frank Method – The Frank method was invented by Mr. Achim Frank and is a very hard method to describe. You want to gravity fill the bowl to the top and the work in a large portion of tobacco on top of it. Kind of like a plug. It is easier to just watch the video to see how this is done and what to do. You can see the video of it here: **Tobacco Pipe Packing Methods Part 2 (Videos)**

Although Mr. Frank uses a torch lighter and recommends using one, I do not

recommend it. The reason why I do not recommend it is that a torch lighter can seriously burn the rim of your pipe beyond repair. If you do use a torch lighter with this method, be careful and be warned of the damage that can occur if you are not careful.

4) The Air Pocket Method – This method was brought to the main stream by Fred Hanna. I read about this method in an article that Mr. Hanna wrote for the 2007 Winter Edition of Pipes and Tobaccos Magazine. This method leaves the bottom of the bowl empty which creates an air pocket, hence the name. I am going to paraphrase the steps from memory.

- Grab a large chunk of tobacco and squeeze it into a clump using your thumb and first three fingers.
- Shove the clump of tobacco into the upper half of the bowl leaving the bottom half of the bowl empty.
- Force the tobacco into the bowl tightly but do not use excessive muscle to do so.
- While you are shoving the tobacco into the bowl, start twisting the chunk of tobacco into the bowl so that you are screwing it into the bowl.
- Screw the clump down deep enough into the bowl so that you will not damage the rim when you light the tobacco.
- Make sure that you do not push on the center of the tobacco.
- Remember that there should be no tobacco in the bottom of the bowl.
- Test the draw. If it is too tight, empty the bowl and start over.
- Light only the center of the tobacco making sure that you get it good and lit. The tobacco will burn outwards towards the walls of the bowl once it is lit.

5) The Two Step Method – This is one of the hybrid methods that I was talking about. I don't want to say that I created it because I am not sure if others have used it before I started doing it. It is like the three step method but with the first step omitted.

- I gravity fill the bowl and lightly push it to the half way point of the bowl.
 - I finish filling the bowl and lightly push it down to about 1/8 to 1/4 inch from the rim.
- 99% of the time I get a perfect draw on the first try.

6) A Hybrid Method (The Bob Method) – I do not know what to call this method. It is a hybrid method that I started doing a few years ago. I don't think that anyone uses it. But as in the two step method, I don't want to say that I created it because I don't know if anyone has used it before me. I combined parts of the Frank method and parts of the Air Pocket method to create this. This is what I do:

- I skip the first step of the Frank method and leave the bottom of the bowl empty so that there is an air pocket (like in the air pocket method).
- Then I grab a large chunk of tobacco and work it into the bowl exactly like the second step of the Frank method (I do not screw it in like the Air Pocket, I use my thumbs like in the Frank method).

This method works great when smoking a pipe that has a 'well' in it. Since there

is no tobacco in the bottom of the bowl, it does not allow the moisture to collect in tobacco that is in the 'well' causing a large amount of dottle.

You do not have to stick to just one method of packing and as you can see from the last two methods, combining or trying out something of your own can help you out in packing a pipe. Try out new and different ways of packing until you find out some that work easily for you. Remember, what works for some people might not work for others. Keep experimenting and don't give up. Try all of them to see how they work for you and then start changing things around until you find 'your' way of packing.

<http://pipesmagazine.com/python/pipe-smoking/tobacco-pipe-packing-methods-part-2-videos/>