

<http://pipesmagazine.com/python/pipe-smoking/flake-pipe-tobacco-preparation/>

Flakes are one of the ways that pipe tobacco is made. Flake tobacco is made by pressing tobacco under extreme pressure for a period of time forming a cube. The cube is then sliced into strips called flakes. When you smoke flake tobacco it has to be packed differently than loose cut pipe tobacco. You can not simply fill the pipe and smoke it; you have to prepare the flakes first. There are many ways that flake tobaccos can be prepared. The way that you prepare a flake will have an effect in the taste of the tobacco and the way that the tobacco burns.

The larger you leave the pieces of flake, the stronger the flavor will be and the harder it will be to get the tobacco burning. Leaving the flakes whole or in large chunks will make the tobacco burn slow. This is a good technique to use when you are going to smoke outside as the wind will have less of an effect on the tobacco. Smaller pieces will make the flavor a little lighter and the tobacco will be easier to burn. It will also burn a little quicker as well. In this article I will describe a few of the different methods on how to prepare flakes for smoking. I have also included short videos of how to do each different method. Now onto the methods!

•Fold and Stuff Method – Take a flake of tobacco and fold it in half length wise (against the grain), down the middle. Then you fold the flake in half again, but this time fold it end to end (with the grain). The flake will now be in a square shape with four layers. Now lightly stuff the prepared flake into the pipe. If there is any tobacco sticking out of the end of the pipe, pull the tobacco back out of the bowl a little and trim off the excess tobacco and re-insert the flake. Make sure to leave a little bit of space between the tobacco and the rim. Adjust the draw by gently pushing on the tobacco with your finger and light the tobacco. By leaving the flake whole it will be a little hard to get the tobacco lit and going.

•Roll and Stuff Method– This is almost the same as the Fold and Stuff; but instead of folding the flake, you roll the flake. To do this you roll the flake length wise (with the grain) like a stick of chewing gum. You then insert the tobacco into the bowl. If the tobacco sticks out, just pull it out a bit and trim some of it off and re-insert it back into the bowl. Make sure to leave a little space between the tobacco and the rim.

•Rubbing Out Method – Rubbing out a flake is pretty much how it sounds. You rub the flake between your palms so the flake breaks apart into small pieces of tobacco. You can control how much the tobacco is rubbed out this way. You can lightly rub it out or you can fully rub it out. It is up to you how large or how small

you want the pieces of tobacco to be. Once the tobacco is rubbed out, you then load the pipe the same way as you would with a mixture.

•**Cutting Into Cubes Method** – This is a method that I read about a couple of years ago and I used it almost exclusively when I started smoking flakes and I still use it frequently now. It was posted on a forum by George Dibos AKA LatakiaLover. This method involves cutting the flakes length wise (with the grain), into 1/4 inch or so strips. You then cut the strips across (against the grain) to make 1/4 or so cubes. You then gravity fill the bowl with the cubes of tobacco and do not use any pressure to pack. Just tap the side of the bowl to settle the tobacco. Make sure that you leave a little space between the tobacco and the rim. You then light the tobacco and smoke. While you are smoking make sure that you do not tamp the ash unless the tobacco will absolutely not light again. And when you do tamp, just let the weight of the tamper crush the ash. Do not use any pressure when tamping. This is the easiest way that I know of to smoke flakes. It was my favorite method to use with flakes as a beginner.

When I smoke flakes, I always pack the tobacco looser than I do when I smoke a loose cut mixture. The reason that I do this is that the pieces of tobacco from a flake will swell up more than a loose cut mixture when they light on fire. So packing loosely allows room for expansion and prevents the tobacco from becoming too tight while smoking.

These are just a few of the ways to prepare flake tobacco and I hope that these tips will help you enjoy flakes a little more or get you into trying flakes if you haven't tried them yet. If you haven't tried smoking flakes before, you must give it a try because you are missing out on some truly great tobaccos. With these methods, you no longer have an excuse for not trying them or smoking them more often.