EXPERT BARISTA · QUICK GUIDE

Pour Over (V60) Guide

Quick Guide 5 — Grind, bloom, pour technique, and reading the cup

Pour-over is the most hands-on of the manual brewing methods — there's no pump, no plunger, no pressure gauge. Every variable is something you're actively controlling in real time, which makes it a genuinely great way to build an intuitive feel for extraction. This guide covers the V60 specifically, the most widely used cone dripper, though the fundamentals apply to most pour-over brewers.

How pour-over differs from espresso

If you're coming to this from espresso, a few fundamental differences are worth understanding up front, since some espresso instincts don't transfer directly.

- **No pressure.** Espresso forces water through the puck at roughly nine times atmospheric pressure; pour-over relies entirely on gravity. This is why pour-over grind is noticeably coarser — a fine, pressure-brewing grind would simply choke a gravity-fed brew almost completely.
- **Much longer contact time.** A pour-over brew runs 2-4 minutes versus 25-30 seconds for espresso, so small grind changes have a gentler, more gradual effect on extraction than the same change would have on an espresso shot.
- **You are the pump.** Pour rate, pour pattern, and pour height are all variables you directly control in real time, in a way espresso's fixed pressure doesn't allow. This is both the appeal and the challenge of the method.

The variables

Variable	Typical range	What it does
Grind size	Medium to medium-coarse	Coarser than espresso — controls how fast water passes through the bed
Dose	15-25g	Sets the overall strength ceiling and total brew size
Ratio (coffee:water)	1:15 to 1:17	Shorter ratio = stronger, more syrupy. Longer = lighter, more tea-like
Water temperature	90-96°C	Hotter extracts faster; useful for darker or older beans that need less coaxing
Bloom time	30-45s	A short pre-pour that lets trapped CO2 escape before the main pour
Total brew time	2:30-3:30	The window most of your control over extraction actually happens in

Why the bloom matters

Freshly roasted coffee releases carbon dioxide, a by-product of roasting, and that gas is still escaping the grounds when you brew, especially within the first few weeks after roasting. If you pour straight through without a bloom, that escaping gas pushes water away from the grounds unevenly, causing patchy, inconsistent extraction — some

grounds barely touched, others heavily saturated.

The fix is simple: pour just enough water to saturate all the grounds (roughly double the dose in water, e.g. 40g water for a 20g dose), then wait 30-45 seconds. You'll see the bed visibly rise and bubble as gas escapes. Once it settles slightly, you're ready for the main pour. Very fresh coffee (a few days off the roaster) blooms dramatically; coffee past its peak barely blooms at all — which is itself a useful freshness indicator.

Pour technique

How you pour the remaining water matters almost as much as how much you use.

- **Centre pour:** a single steady stream aimed at the middle of the bed, letting water spread outward naturally. Simple and consistent, though it can under-extract the outer edges of the bed on wider drippers.
- **Spiral pour:** pouring in a slow, deliberate spiral from the centre outward (and sometimes back in), aiming to saturate the whole bed evenly. The most common technique for V60 specifically.
- **Pulse pouring:** breaking the total water into several smaller pours rather than one continuous stream, letting the bed drain partially between each. Gives more control over total contact time, at the cost of needing more attention.

Whichever technique you use, avoid pouring directly against the filter paper — water that never touches the coffee bed doesn't contribute to extraction and just dilutes the cup.

Water quality — an easy variable to overlook

Water makes up over 98% of a cup of pour-over coffee, so its mineral content genuinely affects extraction and flavour. Very soft water (low mineral content) tends to under-extract and taste flat, since there's little for extracted compounds to bind to. Very hard water, on the other hand, can taste chalky or flat in a different way, and heavy scale buildup damages kettles and brewing equipment over time.

You don't need to become a water chemistry expert to brew well, but two practical habits go a long way: avoid brewing with distilled or heavily softened water on its own, since it genuinely under-extracts, and if your tap water tastes noticeably off on its own, filtered water is usually a straightforward improvement.

V60 versus other pour-over shapes

The V60's cone shape and large single hole at the base are specifically designed to let the barista control flow rate almost entirely through pour technique and grind, rather than the dripper itself restricting flow. Other popular shapes behave differently.

Dripper	Flow characteristic	What it rewards
V60 (cone, large hole)	Fast, pour-controlled	Active technique — spiral pours, pulse pouring
Kalita Wave (flat-bottomed, small holes)	Slower, more restricted	More forgiving and consistent for less precise pours
Chemex (cone, thick filter)	Slow, heavily filtered	A very clean, light-bodied cup, often for larger batches

None of these is objectively better — the V60 rewards developing genuine pour technique, which is exactly why it's a good method to practise deliberately rather than treating as a "set it and forget it" brew.

Reading the drawdown

The "drawdown" is how long it takes the bed to fully drain after your last pour, and it's one of the most useful diagnostic signals in pour-over brewing.

Drawdown behaviour	Likely cause	Fix
Very fast, water level barely builds	Grind too coarse, or channelling through the bed	Grind finer; check for a bare gap in the grounds against the filter wall
Very slow, water pools high	Grind too fine, or too much fines choking the bed	Grind coarser; check your grinder for excessive fines production
Uneven — fast on one side	Poor bed levelling, or an off-centre pour	Give the dripper a gentle settle-tap before pouring; pour more centrally

As a rough guide, a total brew time noticeably outside the 2:30-3:30 window for a typical medium grind and dose is worth investigating before you taste — it usually points to a grind or technique issue rather than something wrong with the bean.

Diagnosing the cup

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
Sour, thin, sharp	Under-extracted — ran too fast or water too cool	Grind finer, raise temperature slightly, or extend total time
Bitter, dry, harsh	Over-extracted — ran too slow or water too hot	Grind coarser, lower temperature slightly, or shorten total time
Muddy, gritty texture	Too many fines, or grind too fine for the filter	Grind coarser; consider a different grinder if this persists
Weak despite correct time	Dose too low, or ratio too long	Increase dose slightly, or shorten the ratio

Filter papers — a small but real variable

Paper filters trap oils and fine particles that a metal mesh (as used in a French press) lets through, which is why pour-over coffee tastes noticeably cleaner and lighter-bodied. Always rinse a paper filter with hot water before adding coffee — this removes any papery taste and, as a side benefit, pre-warms the dripper and carafe, helping keep your brew temperature more stable through the pour.

Equipment beyond the dripper

- **Gooseneck kettle** — for precise, controlled pouring; ideally one with temperature control or a simple thermometer if not.
- **Digital scale** — for weighing both dose and water accurately; ideally with a built-in timer.
- **Burr grinder** — as covered above, consistency matters more here than for almost any other method.
- **Filter papers** — always rinse before use, and store them somewhere they won't pick up odours from a pantry.

None of this needs to be expensive to get good, consistent results — a basic gooseneck kettle and an inexpensive kitchen scale with a timer function will take you most of the way there.

Adjusting for roast level

Roast level shifts your V60 recipe in the same direction it shifts espresso, just with gentler adjustments given the longer, gravity-fed contact time.

Roast	Typical adjustment from a medium-roast baseline
Light	Slightly finer grind, water toward the hotter end (95-96°C), sometimes a longer bloom to help an often denser, less-degassed bean
Medium	The baseline — standard grind and 93-94°C is a fair starting point
Dark	Slightly coarser grind, water toward the cooler end (90-92°C), to avoid tipping into bitterness given the bean's already more porous structure

These are starting adjustments, not fixed rules — always confirm with a taste and adjust from there, the same as any other dial-in.

A worked walkthrough

- Set 20g dose, 1:16 ratio (320g total water), medium grind, 94°C, 40s bloom.
- Bloom with 40g water, wait 40 seconds — the bed should visibly rise and bubble.
- Pour the remaining 280g in a slow spiral over roughly 90 seconds, finishing the pour by around 2:00.
- Let it draw down fully. Total time lands at 2:50 — taste it.
- Sharp and thin: grind slightly finer next time, keeping everything else the same.
- Re-brew. Total time now 3:05, and the cup tastes sweet and balanced — that's your dial-in for this bag.

As with espresso, change one variable at a time and taste after each change — it's the only way to know which adjustment actually caused the difference.

A simple dial-in routine

- Start at a medium grind, 1:16 ratio, 94°C water, 40 second bloom.
- Pour to target weight, timing the total brew.
- Taste, and diagnose using the table above.
- Adjust grind first for most issues — it's the single biggest lever in pour-over brewing.
- Only touch ratio once grind and time feel right, to fine-tune strength rather than fix a fundamental extraction problem.

Grind consistency and your grinder

Pour-over is arguably even more sensitive to grind consistency than espresso, because there's no pressure forcing water through evenly — an inconsistent grind (a wide mix of particle sizes) means small fine particles over-extract while larger ones under-extract, in the same brew, at the same time. This is part of why a genuinely good burr grinder matters so much for this method specifically.

If your V60 coffee consistently tastes muddy or unclear despite careful technique, and adjusting grind size doesn't fix it, grind consistency itself — rather than the average size — is worth investigating as the underlying cause.

Common mistakes

- **Skipping the bloom.** Even 20 seconds helps far more than skipping it entirely, especially with fresher coffee.
- **Pouring too fast and too high.** This agitates the bed excessively and can cause channelling, especially with a heavy-handed pour late in the brew.
- **Ignoring drawdown time.** A brew that finishes wildly outside the normal window is telling you something before you've even tasted it.
- **Using stale, degassed coffee and expecting a strong bloom.** If the bed barely rises during bloom, the beans are likely past their best.

Frequently asked questions

Do I need a gooseneck kettle?

Not strictly, but it helps considerably. A gooseneck spout gives far more control over pour placement and flow rate than a standard kettle, which matters more for pour-over than almost any other brewing method.

Why does my V60 coffee taste different from my espresso on the same beans?

This is expected, not a fault. Different extraction methods, contact times, and filtration all shift what comes through in the cup — pour-over typically highlights acidity and clarity more, while espresso emphasises body and concentration.

Is a scale really necessary?

For consistent results, yes. Volume measurements for both coffee and water are far less precise than weight, and small dose errors have an outsized effect on a method with this much manual variability already.

Can I make more than one cup at a time?

Yes, but scale the recipe proportionally rather than just adding more coffee to the same water volume — keep the same ratio, and expect a slightly longer total brew time for larger volumes since there's more bed depth for water to pass through.

My coffee tastes fine but weak — what's happening?

This usually points to ratio rather than extraction. If the balance (no dominant sour or bitter note) is right but the cup feels thin, try a shorter ratio (more coffee relative to water) before changing grind or time.

How long does the coffee stay fresh once brewed?

Pour-over coffee is best drunk within 15-20 minutes of brewing. It continues to change as it cools and oxidises, and while it doesn't spoil quickly, the balance you dialled in will drift the longer it sits.

Should I stir the bed at any point during the pour?

Some methods deliberately include a gentle stir or swirl, usually right after the bloom, to help settle the bed and promote even saturation. It's optional rather than essential for the V60 specifically, but worth experimenting with if you consistently see uneven drawdown despite a careful pour.

Expert Barista Quick Guide 5 — free for all app users. Practise this exact method in the Pour Over (V60) section of the simulator.