

Cigar Smoking 101

What are the basics of cigar smoking? How do you light a cigar? How do you draw on the cigar properly? Do you inhale? What are the dos and don'ts of cigar smoking? If you have ever pondered any of these questions, read on. Here is a simple and accessible primer designed to help you gain familiarity with the sometimes confusing, always enigmatic world of cigar smoking.

First Step: Lighting Up

First, all new cigar smokers should learn how to properly light a cigar. Use a clipper designed for cigars to clip off the edge of the head (the section you put to your mouth). If possible light the foot of your cigar with a cedar match. Avoid regular cigarette lighters. They produce a nasty odor that can linger and ruin a good cigar. If you must use a lighter, use butane lighter. These will keep the odor to a minimum. However, you should always strive to use a wooden match because lighters can easily taint the foot of your cigar. How do you light up? Simply strike a match and hold the edge of your cigar over the flame. Avoid touching the cigar to the fire, simply hold the cigar over the flame and draw deeply until the cigar is lit.

Second Step: Burn it down to a nub?

Should you burn your cigar down to a nub? Experts recommend you leave at least two inches to your cigar. Even the finest cigars will tend to get bitter if you let it burn all the way down. What about ashes? Should you knock the ashes off of your cigar? Rather than knocking the ashes off the edge, let the cigar rest in the ashtray when you're not smoking it. The ashes will fall off naturally.

Third Step: Relax and Enjoy

A cigar should never be rushed. By design, cigars should be savored, preferably after dinner and with a glass of good brandy. Hold the cigar between your thumb and fingers—anything else might be considered bad taste. Also, don't inhale deeply. The smoke should not reach your lung. This is very bad for your health, and it will not help you taste the cigar any better. Of course, you should always be considerate of those around you. If possible, smoke in the company of other cigar smokers. A good cigar can be enjoyed alone and even more so with friends.

