

How to start smoking

DON'T BE IN THE DARK ABOUT SMOKING – LIGHT(EN) UP!



This is a very brief 'starter' guide for those just setting out on this unusual journey.

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About me

I am, I suppose, retired, but does anyone retire? The worst thing you can say about me is that I care. I don't care. About me, that is. Otherwise, why would I bother? And that, for me, just about sums me up, so there you have it. Enough said.

HOW TO START SMOKING

Driving Forces

If you're young, it's not difficult to start smoking – believe me. Emulating someone close to you who smokes is often the best motivation.

It has that element of danger that everybody loves, can make the difference between a quiet life and a full one, and is far better for everyone than out-of-control drinking.

First, though, there are myths to dispel, and I'm going to tell it 'like it is'...

MYTH No.1 – DYING TO KNOW

Let's not beat about the bush. 'Smoking kills' is a claim made by the politically-correct government and their biggest quango, the National Health Service, in their drive to control every single aspect of our daily lives.

They will tell you that every cigarette takes 5 or 10 minutes (they don't seem to know which) off your life – what they don't tell you is that it's the last 5 or 10 minutes. Are you going to worry about that now?

They will tell you that smoking causes heart disease, lung cancer and most other serious illnesses. If that were true, why does one in five adults smoke? If it were true, would anyone smoke? Don't be put off by the propaganda – speed kills, too, but that doesn't stop millions speeding every day.

And how ridiculous is it that you can buy a packet of cigarettes that says – after you've bought it, mind you – 'smoking is addictive: don't start'? That's really helpful, isn't it? Try asking for your money back, if you believe it for one second.

Some wit said: "There's nothing certain in life except death and taxes." Well, by starting smoking, you can add certainty to your life, too. And pay a lot more tax so the Government can spend more on smoking literature.

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MYTH No.2 – SMOKING IS ANTI-SOCIAL

Recently the Government introduced a public smoking ban. And what was the result of that? More smoking in public – outside shops, office buildings, hospitals, restaurants and even pubs.

Actually, is smoking anti-social? Have you noticed how smokers huddle together outside pubs and offices, regardless of wind, rain, cold and traffic fumes? You don't see non-smokers doing that. They prefer to sit inside and moan about how the country's going to the wall and the price of everything is going up.

If there was a tax on moaning, non-smokers would soon go out and buy a packet of twenty. They even moan about whether anti-social should be hyphenated or not.

MYTH No.3 – WHAT HEALTH BENEFITS?

There is no mystery about the fact that the health benefits of smoking are unknown. Uniquely in the history of scientific endeavour, no studies have ever been carried out to investigate them.

You have to wonder why this is. Over the past two hundred years or so, until about the 1970s, many claims were made, by health professionals, celebrities, and the manufacturers themselves, about the benefits of smoking, but none has been investigated seriously.

The powerful anti-smoking lobby (presumably the same people who got hanging banned after more than a thousand years of proven benefit to society and, more recently, hunting - ditto) are almost certainly to blame for this.

How do these people sleep at night?

So, for now at least, smokers or potential smokers have to rely on anecdotal evidence – the fact that the streets are not littered with dead people with cigarettes in their mouths; the fact that many smokers believe they haven't had a cold for years (due no doubt to the hot gases sterilising the nose and throat); the fact that smokers seem genuinely more happy, more tolerant, more considerate and more sociable than non-smokers.

Tolerance and considerateness are not studied scientifically. Perhaps they should be. It is actually surprising that the tobacco companies do not sponsor such work.

STARTING OUT

Let's look at the basic things you should do to start smoking, then, and the order in which you should do it.

[1] What do you need?

[a] Money.

I said I wouldn't beat around the bush, and smoking isn't cheap. A packet of cigarettes will cost you more than a gallon of petrol. But as I said before, speed kills, so by buying fags instead of petrol could actually save a life.

There is little compensation in knowing that two thirds of the price is tax, because the government waste most of that employing more people.

You may find you have to limit your consumption until you're earning a bit more, but don't worry – there are ways to get round this problem.

You can look for the cheapest brands. They may not be as luxurious as the ones most people buy, but we all have to start somewhere, and you can look forward to the day when you can proudly flash a packet of Marlboro Gold.

If you're ashamed of your brand, then buy a cigarette case. Now that's cool.

Then there are ways to buy tobacco at a lot less than shop prices, and you can ask your smoking friends about this – it would be wrong for me to advise you how to avoid paying tax, but be assured – there are ways.

You can always roll your own. There's a real buzz in doing this while steering the car with one knee – if you can afford to drive these days – but the financial compensation is significant and there's great satisfaction in designing your own smokes – paper thickness, hand or machine rolling, whether or not to use a filter tip, and of what size – the variations are virtually limitless.

[b] A shop.

Many non-smokers don't realise this, but it is actually perfectly legal to go into a local shop or supermarket and buy tobacco over the counter (or under it, if the government has its way). It's not like it used to be with condoms, where you loiter around the shop until the queue has gone and then

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whisper your request to the hard-of-hearing shop assistant.

Be bold. March up to the counter and ask for a large pack (better still, two ounces, just to confuse them) of Golden Virginia and wait for the gasps in the queue behind when they hear the price. You may not be able to afford it, but they will think you can, and that's a real boost to anyone's ego.

[c] Somewhere to light up.

For the maximum effect, light up immediately you leave the shop (not forgetting to put that cellophane wrapping in the bin). Feel the slight light-headedness as the nicotine hits your brain, cross the road carefully and march off homewards followed by clouds of blue and white smoke that are prettier than the early mist on a summer's morning.

Not for nothing was an old brand of cigarettes called 'Passing Clouds'.

When you've finished, don't forget to dispose of cigarette butts responsibly. Start how you mean to go on. Fag-ends are easier to pick up than discarded chewing gum, but unsightly nevertheless. Many buildings now have bins for the purpose. Throwing them down in the street just gets smokers a bad name.

And there are penalties for doing it, too – it may surprise you to know that throwing down a cigarette butt can cost you more than spitting, urinating in public and even, in some cases, burglary.

[2] Speak to others

There will be many people you can speak to about starting. Confirmed smokers are more numerous than you would imagine. They just hide their lighters under a bushel because of all the government propaganda. Some people are actually ashamed of being smokers, if you can believe that.

Smokers will sometimes feel obliged to say to you: "Don't start." But read between the lines. How can they say that?

[3] Join a group

People don't talk to each other these days. They rush about, getting this and that done, afraid to

even smile at a stranger. Not so smokers. They aren't afraid to go up to any other smoker and ask if they have a light. No smoker will ever refuse, and that simple gesture will often be the start of a conversation, and even a lifelong friendship.

You see these encounters everywhere – outside shops, offices, hospitals and railway stations – social life in this country would be extinct without them.

It's not always obvious who's a smoker when you start a new job. Obviously, you have avoided the companies that operate a no-smoking policy (whether this is legal is debatable), so there will be some smokers amongst the staff. Those 'popping out' for a quick one will be obvious, and smokers will often invite you as well, breaking the ice immediately.

An added benefit of joining a group, or pro-smoking forum on the internet, is that you will learn more quickly how to counter the anti-smoking lobbies' chestnuts that they like to trot out at every opportunity. Such as –

Statistically aware: "If all the cigarette ends discarded in one day were piled up together, they would block the M25." Your answer – "So why haven't they, then?"

Arrogant: "You can smoke if you smoke it yourself." Your answer – "Sorry, I don't understand." Make them work for it.

Intellectual: "Ugh! You're choking me with that filthy thing!" Your answer – "I'll only be a minute, then I'll probably drop dead right here." Or, for those who like an argument: "Did you know that one diesel engine pumps out more carcinogens in one hour than I would in a lifetime of smoking?"

Appealing: "Aren't you worried about the look of those nicotine stains?" Your answer – "They're not nicotine stains – nicotine is a colourless substance. Actually," (and don't lower your voice) "I have epididymis." In case you're wondering, that's a polite way of referring to the part of the body known colloquially as "bollocks."

[4] Don't be afraid of criticism

People may glare at you in the street with that holier-than-thou attitude, mixed with a tinge of

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envy. Ignore them. Don't make the mistake of trying to be friendly by offering them a cigarette – it only angers them even more. Just leave them to go on with their miserable lives, wondering how they're ever going to get through it without a fag.

There's nothing that angers a non-smoker more than telling them: 'You must have thought about it.' "Gay" people say it all the time, apparently. Try it – you'll see what I mean – but don't pick on someone your own size, and don't say I didn't warn you.

[5] Don't be afraid of fear

Of course there are reasons for NOT smoking – it would be wrong of me not to produce a balanced view. You may have your doubts when you cough in the morning, or feel a little short of breath when running the local marathon; you may feel a tinge of regret when you have to choose between fags and food; you may imagine the worst as you walk to the late-night shop just before it closes.

But often these are fears that are put into your head in quite subtle ways – posters at the doctor's surgery, no-smoking signs everywhere, the unsolicited, grubby invitations to take part in bowel cancer screening programmes.

Be brave. There are not many things that are both pleasurable and legal these days – enjoy them while you can.

Just remember – if it weren't for the bad press that smoking gets, everybody would smoke.

[6] Getting round the legislation

Not long ago, a government scheme to bail out struggling plastic sign-makers was dovetailed into a cleverly thought-out campaign to prevent smoking in places where non-smokers go.

The signs, some costing as much as £10 each (including VAT), proliferated within weeks, rescuing the plastic sign industry at a stroke. The campaign was so successful that you hardly see a single doorway or window – commercial or non-commercial – that doesn't have a no-smoking sign.

You can still find them, though. There are several premises in our town that have resisted this insidious campaign, and you are bound to find some in your locality. This doesn't mean you can

smoke inside, though, so beware of the fraudsters who deliberately fail to show the signs, either for a joke or to trick you into breaking the law.

[7] Setting an example

As a smoker, and one of a dying breed, it falls to you to 'do your bit.' As long as you stay within the law (if you can understand the law, that is) you can light up anywhere, and should.

Standing by an open pub doorway so that the smoke drifts inside, dragged in by the extractor fans designed to take out the smell of stale beer, over-cooked chips, underarm sweat and bad breath, is a good ploy to remind people that what you are doing is not only legal, it is your right.

The last time I walked past a pub (not something I do very often) there were more people outside than inside. Honest – I counted them.

Many non-smokers and petty officials (not always the same thing) can be teased by the imitation cigarettes that look just like the real thing, and walking around with an unlit or dead cigarette in your mouth or – better still – a pipe, can brighten up the dreariest Monday morning.

Use your imagination. That's what it's for.

Many non-smokers and – the worst of all – ex-smokers will constantly badger you to stop smoking, even risking friendship to do so. They will even recruit your own children in this effort.

They do not understand why they are doing it, so go easy on them. You may have a dozen or more convincing arguments to change their minds, but is a quiet life worth it? There are few enough freedoms in this life without taking more away, so just smile and privately celebrate the fact that you have a choice whether to smoke or not.

And they don't.

FINALLY...

If you're still undecided, here are a few other things you might like to consider –

The contents of ashtrays make the kitchen bin smell so disgusting the dog won't root in it.

Clouds of smoke keep mosquitoes away in the garden in the evening.

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Slugs die a horrible death when you stub a cigarette out on them.

A lit cigarette is the perfect way to seal the end of nylon rope.

If you want to play 'Pooh sticks' and can't find any sticks, dog-ends are a good substitute. Make sure they're different lengths.

No one who smokes ever has to smell stale tobacco smoke on someone else at the theatre, cinema, etc.

www.fagaware.com

Advisory note: other cynical chronicles may be available. Oh come on, don't take it all so seriously...

Enjoyed reading this?

You may like to know that other advice sheets are available, some free, some not (we all have to eat). These include:

By Cyril Wiggle

(the only person ever to have been swallowed accidentally by a basking shark and to have a non-existent book on sale by Amazon)

How to enjoy driving

How to tell if you're crazy

How to make excuses

How to annoy people with punch lines

How to start smocking

How to start smoking

(re-issued with correct title)

How to start your own business

How to mind your own business

How to cycle

How to recycle

How to use party conversation stoppers

How to learn to love politics

How to get in the New Year's Honours List

By Tony Holkham

GENEALOGY

How to start researching your family history

How to search the internet

WRITING

How to start being a writer

How to decide what to write about

How to write fiction

How to write non-fiction

How to sell your writing

BUSINESS

How to make your office more efficient

How to cut costs to maximise profit

How to survive recession

MONEY

How to negotiate – for everything

How to spend less and still enjoy life

OTHER PROBLEMS

How to complain – and get results

How to conduct a secular funeral service

How to help the community

Contact Tony Holkham for more information about some of these by email –

tonyholkham@gmail.com or visit

www.tonyholkham.org (genealogy)

www.tonyholkham.co.uk (business/advice)

DONATIONS

If Tony or Cyril have helped or entertained you in some small way and you feel inclined to make a donation you can either make one direct to Tony (www.tonyholkham.co.uk) or to his favourite charity the RNLI (www.rnli.org.uk), which exists solely by voluntary donations to save lives at sea (and Heaven help us if the government ever gets their hands on it).

Cyril Wiggle's words of 'wisdom' are published by Tony Holkham out of the kindness of his heart (Cyril never paid for anything anyway, so why bother asking?).

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