

## Steps for most Bread Recipes

If you've never made bread before, here is the basic formula for making your own at home. My recipe below follows this perfectly. It's so much easier and trust me, the scent of fresh bread baking will make everyone *really, really* excited for dinner!

### Step 1: Assemble Bread Ingredients

You'll need warm water, honey, instant OR active dry yeast, salt, vegetable oil and flour. That's it!

### Step 2: Dissolve the yeast and activate it by Proofing



This is a simple process that takes about 5 minutes. You can see a picture below what yeast looks like when it's proofed. It's possible to kill yeast if you use too hot of water, so aim for slightly warmer than luke-warm, or about 105°F. Combine warm water, yeast and 1 TBSP of the honey in your mixing bowl. Give it a quick stir and then let it sit for 5 minutes. You'll begin to see the yeast puff up until it covers the entire surface of the water.

### Step 3: Add remaining ingredients and mix

Add the rest of the sugar, the oil, salt and flour, then mix using an electric mixer until it's well combined, about 2 minutes. You can mix by hand but it will take longer.

### Step 4: Knead the Bread

You might be thinking, "Wait! It's already mixed!" Ha! Not so fast! Going through the process of kneading bread dough is crucial for bread with great texture. Kneading dough allows gluten to form which enables dough to rise better, be lighter and fluffier. you can knead by hand or with a mixer. I use the dough hook on my mixer and knead for 7 minutes. If you knead by hand, you'll want to knead for 10-11 minutes, depending on how consistent you are.

### Step 5: First Rise



Place your lovely smooth, elastic bread dough in an oiled bowl and cover it with plastic wrap or a clean towel. I think plastic wrap works better because it traps hot air inside and thus, my dough requires a shorter first rise. Be sure to spray the side of the plastic wrap that will touch the dough with oil!

If your house is cool, your bread will take longer to rise. In the wintertime when my house is cooler than normal, I like to turn the oven on for 2-3 minutes, then turn it off and let the bowl of dough rise in there. The oven traps the heat for a longtime and it's the perfect atmosphere for rising dough.

## Step 6: Punch Dough and Shape it

Punching the dough down quickly releases any air pockets that have developed and helps your bread have a more consistent rise and texture. Shape your dough by rolling it gently into a ball and rolling it 2 or 3 times on the countertop so that the ball is more oblong. I usually punch down and shape the dough quickly, then place in a greased bread pan.

## Step 7: Second Rise



I like to do my second rise in a warm oven that's not turned on. I turn the oven on just before I punch my dough down, then turn it off once I place the dough in the oven for the 2nd rise. It's really only on for a minute or two, which is fine! The second rise will help shape your loaf of bread and takes about 30 minutes.

## Step 8: Bake the Bread



You're nearly there! Preheat the oven temp as directed on recipe. You know what I do to make sure my bread is perfectly cooked? I use a digital cooking thermometer! Bread bakes for about 30-40 minutes. The top will be golden brown when done.

## Step 9: Cool the Bread

Cool baked bread in the pan for 10-15 minutes, then overturn pan and turn loaf out onto a cooling rack or folded towel to finish cooling. If you leave the bread in the pan for much longer than that, you'll steam it, which may cause some parts of your loaf to go soggy. No one likes soggy bread!