

Beginner's Guide to Pigeon Fancying in the UK

Starting out in pigeon racing or fancying can feel overwhelming, but with a clear plan and the right setup, you can build a rewarding and successful hobby. This guide gives you a simple 12-month roadmap, from getting your first loft to completing your first young bird season.

Months 1–2: Research & Preparation

- Join the RPRA and your local club.
- Visit at least 2–3 local lofts – watch how they manage their birds.
- Plan/build a small loft (around 6ft x 6ft).
- Buy basic gear: feeders, drinkers, corn, grit, scraper, baskets.
- Tip: Keep your loft simple and easy to clean.

Months 3–4: Getting Your First Birds

- Source young birds (ybs) from a local fancier.
- Settle your pigeons to the loft.
- Establish a daily routine – feed, water, clean, observe.
- Handle your pigeons daily to tame them.
- Tip: Start small (6–10 birds). Quality matters more than numbers.

Months 5–6: Loft Flying & Training

- Train your birds to trap quickly.
- Begin loft exercise: let them out once daily, then twice daily.
- Start short training tosses (1–2 miles, building to 20 miles).
- Keep a diary of each bird's behaviour and health.
- Tip: Consistency is everything. Train/feed at the same times.

Months 7–8: First Races (Young Bird Season)

- Your club will schedule young bird races (July–September).
- Start with the shorter races – focus on getting them home.
- Learn how to basket, time, and clock your birds.
- Expect some losses – it's part of the sport.
- Tip: Don't get discouraged by early results.

Months 9–10: Post-Season & Health Management

- Allow your birds to moult naturally.
- Maintain steady feeding with plenty of minerals and grit.
- Carry out health checks (worming, canker treatment if needed).

- Evaluate your birds: note strong and weak performers.
- Tip: Ask an experienced fancier to review your team.

Months 11–12: Winter & Planning Ahead

- Keep birds quiet and comfortable over winter.
- Decide whether to pair for breeding in the New Year.
- Plan your racing team for next season.
- Upgrade equipment gradually (ETS clock, more nest boxes).
- Keep learning from experienced fanciers.

Year 1 Goals

- Build a solid loft and routine.
- Settle and train a small team of birds.
- Gain experience in handling, basketing, and timing.
- Complete a young bird racing season (regardless of results).
- End the year with a healthy loft ready for the next season.

Beginner's Shopping Checklist (UK Prices)

- Loft (DIY or second-hand): £300–£1,000+
- Perches & nest boxes: £50–£150
- Feeders & drinkers: £20–£40
- Corn & grit (per month): £40–£60
- Scraper & cleaning tools: £15–£30
- Training/racing baskets: £40–£100
- Pigeons (starter kit, 6–10 birds): £20–£100 each (often gifted by clubs)
- RPRA membership: £35/year
- Local club fees: £20–£50/year
- Health supplies (wormer, canker, vitamins): £30–£60/year
- Clocking system (traditional): £100–£150
- ETS system (optional upgrade): £200–£500+

Estimated Year 1 Budget: £600–£1,500 depending on loft choice and whether you start with gifted birds or purchased stock.