

Steep Times by Tea Family

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Steep times, in summary: Steep times vary by family; black 3-5 min boiling, green 1-2 min at 70-80C, white 2-3 min at 75-85C, herbal 5-10 min; mind time and temperature.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for steep times, brewing times for tea, or "Best Tea Shops in the UK". Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

Steep time matters more than most British tea drinkers realise. [Black tea](#): 3-5 minutes. [Green tea](#): 1-2 minutes. [White tea](#): 4-5 minutes. Oolong: 2-4 minutes (multi infusion). Herbal: 5-10 minutes. **Get the time wrong and you've wasted the leaf, too short and the tea is thin and weak; too long and it's bitter and astringent. The kettle and quick bag approach loses 30% of what good tea offers.**

Why steep time matters

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why steep time matters, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Steeping is extraction. The hot water pulls compounds from the leaf in stages:

- **0-30 seconds:** Aromatic volatile compounds, flavour and aroma.
- **30 seconds, 2 minutes:** [Caffeine](#) and amino acids (L theanine).
- **2-5 minutes:** Catechins, polyphenols, fuller body.
- **5+ minutes:** Tannins (astringency, bitterness).

The right steep time stops at full flavour but before excessive tannin. Different teas have different optimal points.

Black tea steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Black tea steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Standard British black ([Yorkshire](#), Tetley, PG Tips)

3-4 minutes for full strength. 4-5 minutes for very strong "builder's tea." 2 minutes for lighter cup.

Premium black (Yorkshire Gold, [Earl Grey](#), [Darjeeling](#))

3-4 minutes. Don't over steep, premium black tea reveals complexity that bitterness will mask.

Assam

4-5 minutes for the full malty character. Stand up to milk and sugar.

Darjeeling

3 minutes, the delicate muscatel notes are masked by over steeping.

Ceylon

3-4 minutes.

Smoky black ([Lapsang Souchong](#))

3-5 minutes. The smoke holds up well to longer steeping.

Green tea steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Green tea steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Standard green (Twinings Pure Green, Clipper)

1-2 minutes at 70-80°C. NOT longer, green tea over steeps quickly to bitterness.

Sencha

1 minute first infusion at 70-80°C. 30-45 seconds for second/third infusions. [More on sencha brewing.](#)

Gyokuro

2 minutes at 50-60°C (lower than other greens). Specialty.

Longjing (Dragon Well)

2-3 minutes at 75-85°C.

Gunpowder

2-3 minutes at 80-85°C.

Genmaicha

2 minutes at 80°C.

Hojicha

30 seconds at 90-95°C (this one's an exception, roasted).

White tea steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for White tea steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Bai Mu Dan

4-5 minutes at 80-90°C.

Silver Needle

5-10 minutes at 80°C. Long steeping for full flavour without bitterness.

Oolong steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Oolong steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Tieguanyin (Iron Goddess)

30 seconds first infusion at 90-95°C. Up to 6-8 infusions, increasing 15 seconds each.

Da Hong Pao

30 seconds first infusion. Builds over multiple infusions.

Dong Ding

1-2 minutes first infusion at 90°C.

Oriental Beauty

2-3 minutes at 85-90°C.

UK supermarket oolong

2-3 minutes at 85-90°C. Bag style.

Pu erh steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Pu erh steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Sheng (raw) pu erh

30 seconds first infusion at 95°C. Multi infusion.

Shou (cooked) pu erh

30 seconds first infusion at 95°C. Strong, dark.

Herbal steep times

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Herbal steep times, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Chamomile

5-7 minutes for full flavour and apigenin extraction.

Peppermint

5-7 minutes. Cover the cup to retain volatile menthol.

Ginger

7-10 minutes for full flavour. Bag form a bit shorter; fresh ginger root longer.

Fennel

5-7 minutes.

Rooibos

5-7 minutes. Doesn't over steep, no tannins to extract.

Hibiscus

5-10 minutes for tartness and colour.

Lavender

3-5 minutes (or shorter, strong floral can become medicinal).

Valerian

5-10 minutes.

Matcha, different rules

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Matcha, different rules, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Matcha isn't steeped. Powder is whisked into water and consumed. No steep time concern; technique replaces time. [More on matcha brewing.](#)

Multi infusion timing

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Multi infusion timing, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/>*

Premium loose leaf can be re infused 4-8 times. The pattern:

1. First: shortest (30s-1min).
2. Second: similar or slightly longer.
3. Third: 30 seconds longer.
4. Fourth+: incremental increases.

Each infusion reveals different aspects of the tea. [More on re-steeping.](#)

The "weak tea" fix

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The "weak tea" fix, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

If your tea tastes thin and weak, the answer is usually:

1. Use more leaf (or fresher leaf).
2. Steep longer (within the safe window).
3. Use hotter water for black/herbal.
4. Cover the cup to retain heat.
5. Check water mineral content (very soft water under extracts).

The "bitter tea" fix

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The "bitter tea" fix, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

If your tea tastes harsh and astringent:

1. Reduce steep time.
2. Lower water temperature.
3. Use less leaf.
4. Use better quality leaf.
5. For green tea specifically: never use boiling water.

Tea bag vs loose leaf timing

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Tea bag vs loose leaf timing, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

Bag form tea brews faster than loose leaf, finer cut means faster extraction. Reduce loose leaf times by ~30 seconds when using bag form of the same type.

FAQ

Standard British tea steep time? 3-4 minutes for Yorkshire/Tetley/PG Tips.

Green tea steep time? 1-2 minutes at 70-80°C. Never with boiling water.

Why does my tea taste bitter? Probably over steeped or water too hot.

Why does my tea taste weak? Probably under steeped or not enough leaf.

Multi infusion timing? Premium loose leaf can be re infused 4-8 times with incremental time increases.

Curator's note: steep time is one of the most overlooked tea variables. The kettle and quick bag approach gets you 70% of what's possible. Time the brew properly and the same tea is dramatically better. Lee, Teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

In short: steep times by tea family

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Tea family	The steep time
Black tea (Assam, Yorkshire)	3-5 minutes at boiling water
Black tea (Darjeeling)	2-3 minutes at 90C; delicate
Green tea (sencha)	1-2 minutes at 70-80C; cooler water
Green tea (matcha)	Whisked, no steep; 30 second prep
White tea	2-3 minutes at 75-85C; subtle
Oolong (light)	2-3 minutes at 85C; aromatic preservation
Pu-erh (sheng)	30 seconds at boiling water; gongfu method
Herbal infusions	5-10 minutes at boiling water; extended extraction

More on steeping

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for More on steeping, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

- [Steeping times by tea type](#)
- [Water temperature for tea](#)
- [How to make tea properly](#)
- [Re-steeping tea](#)

Reference noted

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted, Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

Where this fits in the wider range: [English Breakfast](#), [Earl Grey](#), [green tea](#), [loose leaf tea](#), [Darjeeling](#), [oolong](#), and [herbal tea](#). There is plenty more in the [tea shop](#), and UK postage is free above £35.

FROM THE CURATOR *teas* · Per-cup price is the only price that matters. Loose leaf usually wins; supermarket bags sometimes do too.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Steep Times by Tea Family. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/steep-times/*

More from the tea wiki

- [Green tea](#)
- [Black tea](#)
- [Oolong tea](#)
- [White tea](#)
- [Herbal tea](#)
- [Caffeine in tea](#)
- [How to make tea properly](#)
- [Loose leaf vs teabag](#)

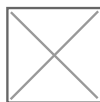
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