The PG Tips Pyramid Bag Story

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The PG Tips pyramid bag, in summary:** PG Tips introduced the pyramid bag in 1996 to give leaf more room to unfurl; modest brewing improvement, plastic-free since 2018, copied by most.

Our PG Tips deep dive covers the brand; the pyramid bag is a story in itself, and a neat lesson in how packaging changes a cup.

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

Why a pyramid at all

PG Tips launched the pyramid bag in 1996. The pitch was simple and, unusually for packaging marketing, largely true: a three dimensional pyramid gives the leaves more room to move and unfurl than a flat, pressed rectangular bag, behaving a little more like loose leaf in a pot. More room for water to circulate through the leaf means faster, fuller extraction, which on a strong everyday blend means a brisker, bolder cup in the time most people actually brew.

Does it genuinely make better tea

Within limits, yes, and for a defined reason. A flat bag crammed with fine, fast infusing dust can stew and taste one note; a roomier pyramid with slightly larger particles extracts more evenly and gives the blend somewhere to breathe. It is not loose leaf in a pot, and it will not turn a cheap blend into a fine single estate, but as a modest engineering tweak to mass market tea it does what it claims. The bigger lever is still brew time and water off the boil, the universal point in our common brewing mistakes guide.

The controversy

Early pyramid bags were made with a small amount of plastic (polypropylene) in the mesh to heat seal the corners, something true of many teabags across the industry, not just PG Tips. As awareness of plastic in teabags grew, this became a flashpoint, and PG Tips publicly committed to and rolled out plant based, biodegradable pyramid bags, part of a wider industry shift. It is a useful case study in how a design win can become a sustainability problem and then a sustainability commitment, and it connects to our plastic in teabags note.

Why it mattered commercially

The pyramid gave PG Tips a visible, ownable point of difference in a category where most bags look identical, and it pushed competitors to rethink bag design too. Decades on, the pyramid is so associated with the brand that it functions as packaging and brand identity at once, the same way the Tetley round bag or the Teapigs "tea temple" do for their owners, which our Teapigs deep dive picks up.

the pyramid bag story at a glance

Element	Note
Introduced	1996 by PG Tips (then a Unilever brand)
Why the shape	About 50% more room for leaf to unfurl during steep
The marketing claim	"Like an extra-mini teapot in your cup"
Does it work?	Yes, modestly; the bigger volume does improve brewing
The material controversy	Original pyramid bags used heat-sealable polypropylene (plastic)
Plant-based switch	2018 PG Tips moved to a fully biodegradable cornstarch-based bag
Followers	Most premium UK black-tea brands now offer a pyramid format
Commercial impact	Helped PG Tips defend market share against Tetley and Yorkshire Tea

Related on the wiki: Tea Bag Brewing Tips, Plastic in Tea Bags, PG Tips deep dive.

The bottom line on the pyramid bag

The pyramid bag is a rare example of packaging marketing that is mostly substance: more space, better circulation, a fuller everyday brew, later cleaned up on the plastic question. It will not out brew a careful pot of good loose leaf, but for the speed and convenience job it is built for, the shape earns its place.

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teas · Pyramid or flat, PG's bags are best compared per cup. Loose leaf usually wins, though a pyramid bag sometimes runs it close.

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