Does Squeezing the Teabag Matter?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Does squeezing the teabag matter, in summary:** A UK guide to teabag squeezing: yes, it makes tea stronger and more astringent. Squeeze for builder's tea with milk, don't for delicate green or Darjeeling.

A familiar kitchen debate with a small, real answer. It is one of the tea myths pages, sitting beside tea myths debunked.

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

Squeezing the teabag at a glance

Question	The answer
Does squeezing change the cup?	Yes, slightly; adds final concentrated liquid from bag
Stronger or weaker?	Stronger and more astringent
Good or bad?	Preference; depends on tea type and drinker
How big is the effect?	Small; ~5-15% additional tannin extraction at most
Builder's tea with milk	Squeezing helps; want maximum strength
Delicate tea (Darjeeling, white)	Don't squeeze; tips into harshness
Green tea	Don't squeeze; brings out bitterness
Etiquette in company	Press spoon against bag in cup rather than finger-squeeze
Effect on reuse potential	Squeezing dry eliminates second-steep possibility
Best practice	Match decision to tea type and personal preference

What squeezing actually does

Squeezing forces the final saturated liquid out of the bag and into the cup, and that liquid is not the same as the cup: it has been in direct contact with the leaf throughout the brew, so it holds higher concentrations of tannin, caffeine and bitter compounds. Releasing it lifts the cup's overall strength and astringency. But the effect is real and small rather than transformational, because most extraction has already happened during the steep, a 3 to 5 minute brew at near-boiling water draws out perhaps 70 to 90% of the available compounds, leaving only a final 5 to 15% in the bag. So "squeezing makes tea bitter" is overstated: it shifts

the cup a little stronger and a little more astringent, no more, see astringency in tea.

When to squeeze, and when not to

The decision is preference matched to the tea. For strong builder's style black with milk, a Yorkshire, PG Tips or Tetley brewed hard, squeezing does help: you want maximum strength to cut through generous milk, and the milk softens the extra astringency, which is why builders' tea culture often includes the press, see builders tea. For delicate teas, green, white, light oolong and first flush Darjeeling, squeezing does real harm: there is no milk or sugar to mask the tannin, the cup is already tuned to the steeping time you chose, and the extra extraction tips a subtle cup into harshness, so lift the bag out cleanly. In company, press the bag against the cup with a spoon rather than finger-squeezing, which is mechanics, not morality, see etiquette. And if you like a second cup from one bag, do not squeeze it dry, since that removes the reuse, see reusing tea bags.

Settle it yourself

The surest way to settle it for your own tea is a side-by-side: brew two cups of the same tea, same water and same steeping time, squeeze one bag thoroughly on the way out and lift the other cleanly, then taste both. With ordinary supermarket black bags taken with milk, most people cannot reliably tell which is which; with green or premium single-origin, the difference is clear. Run it once across the teas you actually drink and you will have a personal answer rather than received wisdom.

What to buy

For tea that takes a squeeze, reach for a strong black: Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips or a hearty English Breakfast; for the delicate end where you would not, a Darjeeling or green tea. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

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