

Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Fannings and dust, in summary: They sound like rubbish but are particle-size grades, not quality grades. Good leaf milled small makes a strong, fast, perfectly good cup, which is exactly why it fills a tea bag.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/>*

"Fannings" and "dust" sound like rubbish; the picture is more nuanced. This sits in the grading cluster beside [whole leaf vs broken](#).

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

What they are

Fannings and dust are the smallest particle grades: fannings are small broken pieces, dust is the finest particles, and together they are the typical fill of a tea bag. The reason is physics: small particles have a high surface area, so they brew fast, strong and consistent, which is exactly what a quick, milky everyday bag needs when it has seconds rather than minutes in the cup. See [loose leaf vs tea bags](#) for the format question.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/>*

Grade	What it is	The read
Whole leaf	Intact or large leaf	Slower, nuanced; loose-leaf territory
Broken	Smaller pieces	Brisker, stronger; many quality bags
Fannings	Small particles	Fast, strong; the standard tea-bag grade
Dust	Finest particles	Very fast, very strong; not automatically bad
CTC	Crush, tear, curl pellets	Built for a quick, robust, milky cup

Not bad, just small

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Not bad, just small , Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/>*

These are particle-size grades, and size governs the speed and strength of extraction, not quality. Good leaf milled small makes a fast, strong, perfectly good daily brew, while poor leaf is poor at any size, whole or dust. The genuine trade-off is nuance versus speed and strength: fannings and dust extract fast (so they are easy to over-stew), offer less nuance and rarely re-steep, giving strength over subtlety. CTC granules and broken-orthodox fannings are produced differently but share the same small-particle, strong-brew logic. See [CTC vs orthodox](#).

Grade is leaf size, quality is the cup

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Grade is leaf size, quality is the cup , Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/>*

The single most useful idea in the whole grading subject is that grade describes the physical leaf, its size and which part of the shoot it came from, and says almost nothing on its own about how the tea tastes. What actually decides quality is the garden and the season, the freshness, the care in processing and, above all, the cup in front of you, none of which is printed on a grade stamp. A high-grown single estate picked at the right moment will make a better cup as fannings than a tired, stale tea will as immaculate whole leaf, because freshness and origin outrank particle size every time. The imposing orthodox ladder (FOP, TGFOP, FTGFOP) is the same point in fancier dress: it describes how tippy and carefully plucked the leaf is, not how good the cup will be.

The buyer's shortcut

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The buyer's shortcut , Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/>*

Read the grade to predict the cup, fast and strong from fannings, dust or CTC, slower and more nuanced from broken or whole leaf, then ignore the prestige of the term entirely and judge the actual brew: is it fresh, is it clean, does it taste of what it should? If yes, it is good tea at whatever grade; if no, no acronym rescues it. Match the grade to the job, fannings or CTC for a quick strong builder's mug, broken or whole leaf for a slower, subtler session, and do not pay a premium for an impressive grade word, which buys a description of the leaf rather than a better cup. Reassuringly, you do not need to learn the acronym ladder at all: "small particles brew fast and strong, large leaf brews slower and subtler, and the cup is the only judge" is enough to buy well for life. See [how to judge tea quality](#).

Want to buy a good one?

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Want to buy a good one? , Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/*

Buy by the cup you want, not the grade. Browse the [black tea range](#) or the full [tea shop](#), buy on the cup and the per-cup price rather than the marketing, and remember free UK delivery is over £35.

Reference noted

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted , Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/*

- [EFSA: Scientific opinion on dietary reference values for water](#)

Round it off with the [English tea range](#) and [loose leaf range](#).

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A small reliable stash beats a big curious one. Cycle two or three teas you genuinely enjoy.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Fannings and Dust: Small Grades, Not Bad Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/fannings-and-dust/*

More from the tea wiki

- [Tea leaf grades](#)
- [Whole leaf vs broken](#)
- [CTC vs orthodox](#)
- [Loose leaf vs tea bags](#)
- [How to judge tea quality](#)
- [Black tea](#)

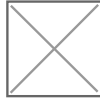
Earn rewards on Teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

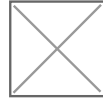
Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



Teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/