Should you squeeze the teabag?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Squeezing the teabag, in short:** Should you squeeze the teabag? No. Squeezing releases bitter tannins from the last concentrated water. What to do instead, why it matters.

"Should you squeeze the teabag?" is one of the great low stakes tea arguments, and the answer is refreshingly simple: it is a matter of taste, not a rule, and knowing exactly what squeezing does lets you decide for yourself rather than follow someone else's superstition.

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

The short answer

Squeezing the bag forces out the strong, concentrated liquid held in the saturated leaf, so it makes the cup stronger and darker and adds a little extra astringency and bitterness along with the extra flavour. That is the whole effect: more strength, slightly more bitterness. It is neither wrong nor right; it depends on what you want from the cup.

Why it actually happens

It works because the last liquid trapped in a brewed bag is the most extracted, richest in both flavour and the tannins that read as bitterness, so wringing it out pushes the cup toward "stronger and a touch sharper". With milk and sugar that extra bitterness is easily absorbed, which is why squeezing suits a strong builder's mug; with a delicate tea drunk without milk it can tip a good cup into harsh, which is why purists object for fine teas specifically.

What to actually do

Practically: squeeze if you like a strong, brisk, milky mug and want every bit of strength, it is a legitimate, sensible choice for everyday black tea. Do not squeeze a delicate or fine tea you are drinking without milk, where the extra astringency really coarsens it. If you want strength without the bitterness, the better lever is to use more leaf or another bag for the correct time rather than wringing one bag, the same strength from leaf not punishment principle this wiki applies everywhere.

Quick take

Squeezing the teabag is a preference, not a sin: it does add strength and a little bitterness, which is great for a strong milky mug and bad for a delicate cup. There is no universal rule; decide by the tea and how you take it, and if you want strength without harshness, reach for more leaf, not a harder squeeze.

Should you squeeze the teabag? at a glance

Question	Short answer
Should I squeeze the teabag?	Generally no. Squeezing releases the bitter tannins that have built up at the end of brewing, making your tea more astringent and less pleasant.
Does squeezing make the tea stronger?	It extracts more caffeine and tannins, but in an unbalanced way. The result is stronger but typically less enjoyable.
Is it actually harmful?	No, not in any health sense. Just suboptimal for flavour.
Why do baristas or tea servers do it then?	Mostly habit and visual cue ("look, I'm really brewing it") rather than tea craft. Some traditions do squeeze; most quality tea practice does not.
What should I do instead?	Let the bag drain naturally over the cup for a few seconds. Lift gently. Do not mash with a spoon.
Does it matter for tea quality?	For commodity teabag tea: not really. For premium teas: yes, squeezing definitely shows in the cup.
How long should I steep instead?	3-5 minutes for black tea, 2-3 for green. If you want it stronger, use more leaf or steep longer; do not squeeze a properly-steeped bag.
Does it affect caffeine?	Yes. A squeezed bag gives more caffeine, but not dramatically more than brewing slightly longer.

Reference noted

Tea tasting and brewing guidance draws on Britannica: Tea.

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teas · If squeezing or not appeals, try both ways once. One cup made each way teaches more than twenty articles.

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