

SK Grow Kits Mushroom Growing Guide

From Inoculation to Harvest

Welcome to SK Grow Kits! This guide will walk you through every step of the growing process, from preparing your workspace to picking your mushrooms. Whether you're a first-time grower or have previous experience, following these instructions carefully will give you the best chance of a successful grow.

Important: Read This Guide Before Starting

Before beginning, we strongly recommend reading this guide from start to finish.

Many of the later steps require supplies, tools, and preparation that are discussed earlier in the guide. Understanding the entire process before starting will help prevent mistakes and improve your chances of a successful grow.

Before You Begin

Growing mushrooms successfully depends on one thing above all else:

Cleanliness

Mushroom mycelium is constantly competing with mold, bacteria, and other contaminants naturally found in the environment.

Contaminants are present on hands, clothing, tools, work surfaces, pet hair, dust, and in moving air. Wearing gloves helps reduce contamination, but gloves are only clean until they touch something unclean. If your gloves touch a phone, doorknob, countertop, clothing, pet, or any other potentially dirty surface, consider them contaminated. Before touching your grow bag again, re-sanitize your gloves with 70% isopropyl alcohol and allow them to dry. Be mindful of

anything that comes into contact with your grow bag or workspace, including tools, surfaces, clothing, dust, and moving air.

Taking a few extra minutes to prepare a clean workspace can dramatically improve your chances of a successful grow.

Understanding Your Grow Bag

Before getting started, it helps to understand the different parts of your grow bag.

Grain Layer

The grain layer is the small pebble-like material located at the bottom of the bag. This is where the spores are introduced during inoculation.

Substrate

The substrate is the larger growing medium above the grain layer. Once the grain is colonized, the mycelium will spread throughout this material.

Mycelium

Mycelium is the white fungal network that grows throughout the bag. Healthy mycelium is typically bright white and may appear fluffy or rope-like.

Injection Port

The self-sealing injection port is where spores are introduced into the grow bag.

Filter Patch

The filter patch allows air exchange while helping prevent contaminants from entering the grow bag.

(Insert labeled diagram here)

Materials Needed

Required Materials

- SK Grow Kits Grow Bag
- Mushroom Spore Syringe
- 70% Isopropyl Alcohol
- Latex or Nitrile Gloves
- Face Mask
- Paper Towels
- Scissors

Materials Needed Later

- 2 Rubber Bands
- Small Handful of Polyfill

Keep all supplies readily available throughout the growing process. Any time you handle your grow bag, wear gloves, wear a face mask, and sanitize tools with alcohol.

Step 1: Prepare Your Workspace

Choose the cleanest environment possible.

Good Locations

- Bedroom shelf
- Closet shelf
- Home office
- Spare room
- Clean cabinet

Avoid

- Open windows
- Garages
- Attics
- Near heating/cooling vents
- Rooms with pets present
- High traffic areas

Cleaning Procedure

1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Put on your face mask.
3. Put on clean gloves.
4. Wipe down your work surface with alcohol.
5. Allow surfaces to air dry.
6. Wipe down the outside of the grow bag and syringe with alcohol.

Avoid touching the filter patch directly.

Step 2: Inoculating the Grow Bag

Cleanliness Reminder

Before handling your grow bag, wash your hands, wear gloves, wear a face mask, and sanitize all tools.

Prepare the Syringe

1. Shake the syringe thoroughly.
2. Attach the sterile needle.
3. Carefully remove the needle cap without touching the needle.

Inject the Bag

1. Locate the self-sealing injection port.
2. Wipe the port with alcohol.
3. Insert the needle into the center of the port.
4. Slowly inject the recommended amount of spore solution while moving the needle throughout the grain layer to distribute spores evenly.
5. Remove the needle carefully, recap it, and dispose of it appropriately according to local sharps disposal guidelines.
6. Allow the injection port to reseal.

After Injection

Place the bag in its incubation location.

Step 3: Incubation

During incubation, mycelium grows throughout the grain layer.

Environmental Conditions

- Store in a clean location.
- Keep out of direct sunlight.
- Maintain stable temperatures between 70°F and 75°F (21°C–24°C).
- Avoid extreme temperature swings.
- Keep the grow bag upright on a flat, stable surface throughout incubation.

During the Incubation Period

After inoculation, be patient and allow the mycelium time to begin growing. It is normal to see little or no visible growth during the first 1–2 weeks. Growth rates can vary, so avoid disturbing the bag and allow the mycelium time to establish itself. At this stage, any visible mycelium growth will appear in the grain layer at the bottom of the bag. You may need to gently lift the bag to inspect the grain layer, but avoid handling or checking it excessively, as frequent disturbance can slow progress.

Healthy Mycelium

- Bright white
- Fluffy or rope-like
- Evenly spreading

Signs of Contamination

- Green growth
- Black growth
- Pink growth
- Sour or unpleasant odors

A mushroom smell is normal. A foul smell is not.

Step 4: Shake the Bag

Cleanliness Reminder

Always wear gloves and work in a clean environment before handling the grow bag.

Before Shaking

Carefully remove the plastic tape securing the top of the bag. Peel it away slowly and gently to avoid tearing or damaging the bag. Removing the tape opens the upper portion of the bag, creating enough space to safely mix the grain with the substrate.

Complete the steps below when approximately 20–30% of the grain layer is colonized. Colonization is the process of mycelium growing over and through the grain. At this stage, healthy mycelium should appear bright white and well-established, with the colonized grains sticking together in small clusters.

1. Gently break apart the colonized grain sections.
2. Carefully shake and massage the bag to evenly distribute the grain throughout the substrate. Work slowly to break apart all clumps while being mindful not to puncture or tear the bag. Avoid squeezing or handling the filter directly during this process.
3. Once the contents are evenly mixed, return the bag to its incubation location.

(Insert photos showing ready and not-ready examples)

Step 5: Full Colonization

Complete the steps below once the entire substrate is fully colonized. Colonization is complete when the mycelium has spread throughout the entire bag, binding the substrate into a dense, solid mass.

Before proceeding, put on clean gloves and follow all cleanliness procedures outlined earlier in this guide.

To check if the bag is ready, gently squeeze the bag in several areas, including the top, sides, and bottom. The substrate should feel like one firm, thick block rather than loose or soft material. Mycelium often colonizes the bottom and sides first, making those areas feel compact while the top remains loose. Do not proceed until the entire bag, including the top, feels firm and well-colonized.

(Insert ready and not-ready photos)

Step 6: Preparing Your Bag for Picking

Cleanliness Reminder

This step involves modifying the grow bag. Cleanliness is especially important.

Wash your hands, wear gloves and a face mask, and sanitize your tools before beginning.

1. Install the Rubber Band

Place a rubber band around the bag near the top of the substrate block.

This helps reduce side pinning (when mushrooms begin growing along the sides of the substrate) by limiting oxygen exposure around the lower portion of the block, encouraging mushrooms to develop primarily from the top surface.

2. Replace the Filter with Polyfill

Using sanitized scissors, carefully remove the filter patch.

(Insert photo or video showing proper cutting technique)

Fill the opening with a loose handful of polyfill.

The polyfill:

- Allows increased fresh air exchange
- Helps filter airborne contaminants

Do not pack it tightly.

3. Return the Bag

Place the bag back in its growing location.

During this stage, light is beneficial and helps encourage mushrooms to grow upward. Providing approximately 8 hours of light per day is recommended, but it does not need to be perfectly consistent. Both indirect sunlight and artificial light work equally well for mushroom growth.

Keep the bag:

- Away from direct sunlight, which can overheat the bag and cause temperature fluctuations
- Away from vents and fans
- In a stable environment

The bag remains closed during this stage.

Step 7: Pinning & Mushroom Development

Over the next couple weeks, you may notice small mushrooms develop, called pins.

Pins are the earliest stage of mushroom development.

Healthy pins will continue growing into mature mushrooms.

During this stage:

- Leave the bag closed
- Avoid unnecessary handling
- Continue providing indirect light
- Monitor growth daily

Step 8: Picking Your Mushrooms

A flush refers to one complete cycle of mushroom growth. Each bag on average produces 2-4 flushes. Your bag is ready to pick when mushrooms reach maturity. (insert photos of mature mushrooms)

Cleanliness Reminder

If you hope to achieve additional flushes from your grow bag, cleanliness during harvesting is extremely important.

Wash your hands, wear gloves and a face mask, and sanitize all tools before harvesting.

1. Prepare Your Tools

Clean scissors with alcohol and allow them to dry.

2. Cut the Bag

Using sanitized scissors, cut around the bag approximately 1–2 inches above the rubber band.

(Insert photo showing cutting location)

Save the top portion of the bag.

3. Inspect for Contamination

Before harvesting, carefully inspect the surface of the substrate and mushrooms for any signs of contamination.

Signs of contamination may include:

- Green growth
- Black growth
- Pink or orange discoloration
- Sour, rotten, or otherwise unpleasant odors

A fresh mushroom smell is normal. Foul or unusual odors are not.

If you observe signs of contamination, you can still harvest any mushrooms that appear unaffected, but the grow bag should be disposed of afterward to prevent the spread of contamination.

4. Pick the Mushrooms

Gently grasp mushrooms near their base.

Twist gently while pulling upward.

If necessary, use clean scissors to assist removal.

Maintaining a flat surface on the cake (substrate block) allows for optimal future growth. When harvesting, pick gently to avoid disturbing the cake too much. Don't panic if some substrate comes up with the mushrooms when removed, as this is normal.

5. Remove All Remaining Mushrooms and Pins

Inspect the entire surface.

Not all pins will mature in each flush.

Remove all mature mushrooms and remaining small pins before preparing for the next flush.

Starting with a clean surface helps encourage more uniform future growth.

6. Reset the Bag for the Next Flush

Take the saved top portion of the bag and place it back over the grow bag.

Pull it down until it completely covers the original rubber band.

Place a second rubber band around the outside to secure everything in place.

This helps maintain humidity and reduce contamination risk.

Return the grow bag to its incubation location and wait for the next harvest to develop. Typically a new flush is ready to pick within 1-2 weeks.

7. Clean Your Flush

Brush away any loose substrate attached to the base of the mushrooms.

Dry or prepare mushrooms according to your preferred method.

Success Tid-Bits

- ✓ Be patient. Mushroom cultivation takes time.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary handling of the bag.
- ✓ Side pinning is common and does not necessarily indicate a problem.
- ✓ Uneven growth is normal.
- ✓ Different flushes may vary in size and appearance. All strains of mushroom have a unique appearance!
- ✓ Some grow bags colonize quickly, while others take longer.
- ✓ If the bag appears too dry: The substrate may look dry or crumbly, and there may be few or no loose water droplets visible inside the bag. If this occurs, lightly mist the inside of the upper portion of the bag with distilled water. Avoid spraying the mushrooms or saturating the substrate directly. A light mist is sufficient.
- ✓ If the bag appears too wet: Excess moisture may collect as standing water at the bottom of the bag. If this happens, carefully remove the rubber band and pull the bag opening to one side, then gently tip the bag to drain the excess water. Discard the drained water, reseal the bag, and return it to the appropriate growing conditions. If this occurs prior to cutting your bag for picking, remove polyfill and tip out excess water through the filter opening. Discard, reseal, and return.
- ✓ Consider writing the date of each harvest directly on the bag with a permanent marker to track growth over time.

- ✓ Every grow is unique. Do not compare your timeline too closely to someone else's.
 - ✓ When in doubt, compare your grow to the photos provided throughout this guide.
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Before Contacting Support

Please provide:

- A clear photo of your grow bag
- The date of inoculation
- A description of what you are experiencing

This information helps us provide the most accurate guidance possible.