

Cannabis COA: Quick Check for Flower

Use this checklist to identify safe, high-quality flower in any U.S. state.

Key:

- ☐ Required in all states (with testing programs)
- ☐ Required in some states


1. COA Basics:

- ☐ Lab name and accreditation
- ☐ Batch or sample ID matches the product label
- ☐ All key sections are clearly labeled (not missing)

Can't find a full COA? Ask: "Can I see the full-panel COA for this batch?"

2. Cannabinoid Content:

- ☐ **Total THC and CBD** are properly calculated
 $(THCA \times 0.877) + THC = Total\ THC$
- ☐ Other cannabinoids listed (CBG, CBC, CBN, etc.)

 **THC above 35%?** That's extremely rare: be cautious!

Tip: Look at the full cannabinoid profile not just THC.

Some cannabinoids promote relaxation, focus, or sleep. Avoid cannabinoids linked to undesired effects.

3. Terpenes: Aroma and Effects

- Terpenes listed (e.g., Myrcene, Limonene, Pinene, Linalool, Caryophyllene)
- “Total terpenes” shown (2%+ indicates a strong profile)
- **Bonus:** If your state allows it, ask to **see and smell** the flower. Fresh cannabis should look vibrant and smell pungent. Avoid flower that appears dry, dull, or has an off odor.

4. Safety Testing: Non-Negotiable

Pesticides

- Tested for banned pesticides (e.g., Myclobutanil, Chlorfenapyr)

Microbes

- Total yeast and mold within safe range
- Screened for *Aspergillus* species (*fumigatus*, *flavus*, *niger*, *terreus*)
Aspergillus can cause lung infections, especially when inhaled.

Heavy Metals

- Tested for: Lead, Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury

Mycotoxins

- Tested for: Aflatoxins (B1, B2, G1, G2) and Ochratoxin A

These are heat-stable toxins from mold.

Foreign Material

- Screened for hair, dirt, insects, or other debris
- In states that do not test for foreign material, it is recommend to examine all flower closely (under magnification and good lighting) before consumption.

Moisture & Water Activity

- **Moisture content:** 10–15%
- **Water activity (Aw):** ≤ 0.65

This helps prevent mold.

Red Flags – Walk Away If:

- ☐ The COA is missing pesticide, metal, or microbial data
- ☐ Only potency is shown (no safety info)
- ☐ No lab name or batch ID is available
- ☐ THC is above 35%
- ☐ Any section shows a failed result

Try This: Keep a simple journal of what you try. Record strain names, cannabinoids, terpenes, and how it made you feel. Over time, patterns will emerge and help you make more confident choices.

Not sure what's required in your state?

Check the “State Testing Requirements” section in **Lesson 1** of this course.