

Tedious but Thorough Tongue Picture Guide, Quick-Start Guide:

Tongue diagnosis is an important part in Chinese medicine diagnosis, it also provides information about the progression of the illness. It helps me identify what strategy to take next.

1. **Simply take a picture of your tongue sticking out of your mouth.**
2. **Do this outside, but do it in the shade.** This way I know that I'm getting the most accurate color.
3. **Don't "point" your tongue out. Let it fall out like a dog that is panting.** This allows me to see the natural shape of your tongue.

That's it for those who prefer simple instructions. For everybody else, please read below. :)

Wait at least one hour after waking up to take your tongue picture. The tongue may appear more pale than it really is first thing in the morning. **Do not scrape, clean, spindle or mutilate your tongue's coating before taking the picture.** The tongue coating is an important diagnostic tool. So don't scrape it the day that you take the tongue picture.

Take the picture during the day when there is some sunlight in the room. You don't want to be directly in the sun, but in a location where there is plenty of light. The sun makes your tongue appear too white, the shadow makes it appear too dark.



Indoors is okay, but its best to have some natural light coming in.

Even better is outdoors, but in the shade. My goal here is to get the right color balance. If you take a picture of your tongue beneath fluorescent lights, it can look artificially green. However if you have an automatic flash, that can improve the color balance and even allow me to see toward the back of the tongue.

This tongue was shot indoors with a flash, perfect.



Take a picture of your tongue sticking out of your mouth.

Don't point the tongue. Just let it fall out and be relaxed. This enables me to see the shape of the tongue. If you're "pointing" your tongue out of the mouth, then I won't see its natural shape.

Here's a tongue that is pointing.



Some people's tongue naturally look like the example of pointing above. Some folks just can't quite relax their tongues. If so, that's okay. Point away, but shoot for the look of a tongue that is hanging out of a dog's mouth as if it were panting.

Here's a nice relaxed looking tongue that allows one to see its natural shape.



Take the picture within five seconds of sticking out your tongue.

When you leave your tongue out of the mouth for longer than that, it tends to turn purple. If your tongue is purple even if you're just sticking it out for one second then I want to see that, but all tongues will turn purple if you leave them out for too long. (kids, there's a science fair project in this somewhere!)

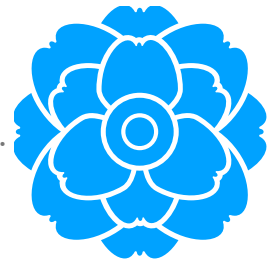
Take a picture of the bottom of your tongue. What you want to do here is open your mouth and touch your tongue to the front of your upper teeth. Touch the front of your teeth like you're on a toothpaste commercial.



Don't bite down on your tongue because that will alter the appearance of the blood vessels beneath your tongue. I want to see them free of that influence. Don't clamp down on your tongue to show me the underside.



Finally, take a picture of your entire face, with your tongue back in your mouth. This will give me a great deal of diagnostic information about your general constitution. More importantly, I'll be able to adjust the color balance of your tongue image if I can see your skin tones.



Indirect light from an open window. Perfect.

It would be best if you don't put on makeup or otherwise try to mask your appearance. We're not trying to look good here, we're trying to show me what's going on so I can get you the right herbal formula. This picture will not be used for any purpose other than the immediate concern to determine which herbs you'll need.