HOW TO TAKE A TAPE SAMPLE

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO COLLECTING ACCURATE MOLD SAMPLES AT HOME

FROM THE MOLD EXPERTS OF THE GREAT INDOORS

A HEALTHY HOME

A home isn't just a structure with walls and a roof to house your belongings. It is a haven—a place where the weight of the world slips from your shoulders the moment you cross the threshold. It is safety. It is comfort. It is laughter echoing in the hallways, togetherness around the table, and memories stitched into every corner. A place for pillow forts, first steps, and for Grandma's famous apple pie on Thanksgiving.

But for those who have faced the fear of mold, home can feel anything but safe. Saying the word "mold" is a little like saying the word "mammal"—there are many kinds, each thriving in their own unique environment. In a world where fear sells, The Great InDoors chooses a different path: empowering clients through education, replacing anxiety with understanding, and restoring the peace a home should provide.

DIY tape samples are a low-cost way to begin the investigation process when you suspect mold might be present. This booklet will guide you through how to correctly collect your own samples, including where to look, how to sample, how to package, and what the results can reveal about your home. It's a simple and accessible first step that provides useful information before deciding whether further testing, remediation, or a full inspection is needed

Thank you for allowing The Great InDoors to help keep your home a SafeHaven.

-Heather & Jason

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Most mold growth happens quietly and out of sight – inside wall cavities, beneath appliances, around plumbing penetrations, or tucked into corners of bathrooms and closets. While a professional environmental inspection is the gold standard for identifying the extent and cause of mold growth, DIY tape sampling gives homeowners a simple, inexpensive way to gather valuable information early in the process.

WHY DIY?

A GREAT PLACE TO START

People typically choose DIY sampling because they:

- See something suspicious (spots, discoloration, dust-like coatings, growth around caulking)
- Just moved into a home and want to screen for potential issues
- Are experiencing unexplained symptoms (fatigue, sinus congestion, headaches, CIRS-type reactions, etc.) and want to rule-out possible environmental factors
- Are renters who need preliminary documentation before contacting management
- Had a water event (leak, overflow, condensation, flooding) and want to know if microbial growth has started
- Want a low-cost first step before committing to full diagnostic inspection or lab testing

WHAT DIY TAPE SAMPLES CAN TELL YOU

When collected correctly, tape samples can provide:

- Visual confirmation of mold spores and structures
- Identification of mold at the genus level (e.g., Aspergillus, Penicillium, Chaetomium, Stachybotrys)
- Clues about whether growth is dry and old vs active and viable
- Clues about water damage history
- Evidence for further testing or remediation
- Supportive documentation for landlords, contractors, remediation companies, or medical providers

Tape samples are particularly valuable because they capture what is actually present on the surface, not just what drifted through the air at a moment in time.

WHAT DIY TAPE SAMPLES WILL NOT TELL YOU

Like any testing method, tape sampling has limitations and cannot answer every question about mold or moisture conditions in the home. Tape sampling does not:

- Quantify spores in the air
- Show total exposure levels
- Tell you where moisture is coming from
- Replace a full home inspection, moisture mapping, or HVAC evaluation

Instead, think of tape sampling as a targeted, microscopic peek behind the curtain — a smart, low-cost way to gather data before making bigger decisions.

WHY TAPE SAMPLES MAKE AN IDEAL FIRST STEP

The following chart compares tape samples, air samples, ERMI/HERTSMI dust testing, petri dishes, and swabs across multiple categories (cost, viability, debris context, DIY feasibility, and time domain).

	Tape Lift Sample	Air Sample	Swab	Pertri Dish	ERMI/ HERTSMI
DIY Labratory Cost	$30	$70 - $90	$90 - $130	$75-$150	ERMI $280+ HERTSMI $150+
DIY Feasible?	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES W/ LIMITATIONS
What it Tests	Surface Growth and Dust Accumulation Over Time	Airborne Spores and Particulate	Surface DNA/Culture	Airborne Spores	Dust Accumulation Over Time
Labratory Analysis Method	Microscopy	Microscopy	Mass Spectromerty or Culture to Microscopy	Microscopy	Mass Spectrometry (HERTSMI Limited to 5 species, ERMI to 36 Species)
Shows Particulate/ Debris Context	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Has the Potential to Show Viability/Non Viability of Spores	YES	YES	Depends on how it is processed	YES	NO
Transient vs. Colonized Spores	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Quantifies Exposure	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Time Representation	Surface History Along with Current Conditions	Current Conditions at Time of Testing Only	Current Conditions at Time of Testing Only	Conditions During the Time Allowed for Exposure	Surface History Along with Current Conditions

WHAT INFORMATION ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

In nature, mold is a fungus that helps break down organic material. It serves as an essential workhorse in Earth's recycling system, returning nutrients back to the soil and keeping ecosystems in balance. But while mold plays an important role outdoors, it becomes far less helpful when it grows inside the home. Indoor environments aren't meant to function as composting systems, and when mold colonizes building materials or accumulates in dust, it can contribute to poor air quality, structural damage, and unwanted exposure for the people living there.

When we test, we are never "chasing zeroes." Even the cleanest, well-ventilated home will have some mold spores present. These are generally transient spores – hitchhikers that blow in with the wind, enter on clothing, shoes, pets, or simply move in and out of the home with daily life. Most of these spores will find the indoor environment non-conducive to growth and will never become a problem.

However, certain circumstances can create conditions where mold can thrive indoors. Elevated humidity, hidden or ongoing moisture intrusion, plumbing leaks, drainage or foundation issues, and HVAC problems are just some of the issues that can create microenvironments that support colonization. When that happens, spores are no longer just passing through – they can germinate, grow, and begin to release additional spores, mycotoxins, and VOCs into your living space. Knowing the difference between "normal background" and "problem mold" is key, and sampling helps us see that clearly.

SAMPLES CAN SHOW:

- What is growing (identification of mold genera)
- Clues about the mold's source
- Whether it's active (viability/colonization)
- Why it's happening (environmental conditions)
- How far it's spreading (distribution patterns)

WHERE TO SAMPLE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SAMPLING STRATEGIES TO GATHER THE MOST HELPFUL INFORMATION

Samples are collected from multiple locations throughout the home to provide a representative understanding of the indoor environment. In a typical assessment, approximately 10-15 targeted samples are collected from areas most likely to reveal useful information about mold presence, circulation, and contributing conditions. Additional samples may be taken if visible microbial growth or other areas of concern are identified during the inspection to ensure those locations are properly evaluated.

TAPE LIFT SAMPLES HELP US EVALUATE THREE KEY THINGS IN A HOME

1. Background and time-lapse indicators of mold and debris circulation within the indoor environment.
2. Identification of visible fungal growth to determine the type of organism present.
3. Indicators of environmental conditions that may be contributing to microbial growth, such as excess dust, moisture exposure, or organic debris accumulation.

SAMPLE LOCATIONS

VISIBLE GROWTH

Tape samples are collected from visible discoloration or suspected microbial growth to confirm whether mold is present and identify the type of organism involved.

HVAC COMPONENTS

The HVAC system acts as the circulatory system of the home. Sampling returns and supply registers helps determine whether mold spores or debris are being pulled into or distributed through the system.

WINDOW SILLS & DOOR FRAMES

These horizontal ledges collect settling dust and airborne particulates over time, providing a snapshot of what has been circulating within the indoor environment.

ELECTRONICS & STATIC SURFACES

Electronics generate static electricity that attracts and holds dust particles, often concentrating spores and debris that may otherwise remain airborne.

UNDER SINKS

Areas beneath sinks are common locations for slow or intermittent plumbing leaks, making them important places to evaluate for hidden moisture-related growth.

CRAWLSPACE OR BASEMENT WOOD SURFACES

Exposed wood framing in crawlspaces or basements can act as an early indicator of elevated humidity or moisture intrusion, allowing assessment of conditions that may support fungal colonization.

HOW TO TAKE A SAMPLE

You don't need a lab coat or a microscope to get started—collecting a tape sample is simple, repeatable, and easy to learn. With a few basic materials and the method below, you can take high-quality samples that help kick-start the investigation process.

LET'S START WITH THE SUPPLIES

1. Scotch™ Transparent Tape (not matte, painter's, or packing tape)
2. Clean, unused gallon-size plastic bag (Ziploc style)
3. Permanent marker (fine or medium tip) and ball point pen
4. Clean, dry surface to work on
5. Sample Analysis Order Form
6. Mailing Envelope

Tip: Transparent tape is important – microscopes need clear optical transmission to view spores and structures.

LET'S GET SAMPLING

1 PREP

1. Wash and dry hands. Oils, lotion, and debris from hands can transfer to the tape and interfere with microscopy. Clean, dry hands reduce contamination
2. Grab any protective gear that is approriate for your space. That can include a mask or respirator.

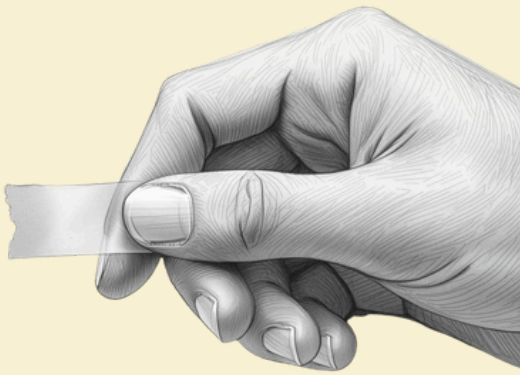
2 THE TAPE

1. Tear a Fresh Piece of Tape and discard that piece. You want to use tape that hasn't been exposed to the air or nearby surfaces.
2. Pull off a strip approximately 2.5 inches (6-7 cm) long

(Longer is not better – oversized pieces can fold, trap bubbles, and obscure the sample)

3 MAKE A TAIL

1. Fold back approximately ½ inch (1.27 cm) of one end of the tape onto itself to make a small handled "tab."
2. This prevents you from touching the sampling surface and avoids fingerprints or oils on the viewing area.



LET'S GET SAMPLING

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TAKE THE SAMPLE

1. While holding the tail, apply tape to the surface being sampled
2. Press the adhesive side gently onto the area of interest.
3. Use light pressure – do not scrape, smear, or twist.
4. For textured surfaces, a single light pass is sufficient.
5. For dusty surfaces, a gentle dab is better than dragging.
6. Peel the tape back smoothly to avoid smearing the sample or causing fibers to stick.

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AFFIX TO BAG

1. INSIDE a clean, unused zip-style bag, press the tape sample, adhesive side down, to the inside of the bag.
2. Do NOT fold the tape on to itself
3. Do your best to lay the tape sample completely flat with no wrinkles

LET'S GET SAMPLING

LABEL THE SAMPLES ON THE BAG

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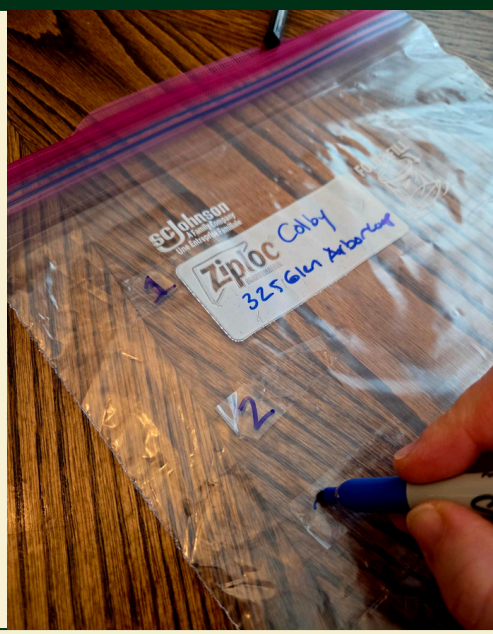
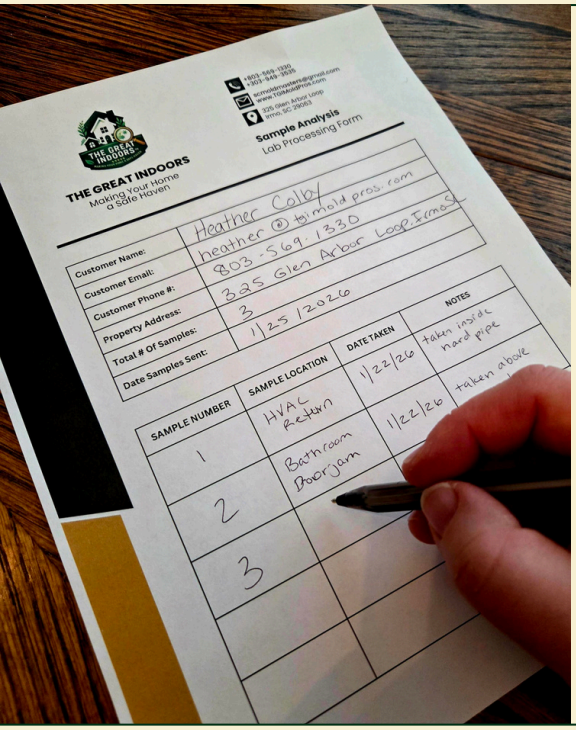
1. Close the bag
2. Label the bag with your name and address
3. On TOP of the sample on the outside of the bag, use a magic marker to label each sample





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FILL OUT FORMS

1. Download and print the DIY Sample Form Page from our website
2. Complete customer information
3. Complete sample information. Include the sample number, sample loaction, date of sample, and any additional notes about the sample location

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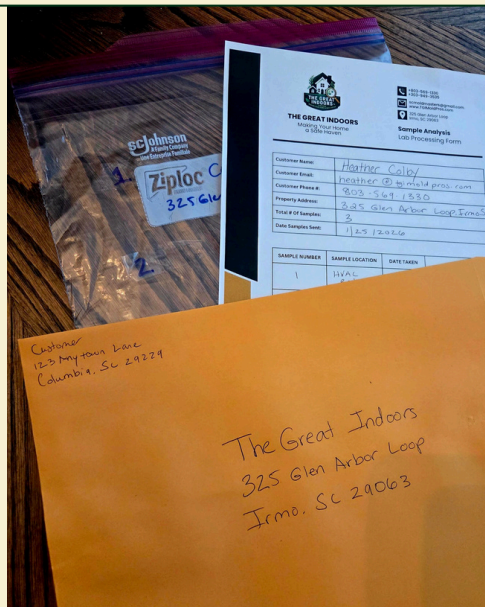
PREPARE TO SHIP

1. Sign the Sample Processing Agreement
2. Ensure the bag is completely closed
3. Place the bag and the forms inside of a mailing envelope
4. Label the envelope and ship using your preffered shipping provider.

*FedEx Or UPS is prferred



THE NEXT STEPS

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

Collect & Send Samples
Receive Results by Email
Schedule Your Free Results Review

Once your samples have been analyzed, you will receive a link to review your laboratory results to the email you provided. The results will outline the findings from each sample collected. This report provides valuable insight into what may be present on the surfaces tested and can help guide your next steps.

While the laboratory results are important, interpreting those findings within the broader context of the home is equally important.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS PROCESS

As part of this service, you have the option to speak with a member of The Great InDoors™ team at no additional cost to review your results. During this conversation, we can help explain what the findings may indicate, discuss potential contributing conditions, and provide guidance on practical next steps for addressing any concerns.

Sometimes the next step may involve simple environmental adjustments. In other cases, additional evaluation may be recommended to better understand the source or extent of a problem.

Our goal is not to create fear—but to provide clarity, education, and a path forward.

IMPORTANT NOTE

DIY tape samples provide useful information about specific surfaces; however, they represent only a limited snapshot of the indoor environment. Because these samples are collected without the benefit of a full site assessment, the results and any guidance provided cannot replace the data gathered during a comprehensive on-site inspection.

A professional inspection allows for evaluation of the entire building system, including moisture conditions, ventilation patterns, HVAC performance, and hidden areas that cannot be assessed through surface sampling alone.
If your results suggest the possibility of an active issue, a full inspection may be recommended to identify the true source of the problem and the most effective solution.

On-Site Mold Inspection Professionals & Professional Lab Analysis

We believe in empowering individuals battling mold through knowledge and education

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