

FREE SAMPLE FROM

3 Free TCM Herb Flashcards + The #1 Board Prep Mistake

From the Second Edition of Herbal Rhymes

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Herbal Rhymes — A Mnemonic Study Guide for TCM Herbology

herbalrhymes.com

The #1 Mistake TCM Students Make

— And the Neuroscience of Why It Fails

After years of teaching, mentoring, and surviving the boards myself, I can tell you the single most common mistake TCM herbology students make:

They try to memorize herbs by reading and re-reading their notes.

It feels productive. You highlight. You re-read. You copy charts. You feel like you're learning. But when the exam asks "Which herb treats Wind-Cold with no sweat, wheezing, and wind-water edema?" — your mind goes blank.

Here's why: **passive re-reading is one of the least effective study strategies known to cognitive science.**

Research in memory science has identified three principles that actually work:

1. Dual Coding (Paivio, 1986)

Information encoded in *both* verbal and visual channels creates two retrieval pathways instead of one. When you picture Ma Huang as a military general storming a castle — wheezing, sweating — you've anchored the verbal facts to a vivid image. On exam day, the image fires and pulls the facts with it.

2. Elaborative Encoding

The more associations you build around a fact, the more neural pathways lead to it. A poem that rhymes "bitter and cold" with "Heart, Lungs, GB too" creates phonetic, semantic, *and* rhythmic connections simultaneously. That's three hooks instead of one.

3. Active Recall (The Testing Effect)

Quizzing yourself is **dramatically** more effective than re-reading. Every time you struggle to recall a fact and succeed, you strengthen that neural pathway. The flashcards in this book are designed precisely for this — cover the back, recall, check.

Herbal Rhymes was built on these principles. Every poem, every mnemonic, every "Board Pearl" callout is engineered to give your brain multiple hooks into each herb's data. The Second Edition expands this system to 217 herbs with verified data, memory tricks, comparison tables, and board-style practice questions.

The three sample flashcards on the following pages will show you exactly how it works. If these help even a little, imagine what the full deck of 217 cards can do for your board prep.

— *Dr. Stacy Peck, DACM, L.Ac.*

Sample Flashcard #1

Má Huáng 麻黄

Ephedrae Herba

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Temperature | Warm |
| Taste | Acrid, Slightly Bitter |
| Channels | LU, UB |
| Top Indications | 1) Wind-Cold with NO sweat (powerful diaphoretic) · 2) Cough, wheezing, asthma · 3) Wind-water edema with urinary difficulty |
| Contraindication | May cause sweating and/or hypertension; caution with Qi/Yin deficiency |

*Ma Huang is warm, acrid and a bit bitter
It calms wheezing and aids peeing, so you can feel fitter
In the Lung and UB, I'd be remiss to mention
It might cause sweating and/or hypertension*

— Original poem by Cindi

🧠 MEMORY TRICKS


"MWA" — **Ma Huang Wheezes Away**. Three big functions: diaphoresis (sweating), cough/wheeze, and edema.

Visual: Picture Ma Huang as a *military general* storming a fortress with no sweat on his brow — he's the EXCESS exterior herb. He opens the gates (pores) and flushes out the enemy (Wind-Cold).

Channel Hook: "Ma Huang is a LUnatic on a Unicycle (**UB**)" — Lung and Urinary Bladder.

⚡ BOARD PEARLS

- Wind-Cold with **NO sweat** → Ma Huang. With sweat → Gui Zhi
- Honey-prepared (**Zhi Ma Huang**) = better for cough/asthma; **Raw** = stronger diaphoretic
- "Summer Ma Huang" = Xiang Ru
- Treats **wind-water edema** with urinary difficulty

-  **Dui Yao:** Ma Huang + Gui Zhi for severe Wind-Cold. Ma Huang = Qi Level; Gui Zhi = Blood Level.

Sample Flashcard #2

Chái Hú 柴胡

Bupleuri Radix

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Temperature | Cool |
| Taste | Bitter, Acrid |
| Channels | GB, SJ, PC, LV |
| Top Indications | 1) Liver Qi stagnation · 2) Harmonizes Shao Yang (alternating fever/chills) · 3) Raises Yang |
| Contraindication | Caution with LV wind rising, Yin deficiency |

Chai Hu is bitter, it's acrid and cool

Clears heat from consumption, manages menses, this jewel

Gallbladder, San Jiao, Pericardium, Liver

Chai Hu can really be quite a giver

— Original poem by Cindi

🧠 MEMORY TRICKS

"Chai Hu Has Four Channels": GB, SJ, PC, LV — remember "Great Shao Yang Peace Lover." It harmonizes Shao Yang and moves Liver Qi.

The Triple Threat: 1) Harmonizes Shao Yang, 2) Moves Liver Qi, 3) Raises Yang.

Chai Hu vs. Bo He for LV Qi: Both move Liver Qi, but Chai Hu is the MAJOR mover. Bo He assists.

⚡ BOARD PEARLS

- **Harmonizes Shao Yang** (alternating fever/chills) — key herb in Xiao Chai Hu Tang
- **Raises Yang** (along with Sheng Ma and Ge Gen)
- Major herb for **moving Liver Qi** and gynecological disorders
- Checks **malarial disorders** (along with Qing Hao)
- Enters GB, SJ, PC, LV — the most channels of any CARE herb

Sample Flashcard #3

Rén Shēn 人參

Ginseng Radix

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Temperature | Slightly Warm |
| Taste | Sweet, Slightly Bitter |
| Channels | SP, LU, HT |
| Top Indications | 1) Tonifies PRIMAL Qi (most potent) · 2) Generates fluids, calms spirit · 3) Revives collapse; generates and controls blood |
| Contraindication | Excess heat; contra with Li Lu (18 Incompatibilities) |

*REN SHEN is categorized as a tonifying herb
Or Ginseng Radix, this plant is superb
Slightly bitter and warm, and also it's sweet
It's VERY FAST-ACTING, other herbs can't compete
It channels thru spleen, lung, and also the heart
Tonifies primal Qi, stops bleeding in old and in young*

— Original poem by Cindi, corrected for Second Edition

MEMORY TRICKS

"The King of Herbs": Ren Shen is the ONLY herb that tonifies Primal (Yuan) Qi. No other herb can do this.

"SPLendid HeaRT": SP, LU, HT — Spleen, Lung, Heart. The HT channel is often forgotten on exams!

Comparison: Ren Shen = strongest (Primal Qi). Dang Shen = affordable substitute (no Primal Qi). Tai Zi Shen = weakest (also nourishes Yin).

BOARD PEARLS

- **ONLY herb that tonifies Primal (Yuan) Qi** — key board fact
- **Very fast-acting** — fastest Qi tonic
- Channels: **SP, LU, HT** (don't forget HT!)

- Generates fluids directly (Dang Shen does NOT)
- Contra with **Li Lu** (18 Incompatibilities)

Sample Category Mnemonic

A taste of the mnemonic systems in the full Second Edition

"The Three Huangs" — Clear Heat: Dry Damp

The three most important herbs in the Dry Damp category all share the surname **Huang** (黄, "yellow"). They clear Damp-Heat but each rules a different Jiao:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Huang Qin 黄芩 | Upper Jiao — LU specialist. First choice for LU heat. Quiets fetus. |
| Huang Lian 黄连 | Middle Jiao — #1 for Damp-Heat diarrhea, dysentery, vomiting. Clears HT fire. |
| Huang Bai 黄柏 | Lower Jiao — KD/UB specialist. Dui Yao with Zhi Mu for KD Yin deficiency heat. |

Memory trick: "Huang goes *from top to bottom*: **Qin** (Up), **Lian** (Middle), **Bai** (Down)." All three are bitter and cold. All three enter different Jiaos. This is tested on virtually every board exam.

Headache–Channel Associations

Another high-yield mnemonic from the Second Edition — which herb for which headache location?

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Occipital (back) | Tai Yang (UB) | Qiang Huo |
| Frontal (forehead) | Yang Ming (ST) | Bai Zhi |
| Temporal (sides) | Shao Yang (GB) | Man Jing Zi |
| Vertex (top) | Jue Yin (LV) → Du | Gao Ben |

| | | |
|------------------|---------|--------------------|
| All types | Various | Chuan Xiong |
|------------------|---------|--------------------|

Memory trick: "Qiang Huo **B**acks you up. Bai Zhi **F**aces you. Man Jing Zi **S**ides with you. Gao Ben **T**ops you off. Chuan Xiong handles **E**verything."

The full Second Edition includes mnemonics for every category, plus comparison tables, Dui Yao pairs, and 120 practice questions.

Get the Full Second Edition

Everything you need to pass your TCM herbology boards — built on neuroscience, verified against Bensky.

The Book

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Questions? Reach out at herbalrhymes.com — I'm here to help you pass.

About the Author

Dr. Stacy Peck, DACM, L.Ac. is a Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine and Licensed Acupuncturist. She created Herbal Rhymes to fill the gap she experienced as a student — the need for a mnemonic-based, board-focused study tool that makes the vast corpus of TCM herbology not just learnable, but memorable. Every fact in the Second Edition has been verified against Bensky's *Materia Medica* (3rd Edition).