The Soil Moisture Watering Guide

How to Read an Analog Meter and Water With Confidence

A free companion guide from ZoxDeal

How Your Meter Works

An analog soil moisture meter measures electrical resistance in the soil. Wet soil conducts better, so the needle moves right. Dry soil resists, so the needle sits left. The XLUX T10 face is split into three zones: DRY (1-3), MOIST (4-7), WET (8-10). Most houseplants are happiest when you water at the low end of MOIST.

Push the probe into the soil about halfway between the stem and the pot edge, to root depth. Wait 30-60 seconds for the needle to settle, then read it. Pull the probe out after each reading and wipe it clean - leaving it in the soil permanently shortens its life.

When to Water: 25 Common Plants

Water when the reading falls to the level shown. These are starting points, not laws - adjust for your pot size, light, and season.

Plant	Water at	Note
Pothos	Dry 2-3	Forgiving; wait for it to droop slightly
Snake plant	Dry 1-2	Almost fully dry; rots if overwatered
Monstera	Moist 3-4	Chunky mix drains fast
Peace lily	Moist 4-5	Dramatic drooper; water at 4
Spider plant	Dry 3	Let it dry between waterings
ZZ plant	Dry 1-2	Stores water in rhizomes
Fiddle-leaf fig	Moist 3-4	Consistency matters more than schedule
Rubber plant	Dry 3	Likes a dry spell
Calathea	Moist 5-6	Never let it hit Dry 2
Fern (Boston)	Moist 6-7	Likes constant dampness
Succulents	Dry 1	Bone dry, then soak
Aloe vera	Dry 1-2	Same as succulents
Jade plant	Dry 1-2	Err on the dry side
Philodendron	Dry 3	Similar to pothos
Basil (indoor)	Moist 5-6	Wilts fast; check often

Tomatoes (pot)	Moist 5-7	Heavy drinkers in sun
Lavender	Dry 2	Hates wet feet
Orchid (bark)	Meter unreliable	Use the skewer test instead
African violet	Moist 4-5	Bottom-water; keep crown dry
String of pearls	Dry 1-2	Very rot-prone
Dieffenbachia	Dry 3	Let top 2 inches dry
Parlor palm	Moist 4-5	Even moisture, never soggy
Herbs (mint)	Moist 6	Thirsty; check twice weekly
Cactus	Dry 1	Bone dry only
Bird of paradise	Moist 3-4	Bright light = more water

The 5 Meter Mistakes Everyone Makes

* Reading too fast: give the needle a full 30-60 seconds to settle before trusting it.
* Pushing into loose bark or perlite: the probe needs soil contact; in orchid mixes it reads falsely dry.
* Leaving it in the pot 24/7: moisture corrodes the probe; insert, read, wipe, store.
* Testing the same spot every time: moisture varies; test two spots and average.
* Watering on a schedule instead of the reading: the meter beats the calendar every time.

Care Tips

* Wipe the probe with a soft cloth after every use and store it dry.
* Do not use it in water - it measures soil, not liquid.
* Recalibrate your eyes monthly: compare the reading to the finger test to build intuition.

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