

Cookie Troubleshooting Chart

Quick fixes for flat, dry, tough, or uneven cookies

Problem	Most Likely Cause	How to Fix It
Cookies turned out flat	Butter too soft or melted; dough too warm; oven temperature too low	Use cool room-temperature butter. Chill dough 30–60 minutes. Verify oven temperature with a thermometer.
Cookies spread too much	Too much sugar or fat; not enough flour; baking sheet greased	Add 1–2 tablespoons flour. Reduce butter slightly. Bake on parchment instead of greasing the pan.
Cookies are dry or crumbly	Too much flour; overbaked; not enough fat	Measure flour correctly (spoon and level). Reduce bake time slightly. Double-check butter amount.
Cookies are tough	Overmixed dough; too much gluten development	Mix just until flour disappears. Avoid overbeating after adding dry ingredients.
Cookies didn't rise	Old baking soda or baking powder	Replace leavening agents every 6–12 months for reliable lift.
Cookies pale and thin	Oven temperature too low	Bake at 350–375°F and confirm temperature accuracy.

Pro Tip for Thick Bakery-Style Cookies:

Chill dough before baking, shape dough balls slightly taller than wide, use a higher ratio of brown sugar to white sugar, and bake on parchment paper.