

Mushroom Spore Prints

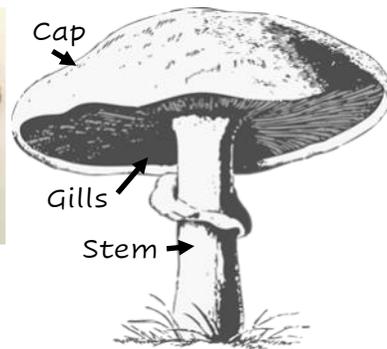
All Ages

Instead of seeds, mushrooms release tiny spores that will sprout into a new mushroom. The spores grow on the mushroom's gills and fall as a fine dust. Different mushrooms have different coloured spores. By making a spore print, mycologists (people who study mushrooms) can identify the type of mushroom from the colour. Spore prints are pretty and fun to make!



Supplies:

- * Plain paper, white or coloured
- * Mushrooms—see **Notes** below
- * Small bowl of water
- * Glass or bowl
- * Hairspray (optional)



Steps:

1. Set the paper on a firm surface. Protect the surface from staining with a cloth or newspaper.



2. Gently, with your hands, break away the stem and clear away any bits of mushroom covering the gills. Or use a sharp knife to slice away the stem and bottom edge of the cap to reveal the gills.

Caution: Always wash your hands after handling mushrooms and dirt. If you are not certain of the type of mushroom, never eat it, some mushrooms are poisonous and can kill if eaten.

3. Place the mushroom cap gills down on the paper. Arrange the caps in a pattern, line them up, or make a single print.

4. With a finger tip, dap a drop or two of water on the top of each cap.

5. Cover the caps with an inverted glass or bowl. Leave them for 24 hours or longer. More time will give a better image.

6. You are done! You could create creatures by adding features such as legs, ears, faces, or make the print part of a scene. To protect the dusty print, carefully spray with a fixative, such as hairspray. (Pressure from the spray can muddle the print)



Notes: Pick mature mushrooms to be sure there are plenty of spores. Freshly-picked mushrooms will likely have more spores than a store-bought ones. Flat mushrooms create the best prints. Avoid shriveled, bruised or old mushrooms.

What do mushrooms and fish have in common? Gills! But that does not make them animals. They are also not plants. Plants make their food using the sun's energy. Mushrooms do not need sunlight and some grow in total darkness. Mushrooms are fungi, a kingdom all of its own, separate from animals and plants.

