



HOW TO MAKE A SPORE PRINT

Remove the stem (stipe) from the mushroom cap and place the cap, gills or pores down, on a piece of clean white paper or a white 3 x 5 card. White (bleached) paper or cardboard is recommended, because some species of mushrooms produce a slightly off-white spore deposit. Thus, it would be difficult to determine the actual color on a grayish or yellowish background. Likewise, use of black paper is not recommended, as it will not characterize off-white or near-white spore prints. Cover the cap with a bowl, a cup, a glass, or even a sheet of plastic to keep stray air currents from your specimen. This will also maintain the moist environment necessary for the production of spores. In a few hours, a spore deposit may form, depending on its freshness. At times, it may take longer, even overnight. If no spore deposit forms in 12 hours, it is unlikely that one will do so. Either your mushroom dropped all its spores before it was placed on the paper/card, or it is too young and no spores have yet matured. Try another specimen of the same species.

If you make your prints directly onto white file cards or glass/plastic slides, it is easy to keep a permanent file record. You can affix your print with clear hair spray or cover it with clear, self-adhesive plastic, such as is used for book covers or ID cards. Be sure to keep a dated record of the mushroom source and any other pertinent details.

In the field, spore color can often be observed in several ways. If the mushroom is growing in a series of clustered or overlapping caps, spores will often be deposited on the lower caps. With some species, such as the Honey Mushroom (*Armillaria* sp.), it will often look as though someone has dusted them with white flour. Sometimes the spore color can be easily seen on the grass or duff under a single spreading specimen. Many times, the spore color can be seen from a deposit of spores on the stem of a mature mushroom. *Cortinarius* species are a good example of this, where the rusty brown spore deposit on the stem often looks like a stain. Spore color, unfortunately, is not always the same color as the immature or mature gill, so do NOT rely on gill color.

Spore prints can also be collected in the field. Just remove the cap from the stalk, place gills/pores down on a card, slip into a waxed paper baggie, place carefully on the bottom of your basket, and examine it when you get home. Since it is fresh, it should have produced a good spore deposit.