



Making a Spore Print

Welcome to the fascinating world of the fungi! Many people are familiar with mushrooms and curious about their identification. A key component in identifying mushrooms is looking at their spore color.

Mushrooms, the fruiting bodies of the fungi, produce spores varying in colors including white, brown, pink, purple, yellow and black. Two different mushrooms may look quite similar, but their spore color can be different. This is especially important when considering edibility! However, the Kalamazoo Nature Center recommends that you do not eat wild mushrooms without proper identification from a qualified expert and otherwise would be at your own risk!

You can make a spore print to determine the mushroom spore color. First, your mushroom should have a stalk or stipe (the stem) and a cap with gills. You can use other irregular shaped mushrooms, but we will start with what we typically think of as the classic mushroom shape.

Next use a piece of black paper. If you use 8 ½ x 11 paper, cut it in half lengthwise and then cut in half lengthwise again. Now tape two black strips on a piece of white 8 ½ x 11 so it alternates black, white, black, and white. Run this through a copy machine and then cut it in half lengthwise so you have two strips, with one side black and one side white. Cut these into 4 ¼ x 5 ½ pieces.

For a simplified version, just lay a black and a white piece of paper so that one overlaps the other.



Cut the stipe from the mushroom. Take the cap and center it on the black and white paper, gills facing down. Place a bowl over the cap, so your spores don't blow away. Check in two to six hours. Dark spores will be more visible on the white side and light spores on the black side.

Your spore print will look like the spokes of a wheel. For an irregular shaped mushroom like a morel, you can wrap it in a cone and get your print that way. You can preserve these by using contact paper or laminating your print. Consult a mushroom field book for identification. Spore color can not guarantee mushroom identification but it will point you in the right direction!

Have fun!

