

Mushroom Prints

Mushrooms come in a myriad of colors and shapes, but they all have spores. Spores are the very small - almost microscopic - dustlike material that a mushroom uses to spread its "seed" or repopulate. If you have ever accidentally kicked a puff ball and seen the cloud of smoke come up from it then you have seen thousands of spores released into the air.

This activity uses those spores to make an imprint of the mushroom and the result is very beautiful. It is an easy project for little hands to do with a little prep help from a grown up.



What You Need:

- Construction paper or card stock – light paper if you have dark under-bellied mushrooms and dark paper if your mushroom is light underneath.
- Fresh mushrooms from the store – choose a couple different kinds – and make sure you can see the "gills" of the mushroom or you will have to cut away part of the mushroom until you can expose them
- Sharp knife – (for adult use)
- Can of hairspray or artist's fixative
- A place to work away from breezes and drafts
- Bowls – enough for one each for every mushroom print

What You Do:

1. Cut off each mushroom stem where it is attached to the cap.
2. Put the caps gill side down on your paper.
3. Put a bowl over the mushroom and keep it covered overnight.
4. The next morning carefully uncover and remove the mushroom.
5. Spray the spore pattern with hairspray or fixative to set the spores. Be careful that the spray does not blow the spores away. Let dry.

Let your children guess where the spores came from. Explain that the gills hold thousands of little spores inside them that will be released to make new mushrooms. Talk about how important mushrooms can be as a food source. You can talk about truffles being so rare and so tasty that people use pigs to search them out because they are really good at finding them.

This might be a good time to explain why we must never eat a mushroom that hasn't been identified by an expert or purchased from a reputable source. The old truism about mushrooms being edible and toadstools being poisonous is untrue. There is no scientific difference between mushrooms and toadstools and some mushrooms can be poisonous.