

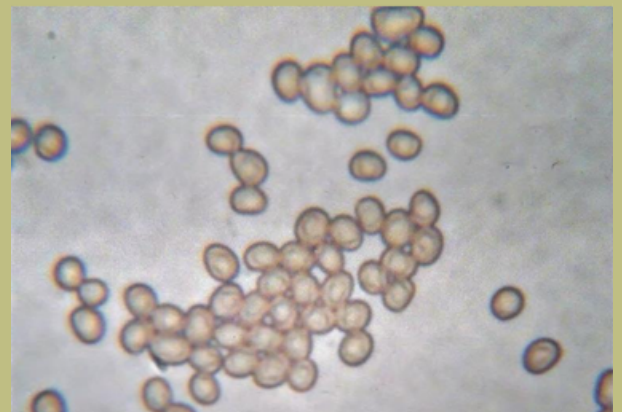
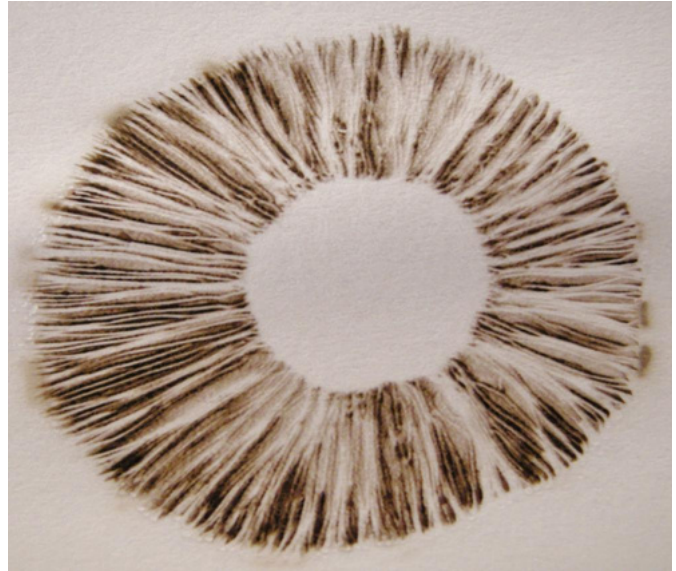
# Make a spore print

## Introduction

**Fungi produce millions of spores, which are similar to the seeds of flowering plants.**

Fungi that make mushroom fruit bodies release their spores from the underside of the cap, from plate-like gills, tubes, ridges or spiky projections. Other fungi produce different shaped fruit bodies to release their spores, such as cups, clubs, ears and balls. When a gilled mushroom is mature, its cap expands and the gills are seen. Spores can then drop from the gills and are picked up by wind currents and carried away.

Spores are so small that you normally need a microscope to see them but, with a spore print, thousands of spores are seen all together. Fungus spores drop directly downwards from the gills of a mushroom and land on top of one another, making a pattern that resembles the gill pattern underneath the cap. Fungus spores can be coloured; if you are not sure of the spore colour of a fungus, carry out a spore print on both black and white card. The spore print colour can often help to identify a particular fungus.



Spores of the cultivated mushroom, taken from a spore print and viewed under a microscope at high magnification.



A close-up of the gills of the cultivated mushroom viewed under a stereo microscope.



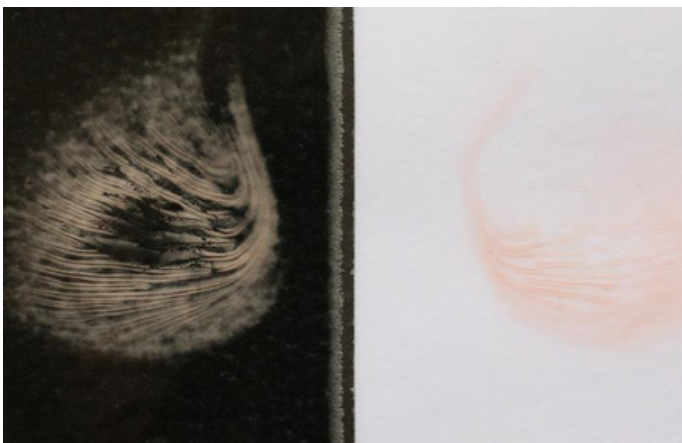
# Make a spore print

## Method

1. Carefully remove the stem from the mushroom
2. Gently place your mushroom cap, face down on the piece of card. There is no need to press it down.
3. Cover the mushroom with a bowl (to stop it drying out and to reduce air currents that might spoil your print by blowing the tiny spores around).
4. Leave everything where it is for at least 2 hours (if freshly picked) or longer (overnight if shop-bought).
5. Carefully remove the bowl and the mushroom cap. You should see a pattern on the card that matches the pattern of gills on the mushroom!
6. You have successfully made a spore print! To prevent smudging, fix your spore print with a little hair spray.

## You will need

- A mushroom
- Pieces of white and black card
- A bowl to cover the mushroom cap
- Hair spray to fix the print (optional)



Spore prints (left) produced by the Pink Oyster mushroom, *Pleurotus djamor* (right)