



Photographing fungi for identification

The information needed to identify a fungus can vary greatly, and you may need to take more than one photograph to show all the features. Good quality close-ups (or use of macro for very small fungi) is best. If you don't want to pick the fungus, you can use a mirror to look for some of the hard-to-see features and describe them in writing rather than images.

In some cases, it is possible to identify a really distinctive fungus from a lower quality photo (for example, Porcelain fungus). For other fungi, identification requires as much detail as possible, especially where there may be a number of very similar-looking species. Some can be narrowed down to genus, but microscopy might be required to establish the identity at species-level (e.g. *Ascocoryne* species).

Many features can easily be shown in a photo but, as a general rule, at least the following should be visible in the images to help with identification:

- The cap shape, size and texture. If there are a number of specimens: the range of size and shape. The size can be shown with a reference item – a coin or small ruler for example. As the fruiting body ages, it may change in shape from convex to flat to concave.
- The shape and colour of the stem. Does it have a ring? The base of the stem. Is it bulbous? Does it emerge from a bag?
- The spore bearing surface: does it have gills? Very important is the way gills attach to the stem. Are the gills narrowly or widely spaced? Forked or not? Does it have pores? Does the surface milk or discolour when bruised or scored?
- The substrate: is the fungus growing on wood (dead or living), soil, leaf litter or something else. Many fungi are very specific, others less so. It is often possible to provide clues in a photo: a leaf, or fruit strategically placed.
- The habitat, for example woodland (which type?), heath, unimproved acid grassland and so on.

The spore colour often gives huge clues for identification but can often only be ascertained by taking the cap and making a spore print ([read how here](#)). Occasionally, spore colour can be captured in a photo, especially if the fungi are clustered - like Honey Fungus, where the upper fruiting bodies drop spores onto the caps below.

A description of the texture is often better where it isn't possible to capture it in a photo; is it dry, sticky, waxy, fibrous, glutinous and so on.

Finally - and this is often elusive - does it have a distinctive smell? A few fungi have an unmistakable scent and, if this is the case, it's worth noting.

To share your photos with others, you can join the [BMS Facebook Group](#). Or, to find out about recording the fungi you have identified, [contact your local group](#).