

MSSF QUICK START GUIDE

for Identifying Mushrooms

- This questionnaire is designed to help you get started **LOOKING** at mushrooms.
- It is **NOT** designed to help you find mushrooms you can eat.
- It is safe to handle mushrooms.
- However, no one should eat a wild mushroom unless an expert has identified it as edible.
- FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE SEE www.mssf.org

With this guide you will:

1. Collect a mushroom.
2. Identify a few basic features used by mycologists.
3. Compare your mushroom to photos and descriptions of other mushrooms.
4. Bring your mushroom and the completed Quick Start Guide to an MSSF meeting to discuss it with other MSSF members.

1 - COLLECT A SPECIMEN

Dig one or, if possible, several specimens from the habitat. Use a small hand shovel or a knife. Be sure to collect the whole mushroom; dig down to get the bottom. Store the specimen in wax paper or a paper bag; no plastic.

2 – DESCRIBE YOUR SPECIMEN

Complete the questionnaire on the next page about your specimen. This questionnaire covers many of the main external features (morphology) that are visible with the eye.

Make a spore print:

- Cut the cap off a specimen.
- Place it gills down on white paper and cover it with a bowl for several hours.
- Notice the color of the print left by the spores.
- Notice the design formed by the dropping spores.

3 – COMPARE YOUR SPECIMEN WITH PHOTOS ONLINE

Go online to www.mykoweb.com to see photos of fungi. Compare your mushroom to the photos. Read descriptions. Do the descriptions match features you noticed about your mushroom? Notice the variety of shapes, colors, and sizes. Notice the scientific and popular names.

4 – SHARE YOUR SPECIMEN

Bring your mushroom, questionnaire, and spore print to the next meeting of the MSSF. Starting at 7 pm at the Randall Museum in San Francisco, there is an identification table where you can display your mushroom and discuss your questionnaire with others. Talking with folks about your “critter” is a big part of the fun.

Mushroom Identification Questionnaire

Size

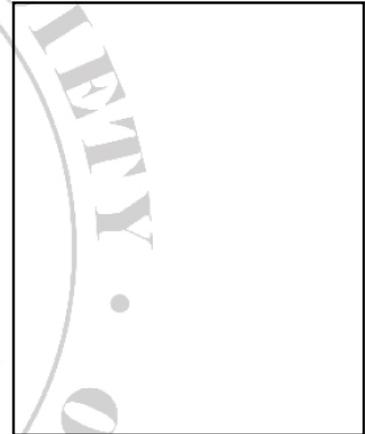
- _____ How wide is the cap? Measure it.
- _____ How long and how wide is the stem? (also called the stipe)

Color

- _____ What color is the cap?
- _____ What color is the stem?
- _____ What color are the gills or pores on the underside of the cap?
- _____ What color are the spores on the spore print?

Shape

- _____ What shape is the cap? (dome, round, flat, funnel, cone, etc) Draw it in the box.
- _____ Is the stem wider or narrower at the bottom, or is it straight all the way down?
- _____ Is there a ring on the stem?
- _____ Is there a wide "cup" at the base of the stem, maybe underground?



Texture

- _____ Does the underside of the cap have gills, pores, or spines?
- _____ Is the stem smooth or shaggy or textured?
- _____ Is the cap dry, slimy, sticky, smooth, bumpy?
- _____ Are there spots on the cap? How many and what color?
- _____ Are the edges of the cap shaggy (fibrous)?

Habitat

- _____ Where did you find the mushroom? in grass, in dirt (soil), on leaves, under trees, or attached to wood?
- _____ Were there a lot of this kind of mushroom together, or was it alone?
- _____ If you know plants, what kind of tree or plant was growing near it?