

# Photographing Mushrooms for Identification or for Posting on the BMC Yahoo Group

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Members photograph specimens for their own records, or to ask BMC members for help with identification, or just to share prize finds with others. Regardless of your purpose, following these steps should generate satisfying results.

## 1. Take a Sharp Photograph with Relevant Visual Details and Context

Learn how to use the close-up feature of your camera so your photos will be in focus. Search the menus or the manual, and practice before you go into the field.

**Resolution:** Set the camera on as high a resolution as possible, such as 'fine' or 'superfine'.

**Focal distance:** Find out how close your camera can get to the subject. Even inexpensive digital cameras usually have a setting for close-ups. Your camera probably also has a digital macro setting, which allows you to get really close. While that setting reduces the quality of a printed photo, it should be fine for uploading to the Web.

**Lens aperture** dictates how far in front and behind the focal area your image will be in focus. When you're taking a close-up, the features of the mushroom that you want to be clearly in focus, such as gills, should be within a short focal distance from each other. The closer you are to the subject, the more this is crucial. You may be able to determine whether the mushroom is sufficiently in focus by using your LCD screen to zoom in after you've take the photo.

If your camera has control over the F-stops (i.e. the aperture of the lens), as a general guide try to use a small aperture of at least F-16 and preferably higher if you're less than about 12" away. (A higher F-stop number represents a smaller lens aperture setting.)

**Shutter speed:** Manually increase the "film" speed to ASA800 or even 1600 if the light is too dim to hold the camera steady or you're having trouble getting the key parts of the mushroom in focus. (Make sure to set it back to the usual setting when you're done.)

In low light or for close-ups of a few inches, use a very small **tripod** to eliminate camera shake. You can also brace your elbows on the ground or your knees to stabilize the camera.

Take a few photographs to make sure you get good images of the cap ("pileus"); the stalk ("stipe") including the complete base; the underside of the cap (i.e. the gills, pores, or teeth) or the inside cut open if, for instance, it's a puffball; the whole fungus in the context it's growing. You can also show multiple views of the fungus in one image if you have more than one specimen.

Place a coin, or other object of known size, next to the fungus in the photographs. Knives vary in size, so if you use one to indicate size, note its blade length on the *Fungus Description Sheet*.

As **flash** is likely to wash out the colors, set the camera not to flash when taking close-ups. If necessary, move the fungus to an area in better light.

Don't hesitate to take a number of photos with different settings if the result is important to you.

## 2. Describe Attributes Not Shown in the Photos

Save the attached *Fungus Description Sheet* on your computer as a template for future use. Even better, take a few with you in your backpack or collecting basket so you can enter descriptive features while they're still fresh in your mind.

Try to key out the mushroom yourself. If you think you've identified it or are on the right track, don't be afraid to take an educated guess. If you are not correct, a knowledgeable responder may explain why, which is just as enlightening as finding out that it is the correct species.

### **3. Upload Your Photos to a Website**

Download your digital mushroom pictures onto your computer. For posting on a website it's best to also save them at a low resolution. That way, they won't take so long to upload and won't use too much of your account's website capacity.

Attaching photos directly to an email is not a desirable alternative. It's clunky for recipients to return to the email to open each photo, and photos eat up their email capacity. The best method is to include a link in your email that will take the reader to a website where you've posted the photos.

This could be the BMC Yahoo group website ([bmc-mushroom@yahogroups.com](mailto:bmc-mushroom@yahogroups.com)) or you could use any number of sites, such as Flickr, Picasa, Shutterfly, Walgreens, etc. To reach the largest number of mycology folk to help with identification, you can become a user and post photos on [www.mushroomobserver.org](http://www.mushroomobserver.org). This site is less easy to use, but to learn more, go to:

[http://mushroomobserver.org/observer/how\\_to\\_use](http://mushroomobserver.org/observer/how_to_use)

For mushroom ID postings, it is best to arrange photos in sets or groups.

### **4. Send an email to [bmc-mushroom@yahogroups.com](mailto:bmc-mushroom@yahogroups.com)**

Using your *Fungus Description Sheet* or other notes, describe in your email the key features and context (eg. Under what kind of tree was it found) which are not evident from the photos. (See #2 above, and the MS Word template below.)

You can also bring your camera with the images to a BMC identification session, particularly if the fungus deteriorates by the time you come to the session.

As described on the BMC website, members can also submit images they have tried their best to identify for posting on the "Photo and art gallery" page. Please read & adhere to the "photo policies" and "how to submit photos" descriptions on that page.

## FUNGUS DESCRIPTION SHEET

1. Date collected:
2. Geographical location:
3. Growing on, under, or in association with (type of tree or plants):
4. Cap width:                      Stalk length & width:  
(try to include coin in the photos for comparison.)
5. Use adjectives to describe the look and/or feel of the **cap** and **stalk**:  
(hairy, smooth, fleshy, fibrous, leathery, gelatinous, cracking, etc....)

CAP:

STALK:

5. Describe the **gills, pores, or interior**, if it doesn't have an underside:  
(crowded, thin, narrow, attached to stalk or free, milky, forked, etc...)

6. **Other features** not evident from the photos: (odor; change color when cut or touched; color if not evident from the photos; the number of specimens in the area; spore color seen on adjacent caps or from spore print; etc)

Note the length of the knife blade, if you used that for size comparison.