

Egg carton mushroom craft

Teacher/parent instructions

a great way to recycle while learning about mushrooms!

suitable for ages 4 and up

Materials:

- corks
- egg cartons
- washable tempera paint.
- paint palette, plate, or small containers
- paint brushes, water cups and washcloths
- newspaper to put under painting area
- dry leaves for display of examples??
- images of mycorrhizae, mushrooms, and kingdoms for inspiration

Set-up:

- Place newspaper on a flat surface to avoid any stain.
- gather a small cup with water to clean brushes in between color changes and place on top of newspaper area.
- have kids choose the colors they want to paint their mushrooms. 3-5 colors should suffice.
- place a small amount of paint in small containers. You can use bottle caps, cough syrup medicine cups to help keep things organized and more spacious.
- Having printouts of different mushrooms or fungi can help bring inspiration to kids if they need it.
- an old t-shirt or apron can be useful to avoid getting stains on clothing.

Background Info:

In the tree of life, organisms are divided into kingdoms. Plants are one kingdom, and animals are another. The most important thing to point out is that fungus are their own thing! Explain that mushrooms are like fungus flowers- this (mycorrhizae) is the organism all the time, and the mushroom is a special part it produces when it needs to reproduce.

some differences between fungus and animals:

- animals consume their food, fungus absorbs it
- animals have cell membranes (cellulose), fungus have cell walls like plants (chitin)
- fungus are not free-moving, although they do grow and spread spores
- the main difference between fungus and plants is that plants can photosynthesize, while mushrooms cannot- instead, they are decomposers, covering the opposite end of the food chain!

Activity:

- Welcome kids to the craft station and invite them to make observations about what they see before you tell them what the activity entails.
 - this could also be an opportunity to talk about ways we can reuse materials before we try to recycle them, asking kids about other ways we can use the materials they see on the table.
- possible questions to ask kids:
 - have you heard about decomposers?
 - do you know what a decomposer does?
 - Can you think of any creatures that might be decomposers?
- today we're talking about a decomposer that is not an animal, or a plant! It's a....FUNGUS!
- show kids examples if they have not seen them already on the table, and have them pick a cap and stem.
- Get them set up to start painting- be sure to review how to change colors, by dipping brush in water then wiping off before moving to a new color and avoid mixing and emphasize not painting ourselves or the floor! Have kids paint the stem first- remind them that one side of this stem will be hidden under the cap.
- While kids are working, ask them- do we see mushrooms all the time? Where and when do we see them?
- As they paint, invite curiosity and promote problem solving with an "I wonder" statement targeted towards mushrooms and decomposers.
- when kids are done painting, let it dry for a few minutes, then attach the cap to the stem with glue.



Differentiation:

- have a few pre glued mushrooms to give kids a secure handle when painting the caps if that feels more comfortable
- for older folks give them an opportunity to cut their own stem and cap. This can also open up opportunities for research on different kinds of fungi, colors, and further information about their choice.