

FUNGI

Fungi are plants without chlorophyll. Consequently, they cannot absorb carbon dioxide from the air and transform it into vegetable matter, but have to live on organic matter.

Some fungi are PARASITES (i.e. they take their nourishment from living organisms). However, most of them are SAPROPHYTES (i.e. they depend for their nourishment on rotting plant substances).

A fungus is composed of threadlike cells, HYPHAE, forming a (usually) subterranean, branched woolly web, the MYCELIUM. Out of the mycelium grows the part commonly called the fungus, which is the reproductive part of the plant. This fruiting body produces the spores which are microscopic and are produced in enormous quantities. To produce a fruiting body, two mycelia of the same species band together and if the conditions of nutrition, humidity, temperature and light are met, a fruit body will be formed.

The larger fungi are divided into two distinct groups:-

a) BASIDIOMYCETES (or club spore fungi).

In this group, the spores are developed on the outside of specialised club-shaped cells (BASIDIA). The club-spore fungi are separated into HYMENOMYCETES (cap fungi) and GASTEROMYCETES (puff balls).

b) ASCOMYCETES (or spore shooters).

In this group the spores are formed within club- or flask-shaped sacs (ASCI). When the spores have matured they are shot out through the top of the ASCUS.

The Morels, Cup Fungi and Truffles are in this group.

IDENTIFICATION

When attempting to identify fungi, it is helpful to look at the following features and characteristics:-

HABITAT

e.g. where does it grow - in fields, woods etc. ; does it grow on wood, the leaves, in the soil?; under what type of tree? etc.etc.

TYPE OF GROWTH

e.g. do the fungi grow singly, in clumps, in a ring, in troops? etc.

TIME OF YEAR

SIZE

Check if the specimen is young or old.

SMELL

Some species have a characteristic smell.

TEXTURE

The mushroom may be velvety, rough, slippery, greasy, grainy etc.

SIZE and STRUCTURE

Note the size and appearance of each part of the fungus.

e.g. **Cap**

Stem

Flesh

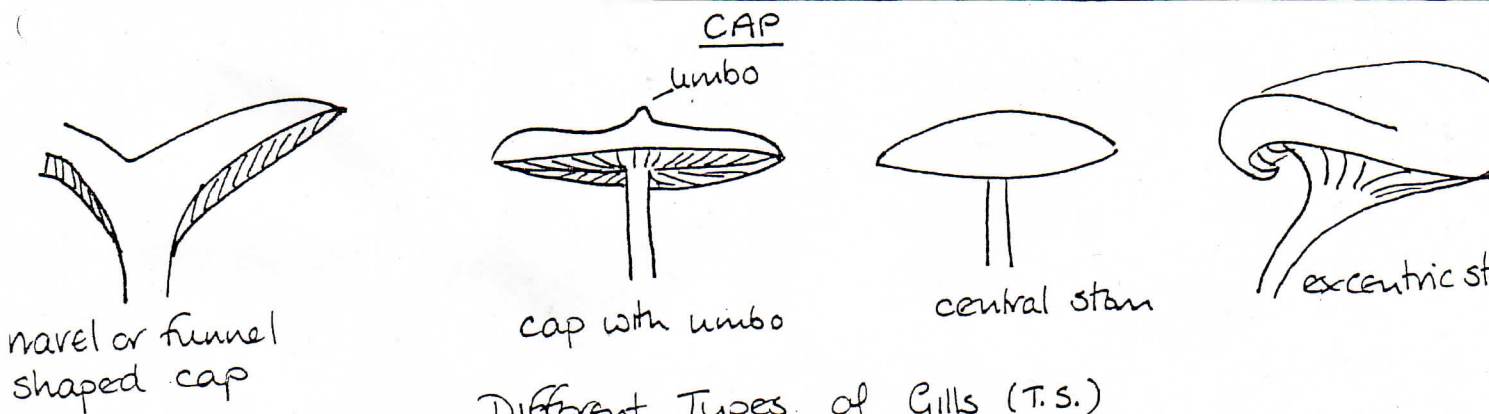
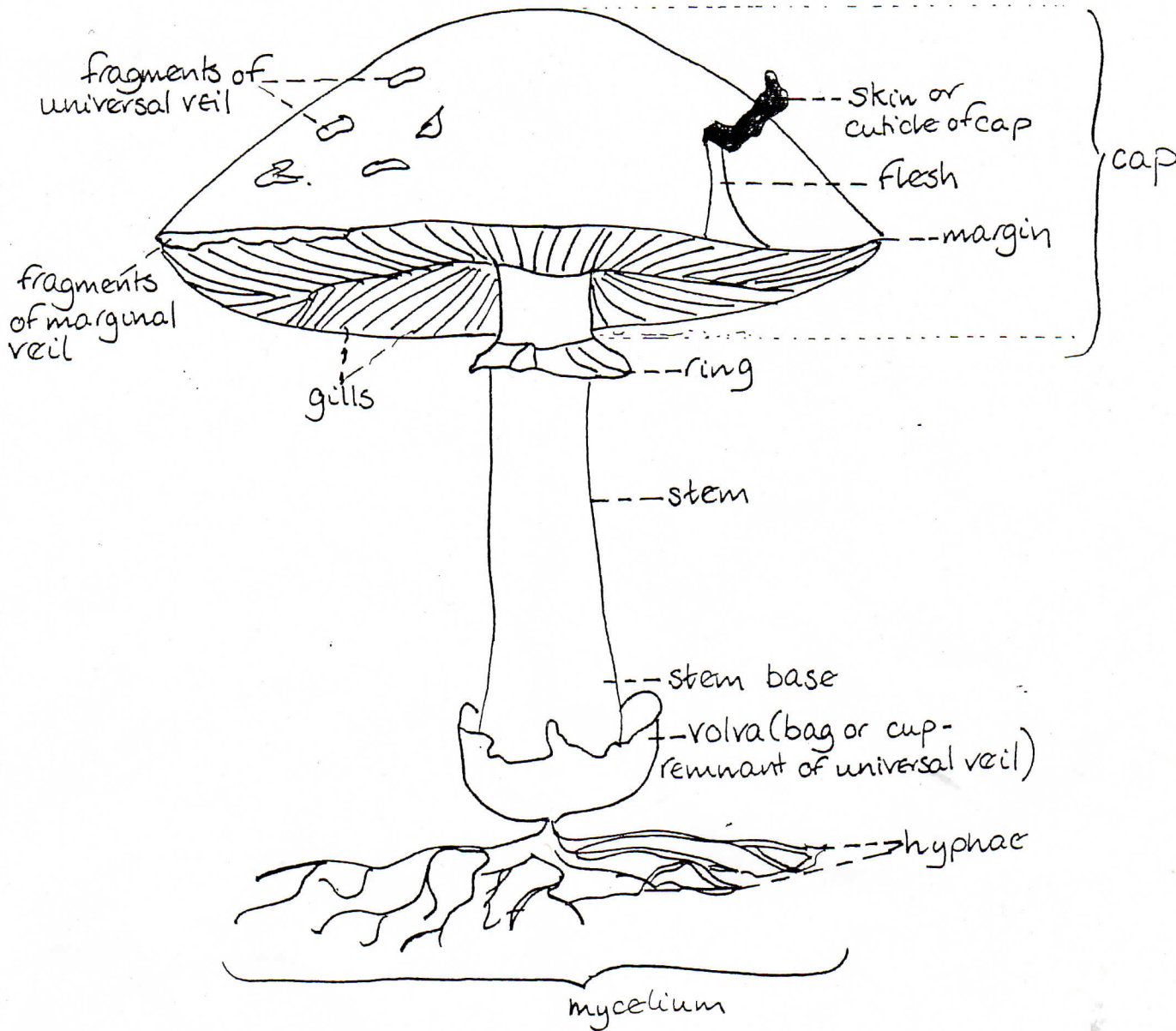
Gills/Pores

Spores - a spore print will give additional information.

Never eat a mushroom unless you are absolutely sure of the identification !!

STRUCTURE OF A MUSHROOM

FLY AGARIC



Different Types of Gills (T.S.)

