

Mini Blitz info sheet – bug collecting and “pooters”

The study of insects and mini-spiders

No matter where you live or what you do, you will be able to find insects and mini-spiders. Insects are the most abundant animals on earth. They can live in just about any situation or climate. People who make careers of studying insects are called entomologists and those that study spiders are called arachnologists.

What is a Pooter?

An aspirator, that we fondly call a ‘Pooter’, is an entomological device used to collect and study insects or other small, fragile organisms. It consists of a small transparent airtight container with two protruding tubes. One tube is to put in your mouth and the other acts as a vacuum to suck up bugs safely without damaging them.

Collecting insects and mini-spiders

It is easy to collect your own insects and mini-spiders. Using a plastic tray, wash tub, or even a white pillow case, following these simple steps:

1. Find a shrub, clump of grass or small tree. The “fluffier” the leaves the more likely you are to find insects and spiders. Also look for flowers which attract insects, plants don’t have to be native, many introduced species will hold lots of insects. Although you will find insects and spiders all year, spring and summer is the most abundant times of the year.



2. Hold the catching container under a section of the bush that has lots of leaves and give the leaves a good firm shake. The aim is to dislodge the insects or spiders from the leaves.



3. Look at what falls into the catching container. You may need to wait a few moments before they start to move. Some insects may look like small bits of dirt before it moves.



4. Use your pooter to suck up the insects and spiders you want to catch. By sucking on one end of the flexible tube you are creating suction. The insect will be sucked into the container. Because there is a filter over the end of the mouthpiece tube, the insect remains in the container.

You can repeat this many times without emptying the container. Most insects are plant specific, which means they live on only one type of plant, so try different plants to see what different insects and spiders you catch. Just be aware some spiders and ants don't make good roommates and may eat your other insects!

You can examine the captured insect in the container or you can easily move it to another container to study more closely under a microscope by unscrewing the lid.



Drill a hole in the lid and the bottom of the container. Cut two pieces of plastic tubing. Mark one piece of tubing with tape – this is the mouthpiece tube for sucking. Thread this tube through the bottom of the container. Wrap the end of the mouthpiece tube with fabric and fasten with a rubber band. Screw the lid on and thread the other tube through – this is the collection tube.

Definition of *pooter* in English:

pooter

Line breaks: poo|ter

Pronunciation: /ˈpuːtə ɹ/

NOUN

chiefly *Entomology*

A bottle for collecting small insects and other invertebrates, having one tube through which they are sucked into the bottle and another, protected by muslin or gauze, which is sucked.

MORE EXAMPLE SENTENCES

Origin

1930s: said to be from the name of William Poos (1891–1987), American entomologist.

How to make your own Pooter

Equipment:

- a clear plastic container with a tight fitting lid
- plastic tubing (irrigation, hardware stores)
- drill with drill bit the same diameter as the tubing
- piece of fabric as filter (stocking, fine mesh)
- small rubber band or tape to fasten on the filter

