



Let's Pin An Insect



1. Select the correct size insect pin. (Do not use sewing or any other pin type.) Usually, sizes 1 to 3 are used for most insects. Size 1 for small insects, size 3 for bigger beetles, dragonflies, etc. Insect pins range in size from 000 – 7.
2. Place the insect on the foam with its *head facing AWAY from you*. Now visualize an imaginary line through the center of the insect. [See Figure 1]. Your pin will be placed slightly to the *right* in the *thorax* or for beetles, in the *upper right wing (hardened wing called the elytra)*. See Figure 2 for pin location on various insect groups.

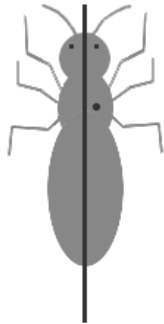


Figure 1

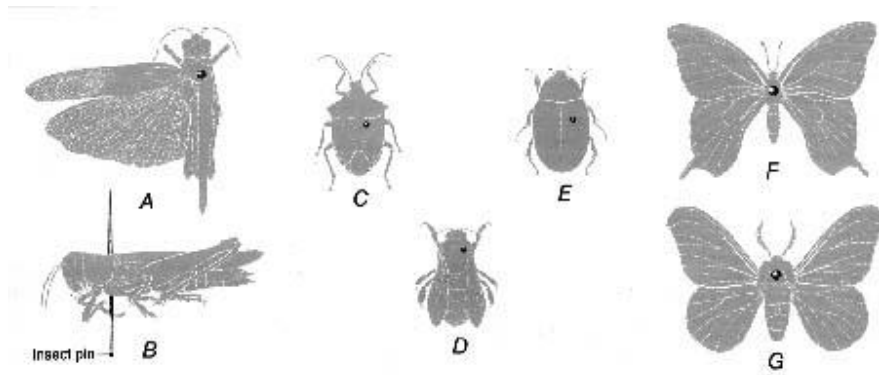
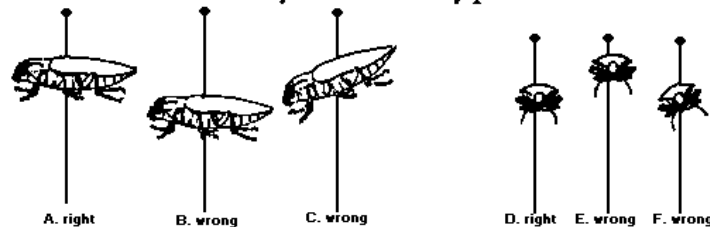


Figure 2*: Pin position for several insect groups, USDA

3. After selecting the pin sight, push the pin into the insect, holding the insect with one hand and the pin perpendicular (straight up) to the insect. The goal is for the insect to be level on the pin both from a side view and a frontal view. [See Figure 3].

The illustrations below show some correctly and incorrectly pinned insects.



Illustrations of right & wrong methods of pinning:

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. correct height & position for specimen | D. correct height & position for specimen |
| B. insect too low on the pin | E. insect too high on the pin |
| C. insect tilted on pin | F. insect tilted on the pin |

Figure 3

4. Correct the pin placement or position in insect as necessary. Try to limit the number of times repositioning, as this will make holes in your insect and decrease longevity in your collection.
5. Mounting grasshoppers – can be mounted 3 ways. First, the insect can be in a resting position [See Figure 4] or in a flying position with left or right set of wings spread [See Figure 5], or with both sets of wings spread [See Figure 6].



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

To mount the wings in a spread position, you will need a spreading board.

- Pinning Insects with Spread Wings – Includes butterflies, moths, dragonflies, damselflies and grasshoppers. After placing the pin in insect correctly, place it in the center of the spreading board (in the groove) and wing spread to look natural (Don't forget the position of the insects legs and antennae prior to positioning wings. It's difficult to do this after the wings are mounted on the board.) Use strips of heavy paper (index cards are great), hold the wings in position [See Figure 8]. For butterflies, the back edge of the forewing should be perpendicular to it's body [See Figure 7].

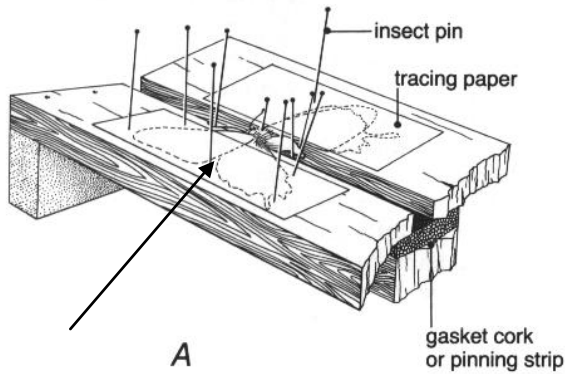


Figure 7* – See hind edge of forewing

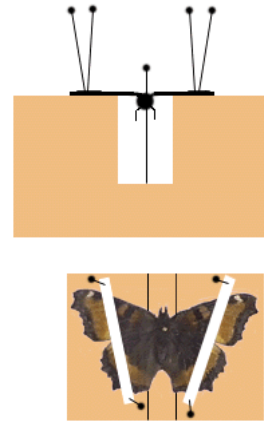


Figure 8: Note position of paper strips

- Allow insect to dry for at least 2 days, 3-4 days for larger beetles, to insure the insect is completely dry and will maintain pinned position.
- Remove insects from foam or spreading board very carefully. Insect should look “natural” and not curled up. See the examples below. Photos from the University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center website: <http://www.hgic.umd.edu/>



- Add appropriate name, date, and location labels.

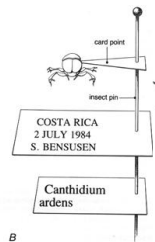
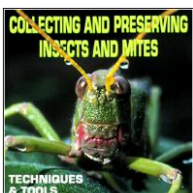


Figure 9*: Labels on “pointed” insect specimen

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Credits:* Collecting and Preserving Insects and Mites, USDA Bulletin.



<http://www.sel.barc.usda.gov/selhome/collpres/collpres.htm>

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