

Pinning Lepidoptera in 11 Steps



BEFORE YOU START:

Make sure the specimen is fresh. If it has dried out, place it in a glass jar with a moist paper towel in order for it to become moist and more workable. Add bleach to the paper towel to prevent mold from growing. Avoid direct contact of the specimen with the moist towel (you can place a piece of cardboard over the paper towel and place the specimen on top of the cardboard). Avoid over moistening as this raises the chance of breaking/damaging the wings.

Use a surface that is soft enough to insert pins into, but sturdy enough to hold them in place. A piece of balsa wood, Styrofoam, or even cardboard works very well.



1: Spread the wings and pin the center perpendicular to the body when the specimen is lying on a flat surface. Allow about half an inch of the pin to hang from the bottom so specimen can later be mounted.



Step 2: Place a pin next to the body on the side of the wing that is first going to be spread. This will prevent the body of the specimen from moving around the center pin.



Step 3: Spread the fore wing on the left side to form a 90 degree angle with the body. Place a pin on the uppermost vein as far from the body and as close to the end of the wing as possible. When pinning the wings and other extremely delicate body parts, size 0 pins should be utilized.



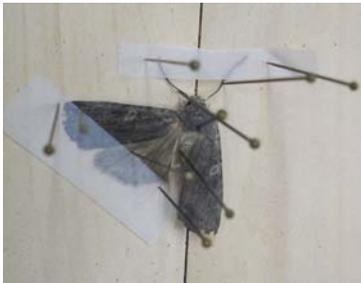
Step 4: Spread the bottom wing to the side, until it is a bit over the upper wing. Using the rounded end of a pin, push the edge of the bottom wing underneath the upper wing. Place a pin on the uppermost vein of the bottom wing, as far away from the torso as possible.



Step 5: Using a sturdy type of paper, such as wax paper, cut a piece about an inch long and about a quarter of an inch thick. Place over the edge of both wings. Pin the top of the paper, flatten the rest of the paper, and place a pin at the bottom. This will prevent the wing from curling upwards while they dry.



Step 6: Place one antenna above the head and place a pin to keep it in place. Repeat the same procedure on the other antenna.



Step 7: Place another strip of sturdy paper over the antenna and pin it down, to prevent these from curling up while they dry.



Step 8: Place a pin on the opposite side of the torso to prevent the specimen from moving while the other wing is pinned.



Step 9: Stretch the top wing to form a straight line with the upper wing on the opposite side. Place a pin on the upper most vein as far from the body as possible.



Step 10: Spread the bottom wing in the same manner as the left side bottom wing.



Step 11: Place another strip of paper over the newly positioned wings and pin it down to prevent curling.

Allow the pinned specimen to dry for 2 to 3 days, depending on its size. Carefully unpin one wing, and if it does not move once the pin is removed, the specimen is dry enough. If the wing recoils, then further drying is necessary. Remove all the strips of paper and pins carefully. Be extremely careful when removing the pins that are holding the antennae as these are extremely fragile and can easily break off. Place the specimen on a mounting platform. If none is available, using a piece of Styrofoam is fine.

The mounted specimens should be kept in a closed container, but there is not need for this to be completely sealed. A couple of moth balls should be placed in the container to preserve the samples, but direct contact of the moth balls with the specimen should be avoided.

This is just a guide on how to pin collected Lepidoptera samples. These steps do not need to be followed in an exact order. If desired, the right side of the insect can be pinned first, or the antenna can be pinned first as well.

Pinning the wing at the upper most vein where it splits in two is the sturdiest place to pin each wing. However, if the wing gets wrinkled, pin it as close to the corner as needed in order for there to be no wrinkles on the wing.