



# Factsheet: Bug Collections

Bug collecting can be an interesting and rewarding hobby. It can even lead to a career as an entomologist! If you are collecting and storing bugs, it is important to do it carefully. Children will need supervision when mounting or preserving bug specimens. And remember, it is illegal to collect anything in National Park Reserves.

It is best to release bugs (alive) as soon as possible after you catch them, and in the same location where they were found. If you are bringing bugs to the Museum for "Bring us your Bugs", you will need to keep the bugs alive. But if you want to add a specimen to your collection it will need to be killed. Professional collectors use a "killing bottle" but these need to be handled carefully. If you don't have a killing bottle, the deep freeze at home works well.

A variety of equipment is required at home to set out and store your collection. Stainless steel pins are best for pinning your collection. These are available in a range of diameters for different sized insects. The very small specimens are best glued to small card points. Setting boards can be made from sheets of polystyrene, setting needles can help arrange specimens. Setting needles can be a needle set in a wooden handle (dental tools are ideal). Fine pointed tweezers are very useful. Magnifying glasses are handy, 4x and 10x are probably best but this is a matter of preference. Wooden storage boxes with glass tops are best for display and storage but cardboard boxes are fine for beginners. Some type of insecticide should be used in storage boxes to protect your collection from pests.

Soft bodied insects and spiders are best kept as "wet specimens" i.e., stored in 80/20% alcohol/water. Larval stages of most insects can also be stored in this way. Hard bodied insects are best mounted within 24 hours after collection. If left too long they will dry out and become brittle - then they are difficult to set and breakages often occur. In order to have your specimens appropriately positioned, you can use extra pins to hold legs and antennae in position, these pins can be removed when the specimen is dry.

Labelling is a most important part of your collection; professionals use three labels placed on a pin below each specimen. The top label shows locality, date and collector, the second indicates habitat, and the third shows the name of the specimen. Labels should be as small as possible.

find out more at: [www.unisa.edu.au/barbarahardy](http://www.unisa.edu.au/barbarahardy)

South Australian Museum



Department for Environment and Heritage  
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