

## **BE AN ANT DETECTIVE !**

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Can you identify the ant in your hand and become a **Certified Ant Detective**? Follow the clues on your page, match your clues to the steps on the floor, and find YOUR ant.

This game is a dichotomous key that will allow elementary school children to learn to make paired choices based on a clue sheet with a picture. The picture and the name of the ant will be hidden under the last choice floor card. The children can learn the parts of an ant that are necessary for basic identification. The necessary supplies include:

1. a game poster with a labeled ant drawing
2. a drawing of an ant with body parts labeled
3. a schematic key for the floor cards
4. clue sheets with characteristics and photographs of the subject ants
5. picture cards and word cards of the key to put on the floor
6. Certified Ant Detective bookmarks as rewards after identifying an ant
7. tape to guide from one possible choice to the next possible choice

It is also necessary to have monitors who can make suggestions as needed, so the students will be successful. This is for fun! Learning is the plus!

This game was first played in February, 2001 at the meeting of the Southwestern Branch of the Entomological Society of America in San Antonio, Texas. Fourth grade students, speaking either English or Spanish, enjoyed this game together. Many played it at least 8 times, so they could "find" each of the ants on the clue cards. They also helped each other to understand the clues, so that everyone had fun. The children came in class groups. Two adults helped answer questions, and often there were more than 6 children stepping on floor cards at the same time.

This game does require space to put down the floor cards. Tape helps to hold the cards down to the floor and to give an overview of possible paths. The answer card is turned down, so that the student "discovers" the name of the ant by flipping over the card.

The clues are printed on 8½ by 11" paper with a picture of the ant at the top of the page. The picture choices and word choices are also printed on 8½ by 11" sheets and are laminated to protect them from shoes and dirt. The clue sheets can be laminated to make them last longer. The Certified Ant Detective bookmarks are printed on colored paper and cut out with a paper cutter.

This game is based on 1) a dichotomous key *Texas Pest Ant Identification: An Illustrated "Key"* by Jerry L. Cook and Bastiaan M. Drees; 2) *Identification and Distribution of Native Texas Ants* by Sean T. O'Keefe, Jerry L. Cook, and S. Bradleigh Vinson; 3) photographs by Jerry Cook, Sean O'Keefe, and Bart Drees; and 4) drawings by Sean O'Keefe and Sherry Ellison.

There should be a poster on the wall with the picture of an ant. The same poster on the floor at each of the first two choices or nearby would help. This would allow ready reference if many children are playing. A tape line is placed on the floor and is labeled **START HERE**. From **START HERE** the lines should lead the students either to the left for **1 Node** with its resulting choices or to the right for **2 Nodes** and its resulting choices.

At the [Texas AgriLife Extension Extension Bookstore website](#) one can find publication #B-6140 (KIDzANTS Fire Ant Curriculum for Youth: Curriculum Kit). The kit includes *Be An Ant Detective* with many other activities and learning materials about ants. The kit is in English and costs \$35. If you want the new English/Spanish version of *Be An Ant Detective*, please contact Dr. Paul Nester at [PNester@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:PNester@ag.tamu.edu) or by phone at 281-855-5639.

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