

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**“Leaf” It in Your Yard (Composting)**  
**Data Sheet**  
*page 1 of 4*



**Directions:** Use this sheet to record information as you conduct your research.

**Question:** What is needed to make a productive compost pile?

Questions	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Example Answers</b>                      Researched answers may vary slightly.</p>	Source
<p><i>General Information</i></p> <p>What is compost?</p>	<p><i>Organic matter, like leaves, sticks, grass, and table scraps (food), that is in the process of breaking down and returning to the soil.</i></p>	<p><i>online dictionary</i></p>
<p>What makes composting happen?</p>	<p><i>Scavengers and decomposers break down matter by eating it and returning it to soil.</i></p>	<p><i>Spencer’s Team News</i></p>
<p>What is decomposition?</p>	<p><i>The process of matter breaking down and returning to the soil, air, and water.</i></p>	<p><i>dictionary</i></p>
<p>What are six or more things that can be put in a compost pile?</p>	<p><i>Leaves, grass clippings, fruit waste, vegetable waste, shredded paper products (napkins, paper plates, etc.), coffee grounds, prunings, pine needles, straw, wood, sawdust...</i></p>	<p><i>Spencer’s Team News</i></p>
<p>What are four or more things that cannot be put in a compost pile?</p>	<p><i>Meat, cheese (especially chunks), oil, fat, grease, dog or cat manure...</i></p>	<p><i>Spencer’s Team News</i></p>

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Questions	Example Answers Researched answers may vary slightly.	Source
<i>General Information</i>		
What is humus?	<i>Rich soil made from compost.</i>	
How long does it take to make humus?	<i>2 to 3 months (in warm weather).</i>	
<i>Building</i>		
What is a good size for a compost pile?	<i>3'x3'x3' up to 5'x5'x5' (' = feet)</i>	
What is a simple and inexpensive container for a compost pile?	<i>Wire fence, or just make your pile in a fenced corner of your yard with no container at all.</i>	
How should the material in a compost pile be assembled to help decomposition to start quickly?	<i>Alternating layers (i.e., leaves, soil, grass; leaves, soil, grass...)</i>	
How moist should the material be that is being put into a compost pile?	<i>As moist as a sponge that's been wrung out.</i>	

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**Question:** What is needed to make a productive compost pile?

Questions	Example Answers Researched answers may vary slightly.	Source
<i>Maintaining</i>	<i>The pile should be turned with a shovel or pitchfork frequently (every two weeks or so).</i>	
What should be done to allow air to get into a compost pile?		
How moist should the material be kept in a compost pile?	<i>As moist as a sponge that's been wrung out.</i>	
How can you add food waste to a compost pile without attracting unwanted insects and other animals?	<i>Always bury food waste in the middle of the pile.</i>	
<i>Harvesting</i>	<i>The humus (rich, fine soil) will be dark, brown, and granulated (like coffee grounds).</i>	
What will the compost pile look like when it's ready to use?		
What are three or more uses for humus?	<i>Use as a lawn fertilizer, garden fertilizer, flower bed fertilizer, household plant fertilizer, tree fertilizer...</i>	

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Questions	Example Answers Researched answers may vary slightly.	Source
<i>Troubleshooting</i> <i>What should you do if...</i>		
Unwanted animals start showing up at your compost pile?	<i>Make sure all food waste is buried in the center of the pile. Do not add more food waste until unwanted animals stop visiting.</i>	
The compost pile smells bad?	<i>Turn the pile more frequently and add dry material. There is too much moisture and not enough air getting into the pile.</i>	
The compost pile is dry in the center?	<i>Add water while turning the pile. This will allow moisture to be distributed uniformly.</i>	
The compost pile is damp and warm only in the middle?	<i>Either you have humus (the pile has finished composting) or you need to add water while turning the pile to increase overall moisture.</i>	
The compost pile smells sweet, but won't heat up?	<i>Mix in something high in nitrogen, such as grass, manure, or fertilizer.</i>	