

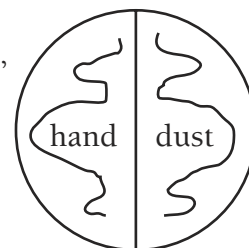
# Directions for Using Bacterial Petri Plates

1. The plates are reasonably sterile but it is always a good idea to have a control plate to show student that the agar (jelly-like stuff on the plates) will not grow bacteria without be exposed a source of bacteria. Pick one plate and do not open it. Label the bottom of the plate “control” with a water-proof marker. Tape the plate shut. Place it in the same location as the other plates.
2. To expose the agar to bacteria it is important to open the lids for as short a time as possible and no wider than needed. The agar is soft and its surfaces should not be broken during the exposure. A gentle rub with a q-tip or fingertip will be all that is needed. The following types of exposures are recommended:
  - The pad of a finger, not washed
  - The pad of a washed finger
  - A minute or two of exposure to the air
  - Dust from a corner
  - A wet Q-tip rubbed across the surface of a desk, floor or door handle.

The following are NOT recommended:

- Spit or mouth swabs,
- Skin, ear or foot swabs (any body surface other than fingers)
- Toilet swabs

3. The bottom on the plate should be labeled and if a large plate is used, a line may divide two different exposures.



4. The beef broth nutrient agar used for the plates typically does not grow harmful bacteria. Avoid using blood agar plates. They are red in color and can grow harmful bacteria. To be safe with any agar, do not open the dish once it has been exposed. All observations can be done looking through the lid. Dispose of the plates by placing them in a plastic bag, securing it shut and placing in a dumpster. If a dumpster is not available, heat the plates for 15 minutes in a pressure cooker before disposing in a trash can.