Photograms, sometimes called “shadow-graphs,” are a way that early photographs were made that is still in use today. Photograms don’t require a camera or even a negative. Instead, they use objects placed on a light-sensitive material. The shadows of those objects are recorded on that material. Many of the photograms you can see in a museum use light-sensitive iron or silver salts, but, most people don’t have those at home. Fortunately, we can make our own version of a photogram using some materials found around the house!

There are two methods you can try. Each one needs a few different supplies, but both will require your creativity and lots of sunlight!

**Method One:**
- Clear acrylic or glass (an old picture frame works too)
- Cardboard
- Binder clips or tape
- Construction paper
- Flat objects (leaves and grass work great!)

**Method Two:**
- Clear sheet protector
- Cardboard
- Tape
- Construction Paper
- Flat objects
Objective:
With each method, you will arrange your objects on top of your construction paper. Next, you will keep those objects in the same place by trapping them between the paper and the glass or sheet protector. After that, you will expose them to the sunlight for a few hours or even days. The more tightly pressed onto the paper your objects are, the more clear their shadows will be!

What is happening?
The ultra-violet (UV) light from the sun can fade the dyes in your construction paper. The objects you have placed over the paper will block this light. Once the uncovered areas of the paper have faded, the areas under your objects will be close to the original paper color, leaving their outline or shadow. If you like your print, you’ll need to keep it out of sunlight after it is finished, or the image will fade away!

Method One
Start with an old picture frame that has a glass front and a back that clips into the frame. Be careful with the glass or clear acrylic as they can both have sharp edges. Ask an adult for help if you need it!

Gather the materials you want to use to make your print with, such as the pine needles and leaves seen below.

Place your construction paper on top of the picture frame backing or cardboard. You may need to trim the edges of the construction paper to fit on the picture frame backing. Next, arrange your objects on top of the construction paper. If you don’t have any construction paper on hand, you can use any paper that has a color, such as an old greeting card envelope.

Then, carefully place the glass over the objects. If you are using binder clips, you will now use them to clip the glass and the cardboard together to hold everything in place. If you are using tape, use it in a similar way to hold everything together snugly. If you are using an old picture frame, pick up the glass, objects, paper and backing and carefully place them into the frame. Secure the backing to the frame.

Finally, find a safe location that gets lots of direct sunlight. How fast the paper fades and creates shadows will depend on different variables such as your elevation, what time of year it is, and even what kind of construction paper you are using! Test different materials and see which one works the best/fastest.
**Method Two**

If you don’t have a picture frame or a piece of glass for clear acrylic, try this method. Arrange your objects on top of the construction paper as described in method one, and then either slide them carefully into the sheet protector, or place the sheet protector on top. Then use a little tape to tightly secure the sheet protector to the cardboard backing. A snug fit will help to hold the objects in place.

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