

Grades 9-12 NTI Day #7 Forensics

Assignment: Please read the excerpt below as an independent reading assignment. Then read and answer the questions below the excerpt.

Start Reading Here



Record the Scene

Once the scene has been secured, a lead investigator starts evaluating the area. First, the investigator determines the boundaries of the scene and then establishes the perpetrator's path of entry and exit. Logic dictates that obvious items of crime-scene evidence will first come to the attention of the crime-scene investigator. These items must be documented and photographed. The investigator then proceeds with an initial walk-through of the scene to gain an overview of the situation and develop a strategy for systematically examining and documenting the entire crime scene.

Investigators have only a limited amount of time to work a crime scene in its untouched state. They must not lose the opportunity to permanently record the scene in its original condition. Such records not only will prove useful during the subsequent investigation but also must be presented at a trial in order to document the condition of the crime scene and the location of physical evidence. Notes, photographs, and sketches are the three methods of crime scene recording (see Figure 2-2).



FIGURE 2-2 Sketching a victim at the crime scene to show the victim's relation to the crime. Courtesy Evident, Union Hall, VA 24176-4025, www.evidentcrimescene.com

Notes The note-taking process begins with the call to a crime-scene investigator to report to a scene. The first notes should identify the person who contacted the investigator and record the time of the contact and any preliminary information disclosed, including the case number. When the lead investigator arrives, the note taker should record the date and time of arrival, who is present, and the identities of any other personnel who are being contacted.

If additional personnel are contacted, their names, titles, and times of arrival should be recorded. A crime scene should be off-limits to any people who are not directly involved with the processing. Investigators must keep very precise records of personnel movements in and out of the scene, beginning with the movements of the first responding officer. It is also important to record the tasks assigned to each member of a team, as well as the beginning and ending times of the processing of the scene.

Before the scene is sketched, photographed, or searched, the lead investigator carries out the initial walk-through. During this walk-through, the investigator should take notes on many aspects of the crime scene in its original condition. Notes taken by an investigator should be uniform in format for all cases. The notes should be in ink (preferably black or blue) and written in a bound notebook. Most important, notes should be written at the time of the crime-scene investigation, not left to record from memory at a later time. At this time, the investigator may need to interview the first responding officer.

The officer should supply information on any events at the crime scene that the officer or others witnessed. When the walk-through is complete, the lead investigator assigns specific tasks or areas to members of the crime-scene team.

The notes should also record these assignments, as well as the times at which each task was started and completed.

Once a search for evidence has taken place, the team members mark the location of all evidence. The investigator should note whether any evidence was disturbed by emergency medical personnel, a suspect, or investigative personnel. Before the team collects items of evidence, the investigator must fully describe each item in their notes. The person who collects a piece of evidence should note who found it, where it was located, how it was packaged, who packaged it, and when it was packaged. The notes should also mention whether the evidence underwent any field tests or processing.

If a victim is present at a homicide scene, the investigator should observe and record the state of the body before the medical examiner or coroner moves it. The notes should describe the victim's appearance and record the position of the body and any visible wounds or blood spatter. The investigator should make note of any identifying features or marks on the body, such as tattoos. The investigator should also make a list of objects found on the body, such as a wallet or jewelry, before collecting those items. Moving the body may reveal previously unseen injuries and physical evidence that the investigator should record. The notes should indicate when the medical examiner or coroner moved the body and whether the victim was moved or affected in some way by emergency medical procedures. Any preliminary identification of a victim or suspect should be recorded.

Audio recording of notes at a scene can be advantageous because detailed notes can be spoken much faster than they can be written. This may also leave the investigators' hands free to carry out other tasks while recording the notes. However, care must be taken to avoid embarrassing conversation in recordings that will be used as evidence in a trial. Digital voice recordings are easily uploaded to a computer, but they must be copied to a disk or flash drive to produce a hard copy. Another method of recording notes is by narrating a digital video of the crime scene. This has the advantage of combining note taking with photography. However, at some point the recording must be transcribed into a written document.

The note taker must keep in mind that this written record may be their only way of refreshing their memory months, perhaps years, after a crime has been processed. The notes must be sufficiently detailed to anticipate this need.

STOP reading here.
Skip to questions.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. **What is the first step a lead investigator takes once a crime scene has been secured?**
 - a) Conduct a walk-through to evaluate the scene
 - b) Start collecting evidence immediately
 - c) Sketch the crime scene layout
 - d) Photograph the crime scene
 2. **Why must notes taken by investigators be written at the time of the investigation?**
 - a) To ensure they follow the correct format
 - b) To avoid recording details from memory later
 - c) To share them immediately with the crime lab
 - d) To give copies to other investigators
 3. **Which of the following is a recommended method for recording notes at a crime scene?**
 - a) Text messages
 - b) Verbal interviews only
 - c) Audio recording or digital video narration
 - d) Handwritten notes in pencil
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Short-Answer Question

Explain why it is important to document the state of the body and the surrounding scene before the medical examiner moves the body. What consequences might arise if this documentation is incomplete or inaccurate?
