

Unit 1: Crime Scene Basics Summary

Crime Scene- any place where evidence may be located to help explain events.

CORPUS DELICTI “Body of the Crime”

🚩 You must prove

- that a crime occurred
- that the person charged with the crime was responsible for the crime

🚩 Top Reasons for Committing a Crime

- Money
- Revenge
- Emotion—love, hate, anger

🚩 Source of Evidence

- Body
- Primary and/or Secondary Crime Scene
- Suspect(s)

CRIME SCENE TEAM

- A group of professional investigators, each trained in a variety of special disciplines.
- Team Members
 - First Police Officer on the scene
 - Medics (if necessary)
 - Investigator(s)
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 - Medical Examiner (if necessary)
 - Photographer and/or Field Evidence Technician
 - Lab Experts

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

Based on the scientific method and the Locard Exchange Principle, logic and forensic techniques

🚩 Involves:

- **Recognition**—scene survey, documentation, collection
- **Identification**—comparison testing
- **Individualization**—evaluation and interpretation
- **Reconstruction**—reporting and presenting

Seven S’s of Crime Scene Investigation

1. Secure the scene.
2. Separate the witnesses.
3. Scan the scene.
4. See to it that the crime scene examiners receive overall and close up photos with and without measuring rulers.
5. Sketch the scene.
6. Search for evidence.
7. Secure and submit the collected evidence.

1. Secure the Scene: FIRST OFFICER ON THE SCENE

- 🚩 A Assess the crime scene and assist those hurt
- 🚩 D Detain the witness
- 🚩 A Arrest the perpetrator
- 🚩 P Protect the crime scene

T Take notes

2. Separate the Witnesses

First officer on scene must separate the witnesses to prevent *collusion*.

Collusion – the creation of a story by witnesses working together.

3. Scan the Scene: CRIME SCENE SURVEY

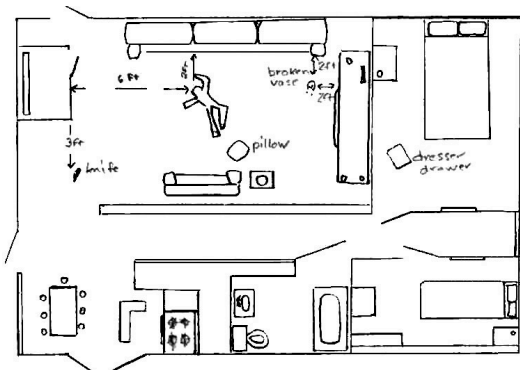
Walk-through—performed by the crime scene investigator, the first officer and sometimes the lead detective

Purpose:

- Mentally prepare a reconstruction theory
- Note any transient or conditional evidence that could change over time.
- Note weather conditions
- Note points of entry or exit, as well as paths of travel within the crime scene
- Record initial observations of who, what, where, when, and how
- Identify special needs within the crime scene for personnel, precautions or equipment and notify superior officers or other agencies

4. See to it... DOCUMENTATION

- **Notes**—date and time, description of the location, weather and environmental conditions, description of the crime, location of the evidence relative to other key points, the names of all people involved, modifications that have occurred and other relevant information
- **Photography**—photos of scene and surroundings, mid-range to close-up photos with various angles of each piece of evidence, photos as viewed by any witnesses.
- **Videography**—allows narration (non-subjective) to be included



5. Sketch the Scene

Must include date, time, scale, reference points, distance measurements, names of investigators, victims, suspects, and a legend (key)

CRIME SCENE SKETCHES

Sketches are useful in questioning witnesses and suspects and when writing investigative reports. Sketches offer accurate information about the placement of objects. Sketches show relationships and distances between things.

For a sketch or diagram to be legally admissible in court, it must meet the following requirements:

- It must be part of a qualified person's testimony.
- It must recall the situation that the preparer saw.
- It must express the place or scene correctly.

A crime scene sketch complements the notes and photographs taken during the crime scene investigation.

- Try to use the largest scale possible.
- All sketches should include:
 - A compass or an orienting compass arrow indicating north.

- A legend or key to explain letters, numbers, or symbols used.
- An indication of the scale used.

Rectangular-coordinates method

A sketching method that involves measuring the distance of an object from two fixed lines at right angles to each other. It is often used to locate an object in a room.

Triangulation method

A sketching method that requires measuring the distance of an object along a straight line from two widely separated, fixed reference points.

Baseline method

A sketching method that takes measurements along and from a single reference line, called a baseline, which can be established by using a length of string, a chalk line, or some convenient means.

Compass point method

A sketching method that requires a protractor or some method of measuring angles between two lines. One point is selected as the origin and a line extended.

Cross projection method

A sketching method in which the ceiling appears to open up like the lid of a hinged box, with the four walls opening outward. Measurements are then indicated from a point on the floor to the wall.

6. Search for evidence: SEARCH METHODS

- **Line or strip method**—best in large, outdoor scenes
- **Grid method**—basically a double-line search; effective, but time-consuming
- **Zone method**—most effective in houses or buildings; teams are assigned small zones for searching
- **Wheel or ray method**—best on small, circular crime scenes
- **Spiral method**—may move inward or outward; best used where there are no physical barriers

COLLECTING AND PACKAGING EVIDENCE

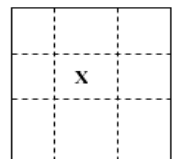
- One individual should be designated as the evidence collector to ensure that the evidence is collected, packaged, marked, sealed, and preserved in a consistent manner
- Each item must be placed in a separate container, sealed, and labeled
- Most fragile is collected and packaged first
- Different types of evidence require specific or special collection and packaging techniques
- The body is the property of the coroner or medical examiner. The collection of evidence on the body is done by that department.

PACKAGING

Most items should be packaged in a primary container and then placed inside a secondary one. These are then placed inside other containers such as paper bags, plastic bags, canisters, packets and envelopes depending on the type and size of the evidence.

PACKAGING WITH A BINDLE

- Crease a clean paper and place the evidence in the X position (as shown above).
- Fold in the left and right sides, and then fold in the top and bottom.
- Put the bindle into a plastic or paper evidence bag affixing a seal over the opening.
- Write your name on the seal.



Chain of Custody

In order to present credible evidence in court, a chain of custody log is essential. There must be a written record of all people who have had possession of an item of evidence.

1. A person bags the evidence, marks it for identification, seals it, and signs it across the sealed edge (above).
2. It is signed over to a technician in a lab for analysis who opens it, but not on the sealed edge.
3. After analysis, the technician puts it back in the evidence bag, seals it in another bag, and signs the evidence log (below).

CRIME SCENE RECONSTRUCTION

Stages

Data collection, Hypothesis formation, Examination (testing and analysis), Determination of the significance of the evidence, Theory formulation

Crime Scene Reconstruction

The facts of the case are determined when the forensic lab processes all the collected evidence. The lab then sends the results to the lead detective who aims to see how it all fits into the crime scenario.

Staged Crime Scenes

When the lab results do not match up with the testimony of witnesses, it can mean the crime was staged; common examples include:

- Staging a fire—to cover bankruptcy.
- Staging a suicide—to cover a murder.
- Staging a burglary—to collect insurance money.

Staged Crime Scenes

To help determine whether a crime scene was staged, consider:

- *Whether the type of wound found on the victim matches the weapon employed.
- *Whether the wound could have been easily self-inflicted.
- *The mood and actions of the victim before the event.
- *The mood and actions of a suspect before the event.