

# **Searching For Evidence**

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Forensic Science

# Introduction

- This is the most important procedure at the crime scene in terms of solving the crime, as most clues or evidence will come largely from the scene. However, like all other procedures, there are specific guidelines for this practice.

# Distinguishing Evidence

- A crime scene cannot be permanently secured just to preserve the evidence contained within the scene. (Imagine if a supermarket were to be completely sealed until a robbery was solved.) So when the investigators begin their search, they search only for appropriate and relevant evidence so that the crime scene can be released as soon as possible. However, searching for relevant evidence is not an easy task. For example, samples of soil can help in determining which suspects may have been present at the scene, especially if samples found on their clothes or shoes match with the soil found at the location, but collecting every item related at the scene of crime would hide vital facts in an inundation of unrelated data.

# More Evidence

- If the investigators were too selective in their search however, they could also neglect evidence that could possibly lead to solving the crime. Only experience can allow investigators to find equilibrium between accumulating too much or too little evidence. The use of video, photography and record on paper helps to control exactly how many objects must be removed from the scene.

# Order Of Search

- Because every crime scene is different, every crime scene requires an individual approach. For example, a murder that occurred outdoors requires a search confined to a specific, relatively smaller area, whereas a bomb explosion can scatter evidence over a very large distance. However, there are certain general rules that guide the search plans for searching a crime scene. Firstly, the type of crime can often point out the appropriate order of search. This means that outdoor zones are always the first to be searched, because the weather is likely to cause damage/alteration to evidence and public areas also hold higher search priority over private areas, as they too, are more difficult to protect.
- If a body cannot be taken from the scene until the area around it is searched, then that search is given priority. A body may not be able to be removed from a scene as it may affect or destroy important evidence that must be collected first.

# Methods Of Search

- Methods of search are also customised to suit the crime scene. A large open land such as fields and parks are investigated using a line search, whereby investigators stand in a straight line and move forward together. The line search can reveal pieces of clothing, objects, weapons or human remains. Another method of search is the grid method, which involves covering the same area twice. The searchers cross firstly in one direction, then again, this time at right angles to the initial course.
- These methods of search are quite impractical indoors, where room-by-room searches are more suited. Room-by-room searches involve searching every room in a house to search for incriminating evidence. This form of search can be impractical when large buildings are involved, requiring a search of the rooms involved, hallways and exit and entry points.

# Evidence Storage

- When all the evidence has been recorded and collected, it is packed and stored for analysis. Storing biodegradable evidence in spirits stops the rotting process while clothing and artifacts are stored in sealable bags. The careful handling, labeling and isolation of the evidence may be time consuming, but has become an increasingly important process, especially for Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) analysis. DNA analysis can be ruined or become inaccurate if the DNA sample becomes contaminated, hence the need for responsible handling.