

NC BLET Criminal Investigation Study Guide

1. Introduction to Criminal Investigation

- **Definition:** The process of reconstructing a criminal event to identify and locate the perpetrator and gather evidence for trial.
 - **Purpose:** Ensure justice by collecting legally admissible evidence and identifying suspects.
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2. Crime Scene Management

A. Securing the Crime Scene

1. **Preserve the Scene for Two Reasons:**
 - Prevent destruction or removal of evidence.
 - Allow for accurate reconstruction of events.
 2. **Initial Steps Upon Arrival:**
 - **Record the following:**
 - Time of call
 - Time of arrival
 - Weather conditions
 - **Ask Witnesses:**
 - Is anyone injured?
 - What happened?
 - Is the suspect still on the scene?
 - Who is the victim and suspect?
 3. **Methods to Secure the Scene:**
 - Remove unauthorized persons.
 - Use barricades, ropes, patrol cars, or officers to block access.
 - Post signs on doors.
 - Set up a crime scene log for everyone entering/exiting.
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3. Crime Scene Documentation

A. Field Notes

- Detailed log of officer actions, observations, and evidence collection.
- Essential for later reports and court testimony.

B. Photography

1. **Three-Step Approach:**

- **Overall Shots:** Entire scene, entry/exit points.
- **Mid-Range Shots:** Evidence placement in relation to surroundings.
- **Close-Up Shots:** Individual pieces of evidence (with a scale for size reference).

2. **Minimum Labels on Photographs:**

- Photographer's name.
- Case number.
- Date of the photograph.
- Type of case.

C. Sketching

1. **Required Elements:**

- **Items necessary to reconstruct the scene.**
- **All items of evidence.**
- **Accurate measurements and proportions.**
- **North indicator for orientation.**

2. **Measurement Methods:**

- **Triangulation:** Measure from two fixed points to evidence.
 - **Rectangular Coordinate:** Use two perpendicular lines as reference points.
 - **Baseline Measurement:** Establish a straight baseline and measure perpendicular distances from it.
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4. Evidence Collection & Handling

A. Physical Evidence Handling

- **General Rule:** All evidence should remain **unmoved** until documented.
- If moved, document **who moved it, why, and how.**
- **Use proper collection techniques:**
 - Blood or fluids: **Use swabs and store in paper bags.**
 - Weapons: **Handle carefully, keep in original position if possible.**
 - Fibers, hair, or trace evidence: **Use tweezers, gloves, or tape lifts.**

B. Chain of Custody

- **Record every transfer of evidence** to maintain its integrity.
 - Label evidence properly with:
 - **Case number.**
 - **Date/time of collection.**
 - **Item number.**
 - **Collector's name/initials.**
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5. Witness and Suspect Statements

A. Witness Identification

- **Ways to locate witnesses:**
 - **Canvass** the area.
 - **Interview** people talking nearby.
 - **Check surveillance footage.**
 - **Review phone records.**
- **Minimum Information to Record:**
 - Full name, date of birth, address, contact info.
 - Occupation and next of kin.

B. Statement Collection

- **Preferred Format:** Audio or video recording.
- **Three Basic Sources:**
 1. Witness
 2. Victim
 3. Suspect
- **Miranda Rights:** Must be read **before** custodial interrogation.

6. Investigative Procedures by Crime Type

A. Death Investigations

- **Rigor Mortis:** Muscle stiffening after death.
- **Livor Mortis:** Blood settling to the lowest part of the body.
- **Key steps in handling a body:**
 - Do **not** move it until photographed and sketched.
 - Bag hands if evidence may be present.
 - Always **check under the body** after documentation.

B. Robbery Investigations

- **Key Information to Collect from the Victim:**
 - Description of suspect and weapon.
 - What was stolen.
 - Direction of escape.
- **Preserve Evidence:**
 - Lock doors if the crime happened in a business.
 - **Search along the suspect's escape route.**

C. Arson Investigations

- **Signs of Arson:**
 - "V" shaped burn patterns (indicates fire origin).
 - Presence of accelerants.
 - Witnesses seeing the same suspect at multiple fires.

D. Sexual Assault Investigations

- **Evidence Collection:**
 - **Clothing:** Air-dry before packaging.
 - **DNA Swabs:** Collected from the victim and scene.
 - **Victim's Rights:** Can receive a forensic exam at no cost, without reporting to law enforcement.
- **Modus Operandi (MO) Considerations:**
 - **Weapon used.**
 - **How the victim was approached.**
 - **Injuries received.**

E. Vehicle Theft Investigations

- **Collect Information:**
 - Year, make, model, color, VIN, license plate.
 - Any unique features (scratches, modifications).
 - **Signs of a Stolen Vehicle:**
 - Plates loosely attached or mismatched.
 - Nervous behavior by the driver.
 - Vehicle operating recklessly.
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7. Surveillance & Digital Evidence Handling

A. Surveillance Methods

- **Types:**
 - **Loose Surveillance:** Periodic observation.
 - **Close Surveillance:** Constant observation.
- **Techniques:**
 - **Foot Surveillance:** Following on foot while blending in.
 - **Vehicle Surveillance:** Tailoring driving patterns to avoid detection.

B. Digital Evidence Collection

- **Definition:** Any data stored or transmitted via electronic devices.
 - **Characteristics:**
 - **Easily altered or deleted.**
 - **Can be time-sensitive.**
 - **Proper Seizure Techniques:**
 - **Use a Faraday bag** to block remote access.
 - **Record make, model, serial number, and condition** at the time of seizure.
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8. Court Cases Every Investigator Should Know

1. **Mincey v. Arizona:**
 - Allows immediate seizure of evidence if there is risk of loss before a warrant is obtained.
 2. **Riley v. California:**
 - Officers **cannot** search a phone without a warrant.
 3. **Miranda v. Arizona:**
 - Suspects **must** be informed of their rights before custodial interrogation.
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9. Search Patterns for Evidence Collection

1. **Lane Method:** Officers move in parallel lines across the scene.
 2. **Grid Method:** A more thorough double-pass of the lane method.
 3. **Zone Method:** Divides the scene into sections for multiple officers.
 4. **Spiral Method:** Officer moves inwards or outwards in a spiral.
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10. Final Review Tips

- Know how to secure a scene.
- Understand chain of custody.
- Be familiar with interview and interrogation techniques.
- Memorize key legal precedents.
- Study crime scene search methods.