

What is
“Forensics?”

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Forensics refers to **the use of evidence in an organized effort to better understand specific unknown events or circumstances**. While Forensics is often thought of in the context of violent crimes, there are many other common uses of Forensics and evidence analysis. Since it requires the application of many different ways of thinking and fields of study, **it can be used in a wide variety of different scenarios** (*even beyond criminal investigations*).

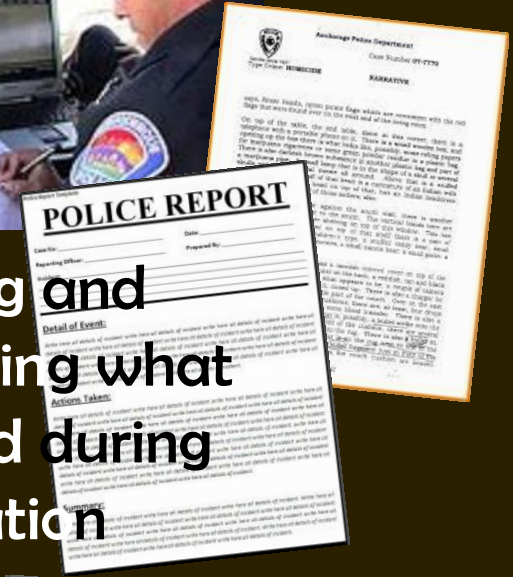


Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and evidence collection

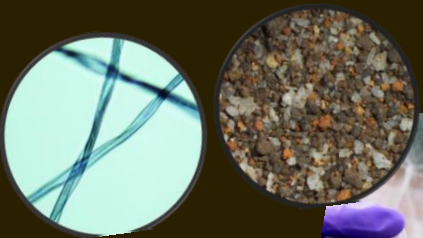
Autopsies and examinations



Documenting and communicating what was observed during the investigation



What does Forensics look like?



Laboratory analysis of evidence



Providing expert testimony in trials and other situations



Authenticating and identifying historical items



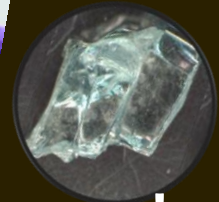
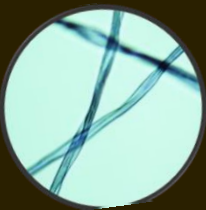


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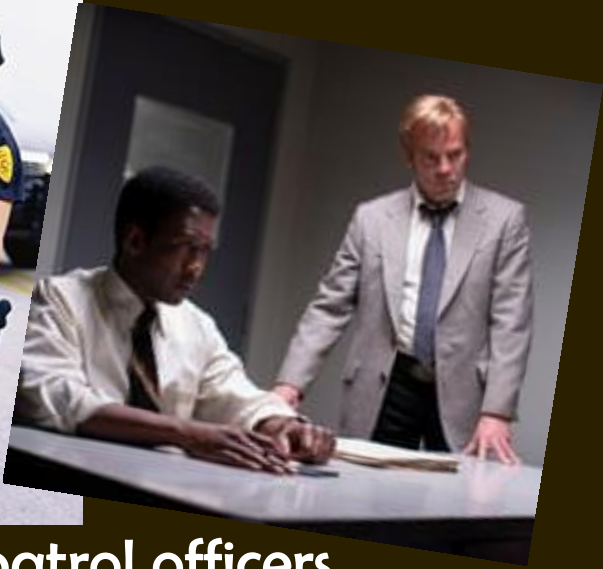


Authenticating and identifying historical items





**Police and patrol officers,
Detectives and police
investigators**



Crime Scene Investigators and Photographers



Courts and Criminal Justice



**Laboratory
analysts and
technicians**



**Specialist
forensic expert**



How does Forensics “**work?**”

In order for a Forensic investigation to be reliable, it has to **follow a specific process** that **documents** each step or phase and shows **who** was involved and **how**:

Recognize and collect evidence; document what is already known.

Analyze evidence in order to find connections that help explain what most likely happened.

Build a thorough, evidence-based explanation of what most likely happened and recognize weaknesses or remaining “unknowns” in this theory.

Use evidence to **present and argue** the validity and reliability of this explanation.

Await a **formal judgment** of the evidence and explanation

What are the **impacts** of Forensics?

Forensic analysis of reliable evidence allows investigators to build a narrative explanation of what most likely happened in an unknown situation. Based on this evidence-based explanation, mysterious questions and problems can be resolved or individuals who have committed some wrong act can be held accountable. However, since it is very difficult to ensure this explanation is free of bias or error, the use of Forensic evidence does not guarantee that the explanation is completely correct.

What is the **context** of Forensics?

Since Forensic evidence analysis is often used during criminal trials, **Forensic Science and its applications have important implications for the Criminal Justice System.** When errors are made in the analysis of Forensic evidence or bias influences the interpretation of this evidence, investigations are no longer reliable, just, or fair. In the same way, when pressures that influence the Criminal Justice System lead to unjust outcomes or inequities, **Forensic Scientists must take responsibility for their role in these problems. Forensics is *not* free from bias, perspective, influence, and manipulation** and must be understood in this context.

**Where did Forensics
come from?**

**How has it changed
over time?**

