

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF

EVIDENCE

FORENSIC KIT



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A large, light gray fingerprint graphic is centered on the page, serving as a background for the main title. The fingerprint is oriented vertically, with the ridge patterns clearly visible.

CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION TO CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

"A photo is worth a thousand words." Nowhere is this more true than when it comes to crime scene photos introduced during a trial. The goal of crime scene photography is to accurately depict the scene and the evidence therein. In a sense, we are telling the jury the story of what happened at the scene through photographs. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies use a step-by-step approach to processing a crime scene. Photography is one of those steps and is considered part of the documentation phase of crime scene processing. Through crime scene photos, the jury can be made to feel as if they were at the scene as evidence was discovered and processed. In this way, they can truly appreciate the environment in which the crime occurred and the key evidence produced by the criminal act.

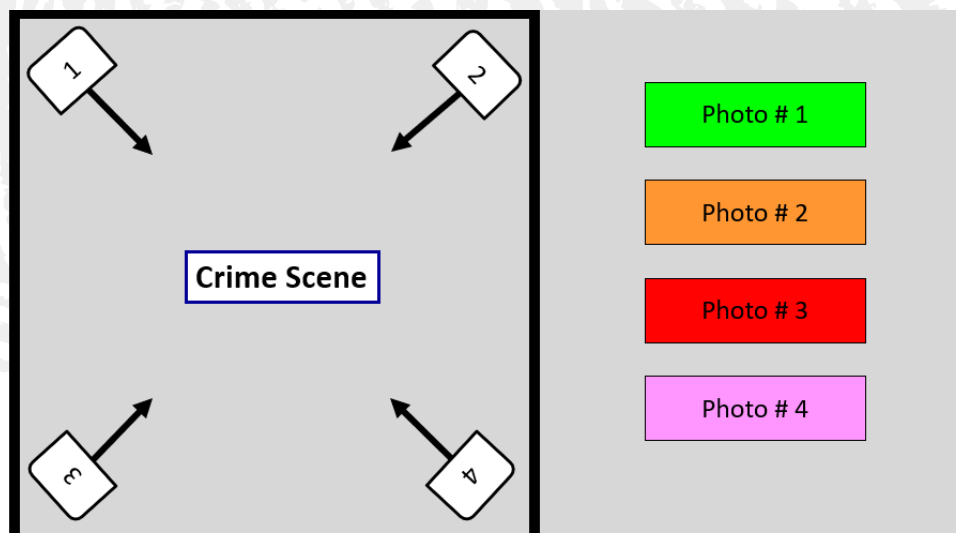
CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY METHODOLOGY

The methodology for photographing a crime scene follows the same methodology as general scene processing – begin with the least intrusive technique and finish with the more intrusive techniques. For crime scene photography, this means start with **overall photos**, then move into the scene for **midrange photos**, and then finish with **closeup photos**.

OVERALL PHOTOS - Overall photos are intended to depict the entire field of evidence. For an indoor scene this may be a single room. For an outdoor scene this would be the area within which the criminal act occurred and the field of evidence produced. This outdoor evidence field is often defined by the area within the crime scene tape or the area blocked off by police for processing. Overall photos should depict the entire area within which evidence is found and should be taken from a natural perspective, meaning eye-level.

Take for example a simple interior room. A common technique for capturing overall photos is the **4-corner technique**. For this technique, the photographer simply takes photos from each corner of the room with the camera zoomed out as much as possible. For an empty room or an area lacking sizeable objects, this technique should capture the entire evidence field. When large objects are in the room or scene, the 4-corner technique may not capture all items of evidence in the scene, as some items may be blocked from view. When that is the case, the photographer would simply take additional photos anywhere from **along the walls** to ensure that all critical items of evidence are photographed from an overall perspective.

4-CORNER TECHNIQUE



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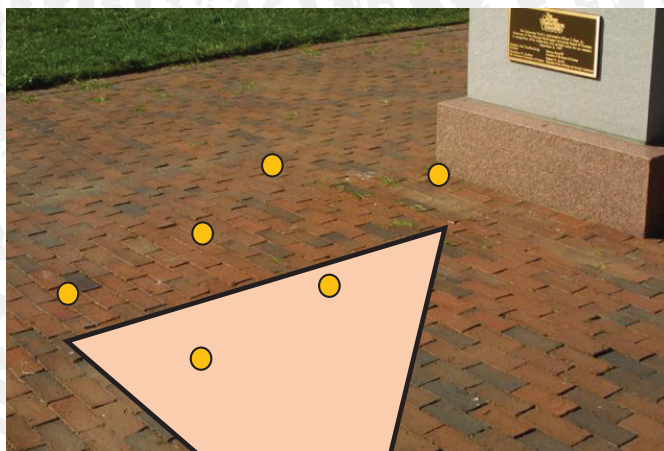
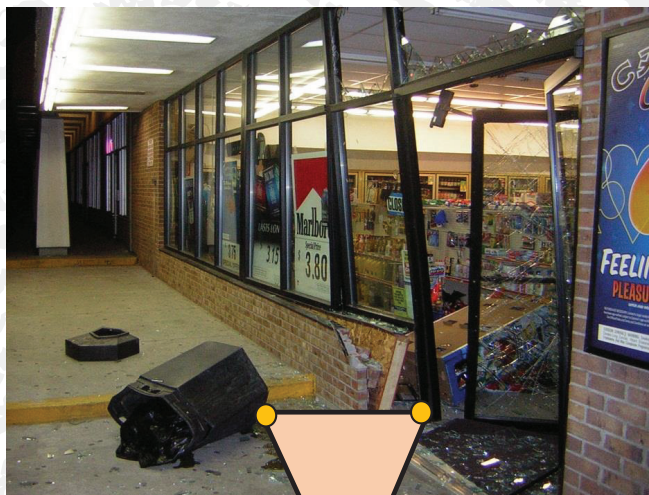
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MIDRANGE PHOTOS

Midrange photos are intended to show the distance and relationship between individual items of evidence and key aspects of the scene. These are sometimes referred to as **evidence establishing photos**. These photos help answer questions like **“how far were the shell casings from the victim?”** or **“where was the palm print on the door?”** The best way to depict the distance between two or more objects is for the photographer to position him/herself at an equal distance from each object, essentially forming a triangle which includes the two objects and the photographer. When the evidence field consists of multiple objects, imagine a line running through the center of the items and form a triangle to best capture the space between the various objects. Midrange photos are typically taken from a natural perspective, or eye-level, but different perspectives are acceptable when the evidence is unusually positioned.

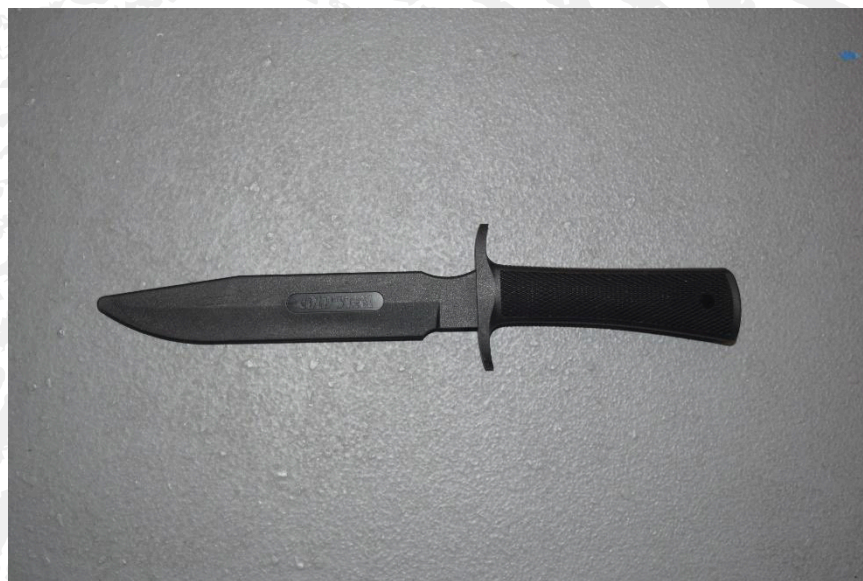


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CLOSE-UP PHOTOS

Close-up photos are taken of each individual item of evidence. A close-up photo is one in which the item of evidence fills the entire frame of the photo. Close-up photos are taken in two stages: **1) the item alone or "as is";** and **2) the item along with a scale and evidence marker.** These photos are typically taken from directly above the item if it is lying on the ground, or 90° to the item if it is on a vertical surface, such as a bullet defect in a wall. Center and square the item within the viewfinder, being careful to leave a small and equal margin around the item. Do not cut off any part of the item of evidence.



AS IS



WITH SCALE
AND MARKER

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ADMINISTRATIVE PHOTOS – Crime Scene Photographers use **Photo ID Cards** to identify the photos taken for each separate scene. Think of these as file labels or dividers in a file cabinet. A **Photo ID Card** is the first photo taken at every scene and identifies the location, date and photographer for the crime scene photos. An example is provided for the exercise which follows. Simply fill the **Photo ID Card** out with a magic marker and take a picture of it to begin the exercise.

Agency Name	
PHOTO I.D. CARD	
Case:	Date/Time:
Location:	
Photographer:	

CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY EXERCISE

Find a medium-sized room and set up a crime scene by randomly laying 5-6 items of evidence on the ground. These items can be anything – keys, baseball bat, wallet, cellphone, hammer, etc. Print and fillout a **Photo ID Card** for your scene. Then, using a cellphone camera or any other camera, photograph the crime scene by taking the following photos in order:

- 1. PHOTO ID CARD** which you will find on the next page (1)
- 2. OVERALL PHOTOS** using **4-Corner Technique** (4) and along the walls if necessary (2-4) to ensure the entire evidence field is captured.
- 3. MIDRANGE PHOTOS** – Take midrange photos using triangulation to show the location of evidentiary items in the scene with respect to each other and other key features of the room (5-10).
- 4. CLOSE-UP PHOTOS** – Take close-up photos of each of the individual items of evidence from directly overhead. Take one photo of the item as is and one photo with a scale (ruler) and an evidence number, which you can simply make with an index card and magic marker (10-12). This same exercise could be repeated for an outdoor scene. Simply choose an area of yard or driveway and set up the scene. Instead of walls, the edge of your scene will simply be the area you define as your field of evidence.