

## Examination of Evidence

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## Examination of Evidence

### 1 SCOPE

These procedures apply to personnel who are involved in answering requests for examination and/or the examination of friction ridge print(s) and/or evidence.

### 2 PRIOR TO EXAMINATION

#### 2.1 Case Information Review

- A. Prior to starting examinations, the individual assigned to the case will review all relevant case information to determine the appropriate examinations that need to be conducted, if any, and follow the applicable FBI Laboratory practices and discipline procedures.
- B. If personnel identify an additional examination(s) that may be probative (e.g., possible trace exams on adhesive surfaces), they will follow the relevant sections in the *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual* (LAB-200).

#### 2.2 Acknowledgement in Ongoing Cases (Exception 31)

- A. An acknowledgement including notification of simplified reporting is not required so long as the following conditions are met:
  - 1. the case has a previously received, open submission/case record where the contributor already received notification of simplified report requirements,
  - 2. a new case record is generated, and
  - 3. one of the following situations is true:
    - i. Only digital evidence was submitted.
    - ii. The submission was request only.
    - iii. Physical digital media containing images specifically requested by the examiner for completion of previously requested examinations were submitted, or
    - iv. Physical known records specifically requested by the examiner for completion of previously requested examinations were submitted.

### 3 OBJECT SHOT/OBJECT CAPTURE

- A. An object shot (also referred to as an object capture) is any image that does not contain evidentiary information relevant to the affected friction ridge print examination(s) and may be submitted by a contributor or captured by the FBI Laboratory.
- B. FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel will determine the relevance of object shots to the requested examinations.
- C. Orientation shots are a specific type of object shot that shows the location of a friction ridge print on an item.

#### **4 PROCESSING AND HANDLING OF EVIDENCE**

- A. FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel will properly handle evidence to ensure the integrity of the item(s) is maintained.
- B. Processing for latent prints can damage or discolor the item of evidence.
  - 1. FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel should determine if special handling or considerations will be needed for evidence prior to beginning exams.
  - 2. As necessary, they will discuss any potential issues with the contributor or appropriate Laboratory personnel prior to conducting possibly detrimental examination(s) and record relevant information in the Communication Log.

#### **5 PROTECTED IDENTITIES**

- A. For cases where an individual's name and/or personal data must be protected (such as for a confidential human source(s)), the contributor may request that the examiner not use the name and/or personal data in the FBI Laboratory file and/or final communication.
- B. The examiner will use a confidential human source(s) number or other unique number or designation provided by or communicated with the contributor or other entity instead of the individual's name and/or personal data.
- C. If the FBI Laboratory file already contains the individual's name and/or personal data, the examiner will replace that information with the unique number or designation to the best of the examiner's ability; however, it is recognized that the examiner may not be able to completely remove the information from the FBI Laboratory file.
- D. The examiner will record specifically what was modified without referencing the individual's name and/or personal data, and the contributor will be advised of the situation if data is unable to be removed.

#### **6 EXTERNAL AGENCY CONCLUSIONS**

##### **6.1 Analysis and Automated Searching Decisions**

- A. External agency personnel may provide additional information, such as analysis decisions or specifying prints suitable for automated searches, prior to submitting the case to the FBI Laboratory.
- B. When this occurs, the prints will be reanalyzed by the FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline and a suitability for comparison determination will be made according to the *Examining Friction Ridge Prints* (FRD-500) document.
- C. If automated searches are requested, an FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline examiner will decide which prints are suitable for the appropriate systems.
- D. Differences in opinion between the contributor and the FBI Laboratory may result from any number of factors including:

- Prints damaged or destroyed when evidence is packaged and shipped to the FBI Laboratory.
  - Prints faded or obliterated due to chemical processing by the contributor prior to shipment to the FBI Laboratory.
  - Agency-specific definitions.
  - Differing automated search software requirements.
- E. Any such differences between the contributor and the FBI Laboratory will be recorded in the FBI Laboratory file, as appropriate, but will not be considered a disagreement and the differences will not be reported.

## 6.2 Evaluation Decisions

- A. Evaluation results reported by another agency will be addressed according to the applicable sections in *Case Acceptance* (FRD-200) and appropriate sections of the *FBI Laboratory Quality Manual* (LAB-100) and the *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual*.
- B. If a technical disagreement occurs such that FBI Laboratory comparison results (identification, exclusion, latent inconclusive, or known inconclusive) do not agree with those of the external agency, the disagreement will be addressed according to the *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual*.
  - 1. An investigation into the situation and factors involved (e.g., records access, technology availability, agency definitions) will occur prior to declaring a technical disagreement.

## 6.3 Unsolved Latent File Matches

All Unsolved Latent File matches by external agencies will be handled as described in the *Next Generation Identification System* (FRD-600).

## 7 REFERENCE COLLECTION AND INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTIC DATABASE

- A. The Next Generation Identification System is an individual characteristic database under the oversight of the Criminal Justice Information Services Division.
- B. The Known Standard Library of the Latent Print Operations Unit is considered a reference collection.

## 8 SECONDARY EVIDENCE

- A. There are three scenarios in which an examiner will produce secondary evidence.
  - 1. When the image of a claimed print is not retained in a digital image retention system and may not be present on the evidence after subsequent processing.
  - 2. When lifts or casts are generated by FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel (as described in the *Processing Overview* (FRD-300)).
  - 3. When physical recordings of friction ridges from an unknown deceased person(s) (excluding digital printouts or photocopies) are generated by FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel and returned to the contributor.
- B. Secondary evidence will have no Level 1 or Level 2 markings.

- C. Once designated, secondary evidence is tracked on the *Secondary Evidence Log* (FRD-005), and original recordings from unknown deceased will be treated as biohazard.
- D. See appropriate sections in *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual* for additional information.

From Item	Quantity	Description
Item 1	5	Photographs
Item 12	2	Lifts
Item 16	1	Prints from Deceased
Item 13, Item 17 through Item 19	1	Disc

**Figure 1: Example of FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline Secondary Evidence Log.**

## 9 INITIALING AND LABELING EVIDENCE

When practicable, every item of evidence will be labeled with the item identifier, initials of the individual processing the evidence, and the FBI Laboratory number.

### 9.1 Situations That Do Not Lend Itself to Marking

#### 9.1.1 Size, Condition or Type of Evidence, Additional Exams, or Contributor Request

- A. If the item of evidence is too small, the surface condition or type does not lend itself to marking, additional laboratory examinations are requested on the item, or there is a recorded contributor-related reason, the item(s) will not be marked.
- B. Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center cases that may be examined in the future by the Technical Exploitation Unit or where another Government Agency or other organization may request to have the item of evidence returned unmarked will be exempt from marking.
- C. In these situations, the required markings will be placed on a proximal evidence container.

#### 9.1.2 Unique Contributor Number

In cases where the evidence is submitted with a unique contributor number affixed by sticker to the evidence and the unique number is associated to the FBI Laboratory number through the *Laboratory Report* and an internal unit database, the examiner is not required to record the FBI Laboratory number on the item of evidence and will place it on a proximal container.

#### 9.1.3 Items Attached to a Backing

- A. For items attached to a backing (e.g., tape placed on an acetate) where it is not practicable to mark each individual item, FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel can note the required information on the backing.

- B. The backing and items will then be completely heat sealed.
  - 1. Either the backing itself will be heat sealed or a proximal container containing the backing and items will be heat sealed.

## 10 CONTEMPORANEOUS RECORDING OF RESULTS

- A. Results will be recorded contemporaneous to when the final decision is made.
  - 1. Final decision varies depending on the activity performed but in general is when the individual has made the determination that something is suitable to move to the next step in the process (e.g., completing an analysis and moving on to comparison) or submitting the results for review (e.g., reviewing all unclaimed friction ridge detail at the close of a submission before submitting for review).
  - 2. In some situations, multiple items or friction ridge detail may be reviewed as a group versus individually.
- B. See [Appendix A](#) for specifics in regards to recording contemporaneous results.

## 11 ACKNOWLEDGING WORK OR REVIEW OF WORK

- A. Throughout the Laboratory and discipline documents, when referring to technical records, the term “FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel initials” will refer to either handwritten initials or signature or digital equivalent.
- B. Any FBI Laboratory Friction Ridge Discipline personnel conducting work on a submission will acknowledge agreement with their work in the FBI Laboratory File.
- C. Prior to the issuance of a *Laboratory Report*, the assigned examiner will acknowledge their review (i.e., agreement with the completeness) of all records in the FBI Laboratory File (e.g., all images, the Next Generation Identification System, logs) by approving the case notes, completing a review, adding a clear notation in the Laboratory Information Management System and/or initialing each page of the physical case notes.

## 12 RECORDING STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

- A. When standards and controls are specified in a procedure, the examination records or appropriate logbook will reflect that a standard or control was used.
- B. Personnel will refer to the appropriate discipline processing document for specific information.

## 13 EVIDENCE STORAGE

- A. Personnel will follow *FBI Laboratory Operations Manual* requirements regarding evidence storage with the following approved exception (see Exception 7):
  - 1. Submitted physical intentionally recorded prints (standard or non-standard) that are considered evidence may be retained outside of an evidence storage area (e.g., office side outside of a secured area with limited access) during examination.

## 14 SUBDIVIDED EVIDENCE

- A. For Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center cases that date prior to the use of Forensic Assurance in 2014, personnel may subdivide using a character designation (e.g., Q1A).
- B. The designation is used to easily distinguish a piece from the full item and each part is further described in the FBI Laboratory file.
- C. The designation may be used in the FBI Laboratory file and issued products.

## 15 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Issued	Changes
15	06/01/2023	Section 2 – Removed the system addition Removed Section on New Leads. Section 5 – Changed report to final communication and removed communication retention requirement. Section 8 – Clarified term “unmarked”. Section 11 – Narrowed to Laboratory Reports only and expanded options to record acknowledgement. Section 13 – Added exception reference and removed remaining information as duplicative. Appendix A – Generalized clarification
16	02/03/2025	Section 2 – addition of Exception 31 with Section 2.2 Section 3 – added “object capture” as term for object shot Section 4 – removed reference to cross-contamination Section 6.2-B – added investigation prior to declaring disagreement. Section 11 – clarified “review” Section 14 – clarified “legacy”

## APPENDIX A: CONTEMPORANEOUS RECORDING

### Notes/Clarifications:

- If personnel need to exit the building for safety reasons in the middle of one of these actions, the results will be recorded immediately following the safe return by the individual.
- Initial assessments (with the exception of comparison records) do not need to be recorded and the requirements below address recording of **final decisions** as defined in each situation below.

Action or Activity	When Decision will be Recorded	Note
Analysis of friction ridge prints	<i>Latent Prints and Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints:</i> Claiming (suitable for comparison) is recorded immediately after an examiner's final decision to claim an individual print	<b>Final Decision = ready for comparison or review</b>  Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes (temporary categorization or other non-permanent methods are not permitted for final decision)
	<i>Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints:</i> Claiming is not recorded; only record when all prints are not suitable for comparison (not claiming prints is recorded immediately after the final decision is made for an individual record)	
	<i>Latent Prints and Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints:</i> Determination of "not analyzed" or "not suitable for comparison" for captured/submitted friction ridge detail is recorded after an examiner's final decision or conclusion is reached. *	<b>Final Decision = ready for review</b>  Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes (temporary categorization or other non-permanent methods are not permitted for final decision).  * For multiple areas of friction ridge detail, the determination of not suitable



		<p>for comparison or notation of not analyzed may be recorded when the grouping<sup>^</sup> is complete provided that the determination occurs at the same time.</p> <p>If an examiner switches activities or takes a substantive break during the review for suitability, a record of any final decision(s) must be recorded prior to the break. (A substantive break is one of significant duration during which memory of activities performed could be effected or one in which activities are intentionally switched).</p> <p>For captured images, when the same print is captured across multiple chemical/physical processes and that print is claimed, those images where the print is unclaimed are considered duplicates and do not need to be noted as such.</p> <p><sup>^</sup> Any of these are examples of a grouping of friction ridge detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a single image capture from Item 6</li> <li>• eight images capturing friction ridge detail on item 6</li> <li>• all captured images from item 10</li> <li>• all submitted images from item 35 through item 40</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all captured friction ridge detail in a case record</li> </ul>
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<b>Comparison of friction ridge prints</b>	<p><i>Latent Prints and Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints:</i></p> <p>Specific details of an individual print are recorded immediately after noting the information</p>	<p>Comparison records must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes</p> <p>(levels of confidence can be included as needed)</p>
	<p><i>Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints:</i></p> <p>Specific details are not recorded (if any details are noted; they will be recorded immediately after noting the information)</p>	
<b>Evaluation of friction ridge prints</b>	<p><i>Latent to Known and Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints to known:</i></p> <p>Conclusion is recorded immediately after an examiner's final decision regarding the comparison of a print (or group of prints) to an individual (or individuals)</p> <p>Comparison of an individual includes all applicable known records available for that individual in that submission</p> <p>Groups of prints may be manually compared to groups of individuals without recording final decisions for each individual comparison when all conclusions for all unrecorded, completed comparisons are uniform (e.g., all prints/individuals excluded or all prints/individuals inconclusive). Instead, uniform final decisions will be recorded immediately upon completion of a dedicated manual comparison session or when a difference in conclusions occurs during a manual comparison session, in which case all final decisions completed to date must be recorded immediately</p>	<p><b><i>Final Decision = ready for quality check or review</i></b></p> <p>Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes (temporary categorization or other non-permanent methods are not permitted for final decision)</p> <p>If an examiner switches activities during a manual comparison session, a record of completed comparisons must be made prior to the switch</p> <p>If an examiner takes a substantive break during a manual comparison session, a record of final decision(s) must be made prior to the break. (A substantive break is one of significant duration during which memory of activities performed could be effected)</p>

	<p><i>Known to Known:</i></p> <p>Conclusion is recorded immediately after an examiner's final decision regarding the comparison of a standard intentionally recorded known record to an individual</p> <p>Comparison of an individual includes all applicable known records available for that individual in that submission</p>	or one in which activities are intentionally switched)
	<p><i>Latent to Latent (and Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded Prints to latent):</i></p> <p>Conclusion is recorded immediately after an examiner's final decision regarding the comparison of an individual latent print/Non-Standard Intentionally Recorded latent to [another] individual latent print</p>	
<b>Changes to analysis or evaluation decisions</b>	All changes are recorded immediately after the final decision has been reached	<p><b><i>Final Decision = ready for quality check or review</i></b></p> <p>Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes</p>
<b>Changes to comparison details</b>	All changes are recorded immediately after change is decided	<p>Comparison records must be of a permanent nature – on image or in case notes</p> <p>Changes recorded on a separate photo or indicated in a digital image if details differ from analysis</p>
<b>Comparison of automated searches</b>	<p>Conclusion is recorded in NGI immediately after final decision regarding the comparison of two prints or two known records</p> <p>Allowances in SOP note situations where the conclusion is not recorded in NGI but in case notes. In these situations, record will be made immediately after final decision is effected.</p>	<p><b><i>Final Decision = ready for quality check or review</i></b></p> <p>Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – in NGI, on Screen print, or in case notes</p>

<b>Search of biographical information</b>	Information searched in NGI will be recorded automatically in NGI provided examiner conducts searches within a case or within the case notes. (UCN only searches are not recorded)	Final decision record must be of a permanent nature – In NGI or in case notes
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<b>Action or Activity</b>	<b>When Decision will be Recorded</b>	<b>Note</b>
<b>Visual</b>	Result is recorded immediately after an item (or group of items) has been examined and a determination made if any detail is suitable for capture or not suitable for capture	Processing records must be of a permanent nature – in case notes
<b>Forensic Light Source</b>	Result is recorded immediately after an item (or group of items) has been examined under all applicable light sources and a determination made if any detail is suitable for capture or not suitable for capture	If groups of items are being examined with a specific process, the results of that process may be recorded when the group is complete provided that the processing occurs at the same time
<b>Chemical Processes and Powder Processes</b>	<p>Result is recorded immediately after a chemical process* has been applied to an item (or group of items) and a determination made if any detail is suitable for capture or not suitable for capture</p> <p>*Application of a chemical process includes development methods and examination under appropriate forensic light source(s) as appropriate</p> <p>If the item is not examined immediately after processing, the individual must record the processing immediately. When the examination is completed at a later time, the results of the examination will be recorded immediately in the case notes.</p> <p>The case record will include which forensic light source(s) was used to capture the print(s) as appropriate</p>	<p>If a processing individual switches activities during processing and/or examination of an item (or group of items), a record of completed activities must be made prior to the switch.</p> <p>If a processing individual takes a substantive break during the processing and/or examination of an item (or group of items), a record of completed activities must be made prior to the break. (A substantive break is one of significant duration during which memory of activities performed could be effected</p>

Action or Activity	When Decision will be Recorded	Note
<p><b>Human Remains</b></p>	<p>Each action taken on the remains is recorded immediately after completion of the action and includes the outcome</p> <p>Remains are recorded in totality – i.e., if all of one hand is item 1, the totality of the actions for that hand will be noted upon completion</p>	<p>or one in which activities are intentionally switched)</p> <p>If workflow deviates from the standard (i.e., process is eliminated or added, additional item is located, unexpected result occurs, item broken down further), a record of the event will be made as soon after the action as possible</p>