

READING TEXT 7

Task 1

Do the following statements agree with the information in the text? Write:

TRUE if the text confirms the statement

FALSE if the text contradicts the statement

NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to know from the text

Statements:

1. The police may ask the people who are at the crime scene to wait together until they can talk to them.....
2. SOCOs are not normally first at a crime scene.....
3. Sometimes hair, skin cells, etc. from a SOCO are left at the crime scene, even though they wear protection to try to stop this.....
4. Every item at a crime scene is photographed five times.....
5. Fibres are an example of trace evidence.....
6. If evidence is burnt, it cannot be dealt with.....
7. A SOCO's job is to help get good evidence to court.....
8. SOCOs may have to go to court to provide evidence.....

Investigating a crime scene

Assessing the scene

On arrival, the police officer's first job is to carry out an initial assessment of the scene. If they are at first unsure whether or not a crime has taken place, it's best to assume that it has. Valuable time and evidence in the investigation could be lost otherwise. First they must deal with anyone at the scene needing medical help. Any other people present at the scene must be kept apart, as they may be eyewitnesses or suspects. Witnesses at crime scenes are not allowed to talk to each other. A person's perception of what happened can get distorted during conversation. The police officer then calls for a Scene of Crime Officer (SOCO).

Preserving the scene

When the SOCO arrives at the crime scene, they put on a full protective body suit, gloves, a mask, and plastic overshoes. Without this, the SOCO's skin cells, hair, fibres, fingerprints or shoeprints could be added to the crime scene.

Recording the scene

The SOCO must produce a permanent record of the crime scene, using detailed written notes, sketches, photographs and videos. It is essential that the original position of items at the scene is recorded. Some biological and chemical evidence may quickly deteriorate. Other evidence may be very fragile, and might be destroyed as the SOCO tries to recover it. Other evidence from the scene of crime will be sent to the forensic lab for analysis.

Photographing the scene

When photographing a crime scene, the SOCO follows four rules:

- 1 Photograph the whole crime scene.
- 2 Photograph each item at the scene before doing anything to it.
- 3 Add a scale and photograph the item again.
- 4 After collecting trace evidence from the item, or removing it for analysis, photograph the same part of the crime scene again.

The search for evidence

Any evidence at the crime scene may turn out to be important at some stage in the investigation, so it's important that the team's search is thorough and systematic.

- Some of the evidence, such as a cigarette butt, may be immediately obvious to the SOCO.
- Some of the evidence, such as fibres, may be present in very small amounts. This is called trace evidence.
- Other evidence, such as fingerprints, may be invisible to the naked eye, and special techniques are needed to reveal it.
- Some evidence may have been damaged, for example burnt. Special procedures are then needed.

Storing the evidence P2

Each item of evidence must be packaged separately, labelled and sealed before it is stored. Small items, such as hairs, fibres, glass fragments and paint, are put into plastic bags or bottles and sealed. Clothing and shoes are put into paper sacks. Evidence must be stored in

secure facilities. Most types of evidence are kept in cool, dry rooms. Biological samples are refrigerated or frozen to prevent their decay.

Using the evidence in a criminal investigation

SOCOs must always use standard methods to process evidence. Only then will it provide valid information that can be used, or be admissible, in court. If fingerprint and DNA evidence are absent, incomplete or damaged, other types of evidence may be very important in solving the crime. The way in which the SOCO team searches for, collects, packages and stores such evidence is important in preserving it. Badly preserved evidence may not provide useful information for the investigation and may not be admissible in court.

Answer Key:

1 FALSE - they are kept apart, not together

2 TRUE - a police officer will arrive first

3 NOT GIVEN - we know that they try to avoid this from happening but we don't know if it sometimes does

4 FALSE - it is photographed four times

5 TRUE

6 NOT GIVEN - there is a suggestion that special procedures may be able to save some burnt evidence but we cannot be sure that this is what 'special procedures' refers to

7 TRUE - SOCOs ...standard methods ... provide valid information that can be used, or be admissible, in court... The way in which the SOCO team searches for, collects, packages and stores such evidence is important in preserving it...

8 NOT GIVEN