

The Science of Note-Making in Forensic Investigations

Ms. Sidhvita Kaithepalli
Assistant Professor &
Ph.D Scholar in Forensic Science



What is note-making?

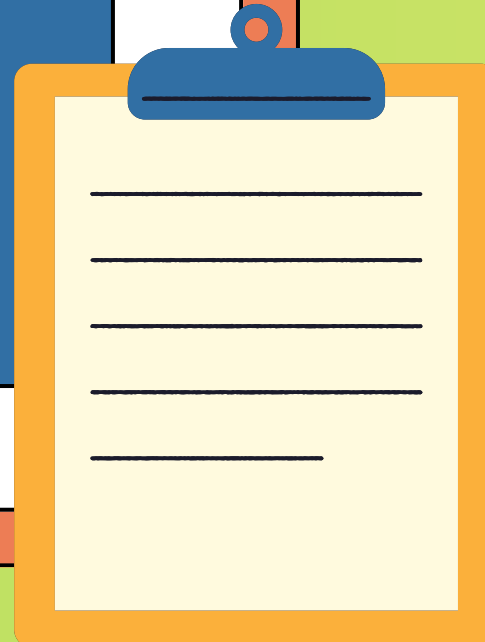
Investigative notes are a permanent written record of all observations, actions, and findings made at the crime scene, and the facts of a case to be used in further investigation, in writing reports, and in prosecuting the case. The basic purpose of notes is to record facts. It's a crucial aspect of crime scene documentation, providing a permanent record that aids in investigations, court proceedings, and helps investigators recall specific details about the scene.



Where to Record Notes ?

In crime scene investigations, note-making notebooks are usually provided by the investigating agency or forensic department to ensure:

- **Standardization:** The format and structure are often predefined to maintain consistency.
- **Chain of Custody:** Official notebooks may have page numbers, signatures, and cannot be torn or removed, making them legally admissible.
- **Accountability:** Notes made on authorized logbooks are easier to authenticate in court.
- However, you should always carry your notebook as a backup or for rough notes



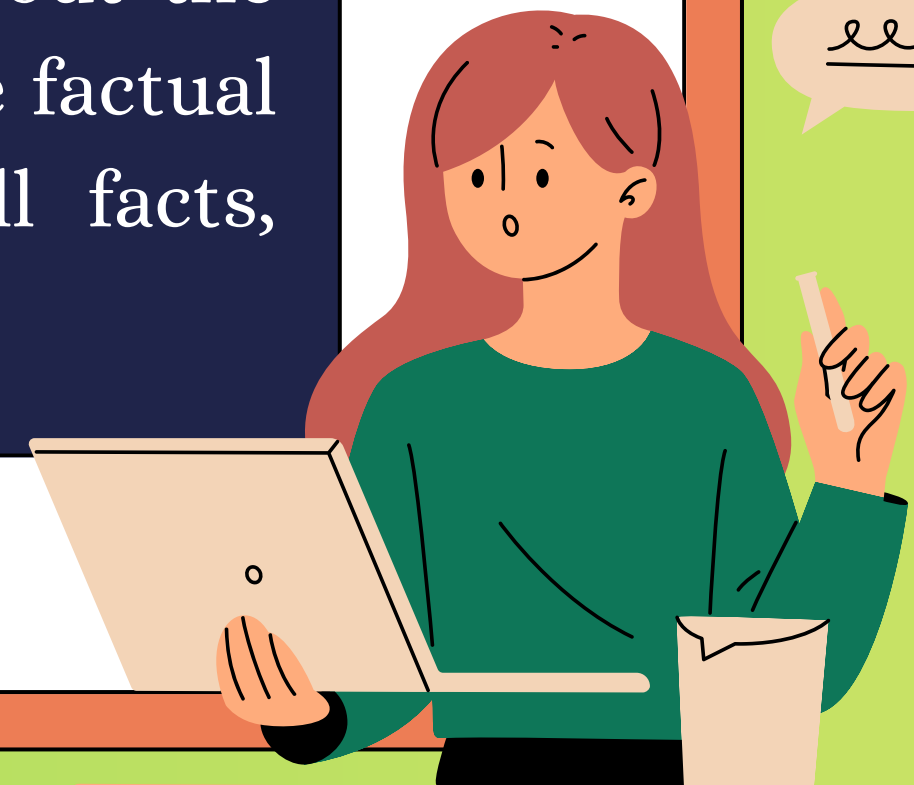
When to Take Notes?

- Start to take notes as soon as possible after receiving a call to respond and continue recording information as it is received throughout the investigation.
- Begins immediately upon arrival and continues throughout the investigation
- From the first step to the last step of the case investigation, note making has to be taken (make sure not to miss any point)



What to Record?

In crime scene note-taking, it's crucial to record a detailed, objective account of the scene, including the location, condition, and characteristics of evidence, as well as any observations about the environment and individuals present. These notes should be factual and avoid personal opinions or conclusions. Record all facts, regardless of where they may lead.



What to Record?

Answer these questions:

- What? (Crime)
- Who? (Criminal)
- When? (Time of the crime)
- How? (How the crime is committed)
- Where? (Crime scene)
- With what? (Weapon)
- Why? (Motive)

Key Elements to Note :

Date, time, and
location of the scene

Names and roles of
personnel present

Search methods used
(zone, grid, etc.)

Condition of the scene
on arrival

Collection details (who
collected what, when,
and how)

Chain of custody
initiation

Positions of visible
evidence Found at
Crime scene

Any changes made to
the scene during
investigation

Weather and
environmental
conditions

Importance of Note Making

- Accurate documentation
- Preservation of details
- Legal validity
- Assists in reconstructing events
- A permanent record of the scene
- Maintains chain of custody
- Enhances team communication
- Acts as a reference
- Ensures accountability
- Crucial for court testimony

Characteristics of Effective Notes

- Effective notes are complete, accurate, specific, factual, objective, concise, clear, well-organized, legible, mechanically correct, written in standard English, and reader-focused.
- Be as specific as possible: (Example: Instead of saying tall, State about 6 feet)
- Legibility refers to the distinctness of your letters and numbers.
- Clarity refers to the distinctness of your statements.
- Avoid wordiness. Length alone doesn't make for quality
- Use spell checkers. Watch for words that are misspelled, such as "there and their"

Characteristics of Effective Notes

- The opening paragraph states the time, date, type of incident, and how you became involved. Next, what you were told by the victim witnesses.
- Use separate paragraph for each witness. Record what you did.
- Paragraphs should be short, about 100 words.
- You should start a new paragraph when: Change speakers, Change location, Change time, Change idea
- Use the Past tense and verbs that denote that events have already occurred.

Tips for Effective Note-Making

- Write in real-time, not from memory
- Use clear, concise language
- Avoid assumptions; stick to observations and facts
- Maintain a bound notebook with numbered pages
- Sign and date all entries
- Mistakes crossed out with single line





THANK YOU