

# Obtaining Your Private Investigator's License



**Orion**  
agency inc.

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**So you want  
to be a PI...**

## OBTAINING YOUR PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S LICENSE

Private investigator. Private detective. Do these terms bring forth visions of someone hiding in a darkened doorway sporting a trenchcoat, hat pulled over his eyes for added obscurity, doing surveillance work or maybe tailing someone for a client? Of course, while there may be spots of excitement for a private investigator, on the whole, the daring chase scenes, shoot-outs and knock-down, drag-out fights are better left for *Magnum P.I.*, or *Simon & Simon*.

A private investigator is one who is in the business of private investigation, as an individual, a partner, or an officer of a corporation. Conducting an investigation may involve:

1. obtaining information on the identity, habits, conduct, movements, whereabouts, affiliations, transactions, reputation, credibility, or character of any person;
2. locating and recovering lost or stolen property;
3. determining the cause of or responsibility for any libel or slander, or any fire, accident or damage to property;
4. obtaining evidence for use in legislative, administrative, or judicial investigation or proceeding.

Under a certain classification of investigator's license, you may furnish watchmen, guards, private patrolmen, or other persons whose primary duties are to protect persons or property (bodyguards).

## OUTLOOK

Due to increasing populations, a rising divorce rate, and a higher rate of crime, there will be a definite need for more private investigators.

Because there are no specific training programs for private investigators, the most accepted way to gain experience in this field is by serving an apprenticeship to a private detective agency or the security department of a major store or corporation.

The job outlook for those persons having training in law enforcement is better. Many police officers find a natural progression in becoming a private investigator.

## **GENERAL NOTE**

In several places in this book you will note that references are geared to laws and procedures in the state of Ohio. You will find that these facts generally hold forth for the remainder of the United States as well. Where there is a great difference, or one worth mentioning, you will find it listed under the synopsis for each state at the back of this book.

## **CLASSIFICATIONS**

Generally, you will find that three different licenses are issued which fall under the classification of private investigator. Those would be:

- A—Investigation and Watch/Guard.
- B—Investigation Only.
- C—Watch/Guard Only.

## **EXAMINATION**

Several weeks after submitting your application for a Private Investigator's license, if your application is filled out to the satisfaction of the Division of Licensing, you will receive a notification of your examination date in the mail. Section 1301:4-5-09 of the Ohio Revised Code, on Examinations, states:

- A. An applicant must take the license examination at the time and place appearing on his notice. If the applicant fails to appear for such examinations, except as provided herein, his file shall be closed and a new application together with a new fee shall be required.
- B. If the applicant's failure to appear for the examination to which he is admitted is due to illness, evidenced by a doctor's certificate sent to the Division of Licensing prior to the date of such examination without additional fee. No applicant shall be excused from taking the scheduled examination for any other reason than illness unless, in the division's judgment, the applicant would suffer undue hardship thereby.

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The examination will include testing general knowledge of:

- A. private sector security procedures
- B. laws pertaining to security/safety
- C. fire safety and plant safety
- D. fire-extinguisher requirements and fire laws, etc.

The examination for private investigator in Ohio is allotted two hours.

### PREPARING YOURSELF

Even though you may have the type and amount of experience required by the state in which you wish to operate, it is possible that you will be unfamiliar with some of the areas covered in the examination. For example, if your area of experience has been that of taking accident statements from witnesses for the detective agency that you are employed by, you will probably be unfamiliar with more technical police terms. If you are now a police officer, chances are that you will not be familiar with terms used in arson cases, or different types of fire extinguishers and their uses. What to do? Since you will have been informed of the general context of the examination through this publication, you will know what to study when you hit the library. The librarian will be more than happy to help you find the study information you need.

**Attention:** You must keep in mind that the questions listed here are *samples*. These examples are demonstrations of *general areas of knowledge* that you must be acquainted with in order to pass the examination for private investigator. Publication of exact examination questions is unethical and against the law.

### SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Rape is a crime of:
  - A. Violence
  - B. Anger
  - C. Passion



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2. The "body of the crime" is:
  - A. Corpse
  - B. Modus operandi
  - C. Corpus delecti
3. Which of the following has the lowest flash point?
  - A. Gas
  - B. Kerosene
  - C. Petroleum ether
  - D. Alcohol
4. If your guard sees an assault in progress with a weapon involved, he should first:
  - A. Stop the assault so that no further injuries occur
  - B. Fire a warning shot
  - C. Call police
  - D. Go back to his TV
5. The minimum age to hold a PI license is:
  - A. 18
  - B. 21
  - C. 25
6. Minimum experience necessary to obtain a private investigator's license is:
  - A. 3 years
  - B. 5 years
  - C. 2 years
7. When there's no witness to a crime, evidence obtained is:
  - A. Real evidence
  - B. Circumstantial
  - C. Real and circumstantial
  - D. None of those mentioned
8. Since most states do not require fire safety for guards:
  - A. Don't bother training.
  - B. It's not your problem.
  - C. Caution and good sense require it.
9. A person with a private police commission may arrest when:
  - A. A misdemeanor is committed, not in his presence
  - B. Felony not in his presence, but witnesses there

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- C. Misdemeanor committed in his presence
  - D. B and C
  - E. All of the above
10. The number of persons necessary to have rioting is:
- A. 5
  - B. 20
  - C. 10
  - D. No figure necessary
11. The type fire extinguisher usually used on electrical fires is:
- A. Water
  - B. Foam
  - C. Dry
12. The state official or office in charge of private investigator's licensing is:
- A. Division of Commerce
  - B. Attorney general
  - C. Director, Police Chief's Association
13. The following crimes are arsons:
- A. Burning house
  - B. Burning garage
  - C. Burning car
14. The age normally considered adult in a crime is:
- A. 18
  - B. 16
  - C. 21
  - D. 18 male, 16 female
15. The person, if a juvenile at the time of crime but adult at time of arrest, is tried in which court under normal circumstances?
- A. Juvenile court
  - B. Municipal court
  - C. Court of Common Pleas
16. If the crime is a felony which judicial bodies are involved?
- A. Muny court
  - B. Court of Common Pleas
  - C. Grand Jury

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- D. All of the above
- 17. A commissioned security officer is permitted to carry his weapon:
  - A. On property he is commissioned on
  - B. To and from work
  - C. Any time as long as he has his commission
  - D. A and B
- 18. Fingerprints are what kind of evidence?
  - A. Real evidence
  - B. Circumstantial evidence
  - C. Crime Lab evidence
  - D. Culpable evidence
- 19. A commissioned security officer, if ordered by a law-enforcement officer to assist him, must do so:
  - A. At all times
  - B. If he won't be late for work
  - C. If he is commissioned where the officer is
  - D. Only if there is not unreasonable danger to his person
- 20. A PI license can be revoked for:
  - A. Being convicted of a crime of moral turpitude
  - B. Being convicted of a felony
  - C. Perjury
  - D. Failure to obey lawful police order
  - E. A, B, and C
- 21. When working in a municipality, a PI must notify local authorities:
  - A. Within 24 hours
  - B. Immediately
  - C. In writing
  - D. Within 12 hours
- 22. In order to have guards and private investigations you must have license classification:
  - A. A
  - B. B
  - C. C
  - D. ABC
- 23. The following employees are required to have ID cards:

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- A. Permanent employees
  - B. Employees that work "plain clothes"
  - C. Officers of the corporation
  - D. All employees involved in "field" duty
24. Written reports must be furnished the client:
- A. In all cases
  - B. At client's request
  - C. Only after 30 days have lapsed
25. A written contract stating that the client has legal right to the information he requests is necessary:
- A. In all cases
  - B. In cases where criminal activity is present
  - C. Only if the client requests it
26. Generally if a crime is punishable by more than one year's imprisonment, it is:
- A. Misdemeanor
  - B. Felony
  - C. Capital crime
27. If a crime is punishable by more than a \$1,000 fine, it is:
- A. Misdemeanor
  - B. Minor misdemeanor
  - C. Felony
28. The amount of training necessary to obtain a private police commission is:
- A. 200 hours
  - B. 240 hours
  - C. 320 hours
  - D. 120 hours
29. The amount of "hands on" firearms training necessary to obtain a private police commission is:
- A. None
  - B. 20 hours
  - C. 8 hours
30. Uniform approval is necessary from:
- A. State
  - B. County
  - C. Any community where work is performed

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31. On a uniformed security officer, how many identification patches are necessary?
- A. One
  - B. Two
  - C. None

### **ANSWERS TO SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

- 1. A. Psychologists' investigations reveal: "Rape is a crime of violence, as many times the physical act of ejaculation is not necessary."
- 2. C. Corpus delicti. Latin, roughly meaning "body of the crime."
- 3. C. Petroleum ether. Used by professional arsonists for years.
- 4. C. First priority is to call the police.
- 5. A. No specific age is mentioned in Ohio regulations. A few states say 25, many 21, and some 18; however, it would be a very hard trick to be 18 and fulfill the experience requirements. Check rules for your state.
- 6. C. Two years (verifiable by references—they *are* checked). This is for Ohio; different states have different time requirements, ranging from zero experience to five years.
- 7. C. Both apply. For example, fingerprints, real evidence. A person leaving the area would be circumstantial.
- 8. C. If a fire occurs and your guard does not respond properly, you may be held liable for your negligence.
- 9. D. Note: If witnesses are cooperative (in A) papers may still be obtained at the prosecutor's office. No physical arrest may be made unless a misdemeanor is witnessed.
- 10. D.
- 11. C.
- 12. B. Attorney general, but in most cases he delegates this authority to the division of licensing or police agency.
- 13. A, B, and C. Any crime involving fire or of an explosive nature is arson.

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14. A. Under some circumstances, such as a long police record or heinous crime, age can be lower.
15. A. Unless circumstances in #14 apply
16. D. All of them
17. A and B. You also must be careful about concealment in your particular area.
18. A. Physical evidence which "can be seen"
19. D. If undue danger is imminent, he can call for assistance for the police officer.
20. E. Also, any procedure you perform that the local police do not like can be cause for a hearing.
21. D. However, this may differ in varied municipalities.
22. A. Classification A covers both private investigations and watch/guard.
23. D. All employees excluding clerical help.
24. B. Some clients wish no hard evidence to be subpoenaed.
25. A. You must have this in all cases. At any rate, it helps to protect you.
26. B. Felony
27. C. Felony
28. D. 120 hours, but legislation is in process to change this to higher amounts.
29. C. The amount of "hands on" firearms training necessary is 8 hours.
30. C. They must be distinctly different from law-enforcement uniforms.
31. A. It must be on the left shoulder, and should not contain abbreviations, unless the uniform has a blazer, in which case the patch may be on the left breast pocket. (This is by law. However, we recommend a patch on *each* shoulder.)

## **FINGERPRINTING**

You will need three complete sets of fingerprints. Included in the application packet provided by the state will be fingerprint cards. Your local police department will do the finger-

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printing for you. As a courtesy to the department, call first and find out what time will be most convenient for them, and what their slowest period of the day is. Fingerprinting is time-consuming. Be prepared to pay a fee for this service, usually several dollars per card. When you are ready for printing, either roll your sleeves up or wear short sleeves. The ink used in the process can be very messy. Leave hand jewelry at home or remove it for more comfort for both you and the officer during fingerprinting. Remember, fingerprints *must* be taken by a law-enforcement agency and signed by the officer doing the procedure.

It is important to be relaxed and to let your hand and wrist move freely when the officer is taking the prints. Prints are taken by rolling the first joint of the finger sideways from nail to nail on the fingerprint card.

Specific printing cards are used by the division of licensing for this purpose, and it is important to get the fingerprinting done with no errors and with clear prints. Local authorities may use different cards, and your application will be held up while waiting for more of the correct forms to reach you.

If you plan a corporation or a partnership, each officer or partner involved will need two complete sets. As employees are hired, and before they begin their jobs, their fingerprints must be registered with the division of licensing. By the time you begin hiring your employees, you will be well familiar with the procedure of fingerprinting.

## MUG SHOTS

These are not really mug shots, but identification photos to be attached to your application form. You will be instructed where to attach these photos. Some forms will have an area boxed in for this purpose. These photos may be taken anywhere that is convenient, or somewhere offering fast service. These pictures are simply Polaroid pictures that may be trimmed to the required size, usually but not always, two inches by two inches. These must be full-face photos.

## CHARACTER REFERENCES

You must submit five character references. (Remember, this applies to Ohio. Some states require different amounts and types of references, while some ask for none. Check your state.)

Each of these references will have known the applicant for at least five years preceding the application, and may not be connected with the applicant by either blood or marriage. Possibilities for these references may be: your immediate supervisor at work, a long-time friend, your lawyer, or any reputable citizen who can attest to your good character and has known you for a minimum of five years. These references are to be in letter form and signed by the individual. Make sure each reference includes his complete name and address. Their phone number is also a smart thing to include. These letters must be included along with the other forms included in the packet of required forms for private investigator (fingerprint cards, insurance forms, etc.).

## FIREARMS

Before beginning this section, one fact must be securely implanted in your medulla. In 99 percent of the situations, depending on your area of operation, being a holder of a private investigator's license offers *no right to carry a firearm, concealed or otherwise*. In this regard, the holder of a private investigator's license has no more right than the average citizen.

In order to obtain the privilege of carrying a firearm, it is first necessary to obtain a private police commission. If your particular municipality does not have a private police commission (most of them do), check with local authorities and see if one from a nearby community will do.

In order to qualify for a private police commission, you must have adequate training, both legal and firearm. Most jurisdictions have minimum training necessary to obtain a commission, the mean being 120 hours. In several states,



though, legislation is in action to increase this requirement.

If you work in a large metropolitan area, you will find that if you work in fifteen mini-burbs, if they offer a commission, you will be the proud owner of fifteen commissions! Also, a good thing to remember is that most states allow you with a commission to carry a firearm *only* while working, or to and from work. I know, "How do these guys know when I'm working?" Oh, well. . . .

Another idiosyncrasy about commissions: When you obtain your commission, research it completely. In some cities, a police badge is issued with a special number to denote private police. In some cities being a holder of a private police commission requires you by law in the case of a major emergency to report to the authorities and assume any duties they deem necessary. In most cases holding a private police commission gives you the general powers of arrest afforded a municipal law-enforcement officer. This is true only of where your commission states you may work. Some require specific places of employment—"Honest Joe's Drugs," for example. Others, if you are in the investigative field rather than guards, can cover the entire community. For those starting guard services, keep this in mind: Some small communities do not allow guards at all! Some areas require that any need for guards be channeled through the local police department. If the request for guards cannot be met by off-duty police or is not lucrative enough for them, then, on a case-by-case basis private guards are allowed, but they are strictly regulated.

### MINIMUM AGE

When age is stated as 18 or 21, this refers to the "age of majority." It would be a very hard trick to be 18 years old and have completed the experience required to be licensed as a private investigator. However, there *are* several states which have no regulations or laws for investigators; therefore, no minimum age or experience is required.