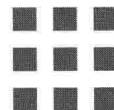


Jacqueline T. FISH | Jonathon FISH

# CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION CASE STUDIES

*Step by Step from  
the Crime Scene  
to the Courtroom*



# Crime Scene Investigation Case Studies

Step by Step from the Crime Scene  
to the Courtroom

Jacqueline T. Fish and Jonathon Fish



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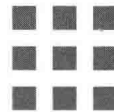
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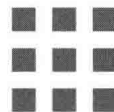
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# Crime Scene Investigation Case Studies



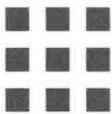
# Foreword

Have you ever heard the adage, “The job isn’t finished until the paperwork is done”? Without question, nowhere is this truer than in the field of criminal investigations. It is also true that the paperwork of any criminal investigation is absolutely vital for the proper administration of justice, where the innocent are protected and the guilty are held responsible for their illegal actions. You may be the greatest criminal investigator on the face of the earth, but if the paperwork in your case files is disorganized, incoherent, and doesn’t accurately, truthfully, and concisely reflect every aspect of your criminal investigation, then all of your hard work may be for naught and justice may be averted. When you are a criminal investigator, what you do or fail to do with your assigned criminal investigations, and this includes your paperwork, can have life or death consequences. The public has entrusted a great responsibility to our criminal investigators, and it is our sworn duty to do everything, within the law, to protect that trust.

With regards to the who, what, where, why, and how of criminal investigative paperwork, many jurisdictions provide only “in house” training, specific to their jurisdiction. Much of this training is “informal,” “on the job” training and is administered by senior investigators, who are assigned to tutor the new investigator. This type of training typically has inconsistent effects, and has the potential of passing on the habits, good and bad, of the senior investigator providing the training. While there will always be some jurisdictional differences involved in criminal investigative paperwork, there are far more universal aspects of criminal investigative paperwork that will be found in all criminal case files, regardless of the jurisdiction, and this text will highlight these best practices.

This text will provide readers with validated, standardized methodologies for completing thorough criminal investigative case files, regardless of the type of crime and jurisdiction, by highlighting actual case studies of different crimes and their associated investigative paperwork. The information presented in this text will form the ideal, non-bias foundation for future criminal investigators and newly assigned criminal investigators, as well as acting as a great refresher for experienced criminal investigators. When you are the criminal investigator, it is your name that will appear at the bottom of the case files, so remember, “garbage in, garbage out.”

Edward William Wallace Jr.  
Certified Senior Crime Scene Analyst,  
NYPD First Grade Detective (Retired)



# CSU Graduate Student Contributors

Charleston Southern University graduate students enrolled in the Master of Science in Criminal Justice program are responsible for the creativity of the case scenarios, development of the case files, preparation of the documentation, and presentation of the completed case files to colleagues for review. What started out as a graduate course assignment resulted in this newest textbook! Congratulations to every student for your perseverance and determination to earn your graduate degrees!

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## Chapter Four

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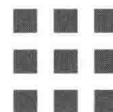
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# Preface

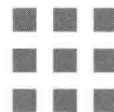
WIFM—what does that mean? Are they radio or television station call letters? Is it an abbreviation for a federal agency or a military acronym? Would you believe these letters stand for something you ask yourself every day: What's In it For Me? No matter what decision you are about to make, you inevitably weigh the outcome by asking, "What's in it for me?" You considered that question when deciding whether or not to take this class, and this textbook is the simple answer to that question. Students identified a need for a step-by-step manual as they seek to enhance their job performance as investigators.

Each chapter of this book involves a different type of criminal offense. After reading the opening section of the case, you will assume the role of investigator. Read the case narrative, and then identify the steps you will take to conduct the investigation (investigative strategy) and the accompanying documentation that must be completed. What criminal offenses have occurred? What are the elements of the crime? As you review the narrative, create a chronological timeline. You will find this extremely useful as events unfold throughout the investigation, and you are the primary person responsible for making sure every step is identified and examined throughout the case.

This book was created by students for students, and it is designed to teach you how to successfully complete investigative case files for criminal activities. Eighteen graduate students collaborated to create this collection of case studies. The events reflect criminal investigations that are conducted every day.

Small and large agencies alike create case files that eventually are reviewed for prosecutorial decisions. A variety of reports is available and an equal number of writing styles, required forms, standard operating procedures, and types of offenders exist. No two reports or files are the same. Every investigation is unique—and each of these case files is also quite different. However, every criminal investigation has commonalities, including chronological sequencing, constitutional guarantees, investigative strategies, and the capacity of the American criminal justice system to effectively identify the guilty and exonerate the innocent.

The criminal justice graduate students at Charleston Southern University offer you these case files to assist in your studies, provide valuable training experiences, and lead to justice being served.



# Digital Assets

Thank you for selecting Anderson Publishing's *Crime Scene Investigation Case Studies: Step by Step from the Crime Scene to the Courtroom*. To complement the learning experience, we have provided a number of online tools to accompany this edition. Two distinct packages of interactive digital assets are available: one for instructors and one for students.

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## For the Instructor

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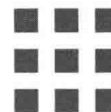
- **Test Bank** Compose, customize, and deliver exams using an online assessment package in a free Windows-based authoring tool that makes it easy to build tests using the unique multiple-choice and true or false questions created for *Crime Scene Investigation Case Studies*. What's more, this authoring tool allows you to export customized exams directly to Blackboard, WebCT, eCollege, Angel, and other leading systems. All test bank files are also conveniently offered in Word format.
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## For the Student

Students will need to visit this link in order to access the ancillaries listed here: [www.elsevierdirect.com/companion.jsp?ISBN=9781455731237](http://www.elsevierdirect.com/companion.jsp?ISBN=9781455731237).

- **Self-Assessment Question Bank** Enhance, review, and study sessions with the help of this online self-quizzing asset. Each question is presented in an interactive format that allows for immediate feedback.
- **Forms for Filling Out Reports**
- **Video Resources for Select Cases**
- **Image Bank** Full-color images of the photos in the book.





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# Introduction

## From the Scene of the Crime to the Desk of the Prosecutor

### **OBJECTIVE**

This opening chapter introduces the methodologies of investigating and reporting criminal offenses beyond the initial response. It includes a sample case for illustrative purposes.

### **KEY TERMS**

case file	investigation	opinions
chronological order	jargon	reports
complainant	linkage	solvability factors
<i>corpus delicti</i>	Locards Exchange Principle	suspect
credibility	<i>modus operandi</i>	victim
elements	narrative	
fact	objective	

## What You Will Learn

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Describe the differences between facts and opinions
- Explain the goals of an investigation
- Examine case narratives to determine investigative strategies
- Identify the elements of the crime under investigation
- Review case file documents for accuracy
- Recognize areas for improvement in case files

## Introduction

Millions of words have been written in an effort to educate and train law enforcement personnel to become well-prepared police officers, show crime scene technicians how to process crime scenes, help law school students to complete bar examinations, and equip judges to

fairly administer justice in the courtroom. What is the single tie that binds all these phases of the criminal justice system together? Investigative case files. First responders deal with emergency situations, and then they must begin the paperwork process that may cross dozens of desks and linger in the courts for many years. That initial preliminary investigation sets in motion a comprehensive course of action culminating in the completion of the inquiry process that may not end for decades. As with all systems, a strategy must be in place to guide the development of the investigation.

Poor police reporting can jeopardize effective criminal prosecution. Who is going to read your reports and case files? There is a wide spectrum of people contained in this audience, and first to view the report is your supervisor. Once the report is approved and becomes an official record, the list of readers expands: lawyers, prosecutors, judges, jurors, social workers, government officials, insurance adjusters and investigators, citizens, defendants, media representatives, crime lab analysts, and other investigating agencies. Is your work of sufficient quality to withstand all this scrutiny? Did you verify the information contained in the reports and subsequent forms? Can a person who is not familiar with investigative techniques read your report and develop a clear understanding of the events that have been documented?

This publication has been compiled to assist investigators and students in the various methodologies required to construct solid, factual investigative case files. These very different cases are presented for review, along with the required paperwork and an informative narrative that will provide details not apparent in the traditional reporting format. These types of investigations are conducted every day in agencies of every size across the United States and throughout the world. There is no “one size fits all” approach to acquiring the knowledge and skills that are required for successful case prosecution. We present the scenarios and the forms; you develop the timeline and the investigative strategy for completing the case file.

Investigation is successful when all the gaps are filled between the statements, alternative explanations are considered but then eliminated, and a solid prosecutable case file is presented to the state’s attorney for review. Not all investigations will result in arrests. Not all arrests will result in prosecutions. Certainly not all prosecutions will produce a conviction. The goal is to achieve justice. Were guilty perpetrators identified and prosecuted? Equally important, were the innocent exonerated and not wrongfully prosecuted?

## Overview

In the United States, more than 16,000 law enforcement agencies generate reports on a daily basis. Since 1838 when the Boston Police Department became the first official police agency in the United States, crime and offense reports have been written. After more than 170 years of compiling reports, there is still no uniform or consistent method of collecting information when officers are called to provide assistance and begin an investigation. Most law enforcement agencies have now moved to the use of standardized reports, but no matter how far technology advances, there will always be reporting requirements for law enforcement functions.

There are not many proficient criminal investigators available for hire by police agencies. The diverse skills that must be developed and honed for one to become a highly effective

**FIGURE 1-1** Many forms and documents are required for case files.

that all activities are documented so that any authorized individual reviewing the associated records will arrive at an informed decision regarding the investigation.

## Terminology Used Throughout the Book

What is the definition of a report? **Reports** are permanent records of all important facts in a case. We need to examine this statement. Just what exactly is a fact? Look around the room now, examine an object, and then state a fact related to that object. For example, the highlighter I use when I am studying is yellow. Would you agree? How would you know this is a fact? The definition of a **fact** is simple: it is a statement that can be proven. When you read that statement, a picture formed in your mind of a yellow highlighter. Would you call that a preconceived notion because you are familiar with yellow highlighters? How do you know whether my highlighter has the diameter of a pen or a magic marker? How do you visualize yellow? Was it fluorescent or banana yellow? Was the cap chewed on? Why does it matter?

This exercise demonstrates the limited knowledge of an individual who was not at the scene and does not have first-hand knowledge with the events contained in the police report. The activities and observations recorded in an official report must be accurate and all information must be reported. Although it seems entirely petty to record such detail as the brand and style of the highlighter, at some point that type of precise information could become vital in creating a **linkage** or association among a victim, the crime scene, and a perpetrator. If you gain the skill of accurately conveying the totality of the information in every instance, your work will survive the scrutiny of a defense attorney in the courtroom.

You have no doubt completed many courses in criminal justice, from the historical beginnings to current-day Homeland Security issues. As students, you can probably list the steps that should be taken by an officer who observes criminal activity or who is dispatched to the scene of an event requiring police assistance. Can you clearly define an **investigation**? It is a systematic and detailed inquiry to determine the truth and let the facts prove or disprove allegations. It also involves seeking to identify those responsible for the events and to eliminate the innocent from suspicion. Finally, if a **corpus delicti** is established (evidence that a crime has been committed), a complete investigative file will present the best case possible for prosecution.

An investigator must establish **elements** of the crime, which are specific legal aspects of a criminal offense that must be proven. If a suspect is charged with the offense, all elements must be established beyond a reasonable doubt or there can be no finding of guilt. Determining the truth is more important than obtaining a conviction or closing a case. State statutes vary regarding the specific elements of offenses, but in every criminal proceeding, each specific condition must be identified for an act to be called a specific crime.

This case studies book consists of carefully structured learning experiences that place you in the role of an investigator who is conducting an investigation and completing the paperwork necessary to build a criminal case file. Although this book is by no means comprehensive,

it will provide you with a guide as you gain knowledge and skills in the “art” of writing. Remember, good writers can write about anything. A good investigator will establish **credibility** by remaining unbiased and impartial, and those traits will be reflected in your written work. Credibility is hard to establish and easy to lose.

Not all crimes are solvable. Many cases have insufficient evidence, no witnesses, and no informants to provide leads. In many instances, the responding officer will complete the initial report and an investigator will examine that report and determine the **solvability factors**—statements that are crucial to solving crimes and in prioritizing caseloads. The data are used for compiling statistics, and the victim (if insured) will provide a copy of the report for claim reimbursement; then the case is removed from active investigation.

The **narrative** section of the report is where the story is told. A well-structured narrative focuses on content and factual statements. Although incident and offense reports vary considerably in format, there is always a section where the officers record personal observations, document actions, and “tell the story.” There is never any room for your opinion in this type of report. Always use the first-person, past tense, active voice, and present the events in chronological order. Use short, clear, concise, and concrete words to explain the situation. **Jargon**, which consists of words, expressions, or phrases specific to a profession or occupation, can create confusion and cause delays or dismissals of criminal charges and should therefore not appear in the reports.

Detailed notes can make or break a case. Take notes on every step taken in every investigation. Ensure the information you record provides a complete and accurate depiction of the scene, the victims, the witnesses, the physical evidence, and the results of all analyses. You should always carry a personal notebook to write down complete, accurate, specific, and factual information. Remember, your opinion has no place in the reports. **Opinions** are beliefs that may not be accurate and may not be provable, whereas facts are tangible things used to make solid decisions and that can be proven. Your job is to provide case files that are **objective**—that is, the documents and statements display no bias, are non-opinionated, fair, and impartial.

As an investigator, you will establish a timeline—or sequence of the events. This timeline will assist you as you complete all of the paperwork following the **chronological order** of the incident. The importance and accuracy of the sequence can be used to establish the whereabouts of suspects, witnesses, weapons, and subsequent activities in relation to the victim. In fact, to proceed with an investigation, one of the primary responsibilities of law enforcement officers is to establish the **corpus delicti**, or “the body of the crime.” This does not literally mean that a body must be discovered, but it must be proven that someone has committed an offense. For example, if a purse with identification and personal items is found discarded alongside a highway, would you agree that it is the *corpus delicti*? With the discovery of the purse, it has not been proven that a crime occurred, so the answer is no. What does it take to make the purse the *corpus delicti*? First, it has to be proven that the property has been stolen and that a person is criminally responsible for this activity. If it cannot be established that the purse was stolen, then no crime has occurred.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE

0735 Call received at 911  
 0735 Call dispatched to patrol officer  
 0741 First officer arrived on scene (Duncan)  
 0742 Fire department on scene  
 0743 Backup officer arrives on scene  
 0744 Perimeter established  
 0746 Supervisors notified  
 0748 Investigator dispatched to scene (Humphrey)  
 0750 Crime scene investigator (CSI) dispatched to scene (Reeves)  
 0814 CSI arrives on scene  
 0820 Investigator and CSI conduct scene walkthrough  
 0850 Coroner arrives on scene (Rhodes)  
 0900 Photographs completed and sketches started  
 0903 Patrol supervisor arrives on scene (Potter)  
 0911 Backup officer begins neighborhood canvas to locate potential witnesses  
 1110 CSI completes diagram, photos, evidence collection  
 1115 Witness list provided to investigator; canvas is completed  
 1210 Coroner releases body to be removed from scene  
 1320 Patrol and CSI debrief with investigator  
 1330 Patrol and CSI clear scene  
 1405 CSI checks physical evidence in to Evidence/Property Unit  
 1415 Investigator begins interviewing neighborhood witnesses  
 1600 CSI reports to morgue to brief medical examiner and witness autopsy

To be continued throughout the investigation.

## The Purpose of This Book

Each chapter of this book involves a different type of criminal offense. After reading the opening section of the case, you will assume the role of investigator. Read the case narrative and then identify the steps you will take to conduct the investigation (your investigative strategy) and the accompanying documentation that must be completed. What criminal offenses have occurred? What are the elements of the crime? As you review the narrative, create a timeline. You will find this extremely useful as events unfold throughout the investigation and you are the primary person responsible for making sure every step is identified and examined throughout the case.