

Guiding Principles on collecting, protecting, and preserving documentary evidence

Documentary evidence such as papers, logbooks, registrars:

1. Designate a focal point who handles, documents and tracks the evidence. **Have as few people handling the evidence as possible.**
2. Protect the evidence from people or damage. If possible, freeze it in its location and guard it. Record the state of the evidence. Take photos or video the evidence in its earliest state before it is touched, if possible. If you can't photograph or video, make notes and sketches.
3. If the evidence needs to be moved, document it in its earliest state, and document the collection and transfer/movement of evidence. Document by photo, video, sketches, or notes. Make notes as soon as possible of:
 - date and time,
 - where found and moved to, by whom,
 - a description of the evidence,
 - how it was seized, moved, and stored.
4. Limit access to the evidence as much as possible. Box it up, lock it up, keep it in a dry cool secure place where people can't handle it and it is protected from damage.
5. Treat your photos, videos, sketches, and notes like evidence too. Keep them safe and secure.
6. There is no such thing as too much documentation. Keep your notes of the evidence all along its journey.
7. Start a "chain of custody" log as soon as possible which accompanies each box or grouping of evidence- This log keeps track of the evidence: a description of the evidence, who touched it, when, and where. This will help preserve the integrity of the evidence, the evidence handlers, and make it more usable in a court.

Electronic devices and storage media (e.g., computers, mobile devices, hard drives, SSDs or USBs, etc):

1. Same guidance as above, ensuring to keep devices away from heat, moisture, and magnetic fields.
2. If devices are already turned off, leave them off. If devices are turned on, leave them on, and connect them to a charger if possible. Avoid charging through USB ports on other devices, and only charge to an electrical outlet. Avoid connecting storage media to any other device.
3. Document the device (including its screen and any identifying markings) by photo, video, or sketches and notes: where and how found; when, by who, and description of what it is (physical description, model, registration or serial #).
4. Document the device and its movement with a Chain of Custody log, as above.



Collecting, Preserving and Protecting Checklist:

1. Documentation

- a) Photo
- b) Video
- c) Sketches
- d) Notes

2. Preserve physical evidence

- a) Packaging and storage
- b) Safe and secure location

3. Chain of Custody

- a) Date and time
- b) Location where found, and where moved to
- c) Name of person(s)
- d) Physical description of evidence