



ATF-LS-QD1 Handwriting/Hand Printing Examinations	Published Online: March 2018
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PRINCIPLE:

To determine, if possible, whether or not a specific writer wrote the questioned handwritten or hand printed material.

SPECIAL HANDLING:

1. Evidence containing body fluids that is received in the Document Section should be dried under a hood and then repackaged in a paper box or envelope. Items should be handled in order to prevent examiner exposure and preserve DNA, if requested by the submitter. Contents should be documented on the front of the packaging.
2. When handling a contaminated document, the examiner must have on a lab coat and rubber gloves. The evidence should be opened and examined only under a biohazard safety hood. After examination the document should be heat sealed. The work area should be disinfected and the lab coat placed in a biohazard bag and sent to the laundry. The gloves must be placed in a properly labeled biohazard disposal after the examination is concluded.
3. Evidence submitted requesting a latent print examination should be placed in a plastic or mylar sheet protector covering the evidence. In this case, item and examiner identifying marks should be placed on the protective sheet.

SPECIMEN(S):

1. An item containing an unknown/questioned handwritten or hand printed entry.
2. Sufficient known standards/writings of each individual suspect to be compared.

SUPPLIES REQUIRED:

Paper, pen, photocopies of evidence

APPARATUS REQUIRED:

1. Stereoscopic microscope and/or hand magnifier
2. Light sources
3. photocopier

CALIBRATION REQUIREMENTS:

Microscope maintained in house.

No special calibration beyond routine maintenance is required.

PROCEDURE:

The method for conducting a handwriting/hand printing examination will generally include the following:

1. Distinguish items into questioned and known categories.
2. The evidence is marked in ink with the appropriate item number as it appears on the Laboratory transmittal sheet, the case number, and the examiner's initials or other mark. Items on the transmittal sheet may be amended by adding "Q" and "K" identifiers. Such amendments should be notated on a copy of the transmittal placed in the case jacket and the contributor should be notified via phone or email. It will be determined by the Forensic Document Examiner on a case by case basis if the quality of photocopied and/or photographed evidence (known and questioned) contains sufficient detail to support any of the nine conclusions that may be rendered.
3. Compare the known writings to insure that those submitted as being by one writer were written by one writer.
4. If there is more than one questioned item, cross-compare them with each other to determine if all items were prepared by the same writer.
5. Examine in detail the known writing assessing both class and individual characteristics.
6. Using a stereoscopic microscope, examine in detail the questioned writing assessing both class and individual characteristics. Some of the individualizing characteristics include: General writing style, slant, line quality, line shading or pen pressure, relationships and proportion of letters and words, spacing, initial and final strokes, pen lifts, alignment, direction of strokes, method of formation of letters, punctuation, drag marks, and retouching or patching
7. Compare each questioned item with each set of known writings assessing the similarities as well as the dissimilarities that appear in the writing, weighing the significance of each that are observed.
8. Make written notes on photocopies and/or worksheet(s) of a representative sample of the significant characteristics of the evidence documenting similarities and dissimilarities of each item.
9. Formulate a conclusion based on all the evidence examined.
10. A complete technical review is conducted by another qualified examiner and documented and initialed on Technical Case File Review Form.
11. Record findings in written form and have the results recorded on a formal laboratory report.
12. The bases and reasons for the conclusion(s), opinion(s), or finding(s) should be included either on the examiner's worksheet or on photocopies and may be also included in the report.
13. It is the responsibility of the submitter to authenticate suspect's collected standards received from a business, school, or social environment. Collected standards are accepted by the document examiner as known writing of a particular writer. If at any point it is revealed that one or more standards cannot be authenticated, any final report issued based on those standards becomes null and void and a new examination must be conducted based on the remaining evidence.

DOCUMENTATION:

Work notes consisting of photocopies of a representative sample of the significant characteristics of the evidence on which the examiner marks similarities and/or dissimilarities together with the written observations of the examiner. A Questioned Document Worksheet will accompany each case and should

include the equipment and/or procedures used, the identifying or eliminating features, and the results of analysis.

REFERENCES:

Conway, James V. P., Evidential Documents, Charles C. Thomas

Publisher, Springfield, Illinois, 1972.

Harrison, Wilson R., Suspect Documents: Their Scientific Examination, Swed & Maxwell Limited, London, England, 1966.

Lindblom B., Kelly J. Scientific Examination of Questioned Documents 2nd Ed., Taylor & Francis Group, Boca Raton, FL, 2006

Osborn, Albert S., Questioned Documents, Nelson-Hall Inc., Chicago, Illinois, 1929.

SWGDOC Standard Guide for Examination of Handwritten Items

ASTM 1658-08 Standard Guide for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners

Various professional papers written on various aspects of Handwriting identification.