

Street-Level Investigation Tips

Phone Numbers

- If you have an address, you can ask dispatch to look up the phone number in the reverse directory (but it might be unlisted).
- You can ask dispatch to look up a phone number in the phone book if you have a name OR an address (but it might be unlisted).
- If you have a phone number of a residence, you can have dispatch call it.
 - You might hear the phone ringing inside, which would verify if you have the correct phone number (or that the subject knows the phone number).
 - Dispatch may get an answering machine, on which there may be information about the home-owner (“Hello, you’ve reached so-and-so, leave a message...”).
- You can ask neighbors or apartment managers for the phone number of a residence.
- If you are searching for the phone numbers for an address or person, you can check the incident reports and FIRs. (In some departments, officers have instant computer access to reports and FIRs right at their patrol cars. In other departments, you may have to ask dispatch to look it up, or even ask another officer go to the station and look it up by hand.)

Getting the Keys for a Residence / Building

- Check to see if a neighbor or the apartment manager has one.
- Dispatch may have the contact info for businesses in your patrol area. Ask dispatch for a ‘keyholder.’
- If there is an alarm, have dispatch call the alarm company and ask for the ‘subscriber/keyholder.’

Confirming the Identity a Subject

- Ask the subject for his/her date of birth. Then quickly ask how old he/she is. The numbers should match, and the subject should not have to think too hard about it.
- Run the subject and verify the physical description of the subject listed in the DOL computer. Ask dispatch to give you the ‘physicals’ and see if they match your subject.
- If subject has no ID, ask the subject for his/her address. Then ask dispatch for the address listed with DOL and see if it matches.
- Ask the subject for his/her driver’s license number. Does the license number match the DOB the subject gave you? WA driver’s license/ID numbers follow a system where you can determine the year and month of birth from the license number.
- Ask for the phone number of a friend or relative. Have dispatch call that person to ask about your subject – where the subject is supposed to be, what the subject is driving, what the subject looks like, or other questions to help you verify the subject is telling you the truth. Most people can provide a phone number of somebody that can vouch for them.
- Ask the subject where he/she works. If during business hours, you can ask for dispatch to look up the phone number for the business. Dispatch can call the business, speak with the supervisor and verify that a person by that name actually works there.
- Ask for the subject’s home or cell phone number. If the subject has an answering machine/service, there might be a voice message greeting from the subject for that phone number. Have dispatch call it and see.
- Ask lots of questions about the subject and note the answers. Then after a break of few minutes, ask the same questions again and see if the subject’s answers have changed.
- Use the subject’s name unexpectedly and look for recognition or lack thereof.

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- Ask the subject for their astrological sign. Even if they don't believe in astrology, most adults know their sign without having to think about it.
- If you have legal authority to search, you can search the subject/vehicle for paperwork that has different names on it. Often, the subject will lie about their name, but still use the same DOB. Try running the name(s) you find on the paper with the DOB the subject gave you.
- If you are going to take enforcement action on a subject (criminal citation or arrest), you must ensure that you are charging the right person with the crime. If they have no ID and you are unsure of their true identity, you can transport them to a facility where you can fingerprint them (police station or jail), because at that point, they have committed a crime (either the crime you have arrested them for, NVOL w/o ID, or Failure to Provide Info).
- If you think the subject is lying to you, you can try a bluff. Tell the subject that the name they gave you has an arrest warrant for a low-level crime (like shoplifting or DWLS). See if they change their story to avoid being arrested for the imaginary warrant. (Don't actually take into custody as part of your bluff unless you have legal authority to do that anyway.)
- Ask the subject for his/her Social Security Number. Also ask where he/she was born. Does the SSN number break down correctly to reflect their place of birth? SSNs follow a system by state of birth. If you don't have the list of how the numbers work, dispatch MIGHT be able to check for you. Another officer MIGHT be able to look it up for you.

If Running a Name Returns 'No Record'

- The subject may be lying about (making up) his/her info. Press harder – more questions.
- Juveniles and illegal aliens may not have been entered into the computer systems yet. But if they've ever received a traffic citation, they should be in the DOL computer. Just know that the vast majority of adults SHOULD have a record SOMEWHERE. Press harder – more questions.
- The subject may be licensed out of a state other than Washington. The records check will not return records from other states unless the dispatcher specifically requests it. Ask the subject if they've ever had a license or ID in another state, then ask dispatch to run the name in that state.

Does the Subject Really Belong With or Own a Vehicle?

- Does the subject have the keys?
- Does the subject know the alarm or keyless-entry code?
- Does the registration list your subject?
- Is there paperwork in the car with the subject's name on it?
- Does the subject have the same last name of the registered owner? Is the subject a relative or family member of the registered owner?
- Run the plate and ask dispatch for the registered owner's info.
 - Does it match your subject?
 - Can your subject provide you with the name of the registered owner? (Make sure to ask the subject about it before you ask dispatch. You don't want the subject to just hear the return on your radio.)
 - If your subject is claiming to be the owner, can he/she provide the name of the legal owner (the bank or finance company)?

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- Ask the subject details about the vehicle that would be hard to guess – tire/wheel sizes, engine size, mileage, license tab expiration, or other pieces of info that only the owner would know. (Careful though, some owners don't know that stuff about their own cars either.)
- Ask the subject to describe for you what is inside the vehicle, glove box, under the seats, in the trunk, etc.
- Is the vehicle set-up for the same size person? If the 6'5" subject is claiming to be the owner of the vehicle, and the driver's seat is clearly adjusted for a small person, the subject might be lying.
- If at an accident scene, does the subject have seatbelt marks on chest and shoulders? Does the subject have broken glass in hair or on clothes? Is the subject injured in a way that is consistent with the accident scene?

Does the Subject Really Live at the Residence?

- Does the subject's ID list the same address?
- Does the subject have a key or good alarm code to the residence?
- Does the subject's name appear on the mailbox or door placard?
- Does the subject have paperwork that lists the address in question?
- Does the subject know where a spare key to the residence is kept?
- Ask a neighbor or the apartment manager. You can have dispatch try to call the apartment manager for you.
- Ask the subject for phone numbers of people (employer, family, friend) that can vouch for him/her. Have dispatch call those people to verify.
- Ask dispatch to check the premises history. There may be information about previous incidents and people associated with the address.
- Most people know what vehicles their neighbors drive. If in an apartment complex, ask the subject to tell you which vehicles nearby belong with which apartment. Then run a few of the plates and see if the registrations match up with the right apartments.
- If you have access to your department's FIR records and reports, the subject may have been the subject of a FIR or report in the past, and he/she might have given this address. (In some departments, officers have instant computer access to FIRs and reports right at their patrol cars. In other departments, you may have to ask dispatch to look it up, or even ask another officer go to the station and look it up by hand in the FIR files or reports.)

Is the Subject Telling the Truth?

- Make the subject PROVE his story.
- Tell the subject your concern or dilemma – make him convince you that his story is true.
- Can he offer up a witness or someone to call to confirm his story? Ask for that person's name and phone number.
- Does he have paperwork or ID cards that confirm his story?
- Does the subject know something that only the right person would know?