

Crime Scene Searching

Session Materials

When searching a crime scene there are five principles which should be followed:

1. Be thorough:

This will most likely be the only chance you have to search the scene before it becomes contaminated with personnel who are working the scene. Make sure you locate everything that you need the first time you might not get to go back.

2. Be organized:

Do not jump around the scene and go from place to place. Have a plan to search in a systematic order from the starting point to the end.

3. Use a reasonable length of time:

You are the police and no one is going to take the scene from you, take all the time that you need to do the scene correctly. Remember that there are other calls pending and other officers waiting for you to get done so that they can do their jobs so don't take longer than you have to.

4. Use non-destructive techniques:

The area or item that you are searching belongs to someone so don't damage things if it is not necessary. If you have to damage something to gain access to your evidence you may do so but you must document in your report why it became necessary.

5. Once located, photograph and record:

After you locate pieces of evidence you should mark it in place, photograph it in place and records its location in your notes and diagram. Remember the Golden Rule of Criminal Investigations, ***"No evidentiary item is to be moved until it is marked, photographed and sketched"***.

Crime scene search patterns need to be developed to be able to locate the evidence in the most efficient manner possible while keeping the crime scene contamination to a minimum.

Here are four standard crime scene search patterns that are commonly used in law enforcement. You will need to determine which pattern is the best for the scene that you have.

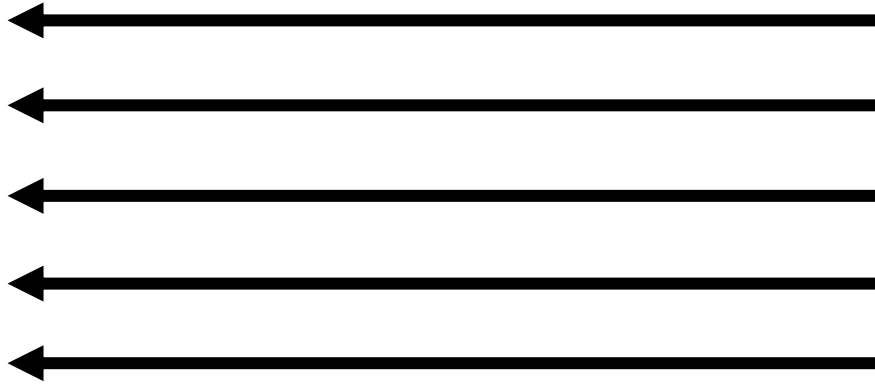


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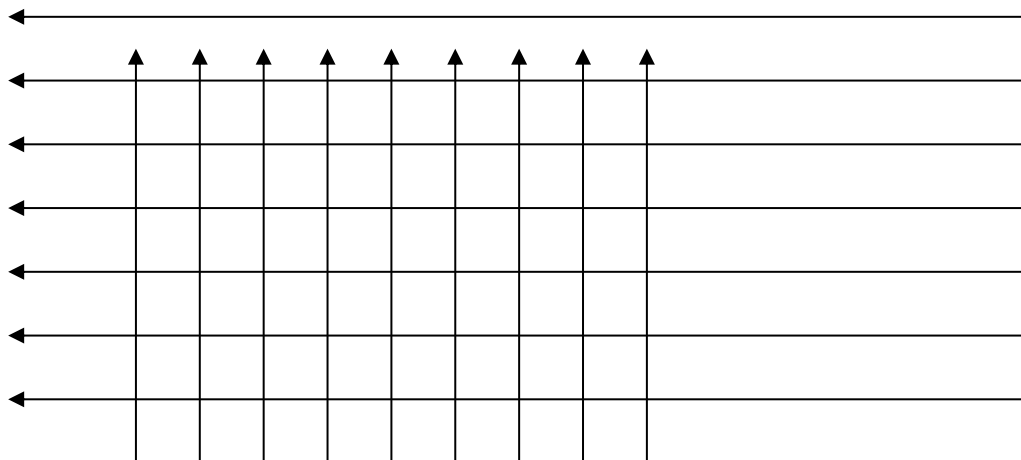
1. Strip or Line Search:

One point to another. Works best with a team. Good for outdoors or large scenes. Each member has a lane of responsibility, the area from the searcher on their left and right.



2. Grid Search:

Similar to the strip or line search except that it overlaps.

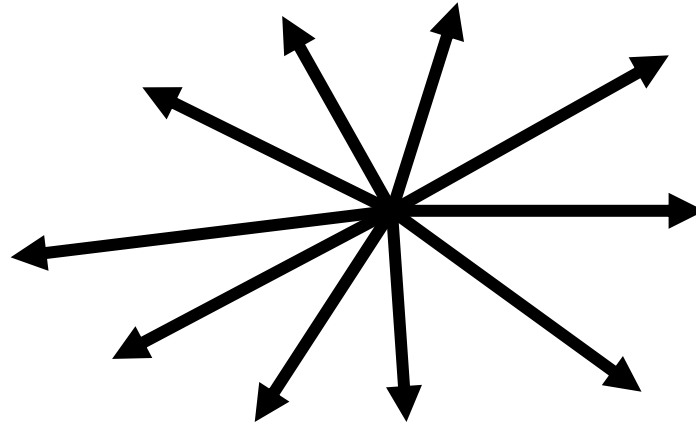


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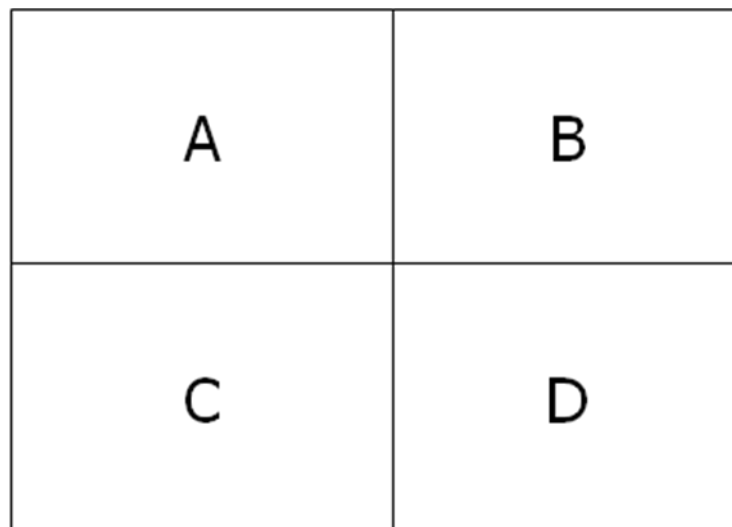
3. Radius / Wheel Search:

Pie shaped. All personnel start in the center and work outward. The drawback is that the area becomes larger the farther out you go.



4. Zone / Quadrant Search:

Break the area to be searched into zones and search the first zone completely, top to bottom and side to side. When completed you move to the next zone doing the same thing. You can overlap into the adjacent zones so that you cover the area more than once. This search is good for the inside of residences and cars.



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5. **Spiral Search:**

Start in the center and walk in an expanding circular pattern.

