

What is a criminal investigator



A criminal investigator is a law enforcement professional who attempts to solve crimes, identify and detain suspects, and prevent future instances of criminal activity. When we think of a criminal investigator pictures of gruesome crime scenes, laboratories and paperwork come to mind. We often do not pay attention to interviews and interrogations or notice the importance of a role it plays in the investigation. Methods of inquiry, having the optimal mindset, knowing what the scientific method is and the importance of your sources of information are all vital knowledge a criminal investigator must know.

Although TV portrays an investigator's job as primarily searching for physical evidence, inquiring about information from sources that were present or knew about the crime is very crucial to a case. Many investigators use method of inquiry. An inquiry is looking for information on something either through what they already know by questioning - interviewing and/or interrogation - or by researching. An interview is where the investigator will try to set a relaxed atmosphere and try to form a rapport with the witness.

They will ask questions in the hope of gaining information that could be used in the case. In interrogations an investigator will be very informal and rough when questioning a suspect in hopes of a confession. An investigator will also research files to find out about past crimes that are similar to the current case. They will look into old cases from the suspect or old cases that were committed by others. A good investigator will use what they already know when questioning or researching the current crime scene. Having the optimal mindset can be an investigators greatest tool.

It is a fixed mental attitude and disposition that can help predetermine an investigator's responses and interpretations of the situation. Intelligence and reasoning are the top qualities an investigator must possess. Being able to analyze and relate a large number of facts at one time is actually a requirement in this field. According to Osteburg & Ward (2007, p. 12), an investigator " must score a 110 or better on a general classification test". Observation and memory are other great attributes for an investigator to have, as these are primary tasks while at a crime scene.

You want to be able to recall as much information as possible. In order to remember it, you must first have noticed it. Imagination and curiosity are just what they are but an investigator must instinctively know how to apply these qualities to the job at hand. Above all an investigator must possess the ability to recognize and control any bias or prejudicial action or thoughts that they may have at all times, whether it is in court or at the crime scene.

Criminal investigators must also be scientists, in a manner of speaking.

The similarities between scientists and criminal investigators are the search for the conclusion or a cause of the effect. Both scientists and criminal investigators are specially trained in their field of practice. They tend to use similar methods of research and investigation when looking for answers.

Yeschke states: The scientific method generally involves the use of inductive logic, which requires repeated observations of an experiment or of an event.

Scientists also use deductive logic, reasoning from known scientific principles or rules to draw a conclusion about a specific case. (2003, p. 2)

Scientific method, at its most basic level, is: State the Problem, Form Hypothesis, Test Hypothesis, keep going until you know for sure if your hypothesis is correct or not. Criminal investigators would never be able to solve a crime without other sources to help them: forensic people, witnesses, surveillance, even records and files. These are just four important sources of information that could make or break a case. An investigator must be able to get all the information that he/she can get or needs. People can possess a great deal of information if the right questions are asked and the person is cooperative.

Sometimes these sources will require the help of professionals: Forensic scientists, fingerprint analysis readers, and some machines, too, such as the lie detector. It tells us the difference between a truth and a lie. Forensic scientists help us in many ways. Forensic science may be formed into two categories: criminalistics and forensic medicine. Osteburg & Ward tell us “Criminalistics, the branch of forensic science concerned with the recording, scientific examination, and interpretation of the minute details to be found in physical evidence” (2007, p. 26).

Osteburg & Ward go on to define forensic medicine as: The branch of medicine offering training in the study of diseases and trauma (their causes and consequences) is pathology. Forensic pathology goes beyond the normal concern with disease, to the study of the causes of death – whether from natural, accidental, or criminal agency. Forensic medicine -- including forensic pathology, forensic serology, toxicology, forensic odontology, and forensic psychiatry -- contributes not only to homicide investigation, but to other kinds of criminal investigation. (2007, p. 0)

<https://assignbuster.com/what-is-a-criminal-investigator/>

Using criminalistics investigators gain large sums of information such as fingerprints, firearm and tool marks. With forensic medicine which has so many branches it depends on the one you use. Pathology can tell us time of death, toxicology can tell if a poison was used and if so what kind. Each of these roles is indispensable and valuable to an investigator in its own way. The victim or witness can be the most reliable source of information at times. Especially if they were able to get a good look at the suspect's face or notice any other significant markings on the suspect.

If the victim or witness is able to describe the suspect we can get artists to draw a sketch of the suspect. This would help apprehend the suspect as we are able to give others a visual of what he/she looks like. The suspect themselves can also be a great source of information; they can provide the answers to the how and why. Then we have people that are known as informants. Their information is not always reliable, but can be valuable if the right questions are asked. An informant is normally someone that is willing to give information freely pertaining to your case, however some do require payment.

Surveillance is another great source of information that investigators use in many cases. Osteburg & Ward state: Because surveillance requires a high degree of expertise, some larger police departments and federal agencies have established surveillance units. The FBI has nonagent surveillance teams in many cities, usually focusing on counter-intelligence or highprofile crimes. These teams are equipped with or have access to high-technology equipment as well as aircraft and unmarked vehicles. The lore of surveillance is based for the most part on three perspectives. One view is the result of the <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-a-criminal-investigator/>

“ private eye’s” experience in divorce cases, in which a relatively simple, one-on-one observation is feasible.

Another is that of the “ street smart” detective who learns from tailing professional criminals of the elaborate precautions they take to shake off the police. The third and most sophisticated derives from the experience of investigators surveilling espionage agents who have been trained to detect and then lose anyone thought to be following them. (2007, p. 245) Records and files although not exciting as the other methods in obtaining information still is a valuable source in its own right.

Records containing personal information can be found on almost every person in the United States. From the time we are born to the time we die paperwork is recorded and filed away. Most of these records contain birth certificates, licenses, education, and medical history. These are just a few examples of what can be found within a file. All of the information in a file can be linked to an actual person in one way or another. Take for example a driver license, if current it may link a person to an address, if not current it still is able to give you a starting point in the direction of obtaining the information you need.

Criminal investigators must use many resources and methods within their field. Even with the help of outside sources it can be a very demanding job. An investigator must be able to take in everything they see or hear and apply it to the case at hand. It is a job that can be very time consuming and stressful, yet fulfilling at the same time. When an investigator sees a suspect caught and all the evidence he/she has gathered all be admissible to court

and the suspect sentenced, then they know they have just taken another criminal off the streets and might have saved others from being victims.