

COLLECTING EXEMPLARS

The best thing you can do to support your document expert is to provide him with as much known and valid handwriting samples as possible at the onset of the case. Samples are usually called “known samples”, “exemplars” or “standards” and are legally admissible and known authentic samples of the subject’s handwriting that is used to compare against or with the document(s) of which validity is in question. It is very important to assure the chain of custody of all known samples that are being used by the document examiner in which she can form an opinion concerning the authenticity of the documents that are in question. There are two kinds of known samples and they are ‘informal’ (previously executed but known to be genuine) and ‘formal’ (requested handwriting samples).

One of the major factors in document examination is the quality of the samples being submitted to the examiner. This is very important to know so that the legal team and other investigators can anticipate the examiner’s needs immediately to save time in case preparation. Document experts work to establish the similarities and differences in the sample comparisons and having clear samples helps avoid errors and a ruling of inconclusive.

Informal handwriting samples are the best to utilize when hiring document examiners because they are typically written without duress and reflect the self-conscious of the writer more accurately. Requested samples can cause one to attempt to stylize or disguise their writing... especially if guilty. However, there may be times when the document experts ask for statements from victims and suspects both so be sure to inform those individuals that it may be requested of them should it be decided to use an expert. The expert will tell you what these individuals should write that are specific key phrases to the case so do not ask them to write until advised to do so by the expert.

Many times, investigators and lawyers ask for help in locating informal writing samples while still maintaining the integrity (chain of custody) of the document. In other words, where can they obtain handwriting samples that can be proven to be the valid handwriting of the individual? Following you will see a list of over 100 places to help with that.

When comparing signatures, it is important to try and obtain signatures that appear to be similar to the one in question. However, if you cannot locate any, anything else with a signature will do in most cases such as a canceled check.

Try to get samples within a somewhat close date range because age, illness, trauma, stroke, grief, medication, substance abuse, and other factors can cause deteriorated handwriting.

HOW MANY SAMPLES OF HANDWRITING SHOULD YOU PROVIDE?

The type of case determines the number of known writing samples that the document examiner needs for comparison with the documents in question. However, try to collect as many as possible. However, most frequently, document examiners are given 1 – 5 samples on average. While one can win a case, more is best.

OVER 150 PLACES WHERE YOU CAN COLLECT HANDWRITING EXEMPLARS

- Accident reports
- Account books
- Address books
- Affidavits
- Airplane logs or tickets
- Arrest records
- Assignments
- Athletic records
- Autographs
- Automobile insurance papers
- Automobile license papers
- Automobile title papers
- Bail bonds
- Bank deposit slips
- Bank savings withdrawal slips
- Bank signature cards
- Bank statements
- Baptism records
- Bible entries
- Bills of sale
- Birth certificates
- Bonds
- Books, signature of owners in
- Building "after hours" registers
- Business license applications
- Car rental
- Charity pledges
- Check book stubs
- Checks, including endorsements
- Church pledges
- Civic organizations
- Civil service papers
- Client checks
- Club memberships
- Contracts
- Convention registration
- Convention registrations
- Cooking recipes
- Corporate dictation
- Corporate papers
- Court briefs and pleadings
- Credit applications
- Credit cards and charge slips
- Criminal records
- Deeds
- Deeds of trust
- Delivery / return receipt postal documents
- Depositions
- Diaries
- Divorce papers
- Dog license applications
- Drafts
- Drive-it-yourself applications
- Driver's licenses and applications
- Drug register
- Educational records
- Employment applications
- Envelopes, address on
- Ex-spouse
- Fishing licenses
- Fraternity papers
- Friends
- Funeral attendance registers
- G.I. loan documents
- Gas service applications
- Gate records at defense plants
- Greeting cards
- Grocery list
- Homework
- Hospital records or papers
- Hotel and motel guest registers
- Hunting licenses
- Identification cards
- Immigration and naturalization records
- Incorporation records
- Installment purchase
- Insurance
- Inventories
- Invoices
- Jail records
- Labor union documents
- Lease or rent receipts
- Letters, personal and business
- Library card applications
- License applications
- Life insurance papers
- Light company applications
- Loan papers
- Mail orders
- Manuscripts
- Marriage records
- Medical records
- Medicare cards and papers
- Membership cards; social, occupational
- Memo's
- Military papers
- Mortgage papers
- Motel or hotel check-in
- National Guard records
- Neighbors
- Newspaper and magazine subscriptions
- Occupational writings

- Operator license
- P.O. Box records
- Package receipts
- Parent's signature on report cards
- Parent-teacher records
- Parole or probation
- Partnership papers
- Passports
- Pawn tickets
- Payroll receipts
- Pension applications
- Permit applications
- Personal notebooks
- Petitions, referendums, etc.
- Phone directories
- Photograph albums
- Pleadings, civil and criminal
- Political groups
- Post cards
- Post office boxes
- Power of attorney
- Prescriptions
- Probate court papers
- Promissory notes
- Property damage reports
- Real estate transactions
- Receipts
- Receipts
- Receipts for rent, etc.
- Recipes
- Registered mail return receipts
- Relatives
- Releases
- Religious documents
- Religious documents'
- Rental contracts for equipment
- Reports
- Research projects
- Sales slips / receipts
- School and college papers
- Selective service records
- Shipping orders
- Social security cards and papers
- Sorority papers
- Sport and game score cards
- Stock certificates, endorsements on
- Surety bond applications
- Surveys
- Tax exemption filings
- Tax returns and estimates
- Telephone service applications
- Theft reports
- Time sheets or punch cards
- Titles
- To do list
- Traffic tickets
- Utility forms (gas, water, electric, phone)
- VA records
- Voting registration records
- Wills
- Worker's compensation papers
- Yearbooks