Chapter 1
Observation Skills

Scenario: Someone Was Stealing Trees
- A farmer reported several valuable trees had been cut down and stolen.
- Investigators followed the clues, observing tire tracks, traces of paint, and other evidence.
- Police matched paint samples to the truck used in the theft.

Chapter 1 Observation Skills
By the end of this chapter you will be able to:
- Define observation and describe what changes occur in the brain
- Describe examples of factors influencing eyewitness accounts of events
- Compare the reliability of eyewitness testimony with what actually happened
- Relate observation skills to their use in forensic science
- Define forensic science
- Practice and improve your observation skills

Introduction
- One of the most important __________ of the forensic investigator is the ability to __________, __________, and __________ ____________ clearly.
- The forensic examiner must be able to
  1. __________— identify the evidence
  2. __________— record the evidence
  3. __________— accurately determine the significance of the evidence
- The trained investigator collects __________ available evidence, __________ __________ __________ ____________ about its potential importance.
  - That comes __________!
- Knowing which evidence is significant requires the __________ ____________ ____________ preceding the crime.
- A crime scene is often laid out in a __________ to ensure that all evidence is found

What is Observation?
- What a person __________ using his or her __________ __________
- We are constantly collecting information through observations: __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, and __________.
  1. We cannot pay attention to everything all at once.
  - We pay attention to things likely to be important like __________: new movement, sound, etc.
- Filtering is an __________ __________ that helps the brain deal with all the __________ and __________ that bombards it.
• How information is processed in the brain:

Our brains play tricks!

• (interpreting information received from the senses) is ________!
  1. Not always _____________
  2. Doesn’t always _____________

• We ________________ that isn’t there.
  Ex. Creamy pink dessert – perceived as _____________, but is actually _____________ flavored!

Observations by Witnesses

Many things ______________ a witness and, therefore, impact his or her ______________ and ______________ of the situation.

• Focus and Concentration
  • Observations are affected by:
    O ________________ ________________
      • Very upset, happy, or depressed – less likely to notice things
      • Stress and fear and ________________ with an ________________
        Ex. ________________ during a bank robbery
    O Whether they were ________________, part of a ________________, or ________________
      ________________
    O What ________________ of and ________________ was going on around them
    O Our ability to observe is actually heightened during ________________ ________________.
      Ex. Where were you during the attack on the ________________, 9/11/2001?

Eyewitness Accounts

• Eyewitness accounts of crime scene events ________________ ________________ from one person to another.

• Crime-scene reports often vary, due to:
  O ________________
  O stress
  O concentration
  O amount and kind of distractions present
  O prejudices
  O ________________
motives
any ___________________________ since the event

The Innocence Project
- Created by Barry C. _____________ and Peter J. _____________ at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law,
- Beginning in 1992, used _____________ to examine post-conviction cases
- Faulty eyewitness identifications accounted for up to _______ % of the ______________

Observation vs. Inference
- Making _______________
  - Using your five senses:
    - Sight, Hearing, Smell, Touch, and Taste
  - You learn _______________ – facts, figures, and other evidence
- Making _______________ (inferring)
  - A logical _______________ based on _______________ or _______________
    _______________
- When evaluating eyewitness testimony, the investigator must _______________
  - It is necessary to _______________ any _______________ the witness makes.
- After the witness examination, the examiner tries to _______________
  _______________ (facts) into a _______________, then determine if this pattern is
  _______________ by the _______________.

How to be a Good Observer
- Observe _______________
  - Start at __________ ________ of a crime scene and run your eyes slowly __________ ________
    __________.
  - Look carefully at details of each piece of _______________.
  - Do not assume you will _______________ everything
- Turn off _______________
  - Consciously pay attention to ________ details
  - Do not pay attention to just what you _______________ is _______________
  - _______________ _______________ are potentially important
- Collect _______________ _______________, interpret data later
  - Look for _______________ and make _______________
  - More information yields better interpretations
  - Prejudices exist everywhere—
    - eyewitness accounts
    - your own _______________ _______________
Documentation, Documentation
- Write down and photograph as much as
- Be aware that memory is
- Remember that our brains tend to in our perception

Observations in Forensics
- Forensic comes from the Latin word forensis, which means “________”
  - The forum was an open area where scholars would gather to and issues
  - It was the historical equivalent to modern-day
  - Today, is often still called forensics.
- Forensic Science, however, is strictly concerned with that stands as .
  - This can be used to help in , such as crimes.

What Forensic Scientists Do
- , , and evidence from a crime scene.
  - The key skill for doing this is .
- deal with certain types of evidence
  - – bullets and firearms
  - – examine bodily injuries for cause of death
  - Textile experts, Blood-spatter experts, Vehicle experts, Animal experts, etc.
- Even need to be trained to have good .
- situations
- Find in ordinary details using
- Work from the evidence to what led up to the crime with
  - Be patient
  - Practice

Summary
- The and our natural affect our ability to observe
- Eyewitness reports can be , , or a little of
- Acquiring good observation skills takes and
- Forensic scientists:
  - Find and Document Evidence
  - and
  - Provide to courts