TERVALUM SYSTEMS

Investigator Professional resource

Investigation Evidence Intake & Control Checklist

A printable worksheet for documenting the source, acquisition, identity, handling, storage, review copies, and disposition of evidence received during an investigation.

Case / matter reference	
Evidence item ID	
Date / time received	
Received by	
Source / provider	
Source contact information	

1. Identify the Item Before Handling

■ Assign a unique evidence item identifier before files or physical items are mixed with other case material.

■ Record what the item is using neutral descriptive language.

■ Record who supplied or created it, when known.

■ Record the original filename, label, serial number, account, device, location, or other identifying information.

■ Note whether the item appears original, copied, exported, photographed, scanned, forwarded, or otherwise derived.

Evidence item description / identifying details

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Source, Acquisition & Integrity

2. Source & Acquisition Record

■ Document how the item was obtained: client delivery, email, download, scan, field collection, interview, records request, system export, or other method.

■ Record the date/time and location of acquisition where relevant.

■ Preserve source context such as the message, folder, device, envelope, export instructions, or record request that explains where the item came from.

■ Do not overwrite or alter an original simply to make it easier to review.

■ If an item is copied, scanned, converted, rotated, enhanced, transcribed, redacted, or otherwise processed, retain the original and identify the derivative separately.

Acquisition method	
Acquisition location / system	
Original filename / label	
Original date/time if known	
File size / physical description	
SHA-256 or other hash, if used	

3. Initial Integrity Check

■ Confirm the item can be opened or physically inspected without unnecessary modification.

■ Record obvious damage, missing pages, unreadable content, password protection, corruption, or incomplete exports.

■ For digital files, consider recording a cryptographic hash before creating working derivatives.

■ Record discrepancies immediately rather than silently correcting them.

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Storage, Custody & Working Copies

4. Storage & Access

- Record where the preserved original or master copy is stored.
- Use access controls appropriate to the sensitivity of the case and the item.
- Keep evidence separate from casual working documents where practical.
- Back up managed evidence according to the case continuity plan.
- Record transfers to another investigator, expert, client, counsel, laboratory, agency, or storage location.

Date / time	From	To	Purpose / action	Location / method	Initials

5. Working Derivatives

- Give each derivative a clear relationship to its source item.
- Record what changed: OCR, enhancement, crop, rotation, transcription, compression, conversion, annotation, or redaction.
- Do not present an edited derivative as though it were the unaltered original.

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Review, Relevance & Disposition

6. Review Record

- Record why the item matters to the investigation rather than merely noting that it exists.
- Link the item to the allegation, issue, event, subject, location, timeline entry, or investigative question it helps address.
- Distinguish what the item directly shows from interpretations or assumptions made during review.
- Record follow-up tasks generated by the item.

Relevance / investigative significance / related issue
Follow-up generated by this item

7. Return, Retention or Disposition

- Record whether the item remains retained, is returned to its source, transferred, archived, or otherwise disposed of.
- Document authorization before destruction or irreversible disposition where required.
- Retain the case record necessary to explain what the item was, where it came from, and what happened to it.

Disposition / retention status	
Date	
Authorized by	
Handled by	

Professional-use note: This checklist is a general evidence-control aid. It does not establish legal admissibility, forensic sufficiency, chain-of-custody requirements, discovery obligations, privacy authority, or retention rules for a particular matter or jurisdiction.

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