

# SOP Template: Gathering and Documentation of Evidence

This SOP details the process for **gathering and documentation of evidence**, covering the systematic collection, preservation, and recording of physical, digital, and testimonial evidence. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining evidence integrity, chain of custody, accurate documentation, and compliance with legal and organizational standards to support investigations and legal proceedings effectively.

## 1. Purpose

To outline standardized procedures for the collection, preservation, documentation, and chain of custody management of evidence relevant to investigations, ensuring admissibility and integrity for legal or internal proceedings.

## 2. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in investigations requiring the gathering and documentation of physical, digital, or testimonial evidence within the organization.

## 3. Responsibilities

- **Investigators:** Collect, secure, and record evidence.
- **Supervisors:** Oversee compliance with SOP and review documentation.
- **Chain of Custody Custodians:** Monitor and log evidence transfers.
- **Legal/Compliance Teams:** Ensure procedures align with legal and organizational standards.

## 4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Evidence	Any material, information, or testimony introduced to prove or disprove facts in an investigation.
Chain of Custody	The documented and unbroken transfer process of evidence.
Preservation	Actions taken to maintain evidence in its original condition.

## 5. Procedure

- 1. Preparation**
  - Review case details and determine evidence types to collect (physical, digital, testimonial).
  - Gather necessary collection materials (evidence bags, cameras, digital storage, forms, PPE, etc.).
- 2. Systematic Collection**
  - Approach scene and secure the area to prevent evidence contamination.
  - Document the scene with photographs/video before interacting with any evidence.
  - Collect evidence using suitable techniques and equipment to avoid contamination/damage.
  - Label each evidence item with a unique identifier, date, time, and collector's details.
- 3. Preservation**
  - Place evidence in appropriate containers (evidence bags, envelopes, etc.).
  - Seal and secure the packaging; affix tamper-evident seals where applicable.
  - Store evidence in designated secure locations as per evidence type (e.g., locked cabinet, digital evidence locker).
- 4. Documentation**
  - Complete the Evidence Collection Log (see Section 7).
  - Record all details: date/time, location, collector, evidence description, unique ID, storage details.
  - Attach photographs or supporting documents as needed.
- 5. Chain of Custody Management**
  - Complete the Chain of Custody Form for each evidence item.
  - Document each handover, including name/signature, date/time, purpose of transfer.
  - Ensure all transfers are authorized and logged.

6. Compliance and Quality Assurance
- Supervisors review documentation for completeness and accuracy.
  - Report and rectify any discrepancies or breaches immediately.

## 6. Legal and Ethical Considerations

- Strictly comply with applicable laws, privacy requirements, and organizational policies.
- Respect the rights of all parties and avoid unnecessary intrusion or harm.

## 7. Documentation Templates

### Evidence Collection Log

Evidence ID	Date/Time	Location	Collector	Description	Preservation Method	Remarks

### Chain of Custody Form

Evidence ID	Date/Time	From (Name/Role)	To (Name/Role)	Purpose	Signature

## 8. Review and Update

This SOP should be reviewed annually or following significant incidents or regulatory changes. Updates must be documented and communicated to all relevant staff.

## 9. References

- Applicable laws/regulations (e.g., Evidence Act, Data Protection laws)
- Internal organizational policies on investigation and privacy
- Relevant industry standards