

Purpose: To have the students determine if the evidence they are given was collected in an appropriate container, as well as, labeled and sealed correctly.

Procedure:

1. For each pair of students, have two different types of evidence in containers.
2. The first piece of evidence should have “blood” on it. This could be a q-tip or some other item with stage blood or red paint on it.
3. The second piece of evidence can be either a piece of fiber, glass or a piece of metal.
4. Each group should have one piece of evidence that is in an appropriate container and one that is not. For the blood evidence, an appropriate container would be anything that is porous – a paper lunch bag or small manila envelope. An inappropriate container that is often chosen by the students is a plastic bag. The fiber evidence should be collected in a container that will prevent loss – a manila envelope (regular mailing envelopes have holes in the corners that make them a poor choice for trace evidence) or a zip-closure container are good choices. Any metal or glass evidence should be collected in a rigid container to prevent the evidence from being scratched or broken.
5. The evidence that is in an appropriate container should be incorrectly labeled or sealed. A label is information that is placed on the outside of the container, but not on the seal. At minimum, a correct label should contain
 - the name of the person who collected the evidence,
 - date and time collected and
 - a description of the evidence.Some law enforcement officers would argue that it is too time consuming to put time on every piece of evidence. But anyone who has done crime scene work for an extensive period of time would tell you that it is important to include. The seal should be placed across the opening of the container and should contain the initials of the collector and the date collected.
6. Explain to the students that they should not open the containers and should assume that what is described on the outside is indeed what is in the container.
7. Each piece of evidence should be numbered with a permanent marker and the number recorded in a key. Your key should contain the number of the evidence, type of evidence, type of container, what is on the label and the seal.