

PRPA Crime Scene Management/Physical Evidence Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

- 1. What should be done to spent cartridge cases after collecting for evidence?**
 - A. Package separately in clear bags**
 - B. Wrap in cotton or filter paper after processing for prints**
 - C. Store in a cardboard box**
 - D. Place directly into a plastic evidence bag**
- 2. How should small samples of flammable materials be stored?**
 - A. In paper bags**
 - B. In glass or plastic vials**
 - C. In open containers**
 - D. In metal cases**
- 3. When should an officer make an arrest at a crime scene?**
 - A. After waiting for backup**
 - B. As soon as there is probable cause**
 - C. Only after gathering witness statements**
 - D. At the end of the investigation**
- 4. What should be done to separate witnesses at a crime scene?**
 - A. Let them talk to each other**
 - B. Keep them together for a summary**
 - C. Always keep them separated until they are interviewed**
 - D. Only separate them if they become agitated**
- 5. How can environmental conditions impact evidence collection?**
 - A. Environmental conditions have no effect**
 - B. They can only improve evidence visibility**
 - C. Weather can alter evidence condition and accessibility**
 - D. Humidity always damages evidence**

- 6. What is the primary purpose of class characteristics in forensic evidence?**
- A. Narrow down a specific individual**
 - B. Identify the exact source of evidence**
 - C. Narrow down a group of items**
 - D. Eliminate all possible sources**
- 7. Which of the following is NOT a benefit of creating a crime scene sketch?**
- A. Providing a permanent record of spatial relationships**
 - B. Aiding in interviewing witnesses**
 - C. Documenting individual accounts of the crime**
 - D. Aiding in reconstruction of the crime scene**
- 8. What does protecting evidence against "the elements" entail?**
- A. Providing first aid to victims**
 - B. Using materials to shield evidence from weather**
 - C. Ensuring the scene is well-lit**
 - D. Ignoring environmental factors**
- 9. Which factors should be considered when planning a crime scene search?**
- A. Only the type of incident**
 - B. Size of the scene and potential evidence types**
 - C. Interviews with victims only**
 - D. Weather conditions only**
- 10. What method is used to collect hair samples at a crime scene?**
- A. Using a vacuum sweeper**
 - B. Using bare hands**
 - C. Using tweezers or forceps**
 - D. Using sticky tape**

Answers

SAMPLE

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. C
7. C
8. B
9. B
10. C

SAMPLE

Explanations

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1. What should be done to spent cartridge cases after collecting for evidence?

- A. Package separately in clear bags**
- B. Wrap in cotton or filter paper after processing for prints**
- C. Store in a cardboard box**
- D. Place directly into a plastic evidence bag**

Wrapping spent cartridge cases in cotton or filter paper after processing for prints is the appropriate method for ensuring their integrity and minimizing contamination. This practice protects the delicate surfaces of the cartridge cases that may contain valuable fingerprints or other trace evidence. Using cotton or filter paper provides cushioning and prevents any direct contact with harsher materials that could alter or damage the evidence. Additionally, employing such a method keeps the sample stable during transport and storage. Keeping the cases sheltered from external elements, including moisture and dust, also contributes to the preservation of potential forensic evidence. The other options, while they have merit in certain contexts, do not prioritize the need for preservation of potential evidentiary details as effectively as wrapping in cotton or filter paper. Using plastic evidence bags, for instance, may create a static charge that could potentially compromise trace evidence, while a cardboard box, although sturdy, may not provide adequate cushioning. Packaging separately in clear bags might be beneficial for organization but does not offer the same level of protection for the surface of the cartridge cases.

2. How should small samples of flammable materials be stored?

- A. In paper bags**
- B. In glass or plastic vials**
- C. In open containers**
- D. In metal cases**

The storage of small samples of flammable materials is critical to maintaining safety and preserving the integrity of the samples. Storing these materials in glass or plastic vials is ideal because these containers provide a sealed environment that helps prevent evaporation and contamination, which is essential for both safety and forensic analysis. Glass vials, in particular, are non-reactive and offer a higher degree of protection against chemical interactions than some other materials. In addition, these containers can protect the samples from environmental factors such as moisture and air exposure, which can alter the composition of flammable materials and potentially lead to dangerous reactions. Plastic vials also serve a similar purpose, often with the advantage of being lighter and less prone to breakage than glass. Choosing appropriate containers like glass or plastic vials is vital in forensic settings, where the preservation of evidence quality is paramount to support legal investigations and analyses.

3. When should an officer make an arrest at a crime scene?

- A. After waiting for backup
- B. As soon as there is probable cause**
- C. Only after gathering witness statements
- D. At the end of the investigation

An officer should make an arrest at a crime scene as soon as there is probable cause, which refers to a reasonable belief that a crime has been committed and that the individual in question is responsible for that crime. This principle is fundamental in law enforcement, as it allows officers to take necessary action to ensure public safety and uphold the law without unnecessary delays. Acting upon probable cause rather than waiting for additional factors, such as backup or witness statements, is crucial because it enables officers to address potentially volatile situations promptly. Immediate action may be necessary to prevent the suspect from escaping, posing a threat to others, or interfering with the investigation. Additionally, gathering witness statements and completing a full investigation can take time, and the immediacy of an arrest can sometimes be necessary to preserve evidence or the integrity of the situation. In sum, basing the decision to arrest on probable cause aligns with standard policing practices and legal requirements, ensuring officers act within their jurisdiction while maintaining public safety.

4. What should be done to separate witnesses at a crime scene?

- A. Let them talk to each other
- B. Keep them together for a summary
- C. Always keep them separated until they are interviewed**
- D. Only separate them if they become agitated

To effectively manage a crime scene and maintain the integrity of witness statements, witnesses should always be separated until they can be interviewed. This is important because having witnesses discuss their accounts with one another can lead to the contamination of their testimonies. By keeping witnesses apart, investigators can ensure that each individual recounts their personal observations without influence from others. This approach helps to preserve the reliability of the information provided, as it reduces the risk of witnesses altering their stories to align with what others may have said. This practice is fundamental in criminal investigations, as discrepancies between accounts can be indicative of truthfulness or deception, and any shared information could obscure the clarity of those details. Therefore, maintaining separation until formal interviews are conducted is a critical step in crime scene management and ensuring accurate data collection.

5. How can environmental conditions impact evidence collection?

- A. Environmental conditions have no effect**
- B. They can only improve evidence visibility**
- C. Weather can alter evidence condition and accessibility**
- D. Humidity always damages evidence**

Environmental conditions play a crucial role in the collection and integrity of evidence at a crime scene. Weather factors such as rain, snow, and temperature can significantly affect the state of physical evidence. For instance, precipitation can cause evidence to be washed away or degraded, while extreme temperatures may lead to the deterioration of fragile items. Additionally, adverse weather conditions can impede access to a scene, making it difficult for investigators to gather evidence efficiently. The impact of weather is particularly important in terms of the types of evidence that can be collected. For example, certain materials can absorb moisture and become compromised, while biological evidence might degrade quickly if not preserved properly in specific environmental conditions. Thus, an understanding of how weather influences both the accessibility and the integrity of evidence is essential for accurate crime scene management and investigative procedures.

6. What is the primary purpose of class characteristics in forensic evidence?

- A. Narrow down a specific individual**
- B. Identify the exact source of evidence**
- C. Narrow down a group of items**
- D. Eliminate all possible sources**

The primary purpose of class characteristics in forensic evidence is to narrow down a group of items. Class characteristics are shared by a group of objects or materials and can help forensic analysts categorize evidence based on common traits. For example, the tread pattern on a shoe can be associated with a specific brand and model, thus linking it to a group of shoes rather than identifying a unique shoe worn by a specific individual. This process is critical in forensic investigations, as it helps investigators focus their efforts on a smaller subset of evidence, making it more manageable to analyze and potentially leading to a more accurate pinpointing of individuals later in the investigation through additional methods, such as comparing unique individual characteristics. Unlike individual characteristics, which can uniquely identify a single source, class characteristics serve as a way to identify characteristics that multiple items share, which can aid in narrowing down suspects or sources in a broader context.

7. Which of the following is NOT a benefit of creating a crime scene sketch?

- A. Providing a permanent record of spatial relationships**
- B. Aiding in interviewing witnesses**
- C. Documenting individual accounts of the crime**
- D. Aiding in reconstruction of the crime scene**

Creating a crime scene sketch serves several important functions within the investigation process, but documenting individual accounts of the crime is not one of them. Instead, sketches focus on capturing the physical layout and evidence present at the scene, which helps to establish the spatial relationships between various elements involved in the incident. A crime scene sketch effectively provides a permanent record of how the scene looked at a specific time, which is crucial for future reference and analysis. This documentation not only supports the investigation but can also be invaluable during court proceedings. Additionally, sketches assist in the reconstruction of the crime scene by providing details necessary to piece together events based on the physical evidence. While sketches can help inform and aid interviews with witnesses by providing a visual representation of the scene, they do not record the individual narratives or accounts of the crime itself. Instead, the focus remains on the physical characteristics rather than the subjective perceptions or experiences of those involved.

8. What does protecting evidence against "the elements" entail?

- A. Providing first aid to victims**
- B. Using materials to shield evidence from weather**
- C. Ensuring the scene is well-lit**
- D. Ignoring environmental factors**

Protecting evidence against "the elements" specifically refers to using materials to shield evidence from adverse weather conditions such as rain, wind, or excessive sunlight. When evidence is exposed to these environmental factors, it can degrade or become compromised, potentially rendering it unusable in an investigation or court. This protection might involve using tarps, containers, or any suitable materials that can safeguard the physical integrity of the evidence collected at a crime scene. Keeping evidence safe from the elements is critical for maintaining the chain of custody and ensuring that the evidence remains valid throughout the investigative process. This practice is an essential component of crime scene management and physical evidence handling.

9. Which factors should be considered when planning a crime scene search?

- A. Only the type of incident**
- B. Size of the scene and potential evidence types**
- C. Interviews with victims only**
- D. Weather conditions only**

In planning a crime scene search, it is crucial to consider the size of the scene and the potential types of evidence that may be located within it. The size of the scene influences how the search will be conducted, including the number of personnel required and the layout strategy to be employed. Larger scenes may necessitate a more organized approach with distinct areas designated for thorough searches, while smaller scenes might allow for a more rapid yet still methodical search. Additionally, understanding the types of evidence that might be present is vital. Different incidents can yield various forms of physical evidence, such as biological materials, fingerprints, firearms, or digital evidence. Planning for these possibilities allows investigators to prioritize search areas and use appropriate techniques to effectively collect and preserve evidence. This strategic consideration ensures that no crucial details are overlooked and that the evidence collected is relevant and admissible in court. Considering only one aspect, such as the type of incident or weather conditions, can lead to an incomplete or ineffective search plan. Incorporating a comprehensive perspective that includes scene size and potential evidence types equips investigators to efficiently and thoroughly gather necessary information for the case.

10. What method is used to collect hair samples at a crime scene?

- A. Using a vacuum sweeper**
- B. Using bare hands**
- C. Using tweezers or forceps**
- D. Using sticky tape**

The use of tweezers or forceps is an effective method for collecting hair samples at a crime scene because it allows for precise handling and minimizes the risk of contamination. This approach is particularly important in forensic science, where maintaining the integrity of physical evidence is paramount. Tweezers or forceps enable the collector to grasp hair samples without directly touching them, thus avoiding the transfer of additional materials or substances from the collector's hands to the evidence. This method also helps ensure that the hair samples can be preserved in their original state, which is crucial for subsequent analysis and comparisons. While other methods, such as using sticky tape or a vacuum sweeper, can also be employed in certain contexts for collecting different types of evidence, they may not provide the same level of control or preservation as tweezers or forceps. Using bare hands would likely compromise the quality of the evidence and is typically discouraged. Therefore, the precision and careful handling provided by tweezers or forceps make this method the most appropriate choice for collecting hair samples.