

## CHECKLIST FOR HANDLING YOUR EVIDENCE

The guidelines below will help you when working with a forensic document examiner after your suspicions have been aroused involving what you believe to be a case of disguised/denied handwriting or altered documents. The following are accepted practices in forensic document examination. Use them to handle your evidence. My professional opinion is rendered after examining and comparing the suspicious writing with the handwritten samples (exemplars<sup>1</sup>).

- Obtain the originals of each document if possible. Otherwise, obtain best scans or photocopies
- Do not fold, staple, punch or otherwise damage original documents
- Investigate background information concerning the documents' origins
- Keep track of the originals: providing a full history of where they have been stored, who has handled them, what has been done to them
- Find and submit a sufficient amount of exemplars. Ask me about what will be enough and the proper way to obtain them (See footnote below)
- Locate exemplars with the same or similar wording configurations
- Provide valid exemplars with proper proof of genuineness. Ask me for the criteria to meet proof
- Acquire exemplars prepared/written within the same timeframe as the questioned document
- Scan or photocopy three sets of your exemplars being careful not to inadvertently omit any portion of an image from top, bottom or side margins
- Give the first photocopied set to me unmarked
- On the second photocopied set, highlight what you regard as suspicious features and also give this set to me
- Retain the third photocopied set for future use if needed
- Keep the original documents in a safe place and protect them in plastic sleeves
- Submit your evidence (scans, copies and/or originals) via safe carrier or by hand-delivery to me

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<sup>1</sup> **Exemplars:** Provable genuine samples of handwriting or documents which serve as models for comparison with questioned handwriting or document. There are two types of exemplars:

**a) Collected Exemplar:** Handwriting or a document that existed prior to and/or is not connected with the dispute.

**b) Requested Exemplar:** Writing which is specifically requested to be written after the dispute has arisen.