

Comparison Quality Photographs

Maine State Police Crime Laboratory – Latent Print Section

Supplies:

- Digital SLR camera
- Detachable lens capable of being set to 35mm or 50mm
- Sync cord
- Tripod
- External flash
- Scale (L-scale preferred) and Tape measure

Steps:

1. Take documentation photographs (overall, midrange, close-up), first without, then with evidence markers.
2. Place scale next to, and at the same level, as the impression you want to photograph.
3. Set camera to RAW (or RAW + JPEGfine)
4. Set camera mode to Aperture Priority (“A” or “Av” depending on your camera)
 - a. Set f-stop to at least 5.6 (8 is a great “catch-all”)
5. Set focal length of lens:
 - a. Cropped frame sensor = set lens to 30-35mm
 - b. Full frame sensor = set lens to 50mm
6. Determine the approximate distance from the impression the camera needs to be for the impression to be in focus.
7. Put camera on tripod at the distance determined in step 6.
8. Adjust the camera on the tripod so the camera back or front of lens is parallel to the impression.
9. Attach the sync cord between the camera and the flash (if using a slave flash, you’ll have to prevent the pop-up fill flash on the camera from firing so tape it or hold it down or block that flash)
10. Focus on the impression by adjusting the tripod (not the lens)
11. Hold flash at arms-length, at an angle, directed at the impression.
12. Take at least three photos with the flash from at least three different orientations to the impression (e.g., 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00)



FILL THE FRAME – CAMERA LENS/BACK PARALLEL TO THE IMPRESSION – SCALE IN PHOTO