

Guidelines for Exemplars

Original exemplars are always preferred to photocopies. Please submit originals whenever possible. No destructive testing is ever performed, and all submitted documents are securely stored while in my custody.

For handwriting exemplars, the submitted known writing must be similar in style to the questioned, i.e., hand printing to compare to hand printing, cursive to compare to cursive, upper case letters to compare with upper case letters, etc. Original normal course-of-business exemplars dated as close in time to the questioned are ideal.

Submission of verified genuine signatures should encompass a variety of documents dated over a period of years. The purpose of this request is to see how consistent an individual's signature is and what, if any, changes have occurred over time.

Request writing, which repeats the questioned material by the suspect writer, should also be obtained for examination purposes. Ideally, a professional forensic document examiner should conduct the collection of the requested writing because they know the proper procedures for obtaining request writing and are knowledgeable of methods used by writers whose intent is to produce unnatural, self-serving exemplars.

As for the quantity of exemplars, it is definitely better to have too many than too few. As a general rule, a minimum of 15 to 20 signatures might be sufficient. Ideally, the submitted exemplars should demonstrate all variations of an individual's signature. If more than one variation of an individual's signature is in question, it will be necessary to obtain a larger sampling of all variations of their known signatures. Signatures can vary greatly depending upon the type of document being signed, the writing instrument, and other conditions.

A good representative sampling of signatures and/or handwriting closely bracketing the date on the document in question is essential to a thorough and effective evaluation. Bank checks are a good source for this, as long as there is no question about the authenticity of the check signatures. Hospital records are also good sources.

Specific information about any health problems affecting the individual on or around the date on the document in question should always be provided.