

BASIC FINGERPRINTING TIPS

Fill out the top of the fingerprint card first.

All the applicant's information should be on the card and the applicant should sign the card prior to taking the prints. This will avoid accidentally smudging the prints.

Have the applicant wash their hands.

Dirt or other particles on the fingers can obscure characteristics, cause smearing, and create inaccurate marks in the print. If the applicant has excessive perspiration on the hands, wipe each finger with a cloth before inking and then roll the print immediately. Using rubbing alcohol and letting it dry can also temporarily dry the skin enough to allow printing. (If using a livescan instrument, be sure that the fingerprint plate is clean and free of oils, dust, and residue from previous prints before beginning.)

Use only heavy black ink intended for fingerprinting.

Other types of ink smear or do not provide adequate coverage. "Inkless" fingerprint pads do not provide acceptable prints.

Use the right amount of ink.

Not fully inking the finger prior to rolling can result in "gaps" and missing characteristics in the prints. Too much ink can cause heavy smears or obscure the ridges of the print. Too little ink may result in impressions that are too faint. Fingerprints should be dark gray for best results.

Control the person's hand.

Ask the applicant to relax and let you do the work. Asking them to look away from the card may prevent them from unconsciously "helping," which may cause twisting or slipping while trying to roll the finger.

Use the "awkward to easy" roll method.

The boxes on the fingerprint card marked for individual fingers must be rolled fingerprints. Rolled prints are made by rolling the finger or thumb from nail edge to nail edge. The fingerprint should show the surface of the fingerprint from fingertip to just past the first joint on the finger, and the entire print must fit within the blue lines of the box designated for that finger. Grasp the top of the applicant's hand and extend the finger to be printed.

Roll in one continuous motion using only enough pressure to make a clear print with no "gaps" in the ink; too much pressure may smear the print. For best results, roll fingers on the right hand toward the right, and fingers on the left hand toward the left, going from "awkward" (where the hand/wrist is most uncomfortable) to "easy" (where the hand/wrist ends up in a comfortable natural position). This helps prevent the person resisting and making unexpected movements as you roll. Thumbs are rolled in the opposite direction than fingers on that hand. After reaching the end of the "roll," lift the finger straight up to avoid smearing or stray ink on the card.

Position the hand well for the "flat" prints.

The bottom row of blocks on the fingerprint card is for pressed or "flat" (also known as "plain") impressions. Make sure all four fingers are extended straight and stiff from the hand. Position the hand at an approximately 45 degree angle to the card to ensure that all four fingers will fit into the box. Print as much of the fingers as you can fit, but at least to just past the first joint. Print all four fingers at the same time by pressing down; no "rolling."

Press down slightly on the top of the applicant's fingers to ensure a complete print with no "gaps" and then lift straight up. Thumbs are pressed straight down into the designated block next to the finger impressions. Use care not to overlap the prints or the lines of the boxes.

Use careful technique for "worn" fingerprints.

Some applicants may have "worn" fingerprints with thin or faint ridges. Use less ink, not more, and light pressure to achieve the best results. Squeezing the finger or "milking" it by rubbing down along the length of the finger toward the tip may help raise the ridges.