

human body left at the crime scene includes blood, semen, skin, saliva and hair, all of which contain DNA. Forensic scientists can use DNA to identify a suspect. If you punch an assailant and draw blood, some of which is splattered on you or the floor, you must preserve that evidence. In training, I occasionally dab some stage blood onto the "attacker's" gloves or dip a rubber knife into it without telling the students. After the conflict, I point out how the blood was transferred and have them take steps to preserve it—by preventing others from walking on it, not washing it off, collecting stained clothing and so on.

Fingerprints can be the result of oil

secreted by the skin or other substances (ink, blood, grease, etc.). Fingerprint identification is the process of comparing friction skin-ridge impressions from fingers, palms and toes to determine if a suspect is the perpetrator who left evidence at the crime scene.

Hairs—whether from the head, arms or legs—are constantly falling off every human being, and when a person is in a fight, they can be yanked out. Hair contains DNA, so leaving any behind is like leaving a calling card. Bad guys may also shed fibers from their clothing or bring fibers from their homes (tiny pieces of carpeting stuck to a shoe, for instance). When a crime has been committed, investigators collect hair

and fiber samples using tweezers or a special vacuum.

Impressions such as shoe prints and tire tracks are often left in dirt, mud and snow. If any are present, the police will photograph them and possibly "collect" them using plaster of Paris or a similar material. They can then be used to determine what made them, which can be a valuable link to the criminal.

If you're like most martial artists, you started training to learn self-defense. If your lessons don't include evidence identification and preservation, you've either drifted away from an important part of self-defense or you never had it in the first place. ✕

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About the author: Sgt. Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information, visit www.blackbeltmag.com and click on Community, then Black Belt Authors.

Having served as a law enforcement officer for 17 years Jim Wagner knows all about conducting a field investigation and identifying and preserving evidence. In this photo Officer Jim Wagner is doing a building search while on patrol with the Costa Mesa Police Department where he served from 1989 to 1999.

