



Activity- Crime Scene Sketching



Background Information:

There are two phases to crime scene sketching-the **rough sketch** and the **finished sketch**. The most common view used in crime scene sketches is the "*bird's eye*" view. This is the view of the scene as from directly above, which does not include the appearance or contents of vertical surfaces like walls or cabinets.

The address, date, and your initials must be on each sketch, in addition to any other "chain-of-custody" documentation.

During the initial evaluation of the scene, an investigator must select two points of reference like "the north exterior wall" or a window or "the main entry door." These must be immovable, permanent features of the building or landscape. To generate a rough sketch, the investigator measures the dimensions of the space and uses these points to accurately characterize the contents of the scene. Major items of interest, like a body or a weapon, are located in reference to these points. For example, the investigator may select the south exterior wall of a home and the back door, located in the kitchen, as the two points of reference in as the two points of reference in a crime scene focused on the kitchen and stairs to the basement. The sketch should begin with the dimensions of the room(s) involved and the footprint of the dwelling, as well as the orientation of the building to due north, as it would appear on a map. The property surrounding the building, like the distance to a road, other buildings, or vehicles, may also be relevant to the investigation, so communication with other investigators on scene is important during this portion of the crime scene analysis.

Once the floor plan of the building is documented, the specific contents are recorded. You must be sure to search the room in a methodical way, which is most commonly done by walking in a circle around the room, spiraling in toward the center. Furniture, blood spatter, bodies, weapons, and any other items of interest should be included on the drawing with the distance from each item to the two reference points determined earlier. It is not necessary to draw each item. Rather, a letter or number should be assigned to each and then included in the sketch. The appearance and orientation of these items are documented in the crime scene photographs and not on the sketch. Be sure to correlate the letter or number with the photographs as well.

Any details like odors, sounds, or other facts not encompassed by the sketch should be recorded in your investigator's notebook. The level of detail should be sufficient to adequately refresh your memory if you are called to testify in court. After the scene has been properly documented, a finished sketch is prepared in a controlled environment, like back in the lab or office. It should be a neat version of the rough sketch clearly drawn to scale. Computer programs or printed cut-and-paste kits are also used by some law enforcement agencies to generate finished sketches.

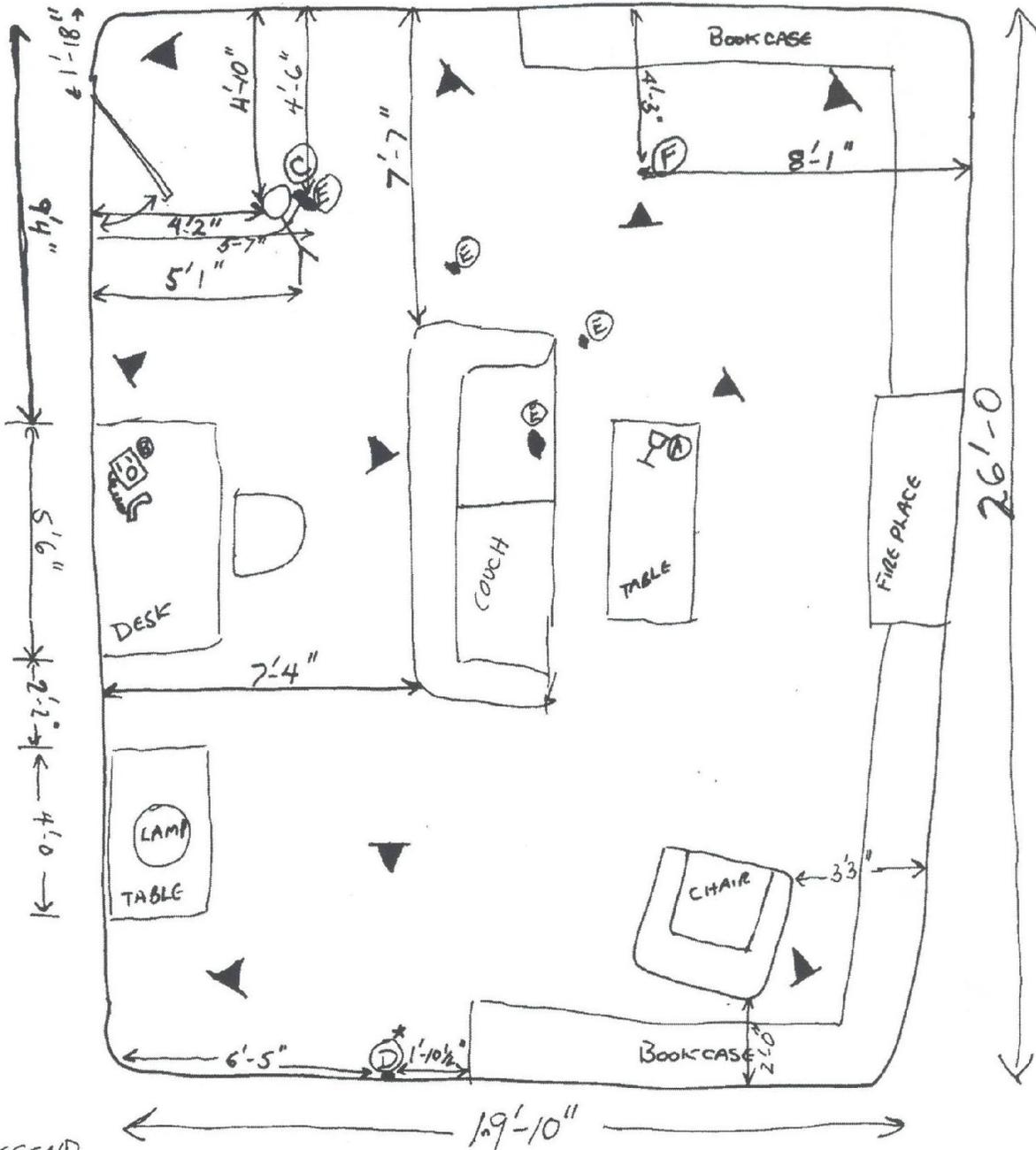
Materials: Sketch book (grid-ruled), Pencil with eraser, Ruler

Procedure:

1. Generate a finished sketch from the rough sketch
2. It is necessary to draw the room to scale, meaning that the distances recorded in the rough sketch are in the same proportion in the finished sketch. This can be easily accomplished by using grid-ruled or graphing paper. Most grid-ruled paper is four squares per inch. For example, if you were to draw a room that is 12 feet by 18 feet, then you can make your drawing twelve squares by eighteen squares. This is a 1 foot = 1 square (or $\frac{1}{4}$ inch) scale. Sadly, this makes your drawing too small to be useful: only 3 inches by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches! This is remedied by increasing your scale to 1 foot = two squares (or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch). This doubles the dimensions of your drawing to 6 inches by 9 inches, which will also adequately fill a standard size page. **Consider the utility of a finished sketch: it will be entered into evidence and presented in court if the case goes to trial.**
3. Note the location of any "evidence" you discover. Include these measurements in your sketch.
4. Indicate the length along each wall, as well as the exact location and size of items like sofas, chairs, and tables. Remember, your sketches will have to provide orientation within the crime scene to other investigators months and years from now - so make it as detailed and as accurate as time permits!
5. Your final sketch should correct any mistakes from the rough sketch. This gives you an opportunity to present a clean, clearly, arranged diagram of the scene. Be sure to include street address, date, and your name on each and every sketch generated during your investigation. Also include the items of evidence listed on the sketch and indicate the location using the assigned letter.
6. List the physical evidence you believe may be relevant to this investigation in the table following the sketch and make recommendation about how each should be tested (i.e., sent to the DNA laboratory, examined for trace evidence, dusted for fingerprints, collected and taken to the laboratory for tool mark or footprint comparison, etc.)

CASE 10-789-96
 301 N. CENTRE ST.
 OCT. 6, 1996 11:40 PM
 HOMICIDE

VICTIM: LESTER W. BROWN
 INVESTIGATOR: SGT. L.A. DUFFY
 ASST BY: PTL. R.W. HICKS



LEGEND

- A = COCKTAIL GLASS
- B = TELEPHONE
- C = VICTIM
- D = BULLET HOLE
- E = BLOOD STAINS
- F = SHELL CASING
- ▲ = CAMERA LOCATIONS

* D 3'-4 3/4" FROM FLOOR

1/4" = 1 FOOT