



CONTEMPLATING CAREERS

Crime Scene Investigator

Does approaching problems with a linear, methodological, step-by-step approach appeal to you? Do you have patience and great attention to detail? Are you a team player, with excellent communication skills and a strong stomach? If you answered yes to these questions, a career as a **crime scene investigator**, also known as a forensic scientist, may be for you.

A forensic scientist/crime scene investigator is one member of a team of scientists and investigators who investigate crimes. Unlike the unrealistic portrayal of forensic scientists in the media, one person does not gather evidence, analyze evidence, track down offenders, and ultimately make an arrest. Rather, crime scene investigators engage in more narrow tasks. They may gather physical evidence in the field, or they may analyze a particular type of evidence in a laboratory. Regardless of the area one works in (field or laboratory), writing skills are important in this role. Forensic scientists write reports, which means excellent writing skills are mandatory. There are relatively few people who work as forensic scientists. It is estimated that in 2010, 13,000 individuals were employed in this capacity

in the United States. Most are employed by government agencies and work in law enforcement agencies, crime laboratories, or coroner's offices. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2012, forensic scientists earned an average of about \$53,000 annually.

Many people falsely believe that they need a criminal justice degree to work as a forensic scientist. This is incorrect. To become qualified for this position, one must earn a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a "hard" science such as biology or chemistry. Some universities now offer forensic science degrees, but it is important to ensure this degree is "hard" science in nature. After earning the degree, one should expect to receive additional on-the-job training while employed. As one may imagine, forensic scientists are exposed to some gruesome scenes. For this reason, the job can be stressful. Still, the work done by these individuals is important and rewarding.



Career Video:

A crime scene investigator discusses her experience and current issues in the field.