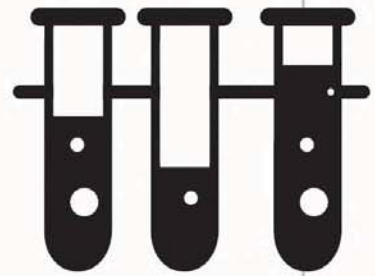


FORENSIC SCIENTIST



JOB DESCRIPTION

Forensic scientists work with the police and other law enforcement agencies to help solve crimes. Collecting samples, such as body fluids, hair, fibers, or fragments from the scene of a crime, they then process and examine the samples for evidence that may help in the identification of a suspect or victim, or provide other valuable information about the incident.



SALARY

Assistant forensic scientist ★★★★★

Senior forensic scientist ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

New techniques in forensics, such as DNA fingerprinting, have opened specialized job opportunities • Fierce competition for jobs

CAREER PATHS

A degree in a scientific subject is the most common first step in this career. You begin as a trainee, supporting forensic scientists in the lab. With experience, you can go on to manage teams of scientists, or move into private consultancy, where you may investigate the causes of industrial fires or accidents.

GRADUATE Although you may be able to find work as a lab assistant with only a high school diploma, the most common route into the profession is to earn a degree. Graduates in chemistry, biology, biochemistry, or medical science are the usual recruits, but opportunities are also available for graduates in computer science.

POSTGRADUATE You may stand a better chance of getting a job with graduate training in a specialty such as ballistics (firearms) or fingerprint examination.



DNA ANALYST Analyzes human genetic material, DNA. This lab-based job in a fast-growing, cutting-edge specialty of forensics demands an in-depth knowledge of DNA sequencing techniques and how to interpret genetic data.



FORENSIC SCIENTIST Most of your training will be on the job. After a few years' experience, you will likely be called as "expert witness" to give evidence in court. Alternatively, you can apply for management positions or enter private consultancy.

SKILLS GUIDE



Good communication skills for presenting complex scientific evidence to legal experts.



The ability to work as part of an investigative team made up of scientists and police.



Excellent analytical skills and absolute attention to detail when examining evidence.



A logical and methodical approach to build a probable sequence of events in a crime case.

RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **INTELLIGENCE OFFICER** *see pp. 246–247*
- ▶ **BIOCHEMIST** Investigates chemical reactions that take place inside living organisms. Research areas include DNA, proteins, drugs, and disease.
- ▶ **LABORATORY TECHNICIAN** Supports scientists during laboratory investigations. They prepare samples for analysis, carry out experiments, and maintain laboratory equipment and supplies.
- ▶ **PATHOLOGY TECHNICIAN** Supports doctors during postmortem examinations to identify the cause of a person's death.
- ▶ **TOXICOLOGIST** Conducts experiments to determine the impact of toxic and radioactive materials on people, animals, and the environment.

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Chemistry • Biology • Mathematics • Physics • Information Technology (IT) • Research and laboratory work



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS A degree in a relevant science subject is usually required, while a graduate degree in forensic science is useful.



LIFESTYLE Hours of work are variable because call-outs to crime scenes can come at any time, including evenings and weekends.



LOCATION Most work is carried out in a laboratory, although visits to crime scenes and courts to present evidence are also a crucial part of the role.



THE REALITIES Visiting accident or crime scenes can be distressing. Forensic scientists have to keep up to date with the changing technology.

PUBLIC HEALTH FORENSIC SCIENTIST

Works with health or government organizations to locate the sources of environmental contamination or investigate the causes of disease epidemics.

FORENSIC EXPLOSIVES SPECIALIST

Uses chemical analysis to establish both the cause of an explosion and the origin of the chemicals involved in it.

Fingerprint evidence has been used in court for over a century.