

DETECTIVE NOTES

Case File: 02



Observation & Witness Workshop

Key Questions:

- Why is observation an essential skill for all police officers to have?
- What is a witness, and what makes a good witness?

Desired Outcomes:

- Students will understand why observation is an essential skill for investigating a crime.
- Students will understand the importance of being a good witness and why it can be challenging to remember details.

Activities and Timelines (30 minutes)

Introduction	5 minutes
What is a Witness?	
Main Activities	20 minutes
Memory Recall	10 minutes
Selective Attention Test	10 minutes
Conclusion	5 minutes
Testing Skills of Observation	

Resources

- Resource 2-1: Memory Recall
- Resource 2-2: Selective Attention Test

Extension Activity

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNF9QNEQLA> “Whodunnit?” - Awareness Test

Introduction

5 minutes

- **Say:** In our last lesson we learned the proper steps to solving a crime. Now, we are going to explore some of the important skills that a good investigator needs.
- **Ask and discuss:** Once a crime scene is secure, the Forensic Crime Scene Unit can start gathering and documenting evidence. Do you remember the two ways that evidence can be collected?
 1. Evidence left at a crime scene (fingerprints, footwear impressions, blood, etc.)
 2. Witness observations and statements
- **Explain:** Witnesses can provide helpful pieces of evidence.
- **Ask:** What is a witness?
 - ▷ Answer: A person who has observed an event or activity take place.
- **Brainstorm:** What do you think makes a good witness?
 - ▷ Good memory, observant, attention to detail.



Memory Recall

10 minutes

- **Materials:**
 - ▷ Resource 2-1
- **Teacher Prep:**
 - ▷ Open Resource 2-1
- **Say:** Observation and attention to detail are a key part of the investigative process. Without detailed information, officers are unable to create a clear and accurate picture of what happened at a crime scene and who was involved. As a witness, it can be hard to remember exactly what you saw. Let's test our observation and memory skills to see just how challenging it can be!
- **Open:** Resource 2-2 Memory Recall
- **Instruct the students:**
 - ▷ I am going to give you one minute to look at this photo and memorize as much detail as you can.
 - ▷ After the minute is up, I am going to ask you some questions about what you saw.



Teacher's note: After the minute is up, minimize the photo so the students can no longer see it.

- **Ask** the students to try answering these questions:
 1. What colour was the ball on the counter? What animal was on top of the ball?
 2. What was the image on the calendar?
 3. How many skeletons were in the room? What word was written on the skeleton's t-shirt?
 4. What kind of hat did you see in the picture?
 5. BONUS: What month was the calendar on?
- **Say:** Let's look at the image again and see how many answers we got right.
- **Explain:** This activity used your short-term memory, but because you weren't sure what I would ask you to remember, your brain processed the information differently and may not have absorbed every detail you saw (even if you think you saw it!). This is similar to when a witness has to recall details of an event to a police officer.

Selective Attention Test

10 minutes

- **Materials:**
 - ▷ Resource 2-2
- **Teacher Prep**
 - ▷ Open Resource 2-2
- **Open** Resource 2-2 Selective Attention Test
- **Before starting the video, instruct:**
 - ▷ The students need to focus and count the number of times the players wearing white catch the ball.
 - ▷ **Remind** students they need to be silent during this activity so that they do not distract others.
 - ▷ **Pause** the video when it asks the students to share the number of passes. Share some answers, then continue the video.
- **Ask:** How many students noticed the gorilla? Why do you think you missed it?
- **Explain:** You were focused on the task of counting the number of times the ball was passed. If you are focused on one thing, your brain will filter out all the "extras". If something is happening in the background but we are not focused on it, our brain does not process it and does not store it.
- **Ask:** What do you think this video has to do with being a witness?



- ▷ A witness's observations may not always tell the entire story. As a witness we want to be able to give as much information as possible, but we can't give information we don't have! Since we can't process everything we see, our brain will sometimes "fill in the gaps" and create false memories of what really happened. As a good witness, the best we can do is tell investigators what we remember. If we don't remember everything, that's okay!
- ▷ When being questioned after an event, if there was a big distraction (such as gun shots or someone screaming) when the event occurred, a witness may easily miss some important details. Therefore, a **witness statement may not be a true representation** of an event's details.

Conclusion

5 minutes

- **Materials:**

- ▷ Clothing items and accessories (bracelet/watch, scarves, glasses, shoes you can easily slip on/off)

- **Teacher Prep:**

- ▷ Put clothing and accessories somewhere easy for you to access



Teacher's note: As you conclude the lesson, subtly change your appearance in some way.

For example:

- ▷ put on or take off a bracelet or watch
- ▷ slip on a different pair of shoes
- ▷ put your hair up/down
- ▷ change glasses
- ▷ add/remove a scarf

Try to do this without drawing attention to it!

- **Ask:** There are around 1.4 million people that live in Calgary; how many police officers do you think we have?
 - ▷ **Answer:** There are about 2300 police officers
- **Ask:** Do you think police officers can see every crime that happens or be everywhere they are needed, all the time?
- **Explain:** No! They can't be everywhere at once or see every crime happen. As citizens of Calgary, it is our job to help police officers. We can do this by being good witnesses. If we think we see something suspicious, or we have witnessed a crime, we need to make sure we report it to the police. As we learned in our last lesson, taking notes is essential for police officers. It is a great idea for witnesses to write down everything they saw as well. That way, they won't forget details or have any false memories.
- **Ask:** Does anyone notice anything different about me?



Teacher's note: If the changes weren't noticed, share them with your students. If time permits, quickly circle back to how things can happen in the background that we may not notice if we are focused on something else.

Optional Extension Activity: Awareness Test

5 minutes

- Watch the following youtube video, a different awareness test that students can participate in with a surprising ending!
 - ▷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNF9QNEQLA>



Curriculum Links

Science and Investigation

General Learner Expectations:

- 6-8: Apply observation and inference skills to recognize and interpret patterns and to distinguish a specific pattern from a group of similar patterns.

Specific Learner Expectations:

- SLE 3: Recognize that evidence found at the scene of an activity may have unique characteristics that allow an investigator to make inferences about the participants and the nature of the activity, and give examples of how specific evidence may be used.

