



## Tips for Rolling Fingerprints

If you or another staff member will be taking fingerprints, please refer to the tips in this document to ensure that the fingerprints are of sufficient quality. If you have not been training in taking fingerprints, please refer section 4.5 of the SafetyNET Manual for information on where your volunteers can be fingerprinted. We do not recommend that you take fingerprints without training. You may be able to ask your local police station to instruct you on how to take effective fingerprints.

All fingerprints must be clear and visible. The lines and patterns of the fingerprint should be clearly visible. The ink should be dark gray and free of any smudges. When rolling fingerprints, you will be rolling the finger from “nail to nail”. Also included should be from the tip of the finger to just below the first joint of the finger. This means that rolled fingerprints appear rectangular when done properly. If fingerprints on the card appear to be oval, you are just pressing the finger down and are not rolling the finger properly. See the sample images at the end of this document for examples.

### Supplies needed:

- Fingerprint cards
- A fingerprint card holder
- A fingerprint ink pad (Note: it must be ink specifically made for fingerprinting)
- Correction tabs (optional; allows you to cover a poorly taken print and retake a print)

### Steps:

1. Ask the volunteer wash and dry their hands.
2. Put a fingerprint card into the fingerprint cardholder. This will keep the card from moving while the fingerprints are being taken. Put the cardholder at the edge of a table or other surface, which will make the fingerprinting easier.
3. You will be rolling the print from “nail to nail”. For the fingers on the right hand, you will be rolling from left to right. For the fingers on the left hand, you will be rolling from right to left. (In other words, you are always starting with the side of the finger closest to the thumb and rolling away.) Thumbs are rolled in the opposite direction as the fingers.
4. Explain to the volunteer that you would like them to look away while you do the fingerprinting and ask them not to help with the rolling. You will actually hold the finger and move it through the rolling motion. If the volunteer tries to help with the rolling, it will likely smudge the print. They must relax and let you do the motion.
5. Immediately before printing each finger, you may wish to wipe their finger with rubbing alcohol to make sure there isn't any sweat or lint present.
6. Roll the finger from nail to nail on the ink pad, and then do the same rolling motion on the fingerprint card. Do not roll back and forth or the print will be smudged. Simply roll from one side to the other and then lift the finger clear of the card. It should all be in one single motion.
7. Repeat for all fingers and thumb.

8. For the impressions on the bottom of the card, you will be inking and then pressing all four fingers simultaneously into the box. The fingers should be angled to fit into the box. You do not roll these prints – just press them. Ink the fingers, and then position them over the card. Hold the individual's wrist with one hand, and press all four fingers onto the card with the other hand. Do the same for the thumbs. These prints are used to verify that the fingers were printed in the right order.

### **Examining the Fingerprint Card**

Once you have completed the fingerprinting, you should carefully examine the fingerprint card before letting the volunteer wash their hands and leave. You may need to redo one or more of the fingers.

Most importantly, the pattern of the fingerprint should be clearly visible, and the lines (called ridges) on the fingerprint should be clear and discernable. Fingerprint examiners are looking for the overall pattern, like a whorl or an arch. They are also looking at the ridges of the fingerprint itself – for places where the ridges merge together, or split apart, where there is a hook off the main ridge, etc. If the pattern and ridges are not visible, your fingerprint is not legible to a fingerprint examiner. Fingerprint examiners look for 12-15 unique features per finger, so it is very important that the fingerprints are clear and include the entire finger.

Things to look for:

- Make sure the ink is a dark gray color. If it is too light or too dark, it will be hard to discern the pattern.
- There shouldn't be any smudges. If the volunteer moved their finger, or your motion was not smooth, it could very well lead to smudges. If the fingerprint is smudged, the ridges will not be visible.
- There shouldn't be splotches, lines, or dots on the card without ink. If a fingerprint has a white patch going through it, you didn't ink the finger well enough. That white patch, especially if it is through the middle of the fingerprint, will likely prevent the pattern from being discerned.
- Make sure you got the whole finger. If the pattern is cut off because you didn't roll from nail to nail, or you didn't get the finger down to the joint, the fingerprint also is not usable.
- Make sure that the fingerprint is contained within the box. Much of the fingerprint examination process today is computerized, and fingerprint scanners are designed to pull the fingerprint from inside the box. This means that any part of the fingerprint outside of the box will likely not be seen by the fingerprint examiner.

If you find that one fingerprint did not turn out well, you can use a correction tab and paste over the box for that finger, and re-print just that finger. You can do this for as many of the fingerprints as necessary until you have a full set of good fingerprints.

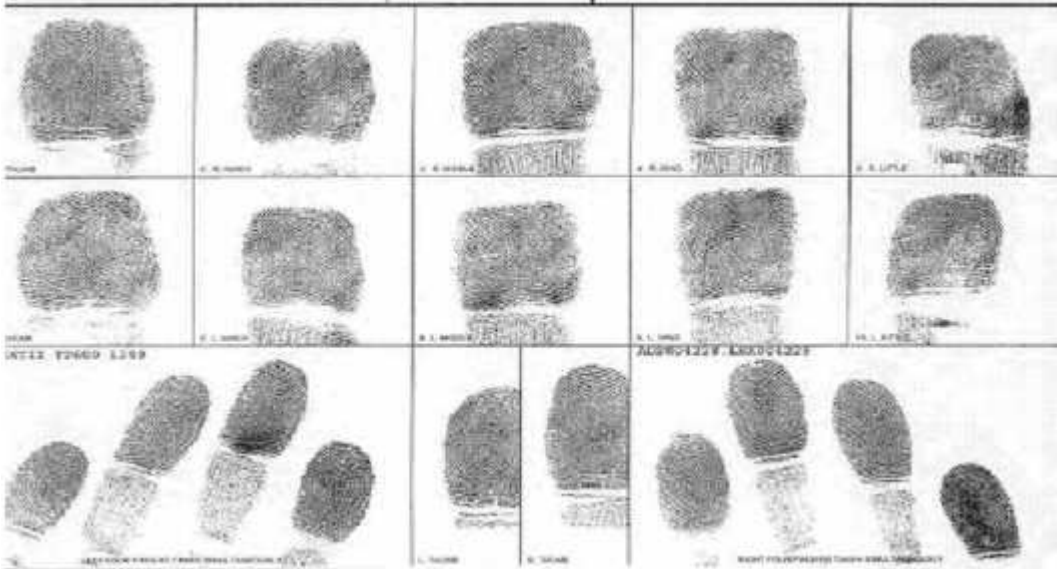
### **Purchasing supplies**

One source for fingerprinting supplies is [www.sirchie.com](http://www.sirchie.com). Important supplies are:

- Ceramic fingerprint ink pad – PFP800 (\$39.95)
- Fingerprint card holder – FPT263 (\$15.95)
- Correction tabs – FPT107R, FPT108R, or FPT109 (\$9.50 – \$21.95)
- Instructional video on rolling fingerprints – FPV100 (\$29.95) (optional)

## Examples of Rolled Fingerprints

**Image 1:** This image is meant to show how rolled prints should appear on the fingerprint card. The image quality is not high enough to show the level of detail each fingerprint should have. Notice how each fingerprint appears rectangular, how each fingerprint fits in the box, and how the entire top portion of the finger to right below the joint is visible.



**Image 2:** This is a close-up of a rolled fingerprint. Notice that the patterns and individual ridges are all clearly visible, without smudging.



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