

# HANDLING MOBILE DEVICES

## step 1 Document the device and all collection procedures and information.

Photograph  
OR Video OR  
Sketch

Notes

Chain of  
custody

## step 2 Determine if the device is on or off.

Look for  
lights

Listen for  
sounds

Feel for  
vibrations  
or heat

note: Many mobile devices save power by turning off screens after a specified amount of time. Despite the screen status, the device is likely still active. Ask if the device is currently powered on. Where legal, pressing the power button quickly will activate the screen.

## step 3 If the device is off, **do NOT turn it on.**

Collect and  
package  
(see Step 5)

Ask for  
password/pass  
pattern

Transport  
(see Step 6)

## step 4 If the device is on, proceed with **CAUTION.**

WARNING

The two most significant challenges for officers seizing mobile devices are: (1) isolating the device from cellular and WI-Fi networks; and (2) obtaining security passwords or pass patterns for the device so the evidence can be examined forensically. Always ask if there is any security feature enabled on the phone. These can include passwords (simple or complex), security/wiping apps, pass patterns, or biometrics (facial scan). Document (see the attached consent form for guidance) and confirm the password or pass pattern. Turning the device off could result in the loss of evidence. The best option is to keep the device powered, unlocked (if locked, collect any available passwords, PIN codes, or security unlock information), and in airplane mode until it is in the hands of an experience technician.

## step 5 Collection and Package

WARNING

You may need to collect other forensic evidence including fingerprints, biological samples, DNA, etc. from smart phones and mobile devices. Work with crime scene technicians or trained forensic personnel to preserve such evidence without disturbing the integrity of the data on the device. Be sure to advise forensic examiners in advance of submission of the possible existence of hazardous material on the device.

Secure data  
and power  
cables

Consider  
collecting  
computers  
that may  
contain device  
backups

Package the  
device so it  
will not be  
physically  
damaged or  
deformed

Package the  
device in  
evidence  
bags or  
boxes

## step 6 Transport.

Deliver evidence to a secure law  
enforcement facility or digital evidence  
laboratory as soon as possible

Protect from tem-  
perature extremes  
and moisture