

TIPS FOR IMPROVING FINGERPRINT QUALITY

Why Does Fingerprint Quality Matter?

If the FBI rejects your fingerprints, you will have to be fingerprinted again, which can double or even treble the time it takes to complete your CBC. Approximately two percent (about 400 per year) of all fingerprints received in the CBCP office are rejected. About 75% of those that have been rejected submit acceptable prints the second time. This means that if they had followed these guidelines the first time, they would have saved both time and money by only being fingerprinted one time.

Common Causes of Low-Quality Fingerprints

The following are some circumstances that can increase the chance of fingerprints being rejected:

- Frequently washing/disinfecting hands
- Activities that require use of the fingertips such as weight-lifting, rock climbing, gardening, or playing guitar
- Frequent or regular handling of paper or typing
- Exposures to chemicals, such as bleach, chlorine, acetone, antibacterial products
- Age: Skin becomes smoother and ridges become harder to capture with age
- Ethnicity: Some ethnic groups have naturally fine/smooth skin (e.g. Asian, Scandinavian, German)

Tips for Improving Fingerprint Quality

1. Use Lotion

The best thing you can do to avoid having your fingerprints rejected is to moisturize. Start using lotion on your hands at least 2-3 times per day for several days leading up to your fingerprinting appointment. We recommend that you do not use lotion on the day of your appointment.

2. Live Scan

If possible, try to find a fingerprinting location that uses LiveScan (digital) technology rather than ink. Ink prints are acceptable, however digital equipment produces better images. **Please Note:** The CBCP will digitally transmit your prints. If taken digitally at any other location, the fingerprints must be printed onto a hard copy FD-258 card and mailed to the CBCP.

3. Take a Break

To maximize fingerprint quality, avoid activities that are hard on your finger tips for several days leading up to your fingerprinting appointment.

4. Make a Plan

For most people, using lotion and taking a break from detrimental activities for a few days will probably be enough. However, if you fit into several of the “common causes” categories and believe you have low-quality fingerprints as a result, plan ahead. For example, if you are a 45-year old nurse who uses sanitizer and soap on your hands 20 times per day and in your spare time, you swim in a chlorinated pool three times per week, you should plan ahead. If you have the weekend off from work, plan to be fingerprinted on Monday morning. Stop using the pool on the previous Wednesday. Start moisturizing at least four times per day at least four days ahead of your appointment. Spend the weekend babying your hands: No cleaning, no gardening, no lifting weights.

If I Don't Want to Follow the Tips and My Fingerprints are Rejected, What Would Happen?

From the date the CBCP transmits your prints, it can take up to three weeks for us to receive the report—including a report that indicates that the fingerprints were rejected by the FBI. When we receive the rejection notification, the CBCP sends you an email instructing you to be fingerprinted again. If you submit a second set of fingerprints, they go through the same process, doubling the time it takes to complete your CBC. If your second set of fingerprints is also rejected, then the CBCP will request a background check using an alternative method, searching by name and date of birth. The Name and Date of Birth search can take up 6 weeks, which can quadruple the time required to complete your CBC.

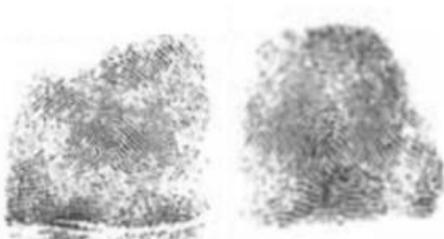
How Much of a Difference Can Following These Tips Make?

The images below show the difference that regular use of lotion and reducing activity can have on fingerprints over time.

Fingerprint ridgeline improvement over time with regular lotion & reduction of activity



Fingerprints of a person who lifts weights two-three times per week



LiveScan fingerprint of someone who moisturized and avoided hard activity for five days



Please Note: Most people following these tips will have significantly improved fingerprint quality. There is a very small percentage (about .1%) of people for whom even the best care and planning will not produce acceptable prints.