

TIPS FOR IMPROVING FINGERPRINT QUALITY

Why Does Fingerprint Quality Matter

Approximately 2 percent (about 400 per year) of all fingerprints received in the Criminal Background Check Program (CBCP) for the Health Professionals Regulatory Boards are rejected. If the FBI rejects your fingerprints, you will have to resubmit new fingerprints, which will delay your background check.

It can take up to three weeks for the CBCP to receive the FBI report on your fingerprints, including if your fingerprints were rejected. Upon receiving the report, the CBCP sends you an email instructing you to be fingerprinted again. Your second set of fingerprints must go through the same process, essentially doubling the time it takes to complete your background check. If your second set of fingerprints is also rejected, the CBCP will request a background check using name and date of birth. The Name and Date of Birth search can take as long as 6 weeks, significantly delaying the completion of your background check.

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 with age causing ridges to become harder to capture
- Ethnicity – some ethnic groups have naturally fine/smooth skin (e.g., Asian, Scandinavian, German)

Tips for Improving Fingerprint Quality

A. 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.

B. LiveScan Digital Technology

If possible, try to find a fingerprinting location that uses LiveScan technology rather than ink. Digital equipment produces better images. Please note that LiveScan fingerprints still must be submitted to the CBCP on a paper card.

C. Take a Break

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

D. Make a Plan

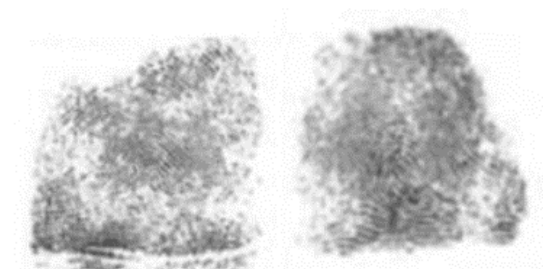
If you fit into several of the “common causes” categories and believe you may have low-quality fingerprints, plan ahead. Schedule your fingerprints following 3 or 4 days you can plan to avoid harsh chemicals, constant handwashing and hand-related activities. Moisturize and give your hands a break.

How Much Difference Can Following These Tips Make?

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



Below are fingerprints of a person who lifts weights 2 to 3 times per week.



In comparison, notice how clear the following LiveScan fingerprint is from a person who moisturized and avoided hard activity for 5 days.



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. If you are worried about your prints being rejected, we recommend sending in two separate sets of prints. This way if the first set is rejected, we can immediately submit the second set without waiting for you to obtain new ones and send them to us.