

Sample Exercises from

Elements of Crime Patterns: A Foundation for Theory and Practice

Conduct an online search using the terms “serial robber” or “robbery series.” Extract and catalog all suspect physical description variables from three different series of robberies. How detailed were the suspect descriptions? How significant might they be in linking the crimes? (Chapter 8: Physical Description)

Choose a familiar location (school, workplace, shopping center). Imagine a hypothetical robbery there. Sketch or list at least three possible escape routes an offender might use. Note environmental features (roads, alleys, rivers, train stations) that help or hinder escape. (Chapter 15: Approach & Escape)

Consider the following: a series of fraud cases involving complex accounting schemes and a series of cybercrimes involving sophisticated technical skills. For each, hypothesize what kinds of legitimate occupational or educational backgrounds investigators should examine. (Chapter 21: Knowledge & Skills)

Search online and locate then compare two different crime series: one targeting commercial sites and one targeting residential sites. Identify how location factors shaped offender methods in each. Reflect on which descriptors (access, concealment, routine victim activity) would be most useful for linkage. (Chapter 25: Location)

Identify a recent publicly reported case of smuggling, large-scale theft, or counterfeit distribution (for example, wildlife trafficking or counterfeit electronics). Create a simple flow diagram tracing the commodity from point of origin through transportation, intermediaries, and final market. Label at least three investigative “choke points” where law enforcement could intervene. (Chapter 29: Commodity Flow & Markets)

Develop a comprehensive list of 20 search terms investigators might use when querying databases for potentially linked sexual assault cases. Organize terms into categories: approach methods, force indicators, location descriptors, temporal patterns, and unique behaviors. For each term, provide two variations or synonyms that might capture the same behavior described differently across reports. (Chapter 32: Sexual Assault)

Make a list of all the ways your personal identifiable information (PII) is stored (wallet, phone, social media, online accounts, mail, workplace files). Identify at least three weak points where an offender could steal it. (Chapter 40: Identity Theft)

Identify three locations in a typical community that might be vulnerable to hosting illegal gambling (bars with video poker, social clubs, convenience stores). For each, explain what makes it attractive to operators and what prevention measures could reduce vulnerability without harming legitimate business. (Chapter 44: Illegal Gambling)

Search for an article or government bulletin about ghost guns or 3D-printed firearms. Identify the main regulatory challenge described and list two investigative indicators (for example, online parts sales, use of specific printing materials) that could help analysts flag serial trafficking of untraceable weapons. (Chapter 53: Firearm Trafficking)

Search online for recent government or NGO reports on illegal wildlife trade (such as INTERPOL, UNODC, or TRAFFIC). Identify one method of concealment traffickers use in wildlife or timber smuggling (for example, hiding ivory in coffee shipments or mixing illegal logs with legal timber). Write 3 - 4 sentences explaining why this method works and how law enforcement might detect it. (Chapter 55: Wildlife, Forest, & Fisheries Crime)