



KINGSGUARD

TIPS FOR IMPROVING FINGERPRINT QUALITY

Why Does Fingerprint Quality Matter?

If the FBI rejects your fingerprints, you will have to be fingerprinted again. Approximately two percent (about 400 per year) of all fingerprints received by the FBI 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 and avoid hand sanitizers on the day of your appointment.
2. **Hydrate** – Avoid consuming Alcohol or Caffeinated Drinks for up to 24 hours prior to your fingerprinting appointment. Instead, choose water or electrolyte beverages to hydrate your skin.
3. **Live Scan** - LiveScan (digital) technology is superior to traditional ink. Ink prints are acceptable, however digital equipment produces better images.
3. **Take a Break** - To maximize fingerprint quality, avoid activities that are hard on your fingertips 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.