

In California, and generally in legal contexts, chain of custody refers to the chronological documentation and control of evidence from its collection to its presentation in court. This documentation establishes a record of who handled the evidence, when, where, and for what purpose. The goal is to ensure the evidence presented in court is the same evidence collected at the crime scene and hasn't been tampered with or altered.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Key aspects of chain of custody:

- **Control:** Maintaining physical control of the evidence at all times.
- **Continuity:** Keeping track of who had access to the evidence and when.
- **Documentation:** Creating a record of the evidence's movement and handling.

Why is it important?

- **Establishing authenticity:**

Chain of custody ensures the evidence presented in court is the same evidence collected at the crime scene.

- **Preventing tampering:**

It helps prevent evidence from being tampered with, altered, or contaminated.

- **Ensuring admissibility:**

A properly established chain of custody is crucial for the admissibility of evidence in court.

In essence, a chain of custody provides a paper trail that demonstrates the integrity of the evidence and its authenticity from the point of collection to the courtroom.