

Fingerprinting Quality & Tips

A. Why does Fingerprint Quality Matter?

If the WSP or FBI determine the prints are not the best quality, prints will be rejected and applicants will have to be fingerprinted again which will increase the time it takes to complete a background check.

The WSP will reject fingerprints until they determine the fingerprints are the best quality. Once the WSP accepts the fingerprints, they will send them to the FBI for processing. The FBI will then determine whether the fingerprints are the best quality and may reject a maximum of 2 times and then a national name and date of birth check may be processed.

B. 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 weightlifting, rock climbing, gardening, or playing guitar
- Frequent or regular handling of paper or typing
- Exposure to chemicals, such as bleach, chlorine, acetone, and/or antibacterial products
- Age: Skin becomes smoother, and ridges become harder to capture with age
- Ethnicity: Some ethnic groups have naturally fine/smooth skin

C. Tips for Applicants for Improving Fingerprint Quality

- Wear kitchen gloves when in contact with water that has dish soap, cleaning products, or especially bleach.
- Avoid prolonged hand submersion in water or swimming in chlorinated pool, etc.
- Use good gloves for any yardwork to protect from dirt, concrete, brick, etc. as they dry and damage skin.
- Avoid alcohol-based hand sanitizing agents.
- Apply lotion multiple times per day, particularly after washing/drying hands. Same day is ok, but not within a couple of hours of appointment time.
- If hands are excessively dry, use some sort of heavy-duty moisturizer before bed and put some inexpensive gloves or mittens on to keep product on skin overnight. Depending on skin tolerance levels – use petroleum jelly, Bag Balm, Aquaphor type products. Simple olive oil or coconut oil work if there are allergy issues.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids – especially in the 24 hours leading up to the appointment. Make sure hands are clean prior to appointment.
- If applicant has excessively moist fingers, wiping them with alcohol can help.