

Name _____

Individual or Class Evidence: YOU MAKE THE CALL!!!

Class or Individual Characteristics

Class

Any characteristics that are common to a group are called class characteristics. Type of fiber is a class characteristic. Since there are many thousands of yards of polyester made, even in specific shapes and colors, this is a class characteristic—all polyester fiber has the same chemical characteristics. Hair is another class characteristic. All brown human hair has the same class characteristics, under a microscope. Their medullas are fragmented or absent and the color and scale pattern of the hair found on any individual varies over their entire scalp.

Individual

Individual characteristics are those that are unique to a single person or a specific item that only one person can possess. For instance, the brown human hair that was a class characteristic on it has a root on can give the DNA of a specific person. DNA is an individual characteristic. Fingerprints are an individual characteristic. Since fingerprints are a random growth pattern on an individual's skin, and they do not change over time, no two people have identical fingerprints. Footwear that has been worn for a few days has individual characteristics.

How is it determined whether a characteristic is class or individual? The investigator must determine how much of that substance or object were produced and how much of it may be found still in existence. The probability of finding another sample exactly like the one in question can then be calculated. That probability is used to determine whether or not that questioned evidence has individual or class characteristics.

STATIONS:

For each station, look carefully at each piece of evidence submitted to you. Upon careful inspection, determine if the evidence that is underlined is class or individual evidence and explain. You will need to consider the whole scenario before you make your decision.

Station 1: A torn T-shirt was found in the back seat of a suspect's car. Three pieces of torn cloth were found at the scene of the crime. Are the torn pieces of cloth available class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 2: A test tube was found at a crime scene at a lab. Would the small glass fragments removed from a suspect's shoe be considered class evidence or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 3: A note was found at a crime scene at a bank. A notepad with a similar type of paper was found in the desk of a suspect. Is the paper note considered class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 4: A soda can was found at the scene of a crime. Investigators tried to determine whether any of several tabs found in a suspects garage could be uniquely associated (individualized) with the can. Upon inspection, are the tabs class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 5: A shoe print was found at the scene of a hit and run automobile accident. Also found at the scene is a lone shoe. Is this shoe print class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 6: The local Buffalo News paper was found at the scene of a crime. The Sports Section was found in the home of the suspect. Is the Sports Section individual or class evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 7: Some powder was found in a plastic bag in a suspect's pocket. Some similar powder was found on the victim. Can the first powder be individualized to the second powder? _____ Explain. (If the two powders were determined to be chemically identical, does that prove they came from the same person?)

Station 8: If a small piece of paper were cut into four pieces, would the pieces be class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 9: If the same small piece of paper were torn into four pieces, would the pieces be class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 10: Torn matches were found at a suspicious house fire. A suspect was found carrying a book of matches, several of which were missing. Are the torn matches class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 11: A piece of duct tape was taken from a victim of a B & E (breaking and entering). A roll of the same brand of duct tape was found at the suspect's home. Would this roll of duct tape be considered class or individual evidence? _____ Explain.

Station 12: A pair of latex gloves was found at the scene of a robbery. A box of the same brand of latex gloves was found at a suspect's home. Can the gloves be individualized to the box? _____ Explain.