

EVIDENCE PRESERVATION SERIES

Preserving a Phone *the Right Way*

Mobile is where evidence is most often lost. This is how to secure a phone without destroying what's on it.

WHERE LTD FITS

Counsel decides the phone is **in scope**. This is how to secure it **technically** — before anything on it is altered.

01 Don't unlock and scroll

Every tap can change timestamps, mark messages read, and trigger auto-deletion. Handling the phone to "just check" is the single most common way mobile evidence is lost.

02 Isolate it from the network

Airplane mode at minimum; a Faraday bag for anything sensitive — to block a remote wipe and stop new data from overwriting old.

03 Preserve power and passcodes

Keep it charged and capture the passcode or PIN. A locked phone that dies can become unrecoverable.

04 Know the extraction types

Logical, file-system, and physical extractions capture **different data**. The right one depends on the device, the OS version, and what's actually at issue.

05 Account for encryption

Modern iOS and Android are encrypted by default. What's accessible depends on the passcode and the device state — before-first-unlock behaves very differently from after.

06 Capture the cloud side too

iCloud and Google backups, synced messages, and app-cloud data often hold what the device itself no longer does.

07 Image and hash — don't hand-export

A forensic acquisition with hash verification, not a manual "export chat" screenshot, is what makes the result defensible.

08 Document the chain of custody

Who held the device, when, how it was isolated and acquired, and with what tool and version.

WHEN TO BRING IN A FORENSIC EXAMINER

A phone that matters shouldn't be self-collected.

Any device likely to be challenged, that's locked or encrypted, or whose data may already be changing should be acquired by an examiner — before anyone handles it.

Phone in play? LTD acquires it forensically, so what's on it holds up.

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Technical resource, not legal advice. Your counsel owns legal strategy and scope; Legal Tech Dynamics addresses the technology of preserving and examining the device. Every matter is different — nothing here is a substitute for advice from qualified counsel or a retained examiner on your specific facts.

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