

## How to Describe a Suspect

To capture a criminal in these highly mobile times, it is of utmost importance for the police to promptly obtain an accurate description. Following are some of the most important identifiers the police need to apprehend criminal suspects. Keep this information in mind so that you can give the police an accurate description of any criminal or criminal incident you may observe.

### **Location information is critical:**

Observe where you are and the exact location of the crime. Try to remember if you have ever seen the suspect in the area before.

Note the time as precisely as possible.

Observe if the suspect is carrying a weapon and, if so, what type—revolver, handgun, shotgun, knife, etc.

If the suspect leaves the scene, note the direction of flight.

If the suspect is in a vehicle, note as much of the following information as possible: vehicle type (auto, truck, van, etc.); color; make and model; condition (dirty, damaged, etc.); and license plate numbers.

Note also if the vehicle has no license plates or a "license applied for" sticker in the rear windshield.

Watch for decoys or accomplices.

### **A variety of general description information about the suspect should be noted:**

- Sex
- Race or national origin
- Age (estimated)
- Height—use comparisons with your own height, a door, or some other standard measure
- Weight (estimated)
- Build—fat, husky, slim, muscular, etc.

### **Facial information is also important:**

- Hair—note the color, texture, hairline, style; also possible dyes or wigs
- Forehead—note forehead height, and whether the skin is smooth, creased or wrinkled
- Eyes—note the color, shape (round, slanted), whether clear or bloodshot, and the heaviness of eyelashes and eyebrows
- Nose—overall shape (long, wide, flat, etc.) and nostrils (wide, narrow, flared) are important
- Cheeks—is the flesh sunken, filled out, dried or oily? are there wrinkles around nose or mouth? are cheek bones high or low, wide or narrow?
- Ears—note size and prominence (protruding or flat against head)
- Mouth—are lips thin, medium, full? do corners turn up, turn down, or level?
- Chin—what is the shape (round, oval, pointed, square)? double chin, dimpled, cleft?
- Neck—note protruding Adam's apple or hanging jowls
- Complexion—note pores, pockmarks, acne, razor rash, bumps
- Facial hair—clean shaven? unshaven? beard, mustache, goatee, sideburns?
- Tattoos—shape and style; on what part of the body

### **Clothing information is also very important:**

- Hat—note color, style, ornaments, how it is worn (bill forward, backward, to one side)
- Coat—note color and style (suit coat, jacket, topcoat, overcoat)
- Shirt/Blouse/Dress—note color, design, sleeves, collar
- Trousers/Slacks/Skirt—note color, style, cuffs
- Socks—note color, pattern, length
- Shoes—note color, style, brand name for sneakers (if possible), condition
- Accessories—sweater, scarf, gloves, necktie
- Jewelry—rings, watches, bracelets, necklaces
- General appearance—neat or sloppy? clean or dirty?
- Oddities—look for clothing too large or too small; odd colors; patchwork

### **Look for other physical features or peculiarities:**

- Voice—pitch, tone, rasp, lisp
- Speech—articulate, uneducated, accent, use of slang
- Gait—slow, fast, limp

You will never be able to remember all of these details about any one suspect you may see. But remembering as many as possible can be particularly helpful to the police and to your community.