

# Obtaining initial accounts

How to get good quality information from witnesses and victims at the early, first-response stage which takes place before the formal interview stage.

## Summary

In collaboration with frontline officers, senior leaders and researchers, we have developed evidence-based guidelines on obtaining initial accounts from victims and witnesses.

The guidelines include evidence-based recommendations on eliciting victim and witness initial (first) accounts. These recommendations are designed to improve the accuracy and quantity of information provided by witnesses and victims in their first account to the police.

Initial accounts guidelines include:

- practical guidelines for first responders obtaining initial accounts
- strategic-level recommendations for senior officers
- recommendations for future research to fill a gap in the evidence

## Obtaining initial accounts guidelines

- Introduction to initial accounts
- Rapport building
- Witness separation
- Clarifying sources of information
- Alcohol intoxication
- Witnesses' own words and open questioning
- Non-leading approach to questioning
- Allowing uncertainty
- Suggesting eye closure
- Advice on information exposure
- Identify and record needs and vulnerabilities
- Strategic recommendation – building knowledge and skills
- Strategic recommendation – use of self-administered interviews

15/04/2021

- [Future research questions](#)
- [Initial accounts – references](#)

## Related reports and information

- [Initial accounts full guidelines \(pdf\) 473.87 KB](#)
- [Obtaining initial accounts from victims and witnesses: A Rapid Evidence Assessment \(pdf\) 1.2 MB](#)