

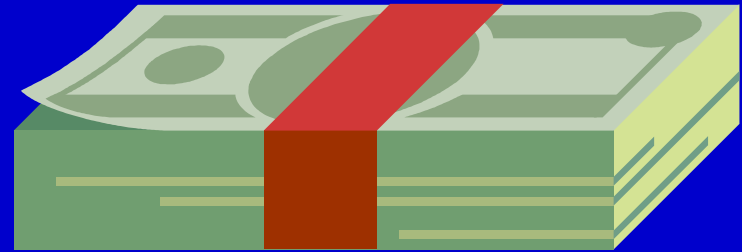


Collecting Your Fee

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How should I charge?

- By the hour?
- By the service?
 - Some examiners charge a certain amount for an oral opinion and an additional amount for a written opinion.
 - Some examiners charge by the number of questioned documents.
 - Regardless of type of billing, always obtain a retainer.





How should I charge?

- How much is my Retainer Fee?
- Is it non-refundable?
- How many hours do I bill for my retainer?
- How do I know what to charge for additional work after the retainer is spent?
- What is the going rate in my area for my type of work?



Considerations

- Competition
 - Other examiners in your area.
- Amount of experience you have.
- Your expenses.
- Amount of time required to complete an assignment.

Considerations

- No expert can take a case on contingency.





Different Services Provided

- Initial contact with client.
- Examining documents.
- Photographing documents.
- Writing reports.
- Preparing exhibits.
- Testifying in deposition and/or court.

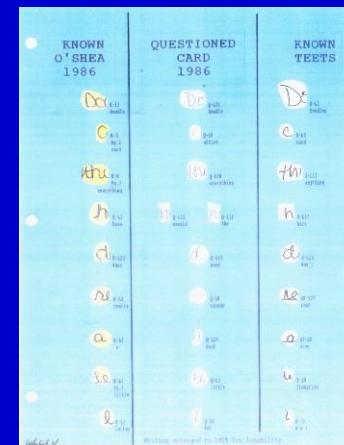
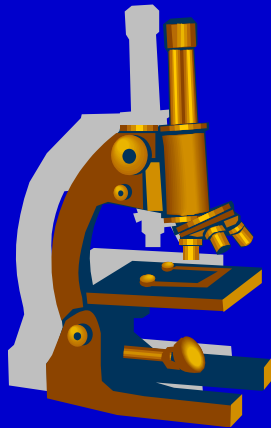
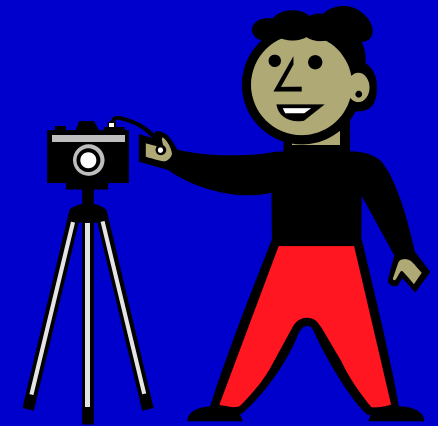


Additional Services

- Consultation
- Pick up documents
- Technical Investigation
- Laboratory work
- Travel Time

Expenses

- Photocopying
- Photographs
- Exhibits
- Use of special equipment



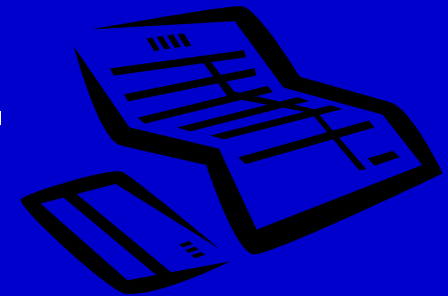
Expenses

- Travel expenses:
 - Mileage and Parking Fees
 - Airfare
 - Hotel accommodations



Other considerations

- Replenish the retainer.
- Bill for additional services.
- Provide refunds for overpayment.
- Collect court fee in advance.
- Open separate account for clients who wire money to you.

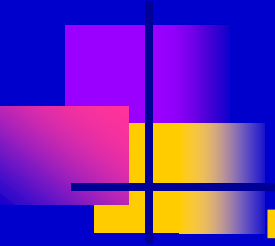


Special Circumstances

- Government cases:
 - Public Defenders
 - Police Departments
 - District Attorneys
 - Appointment by judges
- Repeat clients
- Pro Bono Services
- Reduced rates for some clients.



Deposition

- 
- The party who requests your appearance for deposition usually pays your fee.
 - Check laws of your state regarding payment. For example, in Maryland, an expert cannot charge more for deposition than for preparing a report.
 - You can charge portal to portal.
 - Send your bill prior to deposition and request advance payment.

Method of Payment

- Cash,
- Check or money order,
- Credit Cards.



Fee Agreement

- Always use a Fee Agreement.
- Spells out your fees in detail.
- Spells out conditions of your contract.





FEE AGREEMENT CONTRACT

Effective through 12/31/19

- **Retainer Fee (payable in advance)**
Covers first 3 hours (nonrefundable) \$1000
- Hourly rate \$300
- Rush Case Retainer \$1200
- Rush Cases hourly rate \$450
- Fees cover consultation, case review, technical investigation, laboratory work, preliminary opinion, written opinion, pre-court conferences and travel time.



Fee Agreement

- **Fees for Court and Deposition Appearances**
- Court and Deposition preparation and appearances as well as travel time billed at the \$300 hourly rate (minimum of 3 hours for such appearances). \$900
- Court or Deposition out of local area (over 100 miles each way) 6 hours \$1200
- Out of Region/Country (minimum of 2 days) \$4800
- Day reserved for Court or Deposition that is cancelled 1 week or less prior to appearance. \$600

Fee Agreement

- **Court Exhibits**

- Exhibit preparation hourly rate \$125
- Photographic and reproduction costs are additional and billed separately

- **Travel Expenses**

- Auto Expense is reimbursed at the rate of \$.60 per mile.
- Out of area expenses include: airfare, ground transportation, and lodging.





Fee Agreement

- **Miscellaneous**
- Client agrees that in the event that this case involves additional time spent in court, client is responsible for additional expense.
- Client agrees not to declare representation from this office until retainer has been paid.



Fee Agreement

- **Payment**
- Payment is due upon receipt of invoice.
- Accounts must be paid in full prior to trial date.
- Our policy is to withdraw from retention on any account that is more than 30 days past due.



Fee Agreement

In the event it becomes necessary to refer an unpaid bill to an attorney for collection, the client agrees to be responsible for all associated costs which could include court costs, private process and attorney's fees.



Fee Agreement

Client further agrees that said case will be filed in the county in which Forensic Document Examiners, Inc. maintains its office.



Collecting your fee

- Collect your retainer fee before beginning any work.
- You can replenish your fee for additional work beyond the retainer time.
- If you adhere to these guidelines, you will always get paid for your services.



Collecting your fee

- Alternately:
- Use an invoice
 - Keep a record of the time you spend and the services that you provided.
 - Describe the services provided.



Collecting your fee

- Alternately:
- Use an invoice
 - Set a due date for payment. Normal is 30 days.
 - Include your Employee Identification Number(EIN).
 - You may want to include a self-addressed envelope.



Example of Invoice

EIN: 20-2400929

CASE # 2704

DATE: June 24, 2019

TO: Client

RE: Services Provided

TERMS: Due Upon Receipt or within 30 days

Examination of questioned documents:

Expenses

Retainer Fee

\$1000.00

(Covers the first 3 hours of service)

Fees cover consultation, case review, technical investigation, laboratory work, preliminary opinion, written opinion, pre-court conferences and travel time.

Examination of Documents.

BALANCE DUE

\$1000.00

Make checks payable to: **FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINERS**
We Accept All Major Credit Cards

TIME SHEET



CASE Number _____

- Date Work _____
- Completed By _____
- Time Started _____
- Time Finished _____
- Time Spent _____
- Billable Hours _____
- Total To Date _____
- Billing Date _____
- Date Bill Paid _____



Billing practices

- Invoice regularly.
 - Bill upon completion of services.
 - Bill monthly.
 - Send frequent reminders.
- Always follow up with phone calls.
- Send a demand letter with late bills.

When the client doesn't pay

- Telephone client:
 - “Is there a problem?”
 - Negotiate a plan for payment.





Recommendations

- Call when bill is sent and tell client you are looking forward to receiving his check.
- Call immediately before due date and remind client you are waiting for check.
- Offer a discount for prompt payment.



Filing in Small Claims Court

- Clerk of the Court will assist you.
- Fill out a complaint.
- Attach documentation.
- Send a Certificate of Service to the involved parties.



Small Claims Court

- Testify in court.
- Get a judgment.
- Collect on the judgment.



Collections

- Use a Collection Agency for clients who do not pay.
- You only pay the Collection Agency if they are able to obtain payment.



Pro Bono Work

- Pro bono means “for the good.”
- It is used when services are provided for free.
- It occurs when a client is unable to pay your fee.
- It is entirely up to you if you want to accept pro bono work.



Keep in mind

- There are always clients who will try to avoid paying you or underpay you.
- You are entitled to compensation for your work.
- With a plan and some effort you will be able to collect your fee every time.