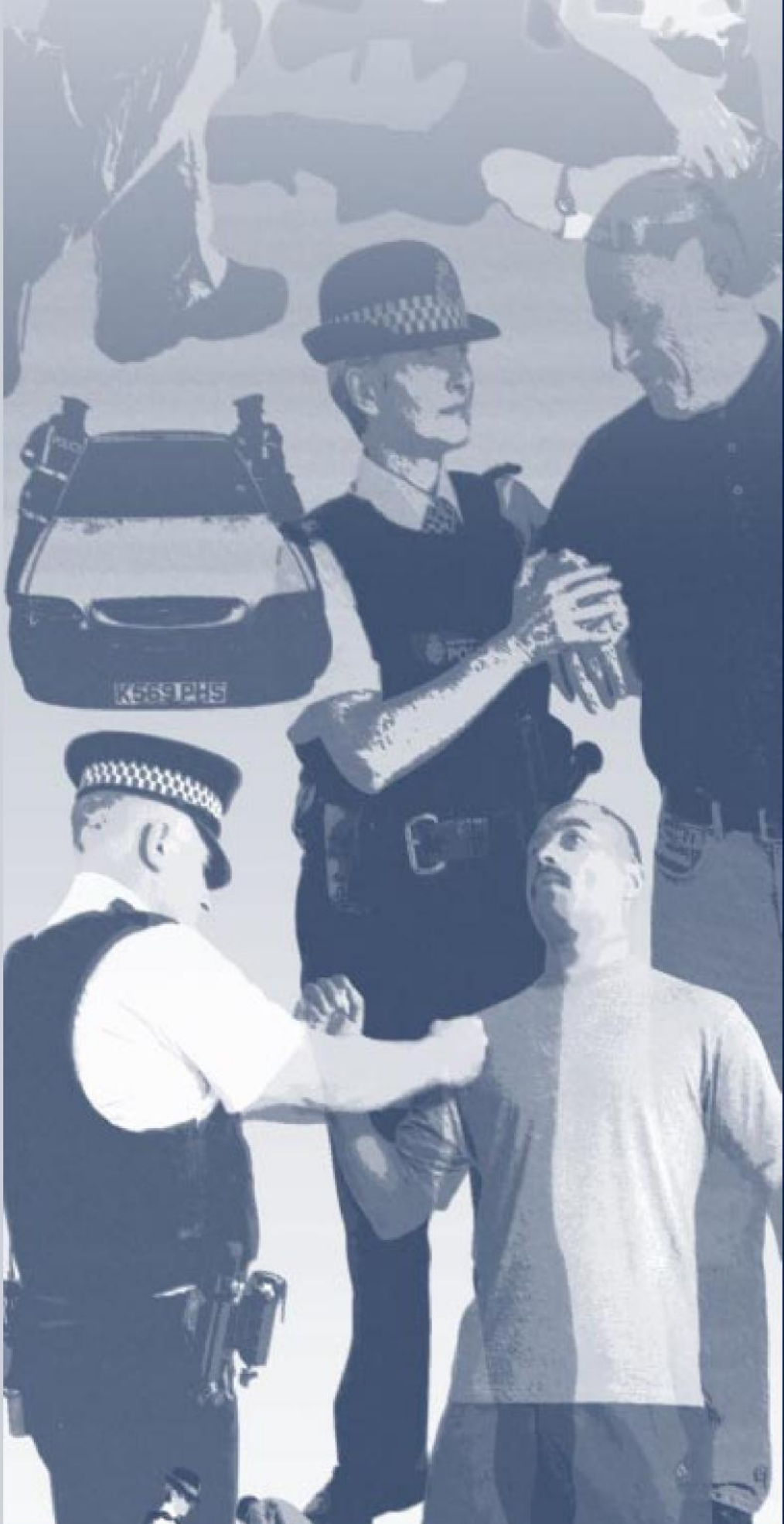


Searching skills



Personal Safety



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SEARCHING SKILLS

The aim therefore of this module is:

- to understand the legislation which is relevant to subject searches
- to practically apply a safe search, which disadvantages the subject, yet enhances the safety of the officers and
- to link where appropriate to other modules contained within this manual.

Introduction

Searching for stolen property, drugs and weapons is a routine part of the duties of most police officers, and yet officers daily expose themselves to unnecessary risks while searching. This often arises out of confusion over police powers and, often due to poor practice is either by over-familiarity with the task, or, in some cases, with no approach to the task at all. A periodic check of police vehicles may well serve as a reminder that this is the case. It must be considered that the subject the officer is dealing with:

- knows what they are carrying (remember the 100% rule - everybody carries an edged weapon)
- can choose when to react to prevent the officer from being successful (remember action v reaction)
- may have entered the danger area within the reactionary gap
- may have been motivated by the officer's physical contact to react.

Legislation

There are numerous Acts of Parliament giving police officers powers to search subjects under a wide variety of circumstances. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984, the Codes of Practice relating to stop and search does not attempt to list them all, but merely limit themselves to the provision of an annexe (A) which lists the main stop and search powers, with a short guide to their provisions. This module is limited to understanding those powers which are relevant to everyday policing.

Human Rights Act 1998 (see Use of Force Module)

Section 1 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
(see Use of Force Module)

Code of Practice A for the exercise by police officers of statutory powers of stop and search

It is the responsibility of all trainers and officers to read and understand the contents of this Code of Practice. A knowledgeable officer is likely to be a confident officer, and this can demonstrate assertiveness towards, and ultimate control of, the subject. The officer should strive never to be compromised.

Practical searching

When searching subjects it is important to adopt an appreciation of the main elements involved in safely completing the task. The following constitute the critical elements. Additional elements may be added. However, from a personal safety priority, the officer will need to consider, in view of numbers, environment and circumstances, whether a search should be conducted at all!

Communication

In any process, clear and concise verbal commands are important. Use open questions (5WH -Who, What, Why, Where, When, How) where appropriate to elicit information, such as, “What weapons or drugs have you got on you, and where are they?”, as opposed to closed questions, such as, “Have you any weapons or drugs on you?” which provide yes/no answers. Also, communication can be used to misdirect the subject. Asking a question and engaging the subject in conversation may (although nothing is certain) restrict the subject’s ability to launch a physical attack on the officer. Once a subject has been physically searched, it is then always useful to verbally search the subject by asking, “What weapons or drugs have I missed? It would be better if you told me now.”

Also, be aware that any questions asked might constitute an interview, and may need to be recorded, in accordance with Code C of the PACE 1984 Codes of Practice.

Positioning (approach to contact)

Although it is always desirable to maintain a reactionary gap of six feet or more, for many reasons this may not always be possible. Also, searching a subject should be conducted by two or more officers, where possible. This searching method however assumes the worst case scenario in that the officer is on their own; where they would adopt both a communicative and physical searching role. Where more than one officer is present, each officer adopts a role, either talking to the subject and observing the second officer, or searching the subject.



WARNING.

There is no such thing as a safe search with an unco-operative subject and a lone officer, unless some form of control is used (see Unarmed Skills Module).

It is always desirable to search the subject from the outside position, which would place the officer outside the conventional fighting arc (or inside position), yet still having due consideration for that percentage of subjects who are able to operate from the unconventional fighting arc. 360-degree awareness of, and alertness to, the subject is just as important as 360-degree awareness of, and alertness to, the officer’s surroundings (see Personal Management Module).



COMPETENCES

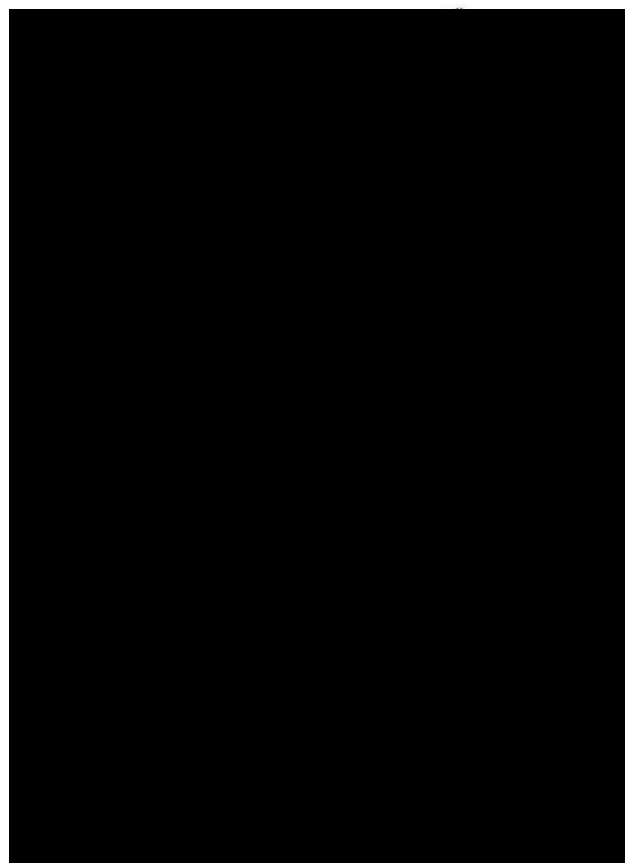
- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]

Balance (subject and officer)

[REDACTED]

COMPETENCES

- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]



If the subject refuses, the officer may consider that the subject is being non-compliant and ask again, or become alerted to a reason for the refusal and therefore pose the question, “Why?”.

Control

Controlling a subject prior to, during and after a search may be achieved by the following methods:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

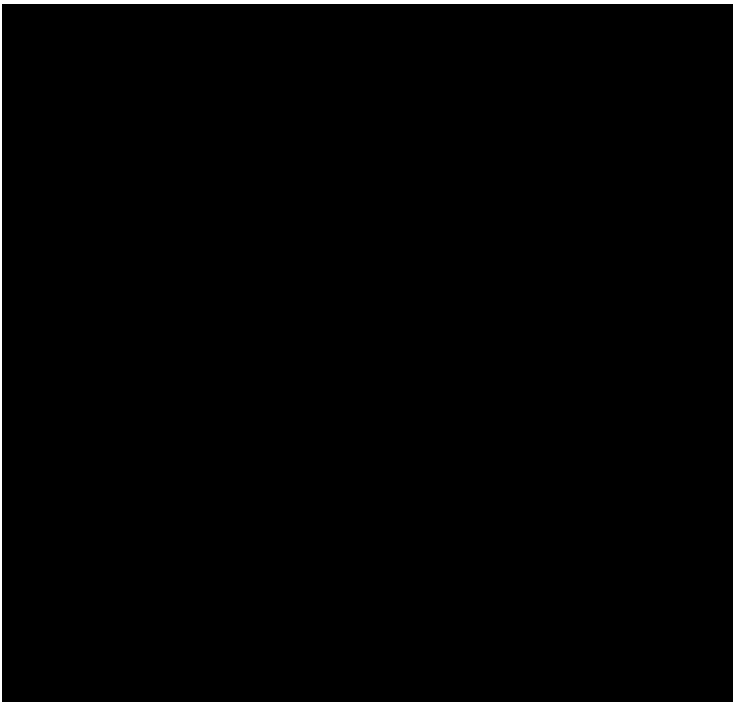
[REDACTED]

COMPETENCES

- [REDACTED]



NOTE:
[REDACTED]

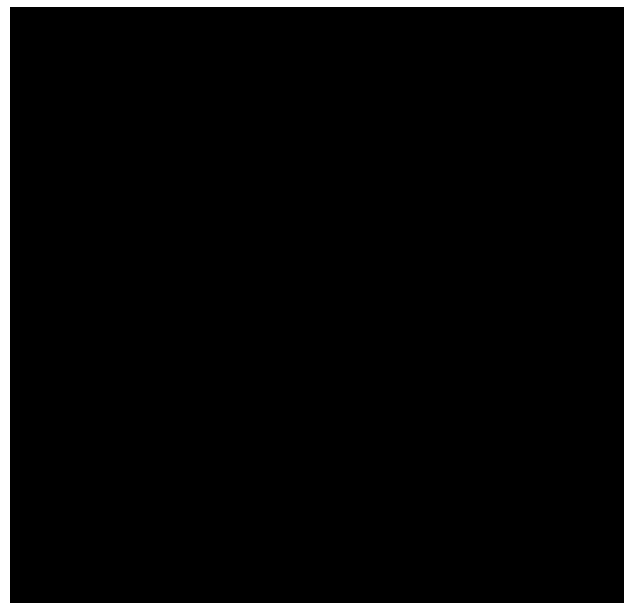
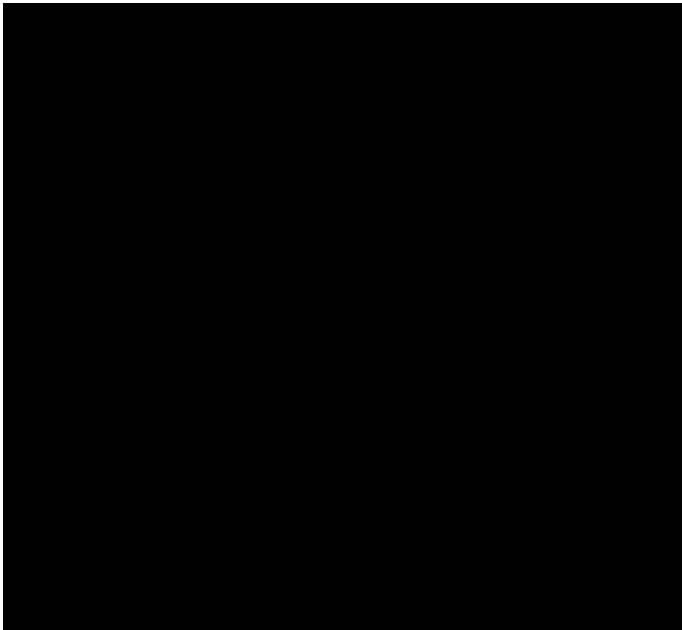


[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]



5

SEARCHING SKILLS

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

This causes the subject's hips to be out of line with their feet and unbalance them; this may place the subject slightly on their toes. Additionally, this makes kicking the officer difficult without some prior warning to the officer, such as a shift of body position.



IMPORTANT.

Any search should be conducted with proper regard to the culture, sensitivity and vulnerability of the subject, and embarrassment should be minimised.

[Redacted text block]

Search pattern

[Redacted text block]

Search technique

[Redacted text block]

COMPETENCES

- ◆ [Redacted text]
- ◆ [Redacted text]
- ◆ [Redacted text]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]

- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] hat may have been taped on, as this may pre

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Searching below the belt line (lower quadrants)

COMPETENCES

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

In the event that the subject decides to resist:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Searching of a co-operative subject

[REDACTED]

Different types of search

[REDACTED]

Kneeling search

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

COMPETENCES

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 0% of the world's population is right
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

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- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

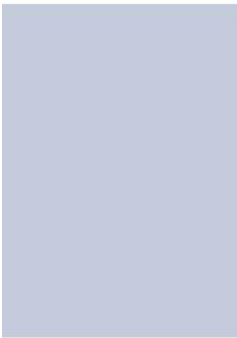
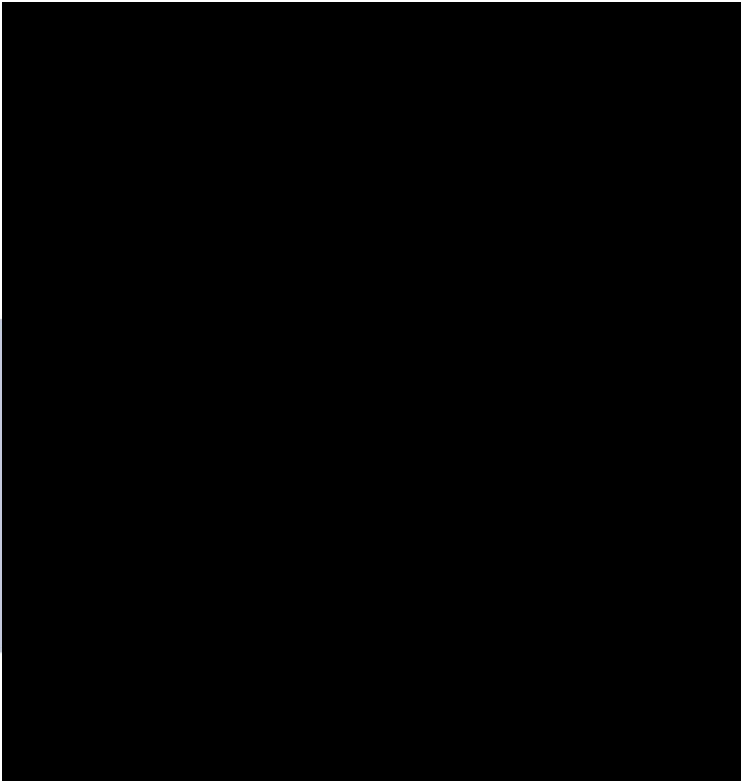
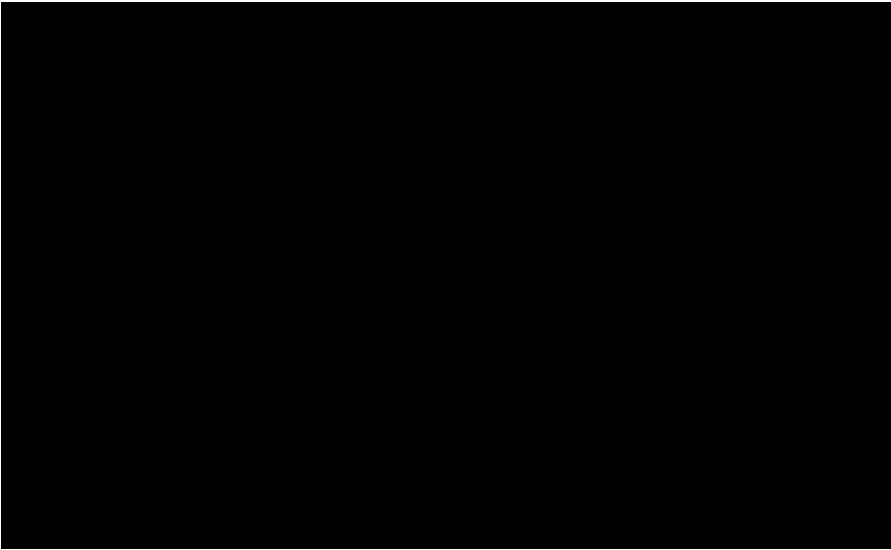
Seated search

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Competences

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]



Prone search

The prone search may be construed as a derivative of the seated search, and may be more commonly associated with a handcuffed subject. The subject's physical well-being is of paramount importance, especially concerning positional asphyxia, excited delirium, sickle cell anaemia and other physiological phenomena (see Medical Implications Module).

COMPETENCES

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Be aware at this point of the subject either rolling into the officer to attack or away from the officer to escape.

If the subject refuses to bend their knees and co-operate with the officer's request, either:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Having a subject sitting on the floor restricts them from being able to forcefully kick the officers. If the subject is sat in a chair or similar seating arrangement, the back and sides of the chair may provide protection for the officers. Regarding standing the subject up, see the Handcuffing Skills Module.

Disabled subjects

Occasionally, officers are placed into a situation involving a subject who has some form of disability. In an effort to establish a professional rapport, in this capacity it may be advisable to seek the opinion of a medical practitioner. However, in conjunction with this, the following fundamentals will be examined.

Devices used by disabled subjects

Prosthetics

A prosthetic device is an artificial replacement for a missing body part. Generally, three types of prosthetic devices are currently in use.

Upper extremity prostheses

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Mechanical prostheses are moved by the use of cables and straps attached to the opposite side of the body. Myo-electric prostheses are moved by muscle contractions within the prosthetic socket. One form of arm or hand prosthesis is the hook or terminal device. The hook may be open or may be housed in a plastic anatomically correct

mould of the hand. Lower arm amputees will be able to swing the limb outward and extend the arm.

Above elbow prostheses

Above elbow prosthetic devices are usually attached by means of a harnessing system. This system significantly limits the subject's arm movements. The subject may be able to elevate the arm, but not have the range of movement to swing the arm.

Lower extremity prostheses

Lower extremity prosthetic devices fall into the categories of endoskeletal (soft with metal internal components) or exoskeletal (hard shell which is often hollow). Exoskeletal below knee devices usually have an insert for the residual limb and are held on the limb by straps or other binding devices. Suction devices may also be used. A medial wall insert prosthetic device is attached to the limb by an insert on the medial or outside wall of the knee.

Searching of prosthetic devices

The decision to remove a prosthetic device should be determined by the possibility and/or probability that the device might be used as a weapon or implement for escape. Also, the knowledge and expertise of the officer removing the device needs to be considered, as legal issues may arise if a limb is injured due to the removal of the prosthesis.

Relevant legislation, the circumstances and medical issues may determine whether the prosthesis should be removed or not, or whether a medical practitioner should be contacted.

The hook or 'terminal' device may be removed by unstrapping the harnessing system and detaching the prosthesis.

Lower extremity prostheses, depending on the type, are large enough to hold prohibited articles and weapons in their hollow cavities.

Exoskeletal below knee devices have an insert for the residual limb. To remove such devices, release the binding or break the suction seal between the prosthesis and the residual limb.

A medial wall prosthesis is attached to a limb by an insert on the wall of the knee. This metal insert can be sharpened to form a sharply pointed and/or edged weapon, or may house a weapon.

Wheelchairs

A wheelchair provides mobility to those subjects who, because of a disability, are unable to stand and walk on their own. Officers need to understand the possible limitations of a subject in a wheelchair for successfully conducting a search, and the need to reduce the risk of injury to a subject. The subject in a wheelchair may be paraplegic (paralysis of the lower part of the body, including both legs) or quadriplegic (paralysis of the four limbs and usually the trunk).

Low paraplegics may have abdominal muscle usage, and most quadriplegics lacking abdominal muscle usage are not able to balance themselves while being searched.





WARNING.

If latex gloves are being used during the searching process, then officers need to be aware that some subjects, especially those with spina bifida (spinal cord on the outside of the spinal column) may be highly allergic to latex, which can cause a subject to go into shock, and may lead to death. However, latex allergies are relatively unusual.

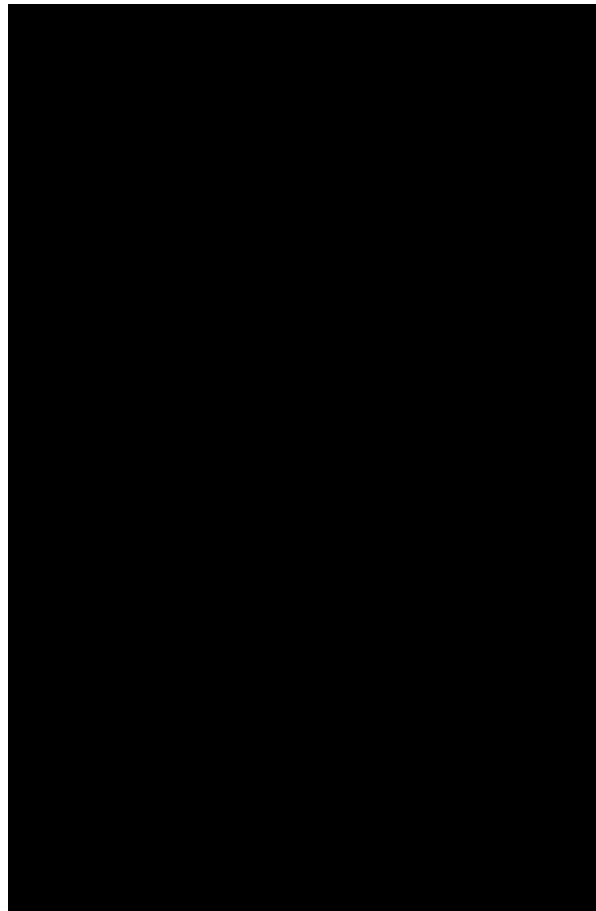
Generally, two officers are required to search a wheelchair subject, and should be positioned at the 4 and 8 o'clock positions. If the wheelchair has brakes then the officer should set them; otherwise an officer may place their baton through the back wheel and step on it. Alternatively, the officer's handcuffs may be secured around the tyre rim and frame of the wheelchair in order to prevent excessive movement and possible escape of the subject.

Due to constant usage of the upper body muscles and arms to push the wheelchair, many paraplegics have tremendous strength and are able to manoeuvre themselves rapidly. If a strong subject grabs an article or fixed object, then officers may have difficulty in removing the subject from the object (see Unarmed Skills Module).

Searching of the subject is exactly the same as for an able-bodied subject, with the exception that upon completion of the search, the subject should be asked to do an ischial shift. The ischial shift (lift) is taught in all physiotherapy units to people using a wheelchair. This is a means of taking pressure off the ischials (bone on which one sits), in order to prevent an ulcer or bed sore from forming. Basically, the subject pushes themselves off the seat.

If the subject is unable to perform the ischial shift, then each officer will have to assist in lifting the person. This can be achieved by each officer sliding their nearest arm under the subject's armpits (**ensuring that the officers' personal protective equipment is out of reach of the subject**).

Both officers then, with a mutually acceptable signal, lift the subject enough so that one officer can search the subject's buttock and groin area.



- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]
- ◆ [REDACTED]

Moving and handling subjects

When moving or handling subjects (if possible):

When lifting:

COMPETENCES

- keep the back straight do not stoop
- bend your knees and hips
- lead with the head and keep it in line with the neck and back
- make sure that your grip is no wider than the width of your shoulders
- stand with your feet apart (one foot should be close to the subject to take the strain at the beginning of the lift)
- stand close to the subject being lifted
- hold the subject as close to the body as possible
- tuck your elbows well in
- when lifting with another officer, use rhythm and timing such as '1, 2, 3, lift'.



Once the subject has been searched, the seat cushion of the wheelchair can be removed and searched. During this procedure the subject should be lowered back down and seated on a soft surface such as a pillow, piece of foam or clothing, to prevent decubitus ulcers (bed sores).

Colostomy bags

A colostomy is a permanent or temporary opening in the abdominal wall through which solid wastes may pass when it is impossible for the faeces to pass through the colon and out of the anus due to a pathological condition. The attachment device is fitted to the stoma or mouth opening, then a waste bag with a wide opening is snapped onto the attachment to allow waste products to be collected from the body.



Urinary devices

Unlike a waist bag, a urinary collection bag has a stopcock. This collection bag may be worn on the upper or lower leg, or near the pubic/groin area. Internal tubing (penis in the male, meatus in the female) is indicative of an indwelling catheter or urinary device. Catheters are maintained in the bladder by inflating a balloon type device and/or by sutures.



If a pouch or tubing is felt when conducting a search, then the officer must visually inspect it and confirm that it is some type of colostomy or urinary collection device or catheter. Be aware that these devices are fragile and ensure that the subject is not needlessly harmed.



WARNING.

Be aware that walking sticks and umbrellas can be effectively used in close quarters as jabbing and bludgeoning weapons. They can also contain swordsticks and occasionally single shot firearms! Also, just because a subject has a stick does not mean that it is actually required.

Vision, hearing and mobility impaired

In the case of searching subjects who have impaired vision, the officer will need to:

- inform the subject that they are a police officer
- inform them that they are going to search them and the reasons why
- adopt the same procedure as for a non-impaired subject.

In the case of searching subjects who have a hearing impairment, the officer will need to:

- depending on the environment in which the search is taking place, use the services of an interpreter
- in the absence of an interpreter, convey requests by written information.

In the case of searching subjects who can stand, but whose mobility is impaired by age, illness or injury, yet aided by a walking stick, crutches or other device, the officer will need to:

- ask the subject if they can walk or balance without the use of the aid
- be responsible for the subject's balance if the aid is removed
- sit the subject down if possible to complete the search.

Additional information

In conclusion, the cause(s) of an ineffective search may be included in the following list which is not exhaustive.

- There is no such thing as a fast and thorough search.
- The officer should ask themselves, "Did I search this subject thoroughly?".
- The officer should ask the person from whom they are receiving the subject, "Has this subject been searched thoroughly?".
- The officer should not believe that another officer's search has been done thoroughly. Do it yourself. This should not be taken as an insult to the other officer's competence, but merely to safeguard all persons involved with the policing process.

- ◆ The subject's demeanour (disorderly, resistive, physically or verbally abusive, or covered with bodily fluids) will have a marked effect on how thoroughly the subject was searched.
- ◆ The environment (dimly lit, dark area, rain, a rapidly forming hostile crowd, multiple and disorderly suspects) will be likely to increase the anxiety and tension of the officers, and increase the likelihood of a fast and vague search.
- ◆ Ask the question, "Did anything interfere with my search of this subject?". If it did, search again thoroughly, in a different environment from the original one if possible. A well-lit garage forecourt, for example, may provide good light, shelter and CCTV evidence.
- ◆ No officer relishes searching a subject with the presence of bodily fluids such as blood, urine or others that can give rise to transmittable diseases. Always use gloves.
- ◆ Be aware of inappropriate comments regarding sexuality, especially when searching the subject's groin area, which may divert the officer's attention from that area.
- ◆ Search children, young persons and the elderly with the same thoroughness as other subjects.
- ◆ Familiarity with the subject (relative, friend) may compromise a thorough search.
- ◆ Having previously arrested the subject without incident may compromise a thorough search.
- ◆ Cross-gender searching may prohibit a thorough search because of uncertainty with such an irregular situation. Local force policy may clear ambiguity.
- ◆ Subjects who are 'too nice'.
- ◆ Subjects with 'professional' occupations; VIPs and celebrities may resent being searched, and/or the officer perceives that the subject may resent being searched.
- ◆ Subjects who are drunk.
- ◆ Subjects who are obese.
- ◆ Officers who are distracted by other officers.

- ◆ At the end of a foot pursuit when the pursuing officer becomes the searching officer.
- ◆ When the officer is unwell, eg hay fever, bad cold.
- ◆ Subject having physical contact with a third party (accomplice, loved one) after having been searched and prior to transportation, when items may be slipped from one to another.

Further reading

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- ◆ MacYoung, M., *A Professional's Guide to Ending Violence Quickly*. Paladin Press. ISBN 0-87364-899-4.
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- ◆ *National Police Training Environmental Scanning and Legal Update Document*, October 2000.