

## Questions Attorneys Pose Regarding Document Examination

1. *Should I hire an expert as a consultant or as an expert witness?*  
Consultants can sit with you during a trial proceeding and offer insight. An expert witness will present a finding in court and will only appear for testimony.
2. *What should a Letter of Opinion contain?*  
The question or task posed by the attorney should be clearly stated. The known and questioned documents are listed and identified; the scientific process should be described by the expert as followed in the study, and the opinion reached should be expressed by known standards of the industry.
3. *What should be conveyed about the case initially?* Often an examiner is contacted by both sides of a case. To avoid conflict of interest, share the name of client and other litigants as well as the opposing attorney. Withhold case information and claims until no conflict is assured. Once retained, the expert should be detailed with a description of the case and its related documents,. How many documents are in question and how many known signatures are available for comparison?
4. *How are document examiners paid?* The document examiner is paid a retainer to begin the case. Fees are generally posted and set . The fees are not related to outcomes. Document Examiners are paid for their time and research design for questioned issues.
5. *How calendared are Document Examiners?* Often Document Examiners are scheduled out three to four months ahead. It is good to inform the examiner of hearings, depositions, court appearances, and any other deadlines critical to the case. Since the field of Document Examiners is small, DE's often travel several states to fit attorneys' needs.
6. *Why should an expert be used?* A competent, qualified expert may provide crucial evidence to move your case forward.

Jan Leach is a Forensic Document Examiner with court appearances in Florida, NY and the southern states since 1996. Typical cases include contracts, disputed Wills, quit claim deeds, mortgages, trusts, altered medical and insurance records, promissory notes, identity theft.