

## Fingerprints

You probably already know that your fingerprints are unique. No one else has fingerprints exactly like yours- even if you have an identical twin. Your fingers had their own unique fingerprints before you were even born and they will never change.

Fingerprints are sorted into three pattern-groups:



The most common pattern is a sort of loop called the 'ulnar loop'.

### **Police and fingerprints**

Fingerprints have been used by the police to crack crimes since about 1900. The first criminal who was convicted using fingerprint evidence was a man called Harry Jackson in 1902. He left his prints on the windowsill of a house in London from where he stole some billiard balls.

Fingerprint evidence is collected from a crime scene in different ways by:

- Photographing the fingerprints
- Using LED lights to make invisible fingerprints visible so they can be photographed
- Using very fine powder which sticks to the print which is then lifted on a clear tape.

The fingerprints collected from a crime scene are compared to ones in police files. Only the fingerprints of people who have committed a crime are on police records.

A fingerprint only tells the police investigators that someone was at a place. It can't tell detectives, for example, when someone was there.

### **Glossary**

**Identical-** exactly the same

**Billiard Balls-** balls used in billiards- a game a bit like snooker

**Criminal-** someone who breaks the law

**Police records-** the information the police keep about criminals.

1. Find the words on the left in the text and underline them, then match the words to their meaning.

Unique	people responsible for investigating crimes
Committed	someone investigating something
Convicted	information to prove something is true
Evidence	found to be guilty
Investigators	carried out
Detectives	the only one of its kind

2. What are the three pattern- groups of fingerprints?

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3. If you were in a room where a crime had been committed, where would you look for fingerprints?

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4. Think of some more questions you could ask to find out more about fingerprints.

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5. When did police start using fingerprints to find criminals?

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6. Who was the first criminal convicted using fingerprint evidence?

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