

The Key to reading prints is not to find each and every characteristic in the prints, but to get the trend of the patterns. Most prints found at a crime scene are partial prints which rarely contain all deltas and cores. It is for this reason that we must learn how to look at the trend of the lines as a whole rather than individual lines.

The following is a guide on how to recognize different types of prints. It is not meant to be taken for or in place of the definitions. Its only use is to young forensic scientist get a better feel for reading prints.

1st-Note a few characteristics that give away certain types of prints

Double loops-always have an “S” shape some where in the print



Plain whorls and **central pocket loops**-are the only prints that contain a circle or spiral within the print



Plain



Central pocket loop

Loops-always have some lines that come in one side, turn around and go out the same side



Arches-all the lines come in one side of the print and exit out the other

Note: There has been no mention of cores or deltas, these attributes can be attained by looking at the trend of the lines, not individual characteristics.

2nd-Procedure for identifying prints

Ask yourself these questions and in this order:

Are there any “S” shapes?

[If yes then print is a **double loop**]

Do I see circles?

[If yes then the print is either a **plain whorl** (symmetrical) or a **central pocket loop** (not symmetrical)]

Plain Whorl (symmetrical)



Central Pocket Loop(not symmetrical)



If there are no S shapes or circles we must have an arch or loop (easy prints to identify)

Are there any lines that turn around and go back to the side they came from?

[If yes it is a **loop**]

[If no it is an **arch**]

*Remember to differentiate between **ulnar** and **radial loops**, and **plain** and **tented arches**.

Ulnar loops open toward the pinky

Radial loops open toward the thumb



[assuming the prints above are from a right hand]

Plain arches are flat



Tented arches are steep

