

iMessage SMS And Messaging Apps On iOS

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iMessage, SMS and Messaging Apps on iOS Where the Conversations Really Live, and Why Deletion, Edits and Encryption Change What You See

COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB § ABOUT THE AUTHOR PREPARED BY COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB E-DISCOVERY TEAM § CONTENTS

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§ 01 · ORIENTATION

Executive summary

The headline point: an iPhone carries conversations across iMessage, SMS and many third-party apps, each storing data differently, and three realities govern the evidence, deleted messages frequently survive, messages can be edited or unsent, and some apps are end-to-end encrypted, which limits interception but not recovery from the end point s.

§ 02 · FIRST PRINCIPLE

The problem in plain English: many channels, one phone

§ 03 · WHERE IT LIVES

Where iOS messaging data lives

§ 04 · WHAT SURVIVES DELETION

What survives deletion

§ 05 · EDITS, UNSENDING AND ENCRYPTION

Edits, unsending and end-to-end encryption

§ 06 · ATTRIBUTION AND HONEST LIMITS

Attribution, interpretation and honest limits

§ 07 · DEPLOYMENT

Deployment: recovering and proving conversations

§ 08 · THE WIDER MAP

Source architecture: where else the evidence lives

EVIDENCE (INCL. MAC / THE I CLOUD / COUNTERPART DELETED / PHONE SYNC DEVICE RECOVERABLE BACKUPS PAIRED ENCRYPTED) IPAD

§ 09 · IN THE WILD

Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1 · THE DELETED CONVERSATION

THE DATABASE KEPT

EXAMPLE 2 · THE EDITED MESSAGE AND THE ORIGINAL BENEATH IT

EXAMPLE 3 · THE END - TO - END APP OPENED AT THE END POINT

§ 10 · WHERE IT GOES WRONG

Common mistakes and technical limitations

Common mistakes

Technical limitations

§ 11 · INTERROGATORIES & DRAFTING AIDS

Questions to ask · Suggested wording

Ask your client

Ask your opponent

Ask your e Discovery / forensic provider

SUGGESTED WORDING · INSTRUCTION FOR AN IOS MESSAGE AGING ANALYSIS

§ 12 · QUICK CONTROL

Checklist and red flags · When to involve a digital forensic expert

The iOS messaging checklist

Red flags

When to involve a digital forensic expert

§ 13 · COMMON QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions

Someone deleted a conversation. Can it be recovered?

A message was edited. Can you see the original?

The messages are in an end-to-end-encrypted app. Doesn't that stop recovery?

Do we need to look at apps other than Messages?

Does a message prove who sent it?

What about disappearing messages?

§ 14 · REFERENCE

Glossary

SMSSources and authoritative references

DISCLAIMER

§ HOW A SPECIALIST LABORATORY CAN ASSIST

Working with Computer Forensics Lab

35 or CrimPR Part 19. This guide sits within the iPhone and iPad block. Conflicts checks, confidential scoping

Speak to a forensic examiner, not a salesperson.

INSTRUCT THE LAB NEW ENQUIRIES EMAIL - DISCOVERY

Questions and answers

The messages are in an end-to-end-encrypted app. Doesn't that stop recovery?

No, it stops interception, not recovery (

Does a message prove who sent it?

It shows the sending account or number; attributing it to a person takes care (

What about disappearing messages?

They limit what survives, and that is stated honestly (

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