# IPhone And IPad Forensics The Acquisition Challenge

e-discovery.uk, Computer Forensics Lab. Published 2026-09-02.
https://e-discovery.uk/library/iphone-and-ipad-forensics-the-acquisition-challenge

IPHONE & IPADFORENSICS · A GUIDE FOR UK LAWYERSiPhone and iPad Forensics: The AcquisitionChallengeWhy the Phone in the Evidence Bag Is the Hardest Device to Open, and WhatDecides Whether It Can BeCOMPUTER FORENSICS LAB§ ABOUT THE AUTHORPREPARED BY COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB E-DISCOVERY TEAMLOCK-STATE & PASSCODE ASSESSMENT CPR PART 35 EXPERT REPORT SFULL CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY DOCUMENTATION§ CONTENTSIn this guide01 Executive summary02 The problem in plain English: the richest device, the hardest to open03 Why iOS resists acquisition04 The factors that decide what can be obtained05 Handling at seizure: the decisive first moments06 Setting realistic expectations honestly07 Deployment: preservation, access and the estate08 Source architecture: where else the evidence lives09 Worked examples10 Common mistakes and technical limitations11 Questions to ask · Suggested wording12 Checklist and red flags · When to involve a digital forensic expert13 Frequently asked questions14 Glossary · References · Disclaimer · How a specialist laboratory can assist§ 01 · ORIENTATIONExecutive summaryacquire, because everything is encrypted and passcode-bound and the phone actively resists extraction, somuch can ever be recovered.§ 02 · FIRST PRINCIPLESThe problem in plain English: the richest device, the hardest toopen§ 03 · WHYIOSRESISTSWhy iOS resists acquisitionENCRYPTED SECURE CHIP ATTEMPT LIMITS AUTO-LOCK REMOTE WIPE§ 04 · THEDECIDINGFACTORSThe factors that decide what can be obtained§ 05 · HANDLINGATSEIZUREHandling at seizure: the decisive first moments§ 06 · REALISTICEXPECTATIONSSetting realistic expectations honestly§ 07 · DEPLOYMENTDeployment: preservation, access and the estate§ 08 · THEWIDERMAPSource architecture: where else the evidence livesEVIDENCE I CLOUD BACKUP (ITUNES/ MAC / LOCKED/THE COUNTERPARTI PHONE DEVICESCOMPUTER PAIRED IF DEVICEFINDER) IPAD WIPED§ 09 · IN THE WILDWorked examplesEXAMPLE1 · THEUNLOCKEDPHONETHATWASALLOWEDTOLOCKEXAMPLE2 · THEHONESTASSESSMENTTHATSETTHESTRATEGYEXAMPLE3 · THEPHONEWIPEDREMOTELYBEFOREEXAMINATION§ 10 · WHEREITGOESWRONGCommon mistakes and technical limitationsCommon mistakesTechnical limitations§ 11 · INTERROGATORIES & DRAFTING AIDSQuestions to ask · Suggested wordingAsk your clientAsk your opponentAsk your e Discovery / forensic providerSUGGESTED WORDING · INSTRUCTIONFORANIOS AC QUISITIONASSESSMENT§ 12 · QUICK CONTROLChecklist and red flags · When to involve a digital forensicexpertThe iOS acquisition checklistRed flagsWhen to involve a digital forensic expert§ 13 · COMMON QUESTIONSFrequently asked questionsCan't you just plug the iPhone in and read it?What is the single most important thing at seizure?Why does the passcode matter so much?Can every iPhone be extracted?If the phone can't be opened, is the evidence lost?Someone might wipe the phone remotely. What do we do?§ 14 · REFERENCEGlossarySources and authoritative referencesDISCLAIMER§ HOW A SPECIALIST LABORATORY CAN ASSISTWorking with Computer Forensics LabSpeak to a

forensic examiner, not a salesperson.INSTRUCTTHELABNEWENQUIRIESEMAILE - DISCOVERY

## Questions and answers

### What is the single most important thing at seizure?

Preserve the device's favourable state and isolate it from the network (

### Why does the passcode matter so much?

Because it is the central determinant of access (

### Can every iPhone be extracted?

No, and a reputable expert will not claim so (

### Someone might wipe the phone remotely. What do we do?

Isolate it from the network immediately (