

## CSI vs Reality - Answers

Often times what is seen on TV does not represent “real life”. It is important that you understand this before you proceed in the course. In this assignment you will read 2 different articles and answer questions on *CSI* versus Reality! Be sure to record your answers in a *DIFFERENT COLOR*.

### Part I : The ‘*CSI*’ Effect by Richard Willing

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-08-05-csi-effect\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-08-05-csi-effect_x.htm)

1. Why did defense attorney Hirschhorn want people who watched *CSI* as jurors for his client Mr. Durst? **To spot the importance of such a gap in the evidence.**
2. What percentage of people in the jury pool watched *CSI* or similar shows? **70%**
3. What “mistaken notion” do programs such as *CSI* promote? **That criminal science is fast and infallible and always gets its man.**
4. What complaint do defense lawyers have about *CSI* type shows? **They say *CSI* and similar shows make jurors rely too heavily on scientific findings and unwilling to accept that those findings can be compromised by human or technical errors.**
5. What complaint do prosecutors have about *CSI* type shows? **They say the shows can make it more difficult for them to win convictions in the large majority of cases in which scientific evidence is irrelevant or absent.**
6. Give 2 examples of how the *CSI* effect has been “felt beyond the courtroom”. **Forensic science is the most popular undergraduate major for the second year in a row, attracting 13% of incoming freshmen. Four technicians have left the lab for lucrative jobs as technical advisers to crime-scene programs.**
7. The article states that the “main fault” of shows such as *CSI* is that “The science is always above reproach.” Explain what that means in your own words. ....

### Part II: Prime-Time Crime TV Exposed by Dan Skantar

<http://www.firearmsid.com/Feature%20Articles/crimeTV/crimeTV.htm>

1. What are the 2 critical roles a forensic scientist plays? **An analyst and as witness.**
2. Complete the table.

Myth	TV	Reality
1	They’ve taken four or five (investigators) and made a composite of them.	he Sheriff’s Lab in San Diego, CA consists of 55 staffers and nine different sections such as Firearms, Controlled Substances, and Fingerprints
2	Whether it’s a smudge of dirt, a broken fingernail or something more exotic, TV sleuths always get their evidence, right? After some	Even the most secured crime scene may not surrender its secrets easily, and often the evidence is found in insufficient quantity or is

	careful fine-tooth combing, the crime scene reveals all.	unusable.
3	Hollywood writers take liberties with the laws of science, especially the compression of time. TV makes analysis seem as fast as baking a cake. Instant results is the fact that the laws of science don't bend.	First of all, in many labs cases are handled in the order they are received. Normally, it takes weeks or months for evidence to hit a benchtop. Analytical physics and chemistry procedures require a set amount of time. Factor in repeated tests and inconclusive data and it is easy to see how long the process can be before achieving definitive results. (Chemical analysis may take weeks to separate and identify all the compounds in a corpse.)
4	TV crime drama is a forensic scientist's dream—outfitted with enough high-tech gadgets to rival the Batcave.	A criminalist watching at home might wince at all this opulence while she's stuck wrestling every day with a beat-up old centrifuge. In reality, crime labs are often underfunded.

**Sources:**

[www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com)

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