

Basic Training: 5-Step Documentation Checklist

Quick Guide to Photographing and Recording Property.

Step 1. Get Consent

Ask the owner for consent before helping to take photos.

If you will be using your own device to take pictures, ask where the owner wants the photos sent or stored (review suggested options in Step 5 below).

Do not take or send photos unless the owner clearly agrees. Written consent is preferable.

Step 2. Take Photos of Each Item

- 3 angles: front, side, close-up
- Capture details: labels, scratches, marks
- Group shot + single item shots

Step 3. Write a Simple Description

- **What it is** → “Blue sleeping bag”
- **Who owns it** → “Belongs to Janelle R.”
- **Details** → “Columbia brand, size L”
- **Date taken** → “Sept. 18, 2025”

Step 4. Save & Label the Files

- File name = [First name + First letter of the last name]_[Item]_[Date]
Example: **JanelleR_Coat_091825**

Step 5. Store Photos Safely:

If using your own phone, with the owner’s permission, you can:

- Send the photos to the **owner’s own email**; or
- Send the photos to the **organization’s email** (if you are working with one); or
- Send the photos to a **trusted person named by the owner**

Do not send photos to anyone else unless the owner clearly agrees.

Photos = Proof of ownership.

- If the City takes or destroys property, these photos can help the owner seek restitution from the City.
- If that effort is unsuccessful, the owner may be able to pursue claims against the city for damages.