

# VISUAL TRACKING / SIGNCUTTING/ "MANTRACKING"

## WHAT WILL VISUAL TRACKING SKILLS DO FOR YOU?

- provide clues: direction, time, shoe description
- aim the search: can reduce the search area by turning the circle produced around the PLS into a pie slice radiating out from the track sign

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SIGNCUTTING:

When searching for sign/tracks there are 5 characteristics:

1. Flattening -- leveling of rocks, twigs and dirt caused by weight and pressure of foot
2. Regularity -- lines circles or geometric shapes pressed into ground by shoe/foot pressure
3. Color change -- color change in soil, vegetation, or twigs, rocks etc. caused by foot pressure (i.e., snapped twig, turned leaf, soil difference from scuffing, etc.)
4. Disturbance -- dislodging of stones, twigs, vegetation
5. Transfer -- finding materials moved by sole of shoe "transfer"

## TRACKS:

Use the angle of the sun to "see" tracks. Greater the angle the more shadow created. A flashlight at night held close to ground can help locate track.

- Look for path of least resistance--that's how most people move.
- People tend to aim toward something. Look for what might attract their aim.

## Following tracks:

1. Draw detailed picture of footprint.
2. Measure:
  - a. Heel to toe length,
  - b. Distance across ball of foot
3. Length and width of heel.

Include all visually important information. Learn to describe this picture for radio communication with searchers ahead of you.

## Using a the tracking stick-

1. Stick will record 3 measurements:

- a. Step interval: Place tip of stick on back edge of front heel mark and place first elastic at point where the toe of back foot touches stick. THIS IS THE DISTANCE TOE TO HEEL OF STRIDE.
- b. Length of foot: first elastic marks the toe front of the print and a second elastic marks the back heel edge. THIS SHORT DISTANCE IS THE TOE TO HEEL FOOT PRINT LENGTH,
- c. Stride: this is already marked on your stick; it is the distance from the tip of the stick to the second elastic. STRIDE LENGTH WILL VARY DEPENDING ON TERRAIN, BUT THIS GIVES YOU A DISTANCE THAT YOU MAY CHANGE AS YOU SEE A BETTER AVERAGE EMERGING WHILE TRACKING.

2. USING STICK WHILE TRACKING: Hold the stick at the second elastic over the back edge of the last heel print. Swing stick in arc looking for next heel print near tip of tracking stick. Keep in mind that terrain affects stride length, but print has to be near arc. LOOK FOR SIGN CHARACTERISTICS MENTIONED ABOVE.

Use crepe (toilet) paper to mark track or sign. Break off small twigs tie crepe paper and put into ground at heel of sign. Series of marked tracks can suggest direction when sign is no longer clear.

Grass, low shrubs show passage and direction particularly in early morning (disturbed dew).

Tracking teams could have the sign cutter with two flankers. Flankers work to the sign and slightly behind. Flankers must be very careful not to destroy clues when signcutter is having trouble locating track. Once track and direction is found search can be sent in front with planes or dogs to locate victim.

Be careful not destroy track as you pass through as it may be evidence.

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These notes developed from a tracking workshop taught by: Bob Dubay and Ben Batchelder of the US Border Patrol, Swanton Sector. 1-800-247-2434 or 868-3361

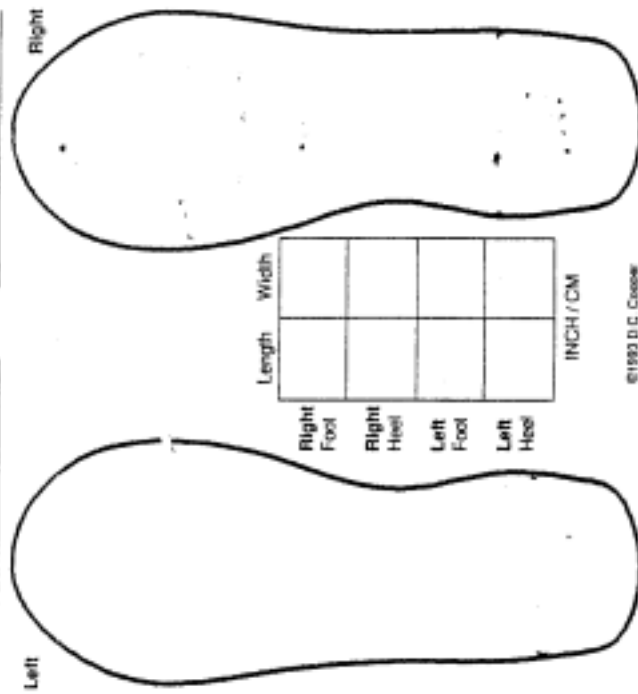
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## Track Identification Form

Location of Print: \_\_\_\_\_

**SKETCH:**  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Heading: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Which measurement are you using for sketch? INCHES (Imperial) CM (Metric)  
 Sole Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Overall Pattern: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ground Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approx. Age of Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Stride: \_\_\_\_\_ Straddle: \_\_\_\_\_



## Track Identification Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mission Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mission #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tracker: \_\_\_\_\_ Op. Period: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT Name: _____	Age: _____	Footwear Sample Available? YES NO
Address: _____	Height: _____	Weight: _____
Physical Problems: _____	Sex: M F	
Physical Condition: _____		

**FOOTWEAR**  
 Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Overall Length: \_\_\_\_\_ Width: \_\_\_\_\_ Heel Length: \_\_\_\_\_ Width: \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCARDABLES**  
 Outer Wear: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Shirt: \_\_\_\_\_ Pants: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inner Wear: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Head Wear: \_\_\_\_\_ Rain Wear: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Socks: \_\_\_\_\_ Candy/Gum: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_