



Sweet talk or bribe a friend or relative into letting you go through their car. Don't tear anything apart! (*You can go through your own car, but it's harder to be objective.*) Take notes. Take pictures if you like.

1. What do you see and smell?
2. What do you find under the seats, in the cushions, in the glove compartment, the little nooks and crannies?
3. What do the contents and state of the car tell you about the person who owns it?
4. What are the make, model, and color? Are they common or unique? Would people remember seeing the vehicle? Does it stand out?
5. Can you find the VIN number?
6. Is it a luxury vehicle or an economy car?
7. New or used vehicle?
8. What does the condition of the exterior tell you about the car's history? Are there dents, scratches? Has it been wrecked?
9. What do the seat settings tell you about the driver?
10. What kind of passengers ride in it? Children? Pets?
11. What does it tell you about the owner's demographic or lifestyle?
12. What kind of license plate does it have? State? County? Expiration? Vanity plate? Special interest plate? Front and back or back only?
13. Does it have a special plate frame designating the car dealer, a college, or special cause?
14. Does it have city stickers or parking passes?



15. Does it have bumper stickers? What do they say about the owner? A lack of personal statements makes a difference too!
16. What kind of wheels does it have: normal, extra large, extra small?
17. Does it have fancy or special rims?
18. How many miles are on the odometer?
19. Are there personal items left inside the car?
20. What kind of door locks does it have? Do they stick up where they could be hooked and depressed? Do they fit flat against the door frame? Are they keyed or electronic?
21. Are there cameras inside the car?
22. Are there radar detectors in the car?
23. Are there CDs, MP3 players, or music cases? What do they tell you about the person who drives the car?
24. Does the car have an alarm system?
25. Does the car have a GPS system? Can you tell where it has been?
26. Does the car have a remote assistance button?
27. How do you get into the trunk? Does it open with a key? Pop upon with a lever from inside?
28. What is in the trunk?
29. What kind of gas does it take? How do you access the gas cap?
30. Does it have fancy seat or wheel covers?



31. Does it have deodorizers? What do they tell you about the owner?

32. Is there an ashtray? Has it been used?

33. How easy would it be to roll it somewhere? Can you put it in neutral?

34. Is it small enough a few people could pick it up and move it?

35. Is it parked outside or in a garage? How easy is it to access it?

Hopefully, this exercise has helped you look at your surroundings in a new way and you can better assist your characters with their detection.

Even if you don't write mysteries, these exercises are a good way to hone your observational skills because every character lives, works, and plays somewhere!

For more information on scene writing visit <http://www.dianahurwitz.com> for free downloads and pick up a copy of Story Building Blocks: The Four Layers of Conflict available in [e-book](#) and [print](#).