

**THE POLICE
HOW-TO
GUIDES**

HOW TO GATHER INTEL

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Being the newest officer in the precinct makes life harder than it should be, because you have to dig for every morsel of information to get ahead. Some of the old heads seem tuned in to things, and you're left out of the loop. Yes, being new to the city or precinct sucks. So how can you develop a system of building intel for you? No, you can't rent an informant from a cop shop or buy a bottle of instant intelligence. You must work on it.

You go into any coffee shop or convenience store and there are assorted fliers. These free papers, fliers, or "fish wrappers" have good information. It may give you no more than which small club may have a blues singer, or list a gathering. Sooner or later, it will pay off. I recall a sergeant who told me one of the FNGs (fabulous new guy/girl) had information on an underground unlicensed club that led to a great case on the operation. That little flier had paid off. These often individually published fliers are focused on some smaller, under the radar activities that are harmless at best. But, they offer ideas or leads about the beat's activity.

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These are especially prominent in college towns. There are so many varied interests, music scenes, and special interests that flourish there. Internet cafés and blogs typically stay within their expected circles.

While in a café or coffee shop, look for bulletin boards. I know several officers who scan these for moving sales, yard sales, and the like. The local internet listings haven't run these out of business. These bulletin boards and free posting areas are still out there, so give them a gander.

Years ago I worked in Savannah, Ga., and the downtown precinct had a civic center. I was taught by my Field Training Officer (FTO) to read the civic center's marquee and make note of whom or what was occurring. We all know that certain bands and performers have their own special following. On some nights, we had to concentrate on the post-concert activities and carnage.

As you perform your daily patrol duties, you'll find a plethora of information that's free for the taking. Of course, you'll have to do some analysis and research to see if it has any potential value to you on patrol. You may not find the major break that solves a big case. But you will develop positive patrol habits that will stick, which will keep you a leg up on the other officers. Who knows, you might impress one of the old guys with some good information that they didn't know about.