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Chapter 1: Case Control

The first problem in any criminal case is not trial strategy. It is control. Discovery arrives in fragments: police reports, statements, screenshots, lab results, interviews, body camera clips, command documents, charging papers, and client explanations. The lawyer's first job is to organize the battlefield. This chapter helps the defense team identify the allegations, evidence, witnesses, missing information, strengths, weaknesses, government theory, defense risks, and immediate priorities.

Prompt 1: Initial Case Assessment

What it does:

This prompt converts raw case material into a disciplined working file. It does not argue the case, generate cross-examination, or draft motions. Its purpose is to impose structure on the facts so the lawyer can quickly understand the allegations, evidence, witnesses, missing information, and early strategic issues.

Prompt:

Act as a senior criminal defense lawyer conducting an initial review of a criminal case file.

Your task is to organize the case materials into a structured case assessment. Do not argue the case. Do not draft cross-examination. Do not write an opening or closing. Do not speculate beyond the facts provided.

When quoting, citing, or referring to a specific document, include the source file name, page number, Bates number, exhibit number, timestamp, or other identifying source reference if available.

Use only the information provided below. If information is missing, identify it as missing rather than filling the gap.

1. Case Overview

Provide a concise overview of the case, including:

- accused / defendant
- alleged victim or complaining witness, if any
- charges or suspected offenses
- date range of alleged conduct
- location
- investigating agency
- current procedural posture, if known

2. Allegations

Identify each allegation separately.

For each allegation, include:

- what is alleged
- who made the allegation

- when it allegedly occurred
- source of allegation
- whether the allegation is supported by evidence, statement only, or unclear

3. Evidence Inventory

Separate the evidence into the following categories:

Objective Evidence

Physical evidence, digital evidence, forensic evidence, photographs, videos, records, medical evidence, financial records, location data, surveillance, or other verifiable evidence.

Testimonial Evidence

Witness statements, complainant statements, law enforcement statements, expert opinions, interviews, affidavits, or reports based on human recollection.

Interpretive Evidence

Evidence that requires interpretation, inference, expert opinion, or narrative framing to become meaningful.

Missing or Unclear Evidence

Evidence referenced but not provided, evidence that should exist but is absent, incomplete records, missing digital data, uncollected evidence, or unexplained gaps.

4. Witness Identification

Identify every person mentioned in the file.

For each person, provide:

- name
- role
- contact information, if provided
- source where the person appears
- expected relevance
- whether the person appears prosecution-favorable, defense-favorable, neutral, or unclear

Do not invent contact information. If contact information is not provided, state “not provided.”

5. Timeline Snapshot

Create a preliminary timeline of major events.

For each event, include:

- date / time, if known
- event
- source
- classification:
 - confirmed by objective evidence
 - claimed by witness statement

- inferred
- unclear

6. Early Strategic Issues

Identify the major strategic issues that require further review.

Focus on:

- proof problems
- credibility issues
- missing evidence
- inconsistent statements
- investigative gaps
- forensic or expert issues
- legal issues apparent from the file
- client exposure risks

7. Immediate Follow-Up Needed

List the next information the defense team should obtain or verify.

Organize by:

- discovery needed
- witnesses to interview
- records to obtain
- forensic evidence to review
- digital evidence to preserve or request
- legal issues to research

8. Initial Assessment Summary

End with a short, practical assessment:

- what appears strongest for the prosecution
- what appears strongest for the defense
- what is currently unknown
- what issue should receive immediate attention

Rules:

- Do not exaggerate.
- Do not assume facts not provided.
- Do not generate cross-examination.
- Do not provide legal conclusions unless supported by the facts.
- Keep the output organized, practical, and suitable for use by a criminal defense team.

Case materials:

Chapter 10: Opening, Closing, and Visual Advocacy

Opening, closing, and trial visuals must serve different purposes. Opening should preview what the evidence will and will not show without overpromising. Closing should organize proof failures and explain why doubt remains. Visual advocacy should clarify the record, not inflame it. This chapter helps the defense build disciplined courtroom presentations that stay tied to evidence and avoid avoidable risk.

Prompt 25: Opening Statement Strategy and Draft Builder

What it does:

This prompt prepares the strategic framework for a defense opening statement and then drafts a restrained, credible, fact-based opening. It identifies what the jury, judge, military panel, board, or other factfinder must understand early, what prosecution assumptions must be resisted, what evidence should be previewed, what missing proof should be noticed, what bad facts must be handled carefully, and what should be avoided to prevent overpromising.

It should be used only after the defense theory, prosecution theory, evidence posture, witness map, timeline issues, investigation problems, forensic issues, and bad facts have been reviewed.

Short-output option:

If the lawyer requests “short opening workflow,” provide only: opening objective, core defense frame, 5 safe facts to preview, 5 overpromise risks, draft opening, and overpromise review.

Prompt:

Act as a senior criminal defense trial lawyer preparing and drafting the opening statement in a contested criminal case.

Your task is to:

- Analyze the case posture and factfinder audience

- Identify the safest and strongest opening frame

- Determine what evidence, witnesses, proof gaps, timeline issues, investigation problems, forensic limits, and bad facts should be previewed

- Identify what must not be overpromised

- Draft a clear, disciplined defense opening statement

- Audit the draft for overpromise risk, unsupported facts, argumentative language, and bad fact problems

Do not draft cross-examination.

Do not write closing argument.

Do not invent facts.

Do not overpromise evidence.

Do not argue beyond what is proper for opening statement.

Do not use unsupported rhetoric.

Do not describe disputed facts as proven.

Use only the information provided. If an important fact is uncertain, either omit it or phrase it cautiously.

When referring to specific evidence, testimony, statements, exhibits, documents, messages, reports, or records, include source file name, page number, Bates number, exhibit number, transcript page and line, message timestamp, recording timestamp, report date, or other identifying source reference in brackets if available.

If the opening is intended for oral delivery without visible citations, provide a separate **Source Support Notes** section after the draft.

1. Audience and Case Posture

Identify:

- jury, judge, military panel, board, or other factfinder

- charges or allegations

- prosecution theory

- selected defense theory

- central dispute

- whether the case is witness-driven, forensic-driven, digital-evidence-driven, investigation-driven, timeline-driven, credibility-driven, or mixed

- strongest prosecution evidence

- strongest defense evidence

- most important proof gap or unresolved issue

- source references if available

2. Opening Statement Objective

Identify what the defense opening must accomplish.

Address:

- first impression the defense wants to create

- what the factfinder must understand early

- what prosecution assumptions must be resisted

- what evidence the factfinder should listen for

- what missing proof the factfinder should notice

- what issues should be framed without argument

- what bad fact must be handled carefully, if any

3. Core Defense Frame

State the core defense frame in:

- one paragraph

- one sentence

- five-word version

This is for internal use only. Do not turn this into closing argument.

4. Prosecution First Impression Analysis

Identify the likely first impressions the prosecution will try to create.

For each, include:

- prosecution impression
- evidence or witness supporting it
- source reference if available
- why it may be persuasive
- whether the defense should address it early, delay response, or avoid it in opening

5. Defense Points to Preview

Identify the defense points that should be previewed in opening.

For each point, include:

- point
- evidence expected to support it
- source reference if available
- why it matters
- whether it is safe to preview or requires more caution

Only include points the defense can reasonably expect to support with evidence.

6. Points Not to Overpromise

Identify facts, claims, explanations, or themes the defense should avoid promising in opening.

For each, include:

- proposed point
- why it is risky
- what evidence is missing or uncertain
- whether it should be omitted, softened, or reserved for closing after the evidence develops

7. Witness Preview Strategy

Identify how key witnesses should be framed in opening.

For each important witness, include:

- name or role
- expected significance
- source reference if available
- whether the witness should be framed as central, limited, unreliable, incomplete, mistaken, biased, technical, background, or unknown
- what the factfinder should listen for
- what should not be said about the witness in opening

Fast Start Prompts for Trial Lawyers

These are short, practical prompts for lawyers who need a fast answer on the fly. They are not replacements for the full workflow prompts. They are quick-start tools for common trial, motion, witness, and discovery problems.

1. Quick Inconsistency Finder

Use when: You have statements, transcripts, interviews, reports, text messages, or depositions and need contradictions fast.

Prompt:

Act as an expert senior criminal defense lawyer. Find the material inconsistencies, omissions, and changes between these statements. Focus only on contradictions that affect credibility, timeline, motive, perception, memory, intent, consent, identity, injury, force, knowledge, possession, or reasonable doubt. For each inconsistency, give me the exact quote or summary, source reference, page/line number if available, why it matters, and whether it is strong, moderate, or weak impeachment.

Materials:

[INSERT STATEMENTS / TRANSCRIPTS / REPORTS / TEXTS / DEPOSITIONS]

2. Quick Witness List and Summary

Use when: You need a fast witness map from discovery.

Prompt:

Act as an expert senior criminal defense lawyer. Create a quick witness list from these materials. For each person mentioned, identify name, role, contact information if provided, where they appear in the file, what they allegedly know, whether they help the prosecution or defense, and whether they are high, medium, or low priority. Do not invent contact information.

Materials:

[INSERT DISCOVERY / REPORTS / STATEMENTS / WITNESS LISTS]

3. Quick Strengths and Weaknesses Breakdown

Use when: You need a fast case assessment for a meeting, client call, or strategy session.

Prompt:

Act as an expert senior criminal defense lawyer. Give me a 4-7 page criminal defense strengths and weaknesses analysis. Break it into prosecution strengths, prosecution weaknesses, defense strengths, defense risks, biggest unknowns, and immediate next steps. Be candid and direct. Do not overstate the defense. Do not invent facts. Include source references where available.