Injuries can occur at many times during a violent crime, or even an accident. Imagine, for example, that a pedestrian gets a cut on the arm before leaving the house. After stopping the bleeding, the person is on the way to work and, perhaps being preoccupied by the pain, is hit on a country road by an oncoming car, which causes the body to go into the opposite lane, and the pedestrian is instantly killed through massive head trauma. The body in the opposite lane is at a bend in the road which causes it to be a blind curve. This means that later (talk about adding insult to injury) a car coming from the opposite direction is unable to brake in time, effectively creating tire tracks over the legs of the decedent. There are three injuries here, each of which has a name based upon the time that it occurred:

- **Antemortem**: Occurred before death.
- **Perimortem**: Occurred at the time of death.
- **Postmortem**: Occurred after death.

In this case, the cut on the arm is an Antemortem injury.

The massive head trauma is a Perimortem injury.

The tire tracks over the legs are Postmortem injuries.

This may be somewhat difficult to differentiate at first, but careful analysis of the body and the scene of the accident can give clues. Those clues could involve bruising, which would not occur after the heart stops, or healing, which would not occur without time for the living body to repair the injury, thus making such injuries Antemortem. Multiple gun shot wounds, with clear signs of bleeding in each case would suggest that they all occurred at the
same time, thus suggesting that they were all **Perimortem**. Drag marks on a body (in the form of abrasions against the skin) that was not tied up would be very different if a victim was alive and would most likely struggle. This would suggest that the abrasions were **Postmortem**.

Once this information has been determined for each injury, then there are three more things we need to determine:

- **Cause of Death:** The primary, or immediate cause of death. One example, a gun shot wound (GSW) to the _____ (**name the organ or organs involved**).

- **Mechanism of Death:** The actual changes to the body that are caused by the injury (e.g., exsanguination, or bleeding to death). This would, as above, include the **name the organ or organs involved**.

- **Manner of Death:** There are only four actual possibilities, but due to the nature of the evidence, we need to include the 5th option below:
  
  1. Natural causes
  2. Accidental
  3. Suicide
  4. Homicide
  5. Undetermined

  **NOTE:** This last option may be the only one possible, but only after all other possibilities have been eliminated.

A forensic pathologist will, of course, have knowledge of the nature of injuries, as well as the effect on the organs. For the student, however, it is a good idea for you to have some anatomical reference
handy, just so you know, at the very least, where the organs are!