

## LIE DETECTOR

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The polygraph was invented in 1921 by John Augustus Larson, a medical student at the University of California and a police officer of the Berkeley Police Department, California.

The polygraph is used as a lie detector by police departments, the FBI, government, and numerous private agencies to interrogate suspects and screen new employees. The underlying theory of the polygraph is that when people lie they also get measurably nervous about lying. The heartbeat increases, blood pressure goes up, breathing rhythms change, perspiration increases, etc. A baseline for these physiological characteristics is established by asking the subject questions whose answers the investigator knows. Deviation from the baseline for truthfulness is taken as sign of lying.

Today, polygraph examiners use two types of instrumentation: analog and computerized. In the US, most examiners now use computerized instrumentation. A typical polygraph test starts with a pre-test interview to gain some preliminary information which will later be used for “control questions”, or CQ. Then the tester will explain how the polygraph is supposed to work, emphasizing that it can detect lies and that it is important to answer truthfully.

Nevertheless, polygraphy has little credibility among scientists. A 1997 survey of 421 psychologists estimated the test's average accuracy at about 61%, a little better than chance. Also, in 2005 Charles Honts, a psychology professor at Boise State University, states that polygraph interrogations give a high rate of false positives on innocent people.

In our opinion, despite its imperfection, the polygraph is a device which can be of great importance in crime detection.