

Report Writing 101:

Things to Consider

Writing an effective incident/police report is a skill best learned through practice. Following the guidelines outlined in this pamphlet will ensure you answer the questions, include all the necessary information, and accurately and completely report the event that took place.

- ✓ Always be professional as your report may be used in various facets of the criminal justice system and/or social service sector. Your report is a reflection of the work you do as an officer and can affect your reputation and the reputation of your law enforcement service.
- ✓ Quality report writing is a vital component of any successful investigation. A quality report is an effective report and must be **complete, clear, concise, and accurate**.



If you need more help, make an appointment with us at...

Student Academic Learning Services

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or

visit our front desk in room 204,
Student Services Building (SSB)

Student Academic Learning Services

Report Writing — Police
Foundations & Protection,
Security and Investigation

References

Turpin, Silvana. *Communication in Law Enforcement*. Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2002. Print.

Walker, Chris. "Report Writing: For Recruits". Durham College. Oshawa. 2009. Lecture.

Writing the Narrative

Answer the 5WH Questions:

Who was involved? Include all victims, witnesses and suspects.

What took place? Determine whether the incident was a crime or a civil problem. What did the suspect take or steal? What weapon did the accused use? What damages occurred?

When did the incident occur? State when you arrived on scene and when you left.

Where did the incident take place?

How did the events transpire? For example, how did the accused threaten the victim or gain entry onto the premises? How did the parties leave?

Why did the event take place? This question can be difficult to answer and unless you specifically know the answer to this question, you should not answer it – leave it out of your report.

Layout of the Report

Introduction:

Include all the “players” involved in the incident. This includes the officer(s), complainant(s), victim(s) and accused(s), providing a name for each. Include what the incident was, when it occurred (date/time), and the location of the incident. Outline what actions you took regarding the incident.

Body:

This portion of the report will include all of the witness, victim, and suspect accounts. Use a different paragraph to differentiate what each person said. Statements should be verbatim and in quotations, whenever possible. This section of the report can be several paragraphs long, depending on the event that took place.

Conclusion:

In this section, explain what happened as a result of taking the report. For example, explain any advice that you may have given the victim of a break and enter (i.e. contact insurance company, change locks). To close off the report, you may state the time that you left the scene.

Final Checklist

Did I...

- ✓ Write in first person?
- ✓ Write in past tense?
- ✓ Use Chronological order?
 - Order the events that took place by the times that they happened.
- ✓ Use correct spelling and grammar?
- ✓ Avoid jargon and wordiness?
 - For example: I radioed headquarters that I was 10-9 with two (Jargon). I radioed communications that I was en route to the station with two suspects (No jargon).
- ✓ Report facts rather than opinions?
 - For example: Peter is a violent person (Opinion). Peter has been arrested twice for domestic violence (Fact).
- ✓ Use plain language?
 - Be specific and to the point; do not leave room for interpretation.
- ✓ Capitalize every letter of last names used throughout the report? (i.e. John SMITH)
- ✓ Proofread the report to ensure accuracy and freedom of errors?