

Principles of Investigative Report Writing A criminal investigation is only as good as the report that supports it.

4



Basics of Report Writing Skills Write in the first person. Avoid jargon and wordiness. Use chronological order. Write facts rather than Choose the correct word to describe the Use past tense. Use active voice. Use correct spelling and punctuation. Organize the report by using openings, paragraphs, and headings. Use correct subject/ verb agreement. Use correct pronoun reference.

Note Taking ■ Purpose: ■ Record storage ■ Building Blocks ■ Aid to Memory Mechanics of Note Taking ■ Readable Accurate Concise

5

Notes to Sentences ■ 0700 rec'd call, 459 now, 123 N. Main Street. ■ 0710 arrvd scene ■ 0711 RP R. Foster (3-16-59) arrvd busins, 0645, frnt door open.

6

Sentences to Reports

On February 6, 2005, I was assigned to uniformed patrol, unit 1A12. At 0700 hours, I received a call of a burglary in progress at 123 North Main Street.

Reports

Source of Activity:

On February 6, 2005, I was assigned to uniformed patrol, unit 1A12. At 0700 hours, I received a call of a burglary in progress at 123 North Main

Observations:

At 0710 hours, I arrived on scene where I was met by the Reporting Party , Raymond Foster. Foster told me that he arrived at his place of business (123 N. Main Street) at 0645 hours and found the front door of the business open.

Judge

Tell the Story

What happened?

Create a mental picture so the reader knows what you know.

The reader:

Victim Detectives Supervisor District Attorney Witnesses Defense Attorney Cold case years later

Write in First Person

 To make reports easier to read and to understand, investigators should write in the FIRST PERSON.

 The writer of the report refers to himself/herself as I, and uses the first person pronouns me, my, and mine.

9

Missing Information

Missing information can be used to infer that you are:

- Not very professional
- Not Thorough
- Do not have certain expertise
- Not Truthful

10

Write in Chronological Order

- Chronological order is order by time. Your report should tell what happened in the order that the events took place.
- Get all the facts and then list them in the order in which they happened. It is much easier to understand what happened if the details are written in chronological order, even if the people involved do not tell you the information in chronological order.

Write in the Past Tense

- Everything you write in your report has already happened, so use the past tense.
 - In present tense, you would write: The suspect lives at: 1010 Swanson Court. A defense attorney might ask: "Does the suspect still live there?"

 It's likely you will have to say that you do not know. If you have to say, "I don't know" many times, you will destroy your credibility. If you write in past tense, you can say that what is in the report was correct at the time you wrote the report.

13 14

Spelling and Punctuation Basic Principle: Spelling always counts! Avoid looking – Stupid

Careless
Unprofessional
Uneducated

Use Active Voice

15 16

- The report was written by Officer Jackson.
 - Passive voice
 - Seven words
- Officer Jackson wrote the report.
 - Active voice
 - Five words
 - If you save two words per sentence, in a five paragraph report, you will save approximately 40 words.

17 18

Use an Active Voice

Past Tense

Do not use the emphatic form (the word did) in

combination with other action words (verbs).

This form implies that something else happened.

Incorrect: I did issue a citation. (But it was ignored.)

 Incorrect: Markly did say that Norman had a gun. (But later he changed his statement.)

· Correct: Markly said that Norman had a gun.

• Correct: I issued a citation.

- Every sentence has a subject and a verb.
 Active Voice: When the subject performs the action of the verb.
 - Active voice: <u>I</u> asked the man about the broken mirror.

Passive Voice: When the action is done to the subject. The subject receives the action of the verb.

- Passive voice: The <u>fire</u> was reported by the child.
- Reports should be written in active voice whenever rossible

Subject/Verb Agreement

Singular (He/ She)

Is

Was

Has

Does

Knows

Wants

Plural (They)

Hare

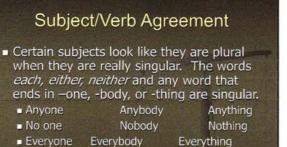
Hare

Have

Do

Knows

Want



Somebody

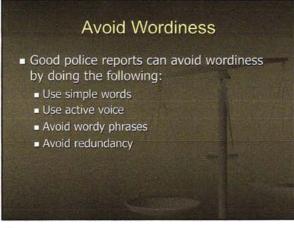
Someone

What is Jargon?

And, why should we avoid it?

19 20

Something



Examples Incorrect: In Correct: I later questioned the subsequent endeavors to suspect as she left work to learn where ascertain her whereabouts on July she had been on July 28, I questioned the 28. suspected perpetrator as she exited the premises of her employment.

21 22

Avoid Wordy Phrases Each and every Red in color Due to the fact that If this should prove to be the case Paced back and forth Members of the gang Avoid Wordy Phrases Each Red Because If Paced Faced Gang members

Avoid Redundancy Experience Past experience True facts ■ Facts Future plans Plans Meet Meet together Reduce Reduce down Final result ■ The result Join together Join Basic fundamentals Basic/ fundamental

23 24



Report Facts, Not Opinions

Report facts, not your opinions.

Opinion: Peterson is a violent person,

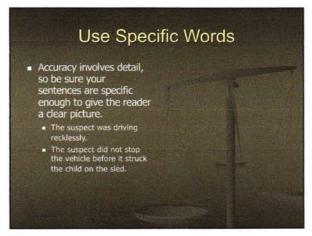
Fact: Peterson has been arrested twice for domestic abuse.

Be sure to cite the source of your information.

The victim entered the garage at approximately 2311 hours. (How do you know? Were you there?)

The victim said spe entered the garage at approximately 2311 hours.

25 26



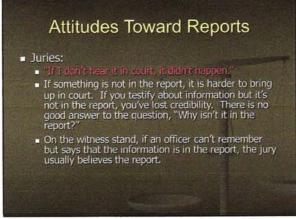
Attitude Toward Reports

Defense Attorney:

"If it isn't on paper, it didn't happen."

Defense attorneys always check to see who was the arresting officer. Every officer earns a reputation for the quality of reports that he or she writes.

27 28



Writing a Report

Once your notes are in order, write the narrative. Each narrative will have

An opening or Source of Activity

Chronological facts of the investigation or Observatoris

A closing or disposition

29 30

Writing a Report The opening will contain Who the officer(s) and complainant(s) are What the officer was doing at the time of the call What the incident was When (time and date) the officer received the call Where the incident occurred

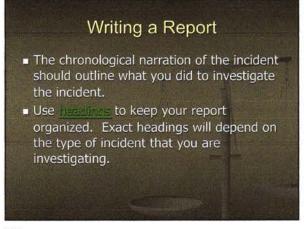
Writing a Report

A typical opening, with heading, may read as follows:

Source of Activity:

On Tuesday, March 18, 200-, I was on patrol alone. At approximately 1042 hours, Dispatch called and said that a Henry Bartell had reported a battery in progress outside Katy's Café, 123 Main Street.

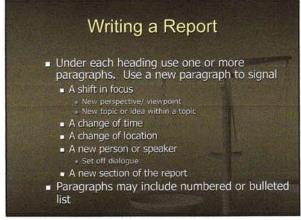
31 32

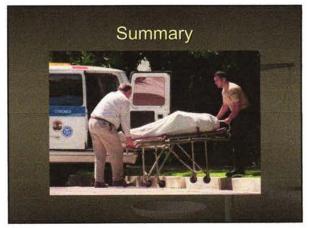


Writing a Report

- Headings may include:
- Source of Activity
- Observations
- Victim's Statements
- Witness' Statements
- Officer's Actions
- Suspect's Statements

33 34





35 36