



Writing a Police Report

Writing Basics

Writing police reports is different from writing traditional essays. This specific style of writing requires its own rules and conventions. While some expectations for police report writing may differ depending on the police department, certain basic guidelines universally apply.

Police reports are written in **first person, past tense** and organized in **chronological order**.

When writing a police report, you also want to abide by the **4 C's**:

- **Clear:** Try to be as specific as possible. Avoid any vague statements or phrases.
- **Concise:** Avoid overly wordy language. Keep statements simple and direct.
- **Complete:** Include all relevant information.
- **Correct:** Make sure that the information you include is accurate and unbiased.

Formatting

Formatting refers to how information is organized and how the report is laid out on the page.

- The heading should contain the report date, title, narrative report, and officer name
- The body should be written in paragraph form, left-justified, and single spaced with a double space between paragraphs

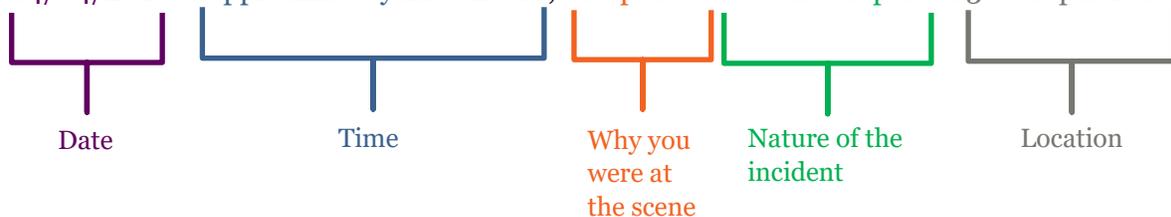
The Introduction

The introduction establishes why you are on the scene and includes:

- Date
- Time (in military time)
- Location
- The nature of the call or incident
- Why you were at the scene
- Additional officers if present (and when those officers arrived on the scene)

Example:

On 04/04/2018 at approximately 2100 hours, I responded to a theft report at 30 Chopin Drive.





The Body

The body explains what happened at the scene by answering the 5W's and H: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How

Example:

When I saw Inmates Frank Lopez and Dave Brock wrestling on the floor of cell P6B1, I immediately radioed for assistance. Officer Scott Carter arrived at my location at approximately 0905 hours. We separated Inmates Lopez and Brock, and we escorted them to a dormitory (cell P5C2).

The Conclusion

The conclusion should include the final actions as the reporting officer. It should always end with “There is nothing further to report.”

Example:

At approximately 0915 hours, I arrested Harrison and read her the Miranda Rights, and placed her in the back seat of my squad car. We arrived at Jamesville Police Station at approximately 0925 hours.

There is nothing further to report.

Best Practices

- Write in active voice as much as possible
- Be direct, concise, and concrete
- Use direct quotes only when needed
- Use a person's name if it is known; first and last name the first time they are introduced, and later by last name only. If the suspect is unknown, use “Suspect #1 and Suspect #2”
- Avoid slang, vulgarities, sexist, biased, and insensitive language unless quoting someone else's words



Further Assistance: This resource is available at lewisuwritingcenter.wordpress.com. For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library, or call 815-836-5427

Consulted: *Just the Facts: Investigative Report Writing* by Michael Biggs, “Police Report Prompt: Writing in the Disciplines” by Dr. Jen Consilio