

# **Basic Course Workbook Series Student Materials**

**Learning Domain 18  
Investigative Report Writing  
Version 3.1**

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Student Materials  
Learning Domain 18  
Investigative Report Writing  
Version 3.1**

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## **THE ACADEMY TRAINING MISSION**

The primary mission of basic training is to prepare students mentally, morally, and physically to advance into a field training program, assume the responsibilities, and execute the duties of a peace officer in society.



## FOREWORD

The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training sincerely appreciates the efforts of the many curriculum consultants, academy instructors, directors and coordinators who contributed to the development of this workbook. The Commission extends its thanks to California law enforcement agency executives who offered personnel to participate in the development of these training materials.

This student workbook is part of the POST Basic Course Training System. The workbook component of this system provides a self-study document for every learning domain in the Basic Course. Each workbook is intended to be a supplement to, not a substitute for, classroom instruction. The objective of the system is to improve academy student learning and information retention.

The content of each workbook is organized into sequenced learning modules to meet requirements as prescribed both by California law and the POST Training and Testing Specifications for the Basic Course.

It is our hope that the collective wisdom and experience of all who contributed to this workbook will help you, the student, to successfully complete the Basic Course and to enjoy a safe and rewarding career as a peace officer serving the communities of California.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Cappitelli', with a stylized, overlapping design.

PAUL CAPPITELLI  
Executive Director





# LD18: Investigative Report Writing

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# Preface

## Introduction

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### **Student workbooks**

The student workbooks are part of the POST Basic Course Instructional System. This system is designed to provide students with a self-study document to be used in preparation for classroom training.

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### **Regular Basic Course training requirement**

Completion of the Regular Basic Course is required, prior to exercising peace officer powers, as recognized in the California Penal Code and where the POST-required standard is the POST Regular Basic Course.

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### **Student workbook elements**

The following elements are included in each workbook:

- chapter contents, including a synopsis of key points,
  - supplementary material, and
  - a glossary of terms used in this workbook.
-

# How to Use the Student Workbook

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## Introduction

This workbook provides an introduction to the training requirements for this Learning Domain. It is intended to be used in several ways: for initial learning prior to classroom attendance, for test preparation, and for remedial training.

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## Workbook format

To use the workbook most effectively, follow the steps listed below.

Step	Action
1	Begin by reading the: Preface and How to Use the Workbook, which provide an overview of how the workbook fits into the POST Instructional System and how it should be used.
2	Refer to the Chapter Synopsis section at the end of each chapter to review the key points that support the chapter objectives.
3	Read the text.
4	Complete the Workbook Learning Activities at the end of each chapter. These activities reinforce the material taught in the chapter.
5	Refer to the Glossary section for a definition of important terms. The terms appear throughout the text and are bolded and underlined the first time they appear (e.g., <b><u>term</u></b> ).

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Investigative Report Writing

### Overview

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**Learning need** A peace officer's ability to clearly document the facts and activities of an investigation not only reflects on the officer's own professionalism, but also on the ability of the justice system to prosecute the criminal case.

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**Learning objectives** The table below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to:	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>explain the legal basis for requiring investigative reports.</li></ul>	18.01.EO2

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on background information regarding the writing of investigative reports. Refer to the following table for specific topics.

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# Investigative Reports and the Judicial Process

[18.01.EO2]

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## Introduction

As much as 40% of a peace officer's work involves writing. Good investigative skills can be diminished if officers do not have the necessary writing skills to record their observations, findings, and actions clearly and concisely.

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## Investigative report

An **investigative report** is a written document prepared by a peace officer that records in detail the officer's observations and actions as they relate to a specific event or incident.

Each investigative report is a legal document that becomes a permanent written record of that event or incident.

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## Judicial process

A suspect's freedom, rights or privileges cannot be taken away or denied unless there is sufficient cause to justify such action.

In order to ensure *due process*, officers, prosecutors, judges, etc., must have sufficient information and evidence to initiate or continue the judicial process and successfully prosecute or exonerate a suspect.

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## Investigative Reports and the Judicial Process, Continued

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### **Officer's reports and the judicial process**

The judicial process cannot function without the investigative reports written by the officers who have the direct knowledge of an event or incident.

An officer's report must present each event or incident in a complete and clear manner. Any investigation, arrest, prosecution, or other action taken must be initiated, supported, or justified by the information included in the report written by that officer.

Because peace officer's reports are so important to the judicial process, each one must be able to stand up to critical review and legal scrutiny.

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### **Statutory requirement**

State and federal statutes mandate that law enforcement agencies report certain events and incidents. *Penal Code Section 11107* requires each sheriff or police chief executive to furnish reports of specified misdemeanors and felonies to the Department of Justice.

Such reports must:

- describe the nature and character of each crime,
- note all particular circumstances of that crime, and
- include all additional or supplemental information pertaining to the suspected criminal activity.

Although the statutes are directed at the executive level, officers in the field are the ones who carry out the task of writing the reports. It is those officers reports that contain the information that will eventually be forwarded to the Department of Justice.

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## Investigative Reports and the Judicial Process, Continued

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### **Specified crimes**

Specified misdemeanors and felonies that require investigative reports, as required under *Penal Code Section 11107*, include, but are not limited to:

- forgery,
  - fraud-bunco,
  - bombings,
  - receiving or selling stolen property,
  - safe and commercial burglary,
  - grand theft,
  - child abuse,
  - homicide,
  - threats,
  - offenses involving lost, stolen, found, pledged, or pawned property,
  - domestic abuse, and
  - sex crimes.
- 

### **Failure to file a report**

Peace officers have a legal and moral duty to investigate and report crimes or incidents that come to their attention. Failure to uphold this responsibility can have negative consequences for officers.

- Deliberate failure to report a crime may be considered a violation of agency regulations and grounds for disciplinary action.
  - Any officer who knowingly files a false report will be guilty of a crime. (*Penal Code Section 118.1*)
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## Investigative Reports and the Judicial Process, Continued

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### **Ethics**

All reports are to be true, unbiased, and unprejudiced. These are easy words to say, but sometimes hard to live by. It is not always easy to know or find out the truth. Clearly it is the peace officer's moral obligation to seek the truth, lying is wrong. Truth and public trust cannot be separated.

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### **Agency policies**

Different agencies vary in their policies, regulations, and guidelines regarding the roles and responsibilities of peace officers for writing investigative reports.

It is the responsibility of each officer to be familiar with and follow that officer's specific agency policies.

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# Uses of Investigative Reports

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## Introduction

Even though it is the officer in the field who gathers the initial information regarding a crime, that officer may not be the person who must use that information to make decisions regarding further actions. Those decisions are usually made by other people removed from the actual event. They must rely on the information in the investigating officer's report to make decisions.

---

## How investigative reports are used

The investigative reports written by peace officers have many different uses within the criminal justice system and beyond.

The following table identifies a number of ways investigative reports can be used.

Reports are used to...	by...
assist with the identification, apprehension and prosecution of criminals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• serving as a source document for filing criminal complaints,</li><li>• providing a record of all investigations,</li><li>• providing information to identify the mode of operation of an individual offender, or</li><li>• providing a basis for follow up investigations.</li></ul>
assist prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other law enforcement agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• providing records of all investigations,</li><li>• serving as source documents for criminal prosecution, or</li><li>• documenting agency actions.</li></ul>

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## Uses of Investigative Reports, Continued

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**How  
investigative  
reports are  
used**  
(continued)

<b>Reports are used to...</b>	<b>by...</b>
assist officers prior to or during court appearances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• refreshing the officer's memory before testifying, or</li><li>• preparing to provide hearsay testimony at preliminary hearings.</li></ul>
aid in determining potential civil liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• documenting events such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- accidents or injuries on city or county property,</li><li>- industrial injuries, or</li><li>- fires or other events that prompt a peace officer response.</li></ul></li><li>• presenting justification for an officer's behavior or actions.</li></ul>
assist decision makers and criminal justice researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• providing statistical information in order to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- analyze crime trends,</li><li>- determine the need for additional employees and equipment,</li><li>- determine personnel deployment requirements,</li><li>- assess community needs,</li><li>- generate uniform crime reports, or</li><li>- identify specialized law enforcement needs.</li></ul></li><li>• satisfying mandatory reporting requirements for specific criminal acts. (e.g., child abuse, incidents of domestic violence, missing persons, etc.)</li></ul>

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## Uses of Investigative Reports, Continued

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**How  
investigative  
reports are  
used**  
(continued)

Reports are used to...	by...
serve as reference material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• providing information to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the public</li><li>- insurance companies,</li><li>- the media, or</li><li>- other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.</li></ul></li></ul>
provide information for evaluating an officer's performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• giving the evaluating agency insight into the officer's ability to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- write clearly, accurately, and mechanically (error-free),</li><li>- demonstrate a knowledge of law,</li><li>- demonstrate a knowledge of agency policies and procedures,</li><li>- investigate criminal acts, and</li><li>- recognize potential evidence and relevant information.</li></ul></li></ul>

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## Uses of Investigative Reports, Continued

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### User needs

Investigative reports must take into account the needs of each potential user of that report. The report must provide not only a clear word-picture of the event or incident but also the critical information necessary for those users to do their jobs.

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### Report users

The following table identifies a number of prospective users and how they will use an officer's investigative report.

Prospective Users	Purpose for Using an Officer's Investigative Report
Immediate supervisors and Field Training Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To determine the next action (e.g., referral for further investigation, file a complaint, forward to a prosecutor, etc.)</li><li>• To evaluate an officer's:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- ability to convert observations and verbal information into a written format that others can use</li><li>- performance during an investigation</li></ul></li></ul>
Detectives and investigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To gather information to use during the follow up investigation of a specific event or incident</li><li>• To clear or close out cases</li></ul>
Representatives of other law enforcement agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To develop mandatory crime reports</li><li>• To aid in further investigations (e.g., Highway Patrol, Fire Department)</li></ul>
Prosecuting and defense attorneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To prepare their cases</li><li>• To determine if officers acted appropriately to ensure the rights of the suspect</li></ul>

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## Uses of Investigative Reports, Continued

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**Report  
users**  
(continued)

<b>Prospective Users</b>	<b>Purpose for Using an Officer's Investigative Report</b>
Other attorneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To evaluate the basis for civil litigation</li><li>• To establish a basis for appeals</li></ul>
Parole, probations and custody personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To determine probation conditions</li><li>• To set requirements for parole</li><li>• To aid in classifying inmates based on special needs or security requirements</li></ul>
Involved parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Under certain circumstances, victims, witnesses, or suspects may gain access for court preparation.</li></ul>
Media representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a source of news material</li></ul>
Insurance agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To provide information for their own investigations</li><li>• To verify claims</li></ul>

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# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report

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## Introduction

Peace officers are faced with a variety of events and incidents. The specific contents of an officer's reports must reflect that specific event or incident. Although the details may vary, there are six characteristics that all effective investigative reports have in common.

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## Characteristics of an effective report

No matter what type of investigative report is being written (i.e., arrest report, incident report, etc.) that report must be:

- **F**actual,
- **A**ccurate,
- **C**lear,
- **C**oncise,
- **C**omplete, and
- **T**imely.

Peace officers can use the acronym **FACCCT** to help them remember these characteristics.

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## Leadership

In a free and democratic society, all segments of the criminal justice system are open to public scrutiny and subject to public record. A police report is often the first and most significant documented account of a possible crime. As such, the police report is a fundamental instrument of democratic law enforcement. Therefore, we place high value on our officers' ability to write good reports. A good report is one that the officer is proud of and will stand the test of time. It must be factual, clear, concise, and complete. Accuracy and attention to detail will provide others in the criminal justice system with a clear picture of what happened.

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# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

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## **Factual**

Critical decisions made based on an officer's investigative report require that each report be factual. Users of the report must have an exact and literal representation of the event or incident.

The factual report provides an *objective* accounting of the relevant facts related to the event or incident under investigation. Any conclusions made by the reporting officer must be based on *objective facts*. These facts must be articulated and documented within the body of the report.

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## **Accurate**

The decisions made and actions taken by the users of the report must be supported by accurate information. There must be *no inconsistencies or discrepancies* between what took place and what is documented in the officer's report.

If any specific information is found to be inaccurate, the credibility and reliability of the report itself may be jeopardized.

Accuracy is achieved by carefully, precisely, impartially, and honestly recording all relevant information.

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## **Clear**

An investigative report must speak for the investigating officer at a time when that officer is not present. There should be no doubt or confusion on what the investigating officer is reporting. If the information is not clear and understandable.

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*Continued on next page*



# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Clear (continued)

Clarity is achieved by the use of appropriate language and logical order. The following table identifies a number of factors that can affect the clarity of an investigative report.

Factor	Recommendations/Rationales
Organization of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information is easier for the reader to understand when facts and events are presented in chronological order.</li><li>• Events relating to the incident should have clear and logical ties to one another.</li></ul>
Language used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simple, common language will make the writer's meaning clear.</li><li>• Readers do not need to be impressed, they need to be informed.</li><li>• Slang or profanity should not be used unless it is in the form of an exact quote.</li></ul>
Writing mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A poorly written or sloppy report can imply poor or sloppy investigative skills.</li><li>• Proper use of commas and other punctuation marks can help convey the writer's meaning.</li><li>• Writing in the first-person will help the reader clearly understand who did what or who said what.</li><li>• Pronoun use must leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to exactly whom or what the writer is referring.</li><li>• Errors in spelling, word choice, or grammar can distract readers.</li><li>• Handwriting must be legible.</li></ul>

*Continued on next page*

# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Concise

Reports should be brief yet, contain all relevant information the users will need to do their jobs. Wordiness can make a report less readable and therefore less effective.

Accuracy, completeness, or clarity should never be sacrificed for the sake of brevity. The following table identifies a number of factors that can affect a writer's ability to write concisely.

Factor	Recommendations/Rationales
Word selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statements should be direct and concrete.</li><li>• Use of abstract phrases can confuse or mislead the reader.</li><li>• Plain English is the most effective way to convey information.</li><li>• Do not use a synonym for a word, merely to avoid repeating a word. Using the exact word may seem less interesting, but it will eliminate misunderstanding.</li></ul>
Sentence structure and grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sentences should be short yet complete (subject-verb-object).</li><li>• Fragments can be misinterpreted or lead to confusion.</li><li>• Long drawn out sentences can be confusing and misleading.</li></ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only the information that will be needed by the user should be included in the report.</li></ul>

*Continued on next page*

# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Complete

An officer's report must contain all the relevant information and facts the user of that report will need. If the user must contact the writer to gather additional information, the report is not complete.

A report is complete when...	Description
it presents a complete word-picture of the event or incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descriptions are comprehensive.</li><li>• Physical conditions are noted.</li><li>• Users are able to visualize the scene.</li></ul>
there are no questions left in the user's mind regarding the event or incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key information regarding the <i>what, when, where, who, how, and why</i> is recorded.</li><li>• Facts are presented.</li><li>• Statements are supported by details.</li><li>• The order of events is clear and easy to follow.</li></ul>
the actions taken by officers are reported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actions are described.</li><li>• Decisions are justified.</li><li>• Statements regarding probable cause are present.</li></ul>
both supporting and conflicting information is presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information that may conflict with stated conclusions or actions must also be included.</li><li>• Investigators, prosecutors, etc. can only determine the merit of information that they are aware of.</li></ul>

NOTE: Report formats used by officers can vary. Some jurisdictions require that certain information be noted on a standardized form that is often used as the report's face sheet. Officers who use such formats must be sure that all relevant blocks or portions of the standardized forms are completed, even if the same information is duplicated in a later narrative.

*Continued on next page*

# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Timely

No decisions can be made or actions taken if an officer's report does not reach the users in a timely fashion. Evidence can be lost, suspects or witnesses may disappear, and the support and good will in the community can be lost if action toward resolving a case is delayed.

## Common characteristics

The following table illustrates the six common characteristics of an effective investigative report.

Characteristic	Well Written	Poorly Written
<b>F</b> actual	The victim could not provide additional information about the suspect.	The victim could not remember what the guy looked like but thought he was a minority. There seems to be a number of those around lately.
<b>A</b> ccurate	On 1-5-99 at 16:00 hrs.	During the first part of the day shift...
<b>C</b> lear	She left for work at 0700 hrs. and returned for lunch at 1130 hrs.	She went to work as usual in the morning and when she came home for lunch like she always does she found the conditions stated as such.
<b>C</b> oncise	She discovered her TV and VCR were missing.	She looked around and she found some books knocked over. She looked around some more and noticed her TV and VCR were not where they were supposed to be.

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# Characteristics of an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

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**Common  
characteristics**  
(continued)

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Well Written</b>	<b>Poorly Written</b>
<b>Complete</b>	I told her that an evidence technician would be sent to her home.	I told her someone would follow up.
<b>Timely</b>	Officers should be aware of their own agency policies regarding when reports need to be submitted.	

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*Continued on next page*

# Chapter Synopsis

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## **Learning need**

A peace officer's ability to clearly document the facts and activities of an investigation not only reflects on the officer's own professionalism, but also on the ability of the justice system to prosecute the criminal case.

---

## **Investigative reports** **[18.01.EO1]**

An investigative report is a written document prepared by a peace officer that records in detail that officer's observations and actions as they relate to a specific event or incident.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## Introduction

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## Activity questions

1. Why should the ability to take accurate field notes and to write effective investigative reports be *personally* important to a peace officer? Why is it legally important to the officer's agency?

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

2. You are preparing to write the report after investigating a residential robbery where a number of expensive antiques were stolen. List the prospective users of that officer's report. Explain what decisions will be made or actions taken by each. What type of information will each be looking for within that officer's report?

Prospective Users	Decisions/Actions	Information Needed

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*Continued on next page*



### Activity questions (continued)

- Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

5. Complete the following table with the appropriate characteristics of an effective report represented by the letters FACCCT. In your own words, describe *why* each characteristic is important to the identified prospective users.

To be effective an investigative report must be...	Prospective Users		
	An investigator assigned to the case	A reporter from the local newspaper	A defense attorney
<b>F</b>			
<b>A</b>			
<b>C</b>			
<b>C</b>			
<b>C</b>			
<b>T</b>			

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

6. Read the following narrative from an officer's investigative report. Would it meet the FACCCT standard? If not, mark the specific statements that need improvement. Describe why and how each should be improved.

While I was patrolling on the street next to the city park, I saw a man who was in the park after closing hours stumble and fall down. He tried to get up but fell down a second time. When I stopped to check on the man, he appeared to be drunk. He was carrying a bag which contained a half empty can of beer. I asked him if he had been drinking and he said he had a few beers with a friend but was now on his way home. He also told me that the path through the park was a shortcut. I asked the man for ID and he produced his driver's license. I arrested the man because the man was drunk and had an open container of alcohol while being in the park after it was officially closed.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### **Additional classroom activities**

Writing an investigative report that is factual, accurate, clear, concise, complete, and timely is a skill that requires practice. As part of the classroom activities, students will have the opportunity to enhance their own writing skills under the supervision of the instructor.

# Chapter 2

## Field Notes

### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must recognize that the information gathered during their initial investigation in the field will become the foundation for their investigative reports.

---

**Learning objectives** The table below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to:	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discuss the importance of taking notes in preparation for writing reports.</li></ul>	18.02.EO6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• apply appropriate actions for taking notes during a field interview.</li></ul>	18.02.EO2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• distinguish between:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- opinion,</li><li>- fact, and</li><li>- conclusion.</li></ul></li></ul>	18.02.EO3 18.02.EO4 18.02.EO5

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*Continued on next page*

## Overview, Continued

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### In this chapter

This chapter focuses on taking field notes that will be used to write investigative reports. Refer to the following chart for specific topics.

Topic	See Page
Introduction to Field Notes	2-3
Notetaking Process During a Field Interview	2-9
Opinions, Facts, and Conclusions	2-15
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# Introduction to Field Notes

[18.02.EO6]

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## Introduction

The officers who investigate a crime or incident are responsible for providing the information other participants in the criminal justice system need to effectively do their jobs. Officers should rely on accurate sources of information when writing their reports.

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## Field notes

**Field notes** are abbreviated notations written by an officer in the field while investigating a specific incident or crime.

An officer's field notes are the **primary source** the officer will use when writing the investigative report. If the officer's field notes are incomplete, difficult to read, or poorly organized, they will be of little use to that officer.

NOTE: There are a number of formats and styles used when taking field notes. Officers should select the format or style they are comfortable with.

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## When to take notes

Field notes are recorded while information is fresh in the investigating officer's mind. They should be taken:

- at the scene of an event or incident,
  - when interviewing persons (e.g., victims, witness, suspects, etc.),
  - whenever an officer wishes to record specific facts for inclusion in the report, and
  - any time the officer wishes to remember specific details at a later time.
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## Introduction to Field Notes, Continued

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### Important considerations

When determining what to include in their field notes, officers should consider the points noted in the following table.

Consideration	Explanation
Field notes are more reliable than an officer's memory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An investigative report is often written several hours after the investigation of a specific event or incident has occurred.</li><li>• Certain types of information such as statements, times, observations, addresses, etc., can be easily forgotten or confused with other information if not recorded while still fresh in the officer's mind.</li></ul>
Field notes are the primary source of information for the investigative report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well taken notes provide officers with the <b>detailed information</b> they will need to have in order to accurately write their reports.</li><li>• Well organized notes will help officers capture vital information regarding the events, persons, statements, and other information related to the investigation.</li></ul>

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## Introduction to Field Notes, Continued

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### Important considerations (continued)

Consideration	Explanation
Detailed field notes reduce the need to recontact the involved parties at a later time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete field notes should contain enough information to answer any pertinent questions about the incident or persons involved.</li></ul>
Field notes can be used to defend the credibility of an investigative report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An officer's field notes can be an indicator of that officer's thoroughness and efficiency as an investigator.</li><li>• During a trial, an officer may be asked to identify the source the officer used when writing a specific report. If the officer relied on field notes the reliability and credibility of the report may be easier to defend.</li></ul>

NOTE: Field notes are discoverable in court. If kept, they should be prepared accordingly.

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### Information to include

Every event or incident is different; therefore, the facts and information the officer must gather will differ. An officer's field notes should contain the facts and information that will aid that officer in answering the questions *what, when, where, who, how, and why*.

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## Introduction to Field Notes, Continued

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### Information to include (continued)

The following table identifies some examples of the basic information officers should capture in their field notes.

	Basic Information	Examples of Additional Information
<b>Victims and witnesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full name</li><li>• Age</li><li>• Date of birth</li><li>• Race</li><li>• Sex</li><li>• Telephone numbers (home, cellular, and work)</li><li>• Address</li><li>• Email address(s)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to contact by phone and in person</li><li>• Place to contact</li><li>• Best time to contact</li><li>• Place of employment (including address)</li></ul>
<b>Occurrence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Type of crime</li><li>• Location</li><li>• Date and time of incident</li><li>• Date and time reported</li><li>• Was physical evidence handled?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who observed it?</li><li>- To whom was it given?</li></ul></li><li>• Chain of custody for evidence</li><li>• Direction of the suspect's flight</li><li>• Type and description of weapon(s)</li><li>• Threat made with weapon(s)</li><li>• Direct statements made by the suspect (e.g., "I'll kill you!")</li><li>• Case number</li><li>• Assisting officer's actions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person(s) involved<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Informants</li><li>- Reporting party</li><li>- Victims</li><li>- Witnesses</li><li>- Suspects</li><li>- Officers</li><li>- Members of other agencies</li><li>- Medical personnel</li><li>- Members of the media</li></ul></li></ul>

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## Introduction to Field Notes, Continued

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**Information to include**  
(continued)

	<b>Basic Information</b>	<b>Examples of Additional Information</b>
<b>Suspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Race</li><li>• Sex</li><li>• Age</li><li>• Type of body build (i.e., heavyset, medium, small frame)</li><li>• Approximate weight</li><li>• Approximate height</li><li>• Color of eyes</li><li>• Color of hair</li><li>• Hair style (e.g., long, short, curly)</li><li>• Existence of facial hair</li><li>• Clothing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Type (e.g., hats, jeans, jackets, etc.)</li><li>- Color</li><li>- Style (e.g., casual, conservative)</li></ul></li><li>• Prior knowledge of name and street name</li><li>• Unusual physical attributes<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Scars</li><li>- Tattoos</li><li>- Limp</li><li>- Moles</li><li>- Unusual odors</li><li>- Missing teeth</li></ul></li><li>• Can the victim identify the suspect?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unusual or memorable gestures</li><li>• Speech peculiarities<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Accents</li><li>- Tone (e.g., loud, soft)</li><li>- Pitch (e.g., high, low)</li><li>- Speech disorders</li></ul></li><li>• Jewelry<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rings (identify which hand and finger)</li><li>- Necklaces</li><li>- Earrings</li><li>- Body piercing</li></ul></li><li>• Right or left handed<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Which hand was dominant?</li><li>- Which hand held the weapon?</li><li>- Which hand opened a door?</li><li>- Where was a watch worn?</li></ul></li><li>• Any gang affiliation?</li></ul>

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## Introduction to Field Notes, Continued

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### **Incident specific information**

The type of crime or incident will also indicate what specific information is required for the officer's notes.

For example, specific information for a burglary may include, but not be limited to:

- point of entry,
  - point of exit,
  - property damage,
  - types and value of property taken,
  - description of suspect's vehicle,
  - nature and location of evidence collected, or
  - unique characteristics of the crime.
-

# Notetaking Process During a Field Interview

[18.02.EO2]

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## Introduction

The effectiveness of an officer's investigation may be dependent on that officer's ability to obtain information and statements from the involved parties.

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## Interviews

An interview is the process of gathering information from a person who has knowledge of the facts an officer will need to conduct an investigation.

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## Role of statements

The field notes taken by officers during an interview must be *clear, accurate* and *complete*.

Statements can be critical in tying together the specific facts of a specific incident or crime. The existence of some crime elements may only be revealed within the statements of witnesses, victims, and the suspects themselves.

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## Notetaking Process During a Field Interview, Continued

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### **Before the interview begins**

Before beginning any field interview, officers should prepare properly. The following table identifies a number of actions the interviewing officer should take.

<b>Actions Prior to the Actual Interview</b>	<b>Guidelines</b>
Separate the involved parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If possible, move the person to a location where there will be no interruptions or distractions.</li><li>• Focus the person's attention on speaking with the officer rather than interacting with others.</li></ul>
Establish rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell the interviewee why the interview is being conducted.</li><li>• Describe the interview process that will be followed.</li><li>• Assure the person that by using this process, the officer will be able to gather that person's statement accurately.</li><li>• Be courteous, considerate, and patient.</li><li>• Control the interview by remaining calm and polite.</li></ul>

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### **Recording the interview**

Some officers may choose to use a small tape recorder while conducting an interview. Officers should be aware this may inhibit the person from talking freely. Electronic equipment can also malfunction, leaving the officer with little or no information.

Even if an officer is recording the interview, that officer should also take thorough and complete notes of the conversation.

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## Notetaking Process During a Field Interview, Continued

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### Three step process

The most effective way for officers to gather clear, accurate, and complete information while conducting an interview is to use a systematic process. One such process involves the following three steps.

Step One: Listen Attentively  
Step Two: Take Notes and Ask Questions  
Step Three: Verify Information

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### Step One: Listen attentively

In the first step of the process, the officer's focus should be strictly on the other person. The officer should be *listening* --- *not taking notes*.

The following table identifies a number of guidelines for officers during step one of the notetaking process.

Action	Guidelines
Ask the person to recount what has happened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow the person to speak freely.</li><li>• Have the person describe the incident just as that person understands it, using that person's own words.</li></ul>
Keep the person focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If the person begins to wander from the specific topic, guide the person back to the subject (i.e., "You mentioned that...." "Let's go back to...").</li><li>• Maintain eye contact and use nonverbal gestures (e.g., nodding the head) to encourage the person.</li></ul>

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## Notetaking Process During a Field Interview, Continued

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**Step One:  
Listen  
attentively  
(continued)**

Action	Guidelines
Listen carefully to what is being said.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be particularly attentive to the essentials of the incident the person describes by including the:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- role of the person being interviewed (victim, witness, etc.),</li><li>- type of crime, if any, that has been committed,</li><li>- time of the occurrence, and</li><li>- exact location of the person during the crime or incident.</li></ul></li></ul>

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## Notetaking Process During a Field Interview, Continued

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**Step Two:  
Take notes  
and ask  
questions**

When the person has finished, the officer can begin to write information. The following table identifies a number of guidelines for officers during step two of the process.

Action	Guidelines
Obtain identification information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirm the person's role in the event or incident. (e.g., victim, witness, possible suspect, etc.)</li><li>• Note the person's:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- complete name,</li><li>- address and phone number (home, cellular, work and email address), and</li><li>- any other information necessary for identification purposes.</li></ul></li></ul>
Ask the interviewee to repeat their account of what happened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guide the interview by asking questions that will keep the person from becoming distracted and wandering from the point.</li><li>• Stop the person and ask questions when necessary to clarify points.</li><li>• Write down information in short statements, recording only the most important words.</li><li>• If a statement is particularly important, quote the entire statement.</li></ul>
Ask additional questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain detailed descriptions of property, suspects, etc.</li></ul>

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*Continued on next page*

## Notetaking Process During a Field Interview, Continued

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### Step Three: Verify information

For the investigative report to be reliable, the officer's field notes must be accurate. The following table identifies a number of guidelines for officers during step three of the process.

Actions	Guidelines
Review information with the person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repeat specific information to verify the information is accurate and complete.</li><li>• Give the person an opportunity to add facts as necessary.</li></ul>
Ask for confirmation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have the person confirm important details such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- direct quotes,</li><li>- time relationships,</li><li>- information regarding weapons, or</li><li>- physical descriptions.</li></ul></li></ul>
Make modifications or corrections as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information may have been initially recorded incorrectly because the officer:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- misunderstood something the interviewee said,</li><li>- wrote something down incorrectly, or</li><li>- the officer's wording may have incorrectly characterized the interviewee's statement.</li></ul></li></ul>
Verify changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Once any changes have been made, the information that has been added or modified should be verified.</li></ul>

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# Opinions, Facts, and Conclusions

[18.02.EO3, 18.02.EO4, 18.02.EO5]

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## Introduction

An effective investigative report must be **factual**. It must present an **objective** accounting of the relevant facts related to the event or incident under investigation. An officer must be able to distinguish between opinion, fact, and conclusion.

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## Opinions, facts, and conclusions

The basis for determining relevant information requires peace officers to make the fine distinctions between an **opinion**, a **fact**, and a **conclusion**. The following table illustrates these distinctions.

	Description	Example
<b>Opinion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A statement that:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- can be open to different interpretations,</li><li>- expresses a belief not necessarily substantiated by proof.</li></ul></li></ul>	The victim was in pain.
<b>Fact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A statement that:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- can be verified or proven</li><li>- has real, demonstrable existence.</li></ul></li></ul>	The victim's arm was broken.
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A statement that is based on the analysis of facts and opinions.</li><li>• Conclusions should always be accompanied with the supporting facts and opinions. Conclusions presented without supporting information may be considered unwarranted.</li></ul>	The victim was not able to explain what had happened because she was in pain due to her broken arm.

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## Opinions, Facts, and Conclusions, Continued

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### **Factual but irrelevant**

It is possible for information to be factual yet still not be relevant to the incident or event being investigated. The following table illustrates points that are all factual but may or may not be relevant in an investigative report.

<b>Factual and Relevant</b>	<b>Factual but Irrelevant</b>
The address of the incident/crime scene	The route followed to the scene of the incident/crime
A description of how the suspect was apprehended	The number of fences the officer had to jump while apprehending a suspect
Statements given by witnesses	Humorous comments given by bystanders

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*Continued on next page*

## Opinions, Facts, and Conclusions, Continued

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### Relevant and irrelevant information

The following are examples of relevant and irrelevant information.

Victim's Statement	Relevant Facts	Irrelevant Facts
"I just bought this bike from the guy down the street a couple of weeks ago. It wasn't new but it was in really good shape. After a long ride, I parked the bike in front of my building at the bottom of the stairs. I didn't bother locking it up or anything because I thought it would be safe there, you know."	The bike was left unlocked in front of the victim's residence.	I thought it was safe there.
"I went inside my apartment to fill my water bottle and was gone for less than 5 minutes."	The bike was left unattended for about 5 minutes.	The victim went into his apartment to fill his water bottle.
"When I came out, the bike was gone. I was really mad and started yelling and cursing. I looked up and down the street but didn't see anyone or any signs of my bike."	No suspect was seen or heard by the victim.	The victim yelled and cursed when he realized his bike was stolen.

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# Chapter Synopsis

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<b>Learning need</b>	Peace officers must recognize that the information gathered during their initial investigation in the field will become the foundation for their investigative reports.
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<b>Content of field notes</b> <b>[18.02.EO6]</b>	<p>When determining what to include in their field notes, officers should consider the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Field notes are the primary source of information for the investigative report.</li><li>• Detailed field notes reduce the need to re-contact the involved parties.</li><li>• Field notes are more reliable than an officer's memory.</li><li>• Field notes can be used to defend the credibility of an investigative report.</li></ul>
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<b>Taking notes during an interview</b> <b>[18.02.EO2]</b>	The most effective way for officers to gather clear, accurate, and complete information while conducting an interview is to follow a systematic process.
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<b>Opinions, facts, and conclusions</b> <b>[18.02.EO3]</b>	<p>An opinion is a statement that can be open to different interpretations and expresses a belief not necessarily substantiated by proof. A fact is a statement that can be verified or proven and has real, demonstrable existence. A conclusion is a statement that is based on the analysis of facts and opinions. Conclusions should always be accompanied with the supporting facts and opinions. Conclusions presented without supporting information may be considered unwarranted.</p>
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## Introduction

### Activity questions

- Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

Read the following scenario and then answer the following questions.

At 2245 hrs., you were called to a local supermarket where a man was caught by the store's night manager attempting to shoplift a bottle of vodka. The suspect struggled and tried to hit the night manager in an attempt to escape.

Upon arrival, you handcuffed the suspect and walked him to the patrol vehicle. All individuals involved declined your offer for medical assistance. You asked the store's night manager, Joe Smith, to tell you what happened. Appearing shaken he told you the following:

"Well... let me get it together now... OK officer... I'm the night manager here and I was in the back when one of the clerks, Ester over there, came over and said there was this guy over in aisle three that was just hanging out and looking kind of suspicious. So, I went over there just to see for myself, and this guy saw me looking at him, so he started moving toward the front of the store. Well, I thought his coat looked funny, you know, like he had something under it so I kind'a followed him until I caught up and tried to make conversation, you know, to get a better look. You gotta be careful, you know... don't want to offend any legitimate customer, you know. Well, he turned around and looked at me and then instead of stopping, he just bolted for the door. He took off so I took off and he must of slipped or something cause he dropped the bottle of vodka he'd tried to get away with. I kept after him, still in pretty good shape ya' know 'cause I work out, and grabbed the guy's jacket. Well he spun 'round and before I could get any kind of grip on the guy, he belted me! Caught me a good one right here under my eye... still bleeding some I guess... but I didn't let go and I got him down on the ground, stuck my knee in his back, and I guess one of the clerks had called 'cause that's when you guys got here. So what happens now? Nothin' like this has ever happened to me before, ya' know."

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*Continued on next page*



## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

3. Continuing the scenario from the previous page, begin step two of the notetaking process. Ask Mr. Smith to repeat his account of what happened. Assuming his account remains the same, write your notes below.

4. What additional questions would you like to ask Mr. Smith?

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

5. After you finished interviewing Mr. Smith, you talked to the suspect. You read him his Miranda rights, and he acknowledged he understood and waived them. He told you the following:

“I didn’t do nothing man! This guy just jumps me! I mean I just went in there to get some booze, ya know, cause I’m going to this party over at my buddies and I wanted to take something with me and this dude starts giving me a hard time and starts chasing me down the aisle. I wasn’t doing anything. I was goin’ to pay for the stuff, ya know, but the guy, he just started yelling so he’s the one that chased me out, ya know. Then the dude grabs my jacket so I swung at the guy. It was self-defense, man! I gotta right to defend myself, ya know!

Assuming his account remains the same when you ask him to repeat it, write your notes below.

6. What additional questions would you like to ask the suspect?

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

7. Look back at the statements given by Mr. Smith and the suspect. In the following table note the facts, opinions, and conclusions that are provided.

Opinions	Facts	Conclusions

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### **Additional practice**

Taking complete and accurate field notes is a skill that requires practice and experience. During classroom discussions and activities, officers will have additional opportunities to practice taking field notes related to arrest situations and criminal investigations.

## Workbook Corrections

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Suggested corrections to this workbook can be made by going to the POST website at: [www.post.ca.gov](http://www.post.ca.gov)

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## Workbook Corrections, Continued

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Student notes

## Chapter 3

### Fundamental Content Elements of Investigative Reports

#### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must recognize in order for an investigative report to be of use in the judicial process, the report must be well organized and include facts needed to establish that a crime has been committed and all actions taken by officers were appropriate.

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**Learning objectives** The table below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to...	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• summarize the primary questions that must be answered by an investigative report.</li></ul>	18.03.EO3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identify the fundamental content elements in investigative reports including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- initial information,</li><li>- identification of the crime,</li><li>- identification of involved parties,</li><li>- victim/witness statements,</li><li>- crime scene specifics,</li><li>- property information, and</li><li>- officer actions.</li></ul></li></ul>	18.03.EO4 18.03.EO5 18.03.EO6 18.03.EO7 18.03.EO8 18.03.EO9 18.03.EO10

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## Overview, Continued

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**In this chapter** This chapter focuses on the content elements in effective investigative reports. Refer to the following table for specific topics.

Topic	See Page
Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report	3-3
Fundamental Content Elements	3-9
Chapter Synopsis	3-15
Workbook Learning Activities	3-17

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# Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report

[18.03.EO3]

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## **Introduction**

No matter how an investigative report is organized, it must be factual, accurate, clear, concise, complete, and timely (FACCCT). It must provide prosecutors, investigators, and other participants in the judicial process with the accuracy of the information needed to do their jobs.

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## **Investigative report formats**

An investigating officer communicates with the other participants in the judicial process through that officer's written investigative report. The adequacy of that communication is dependent on the officer's ability to logically organize events and clearly state the relevant facts related to the incident.

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## **Agency policy**

Each agency has its own policies regarding formats and forms officers must use when writing investigative reports. It is the responsibility of each officer to be familiar with and comply with their agency's requirements.

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## **Community policing**

Police reports have a variety of users in the community. Prosecutors, judges, insurance agencies, and attorneys all rely on police reports to ensure a fair and just outcome. A well-written report can be a significant tool in providing justice for victims. Police reports are useful in prosecutions, in defense against wrongful accusations, as a permanent history in long-term investigations, and in holding peace officers accountable when they are involved in the incident. The peace officer is the "eyes and ears" of the event. A good report will greatly increase the effectiveness of everyone involved.

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## Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report, Continued

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### **Primary questions**

The users of an officer's investigative report should be able to locate the answers to six primary questions within the body of the report. These questions are noted below.

- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Who?
- How?
- Why?

If an officer is not able to answer a question, the report should provide as much information as possible. This information may prove vital for investigators assigned to the case.

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### **Supporting facts and information**

The information that answers each question will vary depending on the details of the specific incident or crime.

NOTE: The following table is not intended to be all inclusive. Specific crimes will require certain information that should be noted by the investigating officer in the report.

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*Continued on next page*

# Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Supporting facts and information (continued)

The following table presents examples of the specific facts and information that can be included in the body of the report to help answer each question.

	Supporting Facts/Information
<b>What...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the crime that was committed?</li><li>• are the elements of the crime?</li><li>• were the actions of the suspect before and after the crime?</li><li>• actually happened?</li><li>• do the witnesses know about it?</li><li>• evidence was obtained?</li><li>• was done with the evidence?</li><li>• weapons were used?</li><li>• action did the officers take?</li><li>• further action should be taken?</li><li>• knowledge, skill or strength was needed to commit the crime?</li><li>• other agencies were notified?</li><li>• other agencies need to be notified?</li></ul>
<b>When...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the crime committed?</li><li>• was it discovered?</li><li>• were the authorities notified?</li><li>• did they arrive at the scene?</li><li>• was the victim last seen alive?</li><li>• did officers arrive?</li><li>• was any arrest made?</li><li>• did witnesses hear anything unusual?</li><li>• did the suspect decide to commit the crime?</li></ul>

*Continued on next page*

## Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report, Continued

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### Supporting facts and information (continued)

	Supporting Facts/Information
Where...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the crime committed?</li><li>• was the crime discovered?</li><li>• was entry made?</li><li>• was the exit?</li><li>• was the weapon obtained that was used to commit the crime?</li><li>• was the victim found?</li><li>• was the suspect seen during the crime?</li><li>• was the suspect last seen?</li><li>• were the witnesses during the crime?</li><li>• did the suspect live?</li><li>• does the suspect currently live?</li><li>• is the suspect now?</li><li>• would the suspect likely go?</li><li>• was the evidence found?</li><li>• was the evidence stored?</li></ul>

When noting locations, officers should include:

- the exact address including:
  - wing,
  - housing unit,
  - floor of the building, etc., and
- identification of the area (e.g., business, apartment complex, private residence, vehicle.)

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## Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report, Continued

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### Supporting facts and information (continued)

	Supporting Facts/Information
<b>Who...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are the involved parties in the incident? (i.e., victim(s), witness(es), suspect(s))</li><li>• were the participating officers?</li><li>• was the complainant?</li><li>• discovered the crime?</li><li>• saw or heard anything of importance?</li><li>• had a motive for committing the crime?</li><li>• committed the crime?</li><li>• had the means to commit the crime?</li><li>• had access to the crime scene?</li><li>• searched for, identified and gathered evidence?</li></ul> <p>Also with whom...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• did the victim associate?</li><li>• did the suspect associate?</li><li>• was the victim last seen?</li><li>• do the witnesses associate?</li><li>• did the suspect commit the crime?</li></ul>

When noting information regarding specific people, officers should include that person's full name, including middle name or initial. The correct spelling of each name should be confirmed by the officer as well.

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*Continued on next page*

# Questions Answered by an Effective Investigative Report,

Continued

## Supporting facts and information (continued)

Additional information regarding specific people can include, but not be limited to:

- phone numbers (home, cellular and work),
- addresses (home, work, and email),
- age and date of birth,
- social security number,
- occupations, and
- physical descriptions as required.

	Supporting Facts/Information
How...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the crime committed? (e.g., force, violence, threats, etc.)</li><li>• did the suspect leave the scene? (e.g., on foot, by car, etc.)</li><li>• did the suspect obtain the information necessary to commit the crime?</li><li>• was the crime discovered?</li><li>• was entry made? (e.g., smashing, breaking, key, etc.)</li><li>• was the weapon/tool for the crime obtained?</li><li>• was the weapon/tool used?</li><li>• was the arrest made?</li><li>• much damage was done?</li></ul>
Why... (if known)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• was the crime committed?</li><li>• was a certain weapon/tool used?</li><li>• was the crime reported?</li><li>• was the crime reported late?</li><li>• were witnesses reluctant to give information?</li><li>• is the suspect lying?</li><li>• did the suspect commit the crime when she/he did?</li><li>• did the suspect commit the crime where she/he did?</li></ul>

# Fundamental Content Elements

[18.03.EO4, 18.03.EO5, 18.03.EO6, 18.03.EO7, 18.03.EO8, 18.03.EO9, 18.03.EO10]

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## Introduction

Every incident is different and different crimes require different information. On the other hand, certain content elements remain constant regardless of the crime or the formats used to present the information.

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## Fundamental content elements

The following table identifies the fundamental content elements that are common within all investigative reports.

An effective investigative report contains...	
initial information...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>establishing how the officer(s) became involved with the specific incident and additional background information.</li></ul>
identification of the crime...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>including the facts that are necessary to show that the specific crime has taken place.</li></ul>
identification of the involved parties...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>such as the reporting person(s), victim(s), witness(es), or suspect(s).</li></ul>
witness/victim statements...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>noting the details of the events the involved parties observed or experienced.</li></ul>
crime scene specifics...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>necessary to accurately reestablish the scene and events of the crime.</li></ul>
property information...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>including descriptions and details pertaining to stolen items as well as physical evidence.</li></ul>
officer actions...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>including descriptions of all actions taken by peace officers that are related to the incident.</li></ul>

NOTE: The order in which information is presented in an investigative report is dependent upon the format used and agency policy.

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*Continued on next page*

## Fundamental Content Elements, Continued

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### Initial information

Each investigative report should describe the manner in which the peace officers learned of the incident. The initial information should also describe the officer's immediate observations and any actions they took upon arrival at the scene.

Content elements specific to the initial information may include, but are not limited to:

- the name(s) and badge number(s) of the responding officer(s),
  - how the officer(s) learned of the incident (e.g., radio dispatch),
  - the exact date and time the officer(s) arrived,
  - the exact location, and
  - details regarding the officer(s) own observations of who was where and what was happening upon arrival.
- 

### Identification of the crime

The facts which are the evidence of a crime are referred to as the **corpus delicti**, or *the body of the crime*.

Specific crimes have their own required crime elements. Investigative reports must clearly identify these facts in order to establish that a crime has occurred.

Crime identification information within the body of the investigative report must clearly state the:

- common name of the crime,
- statutory code reference number for the crime (i.e., Penal Code, Health & Welfare Code, etc.), and
- existence of each of the required crime elements necessary for the crime to be complete.

NOTE: Additional information regarding the crime elements for specific crimes is included in the supplementary materials at the end of this workbook.

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*Continued on next page*



## Fundamental Content Elements, Continued

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### **Identification of involved parties**

The involved parties of a crime can include the person who reported the incident, victim(s), witness(es), or suspect(s). Officers should take care to collect complete and accurate information that clearly identifies each as well as providing a means of further contacts if necessary.

Specific information regarding the involved parties should include, but is not limited to:

- full names,
  - sex, ethnic origin,
  - date of birth (DOB),
  - home address,
  - home phone, cellular phone,
  - workplace, school or email addresses,
  - workplace or school phone,
  - their role in the incident (i.e., reporting party, witness, etc.), and
  - the reporting party's relationship with other involved parties.
- 

*Continued on next page*

## Fundamental Content Elements, Continued

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### **Witness/ victim statements**

Statements of the involved parties (i.e., witnesses, victims) help place events in their proper sequence and establish the elements of the crime. Along with the person's statements, officers should note:

- location/proximity of the person to the event,
- circumstances and actions observed or experienced,
- complete and detailed descriptions, (e.g., items stolen, distinguishing features, injuries sustained, etc.) and
- information regarding suspect(s). (e.g., name, aliases, identifying marks, relationship to the victim, etc.)

If the reporting officers use a person's exact words within a report, quotation marks and the word *said* followed by a comma should be used to introduce the speaker's words.

Example:                Smith said, "I don't know. I'd really have to take a closer look. I'm just not sure if that's all that was taken."

If the reporting officer paraphrases what the speaker said, quotation marks are not used.

Example:                Smith said she was not sure if anything else was taken.

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*Continued on next page*

## Fundamental Content Elements, Continued

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### **Crime scene specifics**

The users of any investigative report should be able to clearly understand and accurately visualize the scene of the crime as well as the events that took place.

Investigative reports should include, but not be limited to, identification and description of:

- the physical condition of the scene itself,
- the chronology of events,
- location of physical evidence, and
- all information supporting the existence of the elements of the crime. (e.g., the point of entry, the location of key objects)

NOTE: Investigative points to be noted can vary based on the specific crime that is being reported.

---

### **Property information**

Any item pertaining to the crime must be identified clearly and described within the investigative report. Such items may include stolen or damaged property as well as physical evidence.

Information should include, but not be limited to:

- brand names,
  - model/serial numbers,
  - description (including color, unique markings, dimensions, etc.),
  - value of stolen item,
  - identification of the owner/possessor/finder,
  - location where found (or stolen from),
  - relationship of the item to the crime/incident, and
  - physical evidence, including methods of collection and preservation.
- 

*Continued on next page*

## Fundamental Content Elements, Continued

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### **Officer actions**

An investigative report is not complete unless it clearly identifies all actions taken by the officer or officers.

Officer actions to be noted can include, but not be limited to:

- stops made,
  - searches conducted,
  - seizures of evidence,
  - arrests made,
  - standard procedures followed (e.g., knock and notice, field showups, etc.),
  - Miranda admonishments,
  - use of force,
  - medical attention (offered, accepted, or refused),
  - safety measures taken,
  - disposition of suspects, or
  - methods used to preserve evidence or capture essential information.
- 

### **Information in support of officer actions**

Complete and accurate descriptions of an officer's actions should also include the officer's reasons or justifications for taking those actions. This can include, but is not limited to the:

- exigent circumstances that led the officer to act (i.e., enter without permission, use force, etc.),
  - basis for an officer's reasonable suspicion to conduct a cursory/frisk search for weapons,
  - probable cause to conduct any other authorized searches,
  - probable cause to seize evidence,
  - probable cause leading to an arrest, and/or
  - detailed information describing acts or conditions that justify the level of force used to gain or maintain control.
-

# Chapter Synopsis

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<b>Learning need</b>	Peace officers must recognize in order for an investigative report to be of use in the judicial process, the report must be well organized and include facts needed to establish that a crime has been committed and all actions taken by officers were appropriate.
<b>Primary questions to be answered [18.03.EO3]</b>	The users of an officer's investigative report should be able to locate the answers to six primary questions within the body of the report.
<b>Initial information [18.03.EO4]</b>	Establishing how the officer(s) became involved with the specific incident and additional background information.
<b>Identification of the crime [18.03.EO5]</b>	Including the facts that are necessary to show that the specific crime has taken place.
<b>Identification of the involved parties [18.03.EO6]</b>	Such as the reporting person(s), victim(s), witness(es), or suspect(s).
<b>Witness/victim statements [18.03.EO7]</b>	Noting the details of the events the involved parties observed or experienced.
<b>Crime scene specifics [18.03.EO8]</b>	Necessary to accurately visualize the scene as well as events that took place.

*Continued on next page*

## Chapter Synopsis, Continued

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**Property  
information  
[18.03.EO9]**

Including descriptions and details pertaining to stolen items as well as physical evidence.

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**Officer  
actions  
[18.03.EO10]**

Including descriptions of all actions taken by peace officers that are related to the incident.

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# Workbook Learning Activities

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## **Introduction**

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## **Activity questions**

1. List reasons why it is important to fully document within the report the officer's reasons or rationales for taking specific actions. Describe the possible effects on an investigation, the officer, and the officer's department if this information is not included.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

2. In order for the crime of vandalism (*Penal Code Section 594*) to be complete, the necessary crime elements include:
- an act of a person or persons
  - with malicious intent
  - to deface, damage, or destroy with graffiti or other inscribed material
  - personal or real property
  - not their own.

The following statement is an excerpt from an investigative report. Has the writer noted sufficient information to establish that the crime of vandalism has been committed? Underline the information that supports the existence of each element of the crime. If an element is not present, identify the information that is missing.

...As my partner and I approached the scene, we could see the spray painted markings on the windshield of a blue Ford Taurus, CA license number 12345, which was parked in the street in front of 9876 Rose Lane. The owner of the Taurus, Clyde Smith, who lived at 9876 Rose Lane came out of the house carrying two empty cans of spray paint that he found in the gutter three houses down, at 9870 Rose Lane...

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*Continued on next page*



## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

3. You are an officer who has responded to a call involving a home burglary. The homeowner tells you that her son's computer, the family's television, and three pieces of her jewelry were taken. List questions you can ask the homeowner that will aid you in describing the stolen property later in your report.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

4. Without looking back in the chapter, list the seven fundamental content elements of an investigative report. Give a reason why each element should be included when possible. Provide examples of the type of information that could be included within each element.

Content Element	Reason for Importance	Type of Information Included

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

5. Assume that you are a supervisor and have received the following narrative from an investigative report. Based on the information given, you will be required to decide on the next action that should be taken.

On 01-5-08 at 1600 hours my partner and I were called to the scene of a residential burglary. The home owner, Alice Smith, met us as we arrived and gave the following information.

Smith left for work today at 0630 hours, locking all doors and windows. She returned home for lunch at 1130 hours and discovered the front door had been kicked in and was left standing open. She entered her home but found nobody inside. She discovered her TV and VCR were missing along with a home computer. Smith said that the only other items disturbed in the house were several books that had been knocked off a shelf in the office. Smith will attempt to locate serial numbers for the TV, VCR, and computer and forward that information to us.

Smith did not see anyone around her home, but did observe a blond male driving a red car. The driver was turning off her street, when she came home. Smith did not recognize the person and had not seen the vehicle in the area before. She could not provide any additional descriptions of the driver or vehicle.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

5. (continued) Complete the following table with the information provided in the report. Note any information that you feel is missing or that is unclear or confusing.

	<b>Facts/Information Included</b>	<b>Missing/Confusing Information</b>
What?		
When?		
Where?		
Who?		
How?		
Why?		

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### **Additional classroom activities**

As part of the classroom activities, students will have the opportunity to practice their investigative report writing skills after viewing a series of video scenarios depicting possible criminal activities. Classroom instructors will evaluate each student's work and provide individual feedback.

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*Continued on next page*

## **Workbook Learning Activities,** Continued

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**Student notes**

## Chapter 4

### Investigative Report Writing Mechanics

#### Overview

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**Learning need** Peace officers must recognize that an effective report must exhibit the writer's command of the language and be relatively free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and other writing mechanics.

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**Learning objectives** The table below identifies the student learning objectives for this chapter.

After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to:	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• apply guidelines for recommended grammar used in investigative reports including use of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- proper nouns,</li><li>- first person pronouns,</li><li>- third person pronouns,</li><li>- past tense, and</li><li>- active voice.</li></ul></li></ul>	18.04.EO1 18.04.EO2 18.04.EO3 18.04.EO4 18.04.EO5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• organize information within a paragraph for clarity and proper emphasis.</li></ul>	18.04.EO6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• select language that will clearly convey information to the reader of the investigative report.</li></ul>	18.04.EO7

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*Continued on next page*

## Overview, Continued

### Learning objectives (continued)

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After completing study of this chapter, the student will be able to:	E.O. Code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>distinguish between commonly used words that sound alike but have different meanings.</li></ul>	18.04.EO8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>proofread for content and mechanical errors, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spelling</li><li>Punctuation</li><li>Grammar</li><li>Word choice</li><li>Syntax</li></ul></li></ul>	18.04.EO9

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### In this chapter

This chapter focuses on common report writing conventions. Refer to the following table for specific topics.

Topic	See Page
Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports	4-3
Writing Clearly and Precisely	4-9
Proofreading	4-21
Chapter Synopsis	4-23
Workbook Learning Activities	4-25

---



# Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports

[18.04.EO1, 18.04.EO2, 18.04.EO3, 18.04.EO4, 18.04.EO5]

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## Introduction

**Grammar** may be defined as the rules and guidelines used by writers to make their message clear and understandable to the reader. There are a large number of grammatical guidelines in the English language and peace officers should be aware of them when writing investigative reports.

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## Proper nouns

A **noun** is a naming word. It can be used to identify people, places, or things. **Proper nouns** name **specific** persons, places or things and always begin with a capital letter.

When referring to a specific person within a report, officers should use proper nouns (Tom Smith, Alice Jones) to clearly convey to the reader whom they are writing about. After the full name has been used once, just the last name may be used when referring to the same person. (Smith, Jones)

Example:            Tom Smith said he saw the woman leap from the deck and run across the yard. Smith went on to describe the woman as...

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*Continued on next page*

# Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports,

Continued

## Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that substitutes for a noun or a proper noun. There are two types of pronouns of which writers of investigative reports should be aware.

Pronoun	Use when referring to the:	Examples of Pronouns	Examples of Use
First person	person writing the report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I/My/Mine/Me</li><li>• We/Our/Ours/Us</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>I</b> told my partner...</li><li>• <b>Our</b> vehicle was...</li></ul>
Third person	person, place, or thing being written about.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He/His/Him</li><li>• She/Hers/Her</li><li>• It/Its</li><li>• They/Their/Theirs/Them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>He</b> said that it was ...</li><li>• <b>She</b> told her sister...</li><li>• <b>It</b> was no longer present...</li><li>• <b>Their</b> father was ...</li></ul>

NOTE: First person pronouns can also be used within quotes to refer to the person speaking. (e.g., Wilson said, “*I ran as fast as I could.*”)

*Continued on next page*

## Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports,

Continued

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### **First person pronouns**

When writing investigative reports, officers should use **first person pronouns** when referring to themselves. By doing so, the reader has a clear understanding of what the officer actually did, observed, experienced, etc.

Referring to themselves as “the reporting officer” or “the writer of this report” or using third person pronouns can be needlessly awkward and lead to confusion as to who was actually doing what.

Example:            My partner and I spoke with the witness about what they saw and heard during the fight.

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*Continued on next page*

## Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports,

Continued

### Third person pronouns

When a **third person pronoun** is used within an investigative report, it must clearly refer to or agree with the noun or proper noun that is directly before it.

Alone, third person pronouns lack any specific meaning. It must be clear to the reader, exactly who, what, or where the pronoun is referring to.

The following table illustrates how the use of third person pronouns can lead to confusion within a report if not properly placed.

Confusing	Clear
Jones saw the man's car crash into the tree. <b>He</b> immediately reported the accident.	Jones saw the man's car crash into the tree. <b>Jones</b> immediately reported the accident.
Smith told his neighbor to get rid of the junk car <b>he</b> kept in front of <b>his</b> house.	Smith told his neighbor to get rid of the junk car <b>the neighbor</b> kept in front of <b>his</b> house.
After McFay gave her daughter the gun, <b>she</b> began to worry.	McFay began to worry after <b>she</b> gave the gun to <b>her</b> daughter.

NOTE: To avoid confusion, it may be preferable to repeat the proper name rather than use a third person pronoun

*Continued on next page*

## Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports,

Continued

### Past tense

Since most investigative reports are written about things that have already happened, the words that are used should clearly indicate the events have already taken place.

**Verbs** are words or groups of words which express action. A **verb's tense** refers to the time the action took place. A **past tense** verb expresses an action completed in the past. A **present tense** verb expresses an action currently taking place.

The following table illustrates some examples of present and past tense verbs.

Present Tense	Past Tense
He <b>says</b> his wife did <b>kick</b> him...	He <b>said</b> his wife <b>kicked</b> him...
I then <b>have</b> Officer Baker . . .	I then <b>had</b> Officer Baker...
She <b>states</b> her husband...	She <b>stated</b> her husband...
On 04-06-98 at 0735 hours I <b>respond</b> to a call...	On 04-06-98 at 0735 hours I <b>responded</b> to a call...
The suspect <b>arrives</b> at the scene...	The suspect <b>arrived</b> at the scene...

*Continued on next page*

# Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports,

Continued

## Active voice

The word “voice,” when used to describe a type of verb, refers to whether the verb is active or passive.

A verb is in the **active voice** when the subject of the sentence is the individual or thing that is actually doing or performing the action. A verb is in the **passive voice** when the subject of the sentence is someone or something other than the doer or performer of the action.

Officers writing investigative reports should use verbs in the active voice rather than the passive voice. Most readers find sentences written in the active voice easier to follow and understand.

The following table illustrates differences between using a passive or active voice in an investigative report.

Passive Voice	Active Voice
The victim <b>was given</b> the report form <b>by</b> me.	I <b>gave</b> the report form to the victim.
The seminar <b>was attended by</b> law enforcement personnel.	Law enforcement personnel <b>attended</b> the seminar.
The witness <b>was talked to by</b> me.	I <b>talked</b> to the witness.
The suspect <b>was patted</b> down for weapons <b>by</b> my partner.	My partner <b>patted</b> down the suspect for weapons.
The driver <b>was asked</b> for his driver's license <b>by</b> me.	I <b>asked</b> the driver for his driver's license.

NOTE: The subject of the sentence does not have to be a person. It can also be a place or thing.

NOTE: A common indicator of passive voice is the word “by” in the sentence.

# Writing Clearly and Precisely

[18.04.EO6, 18.04.EO7, 18.04.EO8]

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## Introduction

Effective investigative reports must present all relevant information simply, or logically. They must be written in plain English in order to be useful for the reader.

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## Paragraph organization

Paragraphs are the structural units for grouping information. No matter which format is used for the investigative report (narrative or category), all paragraphs within the report must be clear and easy to understand.

When writing an investigative report, the first sentence (lead-in sentence) of each paragraph should clearly state the *primary topic or subject of the paragraph*. The sentences that follow within the paragraph should present facts, ideas, reasons, or examples that are directly related to that primary topic.

The following table presents examples of poorly organized and well organized paragraphs.

Poorly Organized	Well Organized
When we arrived, the husband let us into the house. We were responding to a 9-1-1 call. My partner and I had been dispatched to an incident of domestic violence. A woman called for help to keep her husband from beating her.	My partner and I were dispatched to a domestic violence incident after a woman dialed 9-1-1. The woman called for help because she was afraid her husband would beat her. When we arrived, the husband let us into the house.

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

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### Paragraph organization (continued)

Poorly Organized	Well Organized
Marie Parker said her husband refused to answer the door at first when he heard the man on the other side begin to shout. I took her statement approximately 45 minutes after the assault took place. She was sitting in the family room when her husband went to see who was at the door.	I took Marie Parker's statement approximately 45 minutes after the assault took place. Parker said she was sitting in the family room when her husband went to see who was at the door. Initially her husband refused to answer the door when he heard the man on the other side begin to shout.

---

### Transitional words

**Transitions** are words or phrases that show relationships between thoughts, sentences, or paragraphs. By selecting appropriate transitional words, officers can help readers move smoothly and logically from detail to detail and sentence to sentence within the investigative report.

The following table suggests only a few of the possible transitional words and phrases officers may use within their reports.

Type of Transition	Words/Phrases	Examples
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Immediately</li><li>• In the meantime</li><li>• At the same time</li><li>• When</li><li>• Before</li><li>• Prior to</li></ul>	Caster said he noticed the door was not completely shut, so he decided to find out why. <b>Immediately after</b> entering the room, he saw the window was broken.

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*Continued on next page*



## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

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### Transitional words (continued)

Type of Transition	Words/Phrases	Examples
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Near</li><li>• Beyond</li><li>• Next to</li><li>• Under</li><li>• Behind</li><li>• Around</li></ul>	Caster said he saw broken glass on the floor under the window. <b>Near the</b> glass, he saw a large brick.
Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finally</li><li>• In addition</li><li>• Lastly</li><li>• First</li><li>• Then</li><li>• Further</li></ul>	<b>In addition,</b> Caster saw his laptop computer was not on the desk where he left it the night before.

### Concrete vs abstract words

Officers who are writing investigative reports should select simple, common, concrete language whenever possible. The use of simple language can help keep reports concise and brief, addressing relevant information quickly and clearly.

Words that are used to make an investigative report sound eloquent or scholarly may actually serve to make the report wordy, vague and less effective. Inflated language is never appropriate and officers should resist the temptation to impress their readers.

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

---

### Concrete vs abstract words (continued)

The following table presents examples of abstract words along with more concrete alternatives.

Abstract Words	Concrete Words
• a number of	• seven
• at a high rate of speed	• 75 MPH
• appeared intoxicated	• breath smelled of an alcoholic beverage
• hostile behavior	• repeatedly struck the officer
• physical confrontation	• fight
• verbal altercation	• argument
• extensive record	• six DUI offenses over two years
• employed	• used
• dispute	• argument
• inquired	• asked
• in the vicinity of	• near
• articulated	• said, told
• hit	• punched, slapped, or clubbed

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

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### Words that sound alike

Officers should take care to use the correct word for what they are trying to say when writing investigative reports.

There are a number of frequently used words that sound alike but have completely different spellings and meanings. The following table identifies the most commonly confused sound-alike words.

Words	Definitions	Examples
Accept	To take with approval or agree to	I <b>accepted</b> the medal with pride.
Except	To omit or exclude; preposition meaning ‘but’	We did everything <i><b>except</b></i> interview the witness.
Access	An approach, admittance, or route	There is an <b>access</b> road running east to west in front of the drug store.
Excess	Surplus; an amount greater than wanted	The amount of cocaine found was in <b>excess</b> of what had initially been reported.
Advice	Worthy suggestion or information; noun	My sergeant gave me <b>advice</b> on how to handle the situation.
Advise	To give suggestions, data, or counsel; verb	My sergeant <b>advised</b> me on how to handle the situation.

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Affect	To act upon or produce change or influence; verb	The suspect was <b>affected</b> by the pepper spray.
Effect	Result of cause; belongings; noun	Dilated pupils are a physical <b>effect</b> of the drug. The coroner removed the personal effects from the victim.
Allude	Make reference to	The witness <b>alluded</b> to the suspect's collection of guns.
Elude	Escape or evade	The suspect <b>eluded</b> arrest by going into a store.
Assure	To offer assurances	The officer <b>assured</b> the victim that the batterer would be jailed.
Ensure	To make secure or certain	The officer <b>ensured</b> the suspect was correctly handcuffed.
Insure	To make secure or certain (as with ensure); or to guarantee life or property against risk.	The man <b>insured</b> his house against fires and floods.

*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Brake	To stop a vehicle	Her car's <b>brakes</b> failed, and she ran into the truck in front of her.
Break	To burglarize a home or other structure; forcibly entering or exiting a house; to damage	The officer watched the suspect <b>break</b> into the store.
Cite	Refer to an official document or rule as proof; verb	The district attorney <b>cited</b> the Penal Code.
Site	Place or setting of an event; noun	The officers returned to the <b>site</b> of the crime to gather more evidence.
Sight	Ability to see	The contraband lay on the table in plain <b>sight</b> .
Elicit	To draw out or forth; evoke	The officer was able to <b>elicit</b> a confession from the suspect.
Illicit	Something not permitted by law.	The suspect had committed a lewd and <b>illicit</b> act.
Formally	Something done ceremoniously or in a regular, methodical fashion	The suspect was <b>formally</b> indicted for the crime.
Formerly	Something that happened in the past	He was <b>formerly</b> a firefighter.

*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

---

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Hear	To perceive sound	The officers could <b>hear</b> the argument through the door.
Here	Place or location	I asked the victim to come <b>here</b> and answer some questions.
Its	Adjective showing possession	The car lost <b>its</b> rear tire after striking the pot hole in the road.
It's	Short form of 'it is' or 'it has'	<b>It's</b> been six years since the suspect contacted his brother.
Know	To be cognizant of or be acquainted with	The victim claimed that she did not <b>know</b> the suspect.
No	Negative	The suspect shouted, " <b>No.</b> "
Pain	Strong sense of hurt	The victim screamed in <b>pain</b> after being shot.
Pane	Window glass set in a frame	The burglar had broken the <b>pane</b> to gain access to the house.

---

*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

---

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Passed	To move forward or around; to circulate	As we pursued the suspect, we <b>passed</b> four other vehicles on the highway.
Past	History; ended or accomplished; beyond	The suspect had a number of <b>past</b> convictions.
Personal	Belonging to someone	The victim's <b>personal</b> property was put in a bag.
Personnel	Company's employees	The department had a <b>personnel</b> meeting.
Precede	To go before in time, place, or rank	The burglary <b>preceded</b> the rape.
Proceed	To advance, go toward	The burglar then <b>proceeded</b> to the bedroom.
Pride	Self-esteem	The officer took great <b>pride</b> in his work.
Pried	To raise, move, or force with a lever (past tense of pry)	The burglar <b>pried</b> the window open with a screwdriver in order to enter the building.

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Principal	Chief official; chief actor or perpetrator present at time of crime	Manuel Ortega was the <b>principal</b> person in the robbery of the bank.
Principle	Rule of conduct; law of nature or scientific fact	Peace officers are expected to uphold high moral <b>principles</b> .
Quiet	Still or silent	When we arrived at the dispute, the house was <b>quiet</b> .
Quite	To a great degree, completely	The suspect was <b>quite</b> agitated and began swearing.
Scene	Location of an event	The officers secured the crime <b>scene</b> .
Seen	Past tense of “to see” (sight)	The suspect was <b>seen</b> driving a green car.
Steal	To take without any right	Robbery and theft are forms of <b>stealing</b> .
Steel	Strong alloy of iron	The pipe was made of <b>steel</b> .
Than	Introduces comparative clauses	The suspect was taller <b>than</b> me.
Then	Designates time (next)	The suspects <b>then</b> fled from the bank on foot.

*Continued on next page*



## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

---

Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
There	At or in that place; to, toward, or into that place	Morez went <b>there</b> after she talked with the officer.
Their	Possession of them, by them	The brothers went by <b>their</b> home on <i>their</i> way to the corner.
They're	Short form of 'they are'	The woman said, " <b>They're</b> going to shoot him."
Threw	Past tense of "throw"	She <b>threw</b> the vase at her husband.
Through	Motion from side to side or end to end within something	The suspect ran <b>through</b> the mall to evade arrest.
To	Movement toward a place, person, or thing	The victim stated he was going <b>to</b> the grocery store when he was stopped.
Too	Also, besides, in excessive degree	The reporting party stated that the noise was <b>too</b> loud for her to hear the person talking.
Two	The number two (2)	The building had <b>two</b> entrances.

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*Continued on next page*

## Writing Clearly and Precisely, Continued

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Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
(continued)

Words	Definitions	Examples
Waist	Part of the body between the ribs and the hips	The suspect grabbed the victim around the <b>waist</b> and wrestled her to the ground.
Waste	To consume, weaken, or squander	She <b>wasted</b> water by washing her car twice every day.
Weak	Not strong	His use of heroin left him very <b>weak</b> .
Week	Seven days' duration	The suspect stalked his victim for three <b>weeks</b> .
Your	Belongs to a specific you or a specific person	Young heard Johnson say, " <b>Your</b> dog is on my property again."
You're	Short form of 'you are'	The officer said you're under arrest.
Wave	To signal	She waved to her neighbor.
Waive	To surrender or relinquish	She waived her Miranda rights.

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*Continued on next page*

# Proofreading

[18.04.EO9]

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## Introduction

Proofreading may seem time-consuming to both experienced and inexperienced writers. In the case of investigative reports where accuracy, clarity, and completeness are essential, proofreading is critical.

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## Proofreading content

As noted in chapter one of this workbook, the content of an investigative report must be factual, accurate, clear, concise, complete, and timely (FACCCT).

When proofreading reports, officers should ask themselves:

- is the correct crime(s) cited in the report?
  - are all the elements appropriately articulated?
  - are the facts correct (based on the officer's field notes)?
  - is the report well organized?
  - is all necessary information included?
  - is the information in the proper order?
  - are things said efficiently, or are statements too wordy?
  - are all conclusions supported by facts?
  - are there any gaps in logic?
  - are the names spelled correctly?
- 

*Continued on next page*

## Proofreading, Continued

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### **Proofreading mechanics**

A report's effectiveness and an officer's credibility can be damaged by a report with too many mechanical errors. When proofreading the reports they have written, officers should look for:

- inappropriate use of the parts of speech (e.g., use of nouns, pronouns verbs, etc.),
- language that may be vague or confusing,
- incorrect or inappropriate use of words,
- spelling errors,
- inappropriate punctuation, and
- incorrect use of law enforcement abbreviations.

NOTE: Additional information is provided in the supplementary materials portion of this workbook.

---

### **Reading aloud**

Slowly reading a completed report aloud is one of the most effective methods for proofreading the content and mechanics of any document. When sentences are heard, it may be easier for the writer to identify obstacles such as:

- mechanical errors,
  - gaps in logical flow,
  - skewed time sequences,
  - incorrect verb tenses,
  - cumbersome phrasing, etc.
-

# Chapter Synopsis

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<b>Learning need</b>	Peace officers must recognize that an effective report must exhibit the writer's command of the language and be relatively free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and other writing mechanics.
<b>Proper nouns</b> [18.04.EO1]	Persons should be referred to by their proper names to avoid confusion. Once the full name has been used once, the last name may be used when referring to the same person.
<b>First person pronouns</b> [18.04.EO2]	Officers should refer to themselves in the first person (i.e., "I," "we," etc.). Use of a person's name or a third person pronoun is appropriate when referring to another person.
<b>Third person pronouns</b> [18.04.EO3]	When a third person pronoun is used, it must clearly refer to or agree with the noun or proper noun that is directly before it.
<b>Past tense</b> [18.04.EO4]	Past tense verbs should be used to clearly indicate that events have already taken place.
<b>Active voice</b> [18.04.EO5]	The active voice should be used to ensure the information presented is direct, brief, and clearly establishes the actions of the sentence.
<b>Paragraph organization</b> [18.04.EO6]	When writing an investigative report, the first sentence (a lead-in sentence) of each paragraph should clearly state the primary topic of the paragraph.

*Continued on next page*

## Chapter Synopsis, Continued

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**Concrete  
language  
[18.04.EO7]**

Officers should select simple, concrete language that readers clearly understand.

---

**Words  
that  
sound  
alike  
[18.04.EO8]**

Officers should not confuse words that sound alike but have differing meanings and spellings.

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**Proofreading  
[18.04.EO9]**

There are two relatively distinct tasks involved when officers proofread their investigative reports.

---

# Workbook Learning Activities

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## Introduction

To help you review and apply the material covered in this chapter, a selection of learning activities has been included. No answers are provided. However, by referring to the appropriate text, you should be able to prepare a response.

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## Activity questions

1. You have just been handed the following narrative from an officer's investigative report. The officer who wrote the report has also asked you to suggest other revisions that would improve the quality and effectiveness of the report. List the recommendations you would make. Identify any specific errors within the report.

On 5-31-99 I was dispatched at 1153 hrs. to 33 "A" Street for a reported theft. I arrived at the address at approx. 1156 hrs. As I got out of my car I could see Mr. Jones waiting on the porch of his apartment waiting for me. As I walked towards Jones I asked him if he was the one who called in the report. He said yes. I asked Jones to tell me what happened. Jones told me he parked his mtn. bike against the stairs of his apartment while he ran into his apartment to fill his water bottle. Jones said he was inside for no more than 5 minutes. When he came out his bike was gone. Jones then gave me a complete description of his bike. I asked his neighbor if she saw anything but she said no.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

2. Rewrite each of the following sentences using active voice, first person, or any other modifications necessary to make sure the writer's intent is clear. In all sentences Officer Brown is the reporting officer.
  - a) Officer Brown had been approaching the suspect and at this time he noticed that the woman appeared intoxicated.
  - b) Jones was asked by Brown to describe the gun, and she said that she didn't know much about them, but it was small enough to fit in his waste band.
  - c) Logan was then transported by Brown to jail for booking. During the search procedure, Logan said, I except responsibility for everything but shooting her. I guess I better ask advice from my attorney.
  - d) The suspect was patted down for weapons by Brown's partner. The immediate effect was to cause Russell to exhibit hostile behavior.
  - e) At this time Johnson was being advised of his Miranda options by Brown's partner. The suspect was asked if he understood each right as it was read by him to him. He said yes.

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*Continued on next page*



## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

3. Rewrite the following segment from an officer's investigative report. Correct all mechanical errors as well as any other modifications you feel would improve the segment.

On 5/3/99 about 1147 I was dispatch to a report of a petty theft. I talked to Mark Jones. He told me that he went into his home to get some water. When he returned to the past location of his bike, someone stole his bike. It was a mountain bike, red with black trim. He told me that he had seen no one. His neighbor came out and I asked him if he had scene anyone take it but he said no.

4. Why is it important that the first sentence of a narrative paragraph clearly state the primary topic or subject of the paragraph?

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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**Activity  
questions**  
(continued)

5. Circle the correct word choice for each of the following sentences.
- a) The [affect/effect] on the car was minimal.
  - b) The Browns said they were returning to [there/their/they're] home.
  - c) The [cite/site/sight] was covered with trash and broken glass.
  - d) The witness saw two boys [braking/breaking] the windows.
  - e) The other driver was going over 70 MPH when she [passed/past] us.
  - f) Someone [pride/pried] the hinges from the frame of the door.
  - g) The injured man refused to [accept/except] medical aid.
  - h) Jones [alluded/eluded] to the location of the stolen vehicle.

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

6. Write a sentence that illustrates the proper use of each of the following words.

Word	Examples of Proper Use
threw	
proceed	
waste	
principal	
proceed	
waist	
through	
principle	

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*Continued on next page*

## Workbook Learning Activities, Continued

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### Activity questions (continued)

7. Rewrite and reorganize the following statements/sentences into a clear narrative paragraph.
- 07/07/99
  - 1945 pm
  - The suspect ran north on Wilson street with what appeared to be a metal bar in his hand.
  - My partner and I were called to the incident in response to a silent alarm.
  - A man was standing below a rear window of the building.
  - A rear window was cracked but remained locked and secured.
  - As I approached the rear of the building on foot, the man began to run away.
  - The suspect was approximately 6 ft tall, 180 lbs, wearing dark pants, a black nylon jacket, black baseball cap, and was a white male with brown hair and medium build.

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*Continued on next page*

# Supplementary Material

## Overview

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**Introduction**      The following materials can be referred to by peace officers when writing investigative reports.

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**In this section**      Refer to the following table for specific reference documents included in this section.

Topic	See Page
Parts of Speech	S-2
Punctuation	S-4
Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations	S-6
State Abbreviations	S-12
Crime Information Reference Guide	S-13

---

# Parts of Speech

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## Introduction

The sentence is the basic structure of written English. It is made up of words that have unique characteristics and functions.

---

## Parts of speech

The eight parts of speech are identified in the following table.

	Description	Examples
Noun	Names a person, place, or thing	The <b>officer</b> stopped the <b>car</b> . The <b>suspect</b> fled from the <b>officers</b> .
Pronoun	Takes the place of a noun	<b>He</b> ran between the cars. <b>They</b> were close together.
Verb	Expresses action or state of being (“be verbs”)	The officer <b>ran</b> after the suspect. The suspect <b>was</b> fast.
Adverb	Describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb	The suspect ran <b>quickly</b> . He became <b>extremely</b> exhausted
Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun	The <b>tall</b> suspect turned around. The <b>short</b> suspect continued to run.

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*Continued on next page*

## Parts of Speech, Continued

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**Parts of  
speech  
(continued)**

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Preposition	Shows how a noun or pronoun is related to another word in a sentence; followed by nouns or pronouns	The suspect jumped <b>out of</b> the car, <b>over</b> the retaining wall, and <b>into</b> the store.
Conjunction	Connects words or parts of sentences; can be coordinating or subordinating	My partner <b>and I</b> approached the car. I was cover officer <b>while</b> my partner was contact officer.
Article	Comes before and usually limits a noun	<b>A</b> bag of powder was lying on <b>the</b> back seat.

---

# Punctuation

---

## Introduction

Punctuation marks give writers a way to achieve some of the effects they would convey in spoken conversations. (i.e., pauses, changes in tone or pitch, inflections, etc.) They can influence the meaning of words, the flow of thought, and the emphasis intended by the writer.

---

## Common punctuation

The following table identifies the most common punctuation marks used within investigative reports.

Mark	Main Uses	Examples
Period (.)	Marks the end of a sentence that is not a question or exclamation	Stewart went to the back of the store and told the manager what she saw.
Comma (,)	Separates items in a series	She reported that a microwave oven, a computer, and a stereo system were missing from the apartment.
	Separates nonessential phrases and clauses from the rest of the sentence	In the meantime, Jones swept up the broken glass.
	Separates two independent clauses in a compound sentence	The victim was in pain, but he was still able to speak with us.
Quotation marks (“ ”)	Indicates the beginning and end of direct quotes	Stanley said, “I just didn’t see the car coming.”

NOTE: Punctuation is generally not placed inside quotation marks. (i.e., commas, periods)

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*Continued on next page*



## Punctuation, Continued

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### Common punctuation (continued)

Mark	Main Uses	Examples
Colon (:)	Signals a series is about to follow	The victim reported the following items were missing from the apartment: a microwave oven, a computer, and a stereo system.
Apostrophe (')	To show possession in nouns	The victim's car was totaled.
	To form a contraction	She couldn't tell the direction he came from.

NOTE: The use of contractions in official reports is discouraged except in direct quotes.

NOTE: Usage of semi-colons may be discouraged, please check agency policy and procedures.

---

# Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations

---

## Introduction

Peace officers use abbreviations in their notes to expedite time and then write the complete words in their report.

---

## Guidelines for use

Abbreviations should be such that the meaning will be readily understood to the person reading the notes. Officers may use abbreviations in their notes but should write the word out for their reports.

Abbreviations containing all capital letters do not require periods (e.g., DMV, CHP).

NOTE: Review agency policies and procedures before using abbreviations.

The following is an alphabetical listing of common law enforcement abbreviations.

---

## A

Assisted and advised	A&A
Address	Add.
All points bulletin	APB
Also known as	AKA
Ambulance	Amb.
American Indian	I
Arresting officer	A/O
Apartment	Apt.
Arrest	Arr.
Asian Indian	A
Assault with deadly weapon	ADW
Assistant	Asst.
Attempt	Att.
Attention	Attn.
Avenue	Ave.

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*Continued on next page*

## Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations, Continued

---

<b>B</b>	Blood alcohol count	BAC
	Black (color)	Blk.
	Black (descent)	B
	Blocks	Blks.
	Blonde	Bln.
	Blue	Blu.
	Be on the lookout	BOLO
	Brown	Brn.
	Building	Bldg.
	Business and Professions Code	B&P

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<b>C</b>	California Highway Patrol	CHP
	Captain	Capt.
	California drivers license	CDL
	California identification card	CID
	Caucasian	W
	Cleared by arrest	CBA
	County	Co.
	Complainant	Comp.
	Convertible	Conv.
	Chief of Police	COP
	Criminal Justice Information System	CJIS

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<b>D</b>	Dark	Dk.
	Date of birth	DOB
	Dead on arrival	DOA
	Defendant	Def.
	Department	Dept.
	Department of Motor Vehicles	DMV
	District	Dist.
	Direction of travel	DOT
	Division	Div.
	Doing business as	DBA
	Driving under the influence	DUI

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*Continued on next page*

## Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations, Continued

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<b>E</b>	East	E
	Eastbound	E/B
	Emergency room	ER
	Expired	Exp.
	Estimated	Est.

---

<b>F</b>	Felony	Fel.
	Female	F
	Field sobriety test	FST
	Four door	4D

---

<b>G</b>	Gray	Gry.
	Gone on arrival	GOA
	Green	G

---

<b>H</b>	Had been drinking	HBD
	Hazel	Hzl.
	Headquarters	Hdqts.
	Health & Safety Code	H&S
	Highway	Hwy.
	High School	H.S.

---

<b>I</b>	Identification	ID
	Identity	ID
	Indian, American	I
	Information	Info.
	Informant	Inf.
	Inspector	Insp.
	Injury	Inj.
	Injury on duty	IOD
	Intersection	I/S

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<b>J</b>	Juvenile	Juv.
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*Continued on next page*

## Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations, Continued

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### K

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<b>L</b>	Left front	L/F
	Left rear	L/R
	License	Lic.
	Lieutenant	LT
	Light	Lt.

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<b>M</b>	Male	M
	Maroon	Mar.
	Medium	Med.
	Memorandum	Memo
	Mexican, Latino, Hispanic	H
	Miles per hour	MPH
	Miscellaneous	Misc.
	Misdemeanor	Misd.
	Modus operandi	M.O.
	Motorcycle	M/C

---

<b>N</b>	National Crime Information Center	NCIC
	No further description	NFD
	No middle name	NMN
	Not applicable	N/A
	North	N
	Northbound	N/B

---

<b>O</b>	Officer	Off.
	Oriental	O

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*Continued on next page*

## Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations, Continued

---

<b>P</b>	Parked	Pkd.
	Passenger	Pass.
	Pedestrian	Ped.
	Penal Code	PC
	Permanent identification number	PIN
	Pickup	P/U
	Point of impact	POI
	Point of rest	POR
	Possible	Poss.

---

<b>Q</b>	Quiet on arrival	QOA
	Quiet on departure	QOD

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<b>R</b>	Railroad	RR
	Referral by other agency	ROA
	Registration	Reg.
	Reporting officer	R/O
	Right front	R/F
	Right rear	R/R
	Room	Rm.

---

<b>S</b>	Sergeant	Sgt.
	South	S
	Southbound	S/B
	Station wagon	S/W
	Street	St.
	Supervisor	Supv.
	Suspect	Susp.

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*Continued on next page*

## Common Law Enforcement Abbreviations, Continued

---

<b>T</b>	Teletype	TT
	Temporary	Temp.
	Traffic accident	TA
	Two door	2D

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<b>U</b>	Uniform Crime Reports	UCR
	Unable to locate	UTL
	Unknown	Unk.

---

<b>V</b>	Vehicle	Veh.
	Vehicle Code	VC
	Vehicle identification number	VIN
	Victim	Vict.
	Violation	Viol.

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<b>W</b>	Warned and released	W&R
	Watch Commander	W/C
	Welfare & Institutions Code	W&I
	West	W
	Westbound	W/B
	White (color)	Wh
	White (descent)	W
	Witness	Wit.

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<b>X</b>		
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---

<b>Y</b>	Yellow	Yel.
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---

<b>Z</b>		
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# State Abbreviations

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**Introduction** Peace officers may have to refer to specific states within their reports. The U.S. Postal Service has standardized the abbreviations for the states and some Canadian provinces.

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**Abbreviations** The following table identifies the U.S. Postal Service's standardized abbreviations.

Alabama	AL	Montana	MT
Alaska	AK	Nebraska	NE
Arizona	AZ	Nevada	NV
Arkansas	AR	New Hampshire	NH
California	CA	New Jersey	NJ
Colorado	CO	New Mexico	NM
Connecticut	CT	New York	NY
Delaware	DE	North Carolina	NC
Dist. of Columbia	DC	North Dakota	ND
Florida	FL	Ohio	OH
Georgia	GA	Oklahoma	OK
Hawaii	HI	Oregon	OR
Idaho	ID	Pennsylvania	PA
Illinois	IL	Rhode Island	RI
Indiana	IN	South Carolina	SC
Iowa	IA	South Dakota	SD
Kansas	KS	Tennessee	TN
Kentucky	KY	Texas	TX
Louisiana	LA	Utah	UT
Maine	ME	Vermont	VT
Maryland	MD	Virginia	VA
Massachusetts	MA	Washington	WA
Michigan	MI	West Virginia	WV
Minnesota	MN	Wisconsin	WI
Mississippi	MS	Wyoming	WY
Missouri	MO	British Columbia	BC

NOTE: State postal abbreviations do not require periods.

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# Glossary

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**Introduction**      **The following glossary terms apply only to Learning Domain 18:  
Investigative Report Writing**

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**active voice**      The use of verbs that refer to or agree with the subject of the sentence actually doing or performing the action

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**conclusion**      A statement that is based on the analysis of facts and opinions

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**corpus delicti**      The body or elements of the crime

---

**FACCCT**      Acronym for the characteristics of an effective investigative report; factual, accurate, clear, concise, complete, and timely

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**fact**      A statement that can be verified or proven

---

**field notes**      Abbreviated notations written by an officer in the field while investigating a specific incident or crime

---

**first person pronoun**      A pronoun that refers to the person speaking (e.g., I, my, we, our, etc.)

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**investigative report**      A written legal document prepared by a peace officer that records in detail that officer's observations and actions as they relate to a specific event or incident

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*Continued on next page*

## Glossary, Continued

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<b>interview</b>	The process of gathering information from a person who has knowledge of the facts an officer will need to conduct an investigation
<b>noun</b>	A word that is used to identify or name a person, place, or thing
<b>opinion</b>	A statement that can be open to different interpretations and expresses a belief not necessarily substantiated by proof
<b>passive voice</b>	The use of verbs that refer to or agree with someone or something other than the doer or performer of the action of a sentence
<b>past tense</b>	A form of a verb that expresses an action that has already taken place
<b>present tense</b>	A form of a verb that expresses an action that is currently taking place
<b>pronoun</b>	A word that can be used as a substitute for a noun or a proper noun
<b>proper noun</b>	A noun that names a specific person, place, or thing
<b>third person pronoun</b>	A pronoun that refers to or agrees with the noun that is being spoken about (e.g., he, she, it, etc.)

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*Continued on next page*

## **Glossary,** Continued

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<b>transition</b>	A word or phrase that shows a relationship between thoughts, sentences, or paragraphs
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<b>verb</b>	A word which expresses an action or state of being
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<b>verb tense</b>	A form of a verb that refers to the time an action takes place
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