

DISTRICT OFFICE MANUAL

The Tottenham System of office procedure, as prescribed in the District Office Manual, mainly deals with the procedure to be followed for conducting routine work in Government offices. Following are some important aspects :

1. GENERAL DISCIPLINE

Discipline is the essential prerequisite for the efficient functioning of any office or organisation. Punctuality, Promptness, regular attendance and obedience are the basic needs of discipline. Cleanliness and orderliness, quiet and dignified behaviour, observance of silence during working hours and mutual courtesy among the members of the staff will be conducive to the smooth running of the office. Divulgence of official information and secrets is a serious offence which should not be done at any cost. Lastly, honesty is the most essential code of conduct without which all other qualities are useless.

2. ATTENDANCE

- 2.1 All Government servants are expected to attend office from 10.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on all working days. An attendance register should be maintained and all establishment members should initial it as soon as they come to office. A grace time of ten minutes is allowed after which the attendance register should be closed. Permission to attend late by one hour or leave office one hour earlier, not exceeding three times in each case, can be allowed with prior sanction. Any member who attends late should sign after entering the hour of arrival. If he attends office before 2.00 p.m. with or without permission it will be treated as half day casual leave and attendance after 2.00 p.m. will be treated as

a full day's casual leave. One day's casual leave should be deducted for every 3 days of late attendance. Casual leave not exceeding 15 days can be availed with prior sanction. It can be clubbed with any public holiday or optional holiday. However such a spell of leave should not exceed 10 days.

2.2. COMPENSATORY LEAVE (CPL) : If a Government Servant is directed to attend the office on a public holiday, he will be permitted, by prior sanction, to avail leave for a working day in its place. Not more than ten days of compensatory leave may be granted in a calendar year and no such leave can be availed after expiry of six months from the public holidays for which it is sanctioned. Not more than seven such compensatory leave days may be accumulated. (This concession is available for ministerial staff)

3. ORGANISATION

For convenient and smooth transaction of official business, the office has to be divided into sections, comprising of three or four or more Assistants according to the work load, ensuring equitable distribution of work among the Assistants. Each section will be denoted by an alphabetical letter and each Assistant by a figure suffixed to the letter by which the section is denoted. The work of each Assistant has to be specified by an office order issued by the Head of the office. The section head should exercise control and supervision over the Assistants in his section and ensure that the correspondence is promptly attended to. He will also be responsible for promptness in faircopying and despatch of tappals.

4. OFFICE SYSTEM

The method of conducting official business is known as office system. The various stages of official business, starting from opening of tappals to consignment of files to records, comes under office system. The progress

of work at various stages will be watched through appropriate registers prescribed under the District Office Manual. The catalogue of registers to be maintained to conduct official business is given at pages 6 to 9 of the District Office Manual.

5. OPENING AND REGISTRATION OF TAPPALS

- 5.1 There should be an office order regarding distribution of tappals in any office.
- 5.2 Generally, soon after the tappal / dak is received, the tappal should be opened, preferably in the presence of the Head of office or his Personal Assistant or any authorised officer. Important communications such as letters from Government, Heads of departments, D.O. letters and confidential letters addressed to the Head of the office must necessarily be opened in the presence of the Head of the office and seen by him before distribution to Assistants.
- 5.3 The officer, in whose presence the tappal /dak is opened, must peruse the tappals and give appropriate instructions at the stage of perusal of tappal itself, particularly in respect of urgent and important papers indicating the action to be taken. The tappals Assistant will thereafter sort out the tappals section wise and give them numbers, serially, as per the Distribution Register. Cash and other valuables will be entered in the Security Register. When the tappals with the Distribution Register is received in the section, the section head should go through them, note the instructions of officers, if any, on them and then mark them to the concerned Assistants. It should be ensured that all the Assistants to whom the tapals are marked in the Distribution Register should acknowledge them without fail. Otherwise, it would become difficult to account for the unacknowledged ones in the Distribution Register at a later stage, especially at the time of office inspection. Papers marked

F (to be filed), XL DL Dis (to be lodged), need not be entered in the Distribution Register.

6. REGISTRATION

6.1 The tappal received by clerks contain either new cases (for which there is no pending file) or old cases (for which there is a pending file).

Tappals received by clerks should be registered in the Personal Register with out delay. New cases have to be registered as fresh currents noting the details, as required in col. 4. Old cases have to be clubbed with the pending currents duly noting their particulars in col. 9 and 10 of the PR. A current which originates in the office is also registered in the Personal Register like any other new case, but in col. 4 the word "arising" has to be noted under the head "title".

6.2 Under the head "title" in col.4 of the Personal Register, appropriate main head and subhead should be given from the list of index heads in Appendix A of the DOM.

6.3 While opening a new Personal Register at the beginning of the calender year, sufficient number of blank pages should be left to bring forward the currents of the previous year, which could not be closed by 31st March. Not more than three currents have to be entered on the page and they have to be divided by red lines. The main head has to be underlined in red ink.

7. MAINTENANCE OF FILES

7.1 A file includes both current and note file. The current file comprises of incoming and outgoing references and other intermediary correspondence other than routine reminders. The note file is the one on which notes are written summarising the facts reported in the

reference, citing relevant provisions of law, rules, and orders of Govt., or other superior authorities, wherever required, and pointing out the matters requiring orders or clarifications.

- 7.2 The pages of the current file and the pages of the note file have to be tagged separately. The pages of the current file have to be numbered in red ink and the pages of the note file in black or blue ink, chronologically. Files have to be maintained neatly.

8. NOTING

- 8.1 Notings should be brief and to the point and should be in simple language. The object of the note is to present, in the most intelligible, condensed and convenient form possible, the facts of the case, accompanied by a brief facts of the case, if any. Points at issue requiring orders / clarifications etc. are to be examined with reference to any useful precedent, rule or Law and put up in order to enable the officers to arrive at quick and correct decisions.

- 8.2 Reproduction of facts already available in the file is not necessary. While drawing attention to the facts already available in the file, any other important or new points and precedents, if any, could be mentioned in the note. A leading note is improper and should be avoided.

9. CURRENT FILE ARRANGEMENT

The current file, with papers arranged chronologically, numbered in red ink and tagged together neatly, should be put up along with previous papers, or disposals obtained from Records for reference in flat file pad marked 'Ordinary', 'Urgent', 'Very Urgent' as may be appropriate. Statements and maps should be placed for reference below the current file.

10. REFERENCING

Referencing is one of the important elements of noting or drafting for quick and proper disposal of papers. Facts of a case previously noted or reported, relevant previous decisions or orders, Precedents, authorities and provisions of law should be aptly referred to in the notes. Any relevant portion in the pending file should also be referred to. Referencing is made by noting the page number of the current file or note file and the disposal number, G.O.No. Name of the Act., code or manual. Reference should be done in pencil in the margin of the note file or draft put up. Where disposals are put up for reference, they should be flagged. The flag of each disposals or statement put up should be denoted by an alphabetical letter. Flags attached to the disposals should be pinned only to the outer dockets. Flags should not be attached to any page of the C.F. or N.F. or to any page of any code, act, book or stock file.

11. LINKED FILES

Where pending files are put up for reference they should be linked to the main file on which orders have to be passed, by placing them underneath of the main file. The main file and linked file should be tied together with the strings of the linked file, if there is only one or more than one linked files. A slip should be fastened to the flap of each linked file indicating L.F.I, L.F.II and so on. The slip fastened to the top file should indicate "top file for orders and linked file for reference".

12. DRAFTING

12.1 After orders are passed on note file draft should be put up. In simple cases, where discussions on note is not necessary, draft may be put up along with the note.

12.2 The draft should begin with a proper title, whether it is memo, or letter or proceedings. The title should almost be the same as shown in the note file, with suitable modifications to indicate the exact nature of the reference made or orders passed.

12.3 Below the title, the references received from outside and the references sent, other than routine reminders, should be cited in chronological order.

12.4 The draft should be on the lines of the approved note taking into account the observations and comments made by the officers and orders passed. It should be in easy and natural style, and concise and at the same time comprehensive. Words or phrases which lead to ambiguity, confusion and necessitate looking back for date, person or thing referred to should be avoided. The following should also be avoided
(i) long words (ii) foreign or classical words or expressions (iii) vague and clumsy phrases (iv) colloquial phrases, such as "so impertinent", "so many times", "not too bad" etc., (v) phrases which show courtesy, "care to" (vi) short abbreviations (vii) split infinitives etc.

13. VARIOUS TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS, THEIR FORM AND PURPOSE

13.1 The various types of communication are (i) Memo (ii) Letter (iii) D.O. Letter (iv) Proceedings and (v) Telegram.

- (i) MEMO is a reference made to a subordinate or to petitioner.
- (ii) LETTER is a reference made to an officer, often equivalent in rank, or to an officer of other department.
- (iii) D.O. LETTER is generally written where personal attention of the officer concerned is required to be bestowed.

- (iv) PROCEEDINGS is the final orders passed with reference to certain powers invested.
- (v) TELEGRAM should be brief and intelligible. It should be accompanied by a post copy.

13.2 The communication should be precise and brief, setting forth the points in which clarifications or orders are required.

13.3 The proceedings should be complete in itself, with the title at the head, followed by such description as the communication with reference to which the proceedings are passed as will be sufficient to enable any officer to whom it is communicated to trace the previous correspondence on the subject in his office without any delay.

14. REMINDER DIARY

To watch the action on and ensure prompt replies to Government letters or other superiors, to watch action on urgent and important references from others and ensure prompt replies to them, reminder diary should be maintained by each clerk/section head.

15. DISPOSALS

15.1 The various kinds of disposals are :

1. R. Dis to be retained permanently.
2. D.Dis to be retained till the prescribed period of retention (10 years normally. Period can be extended, where necessary by obtaining order for further retention.)
3. L.Dis to be retained till one (or three) years.

4. N.Dis is to be returned in original
5. F.D is to be filed
6. X.L.Dis to be filed without numbering.
7. X.N.D is to be returned without numbering

The nature of disposal depends on the importance of each file.

15.2 Government orders and proceedings of Heads of departments have to be filed normally. But, some of those Government orders or proceedings, require further action at times. Such papers should be registered in Personal Registers and final disposal given as R.Dis. or D.Dis as is necessary.

15.3 Great care should be exercised in marking the nature of disposal. The Section head is responsible for marking the correct nature of disposal on the paper. For classifying a disposal under "R" series orders of the head of the office have to be obtained. The Heads of the departments have since been empowered to prescribe suitable period of retention based upon the peculiar nature or work done in their departments and the estimated period of utility for reference, after getting such record retention schedules approved by the concerned administrative departments of the Secretariat (vide a new note added under para. 63 of the DOM in G.O.Ms.No. 65 GAD (Ser.C) dated 27.12.82). Consequently, in some departments new disposals i.e. "K.Dis" etc., with 3 years of retention or 5 years of retention have been prescribed.

15.4 Further, as per the amendment issued to para. 80 of the DOM in the above G.O.Ms.No.65 GAD (Services.C) dt.27.12.82 at the initial stage of sending disposal in the "L.Dis" and any other series with

limited periods of retention for less than ten years, it should be examined closely whether the disposal needs to be rescrutinised after the prescribed period of retention and to be certified as fit for destruction or for further retention. The docket sheet of each such disposal should therefore carry a certificate to the effect. "To be destroyed straightaway / sent back for rescrutiny in the year after the prescribed retention period" (words not applicable to a disposal to be struck off). R Disposals require scrutiny after 50 years in order to see whether they still require to be preserved or not.

16. DISPOSAL JACKETS

The R and D disposals should be covered with brown paper jackets and the entries should be made on the jackets as instructed in paragraph 65 of DOM.

17. CALL BOOK

References of the Government and Heads of departments calling for a report after one year or so, and such other references where report is due after one year or so and where no action is necessary for more than six months will be entered in Call book closing the current in the Personal Register. The tappal clerk or record keeper will be responsible for the proper maintenance of the Call book. When the time noted in col. (5) of the Call book for taking action approaches, the current should be reopened giving a fresh current number and entering in the personal register. As soon as this is done, the entry in the Call book should be rounded off.

18. PERIODICALS

The purpose of the periodicals will be defeated if they are not sent or received in time. To ensure receipt of incoming periodicals in time advance

reminders should be issued. Where an outgoing periodical has to be compiled on the basis of figures furnished or reports made in the incoming periodicals, the compilation should be done expeditiously and outgoing periodicals despatched in time. Each periodical will be assigned a periodical number. There will be only one set of serial numbers for periodicals in an office, depending on the nature i.e. whether weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, annual etc. A Consolidated Periodically Register has to be maintained for the entire office. A Periodical Register showing the incoming and outgoing periodicals, to be dealt with by each clerk has to be maintained by him. Periodicals should not be given R, D. or L. Disposal. They should be simply filed with the periodical numbers only.

19. FAIR COPYING AND DESPATCH

- 19.1 Fair copying and despatch should be done without any delay. The Superintendent, fair copying section should see that there is no delay at any stage of fair copying, comparing and despatch where there is pool system of typing in any office.
- 19.2 When the Superintendent, fair copying section, receives an approved draft for fair copying, he should check up whether all the particulars necessary for typing are available on the draft, such as the reference or disposal number, if it is a disposal, its nature, person or persons to whom it is to be sent, the enclosures to be sent with it, etc. He should also see if it is a R or D disposal, whether the Index slips in duplicate showing the title as noted in the draft has accompanied the draft. After satisfying that all the above details are available on the draft, he should give it to the typist for typing. Soon after they are typed, they should be compared with the approved draft, get them signed by the Head of office or concerned officer and despatched.

19.3 A Fair Copy Register as in Form IV, should be maintained in the section. It serves as a despatch register as well. Now-a-days, in many of the offices, section wise typists are allotted. The Head of the section should check the Fair Copy Register maintained by the typist at the end of each day to ensure that no delays are made in fair copying of the approved drafts. In most of the offices, a separate despatch section is organised. For postal delivery, stamp account has also to be maintained besides the Postal Despatch Register. For communications to be delivered locally by hand a separate register "Local delivery book" should be maintained and should be periodically checked.

PREVENTION AND CHECKING OF ARREARS AND DELAY

- 20.1 The section heads should exercise effective supervision over the assistants in their sections to prevent delays and arrears. The periodical checking of Personal, Periodical and other Registers even with long pending currents critically, will be an effective check to prevent delays and arrears. The Superintendent and the officer concerned should point out the delays and other irregularities, in the running note file accompanying the personal and periodical register put up for check, as per the programme of check drawn up and issue suitable instructions for avoidance of delays and rectification of defects. Compliance with the instructions should be insisted within 48 hours and non-compliance should be taken serious notice of.
- 20.2 Reminder should be issued promptly. A Reminder Diary should be maintained by each clerk for this purpose, which should also be checked periodically along with PRs etc.
- 20.3 Arrear Lists showing the pendency of currents, should be put up with the Personal Register. Long pending files should receive special attention of the section head.

20.4 Business return is prepared every half year to enable the head of office or his superiors to watch the progress of business in the office and to take suitable action for the reduction of pendency and arrears.

21. INDEXING OF THE TITLE

Preparation of index slips and their filing in the manner laid down in paragraphs 100 to 102 should carefully be done. The index title should correspond with the heading of the final draft and be normally identical with the entry made in col. 4 of the personal register. One copy should be retained with the clerk and the duplicate copy should be retained in records. At the end of the year, the record clerk should prepare a general index register showing all the R.Dis and D.Dis files separately. The Index Register should be in the alphabetical order for ready reference. It should be typed or renewed and supplied to all sections and all officers.

22. RECORDS - FILING - MAINTENANCE & CUSTODY

Before the receipt of any disposal (handed over to the record keeper) is acknowledged, the record keeper should verify whether all the pages in the disposal have been numbered, securely stitched and are in tact, whether the disposal number has been correctly noted and the disposal has been properly docketed, and if it is a R or D disposal and whether duplicate copy of index slip has accompanied it. According to the amendments issued to the DOM para 81, disposals have to be arranged in the record room basing on the year of disposal and not according to the year of the current as is obtaining hitherto.

23. RESPONSIBILITY OF CLERKS AND HEADS OF SECTIONS

Every assistant is responsible for the safe custody of the files, registers, stock files and other records in his charge. If any document submitted for orders bears a court fee or adhesive stamp, he will be responsible for seeing that it is punched. This does not however absolve the Heads of sections from the responsibility from seeing that stamps are punched.

24. SUBMISSION OF FILES AT HEAD-QUARTERS OR CAMP

- 24.1 All the files should be sent to the officer concerned who is on tour in locked tappal boxes preferably steel boxes, with an invoice. The camp assistant of the officer should verify the tappals received with the invoice. The same procedure should be adopted when tappals are returned from camp. The invoice will be prepared by the camp assistant and the tappals on receipt in office will be verified by the tappal assistant.
- 24.2 When an officer is at head quarters, papers for orders, approval and signature should be submitted daily in one or more batched.
- 24.3 Confidential papers should be in separate confidential boxes locked and sealed.

25. PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FIRE

- 25.1 The precautions against fire to be observed in public offices are given in appendix-c.

25.2 Required fire fighting equipment should be kept and they should be maintained in good condition. Office staff should be given practical drill. The head of the office should nominate an officer in his office for conducting the drill.

26. ECONOMY IN THE USE OF STATIONERY

Utmost economy should be observed in the use of stationery as per the instructions contained in para 140 of the District office manual at page 59 to 61.

WE CANT SPELL S_CCESS

WITHOUT U