

BALTIMORE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT ACADEMY REPORT WRITING MANUAL

ON BEHALF OF THE BCPDA-TOWSON UNIVERSITY WRITING ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

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Introduction

This manual serves as a guide for writing effective police reports. The material here provides information on what elements you need to include in a report. Each section also contains many examples and exercises for practicing writing skills.

The authors would like to recognize the project coordinator for the Baltimore City Police Department Academy Writing Enhancement Initiative, David Belz. Without his dedicated service as a leader and mentor, we could not have completed this project. We'd also like to thank the Towson University project funders and staff who helped with the program's start-up and tutor training.

All involved in the project extend a thanks to the past, present, and future Towson University writing tutors in the Baltimore City Police Department Academy Writing Enhancement Initiative. We value your service and commitment.

Finally, we want to thank the sergeants, officers, police officers in training, and all other employees of the Baltimore City Police Department Academy for your devoted time and effort in working with Towson University to make this project successful.

What Goes into a Well-Written Police Report?

- Only **facts**, no opinions
 - Exception- If witness states, “I believe (stated event) happened.”
- Keep report **concise** to the incident and investigation
 - What does this mean for interns?
 - Do not worry about content of report (unless you need to clarify)
 - Focus on proper sentence structure
- **Completeness, Clarity and Legibility:** You must write your reports neatly and be able to tell a reader anything he or she would need to know about a specific incident.
 - Remember: Members of a jury may have little to no background knowledge about criminal investigations. The report must speak for itself, so write abbreviations out fully.
 - I.E.- “I ran a **1029** with negative results,” should be, “I ran a **warrant check** with negative results.”
 - I.E.- “The suspect was described as a **BM**,” should be, “The suspect was described as a **black male**.”
 - Exceptions- **lbs** for pounds, **ft** for foot/feet, etc.
- Reports must be **objective**
 - Avoid giving biased opinions in written reports

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

A Structure All Reports Should Follow

- **Who?**
 - Include and name all participants of the incident upon their introduction
 - Suspect(s), Victim(s), Witness(es)
- **What?**
 - This section should describe what happened during the incident, including but not limited to: the means by which the crime was committed, the weapon or object used, and objects stolen if the crime was a theft.
- **When? Where?**
 - Include the time of day, full date and address in the report. If the crime happened between two periods of time, include the range of full dates.
 - The format of the reports should follow a structure such as: On **Day/Month/Year** at approximately **Time of Day (Military Time)**, I was dispatched to the **Address** for **Committed Crime**.
- **Why?**
 - This section describes the motive. For example, if the crime was a domestic dispute the report should include brief information as to why the couple argued.
- **How?**
 - How did the suspected person(s) specifically commit the crime?
 - How did the suspected person(s) enter and/or escape the scene of the crime?

Elements of A Good Report: Clear & Complete

(Tells the reader exactly what happened, so that even the most unaware reader can understand what happened, and must tell the reader everything that is important to know about the incident.)

The best way to write a clear and complete report is to understand the rhetorical situation, conduct audience analysis, and create user personas. This section will cover all of these useful writing techniques.

1. Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

Analyzing the rhetorical situation helps the writer (you) target your message for a specific audience. When you understand who will read your message, you can write and form the message so that particular audience can best understand the meaning of the message.

The rhetorical triangle stems from the early definitions of rhetoric. Aristotle defined rhetoric as, “the available means of persuasion” in any situation (*Rhetoric*, Book 1, Part II, 350 B.C.E.) This concept describes the ability to use language to clearly explain your message to your audience. The writer needs to understand the needs of the audience to create a document that the audience can understand and use. (See the next section on Conducting Audience Analysis)

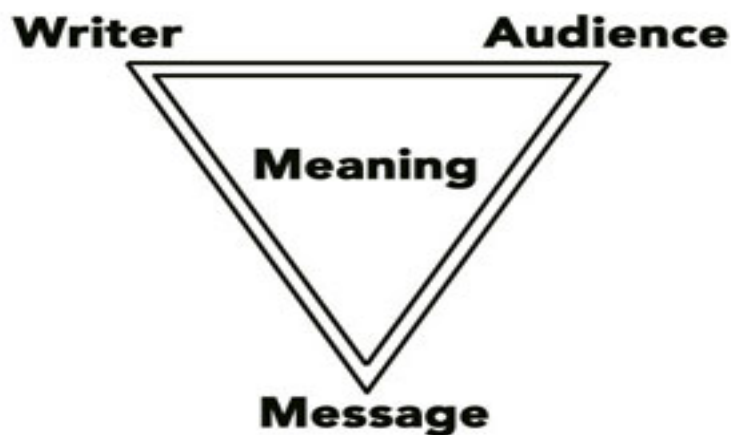


Figure 1: The Rhetorical Triangle

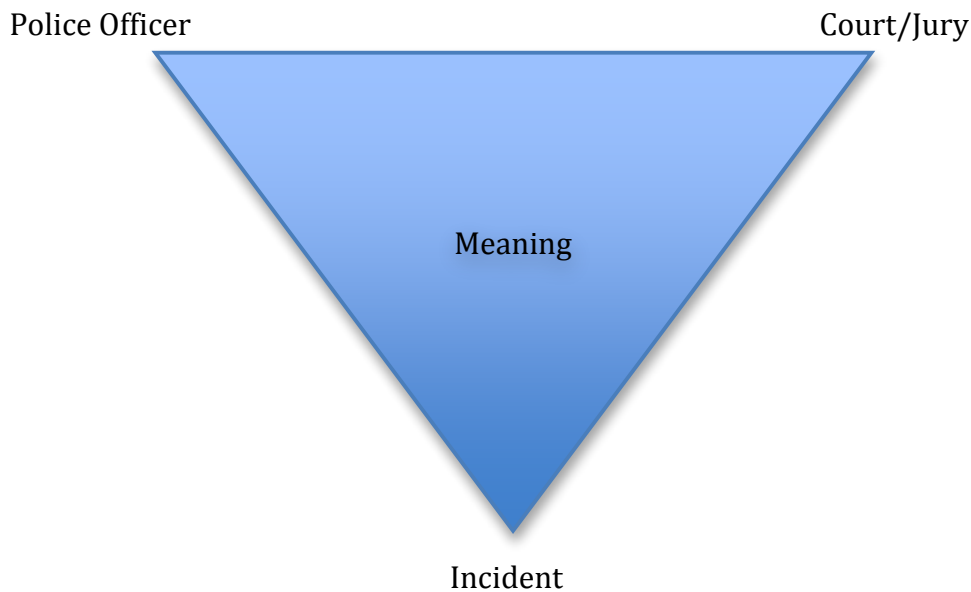
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Speaker/Writer: Police Officer

Message: Report of Incident

Audience: Court/Jury

As the police officer, you want to communicate the incident information to the all members of the court, so that they understand the meaning of your message. Your narrative should be clear and accurate so that the court, particularly the jury, knows exactly what happened (who, what, when, where, why, how). You're communicating to an audience that has no idea what happened; you're responsible for telling them. Ultimately, your report should be easy to understand and useful to the jury in their decision-making.



2. Conducting Audience Analysis

To understand your audience, you need to conduct audience analysis. Knowing your audience's needs, values, and attitudes will help you write a report that your audience can understand and use.

- Needs (What will your audience need from your report?)
- Values (What will your audience value when reading your report?)
- Attitudes (How will your audience feel when reading your report?)

Analyzing Your Sergeant

- **Needs:** Timely, Easy to read, Clear and Concise, Correct spelling and grammar, Short sentences, Logical order of events, etc.
- **Values:** Detailed evidence, Accuracy, Factual, Objective (unbiased), Professional tone, etc.
- 1. **Attitudes:** Busy, Pressured, Overwhelmed, Pressed for time, etc.

Analyzing the Jury

- **Needs:** Easy to read, Clear and Concise, Visual Appeal, Correct spelling and grammar, Short sentences, Logical order of events, etc.
- **Values:** Accuracy, Consistency, Detailed evidence, Objective (unbiased)
- **Attitudes:** Nervous, Apprehensive, Overwhelmed, Stressed, Vulnerable, Worried, Pressured, Uneasy, Curious, Eager, etc.

Analyzing the Judge

- **Needs:** Easy to read, Clear and Concise, Visual Appeal, Correct spelling and grammar, Logical order of events, etc.
- **Values:** Factual, Accuracy, Detailed evidence, Objective (unbiased), Professional tone, etc.
- **Attitudes:** Pressure to uphold the law, Pressure to "get it right," Involved in multiple cases, etc.

Analyzing the Prosecutor

- **Needs:** Easy to read, Clear and Concise, Correct spelling and grammar, Short sentences, Logical order of events, etc.
- **Values:** Factual, Accuracy, Detailed evidence, Objective (unbiased), Professional tone, etc.
- **Attitudes:** Pressure to uphold the law, Pressure to "get it right," Overwhelmed with multiple cases, etc.

Analyzing the Defense Attorney

- **Needs:** Easy to read, Clear and Concise, Correct spelling and grammar, Short sentences, Logical order of events, etc.
- **Values:** Factual, Accuracy, Detailed evidence, Objective (unbiased), Professional tone, etc.
- 2. **Attitudes:** Skeptical, Doubtful, Unconvinced, “Show-me,” Looking for holes in facts, Questioning any vague descriptions, etc.

3. Creating Personas

You need a clear image of who will be reading your police report. The best way to picture your audience is to create personas. A persona is a fictitious profile of someone who you will use as a guide to write your message. This person represents the real audience member who will read your report.

You give the fictitious persona a real face and name. You describe their demographics, daily life, career, feelings, beliefs, etc. Overall, you are creating a real life story for a member of your audience. You need to determine how to best communicate with this audience member based on who they are, what they need, and what they value. In the end, you form a message (report) that all of your audience members would best understand.

Take a look at the personas on the next few pages and see how putting a face to your audience (readers) makes them real.

Persona #1: Sgt. Cheryl Womack (Your Sergeant)



Photo Credit: Atarah1222

“I see hundreds of reports come across my desk every day. I’m swamped with phone calls, emails, meetings, briefings on major incidents, and some field work. I dislike having to tell my officers to rewrite reports because of preventable mistakes and confusion like illegible handwriting and missing details.”

Exercise A.

1. What does the above description tell you about your Sergeant’s needs? What will she value most in your police report?

Persona #2: Henry Rodgers (Civilian, Jury Member)



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Photo Credit: DW. Photography

“I’m a busy dad, who’s really anxious about jury duty. I’m a first-timer, and I have no idea what to expect. I hope that all the evidence is clear and detailed, so that the jury can make the right decision.”

Exercise B.

1. Based on the above description, write a short narrative about Henry Rodgers’s morning before he reports to jury duty the morning of the trial.
2. Look at your short narrative and determine his specific needs, values and attitudes. What would Henry Rodgers appreciate in your report? What should you include to make your document effective for him?

Persona #3: The Honorable Wenda Norman (Presiding Judge)

Photo Credit: American Judicial Society

“My time is precious; I juggle multiple cases, write extensive legal reports, and spend a lot of time reading for current and upcoming cases. I want straightforward evidence and no nonsense in my courtroom.”

Exercise C.

1. If your police report was presented to Judge Norman, how would you want the narrative to be structured? (Think about format, sentences, word choice, etc.)

Persona #4: Chris Poleson (ADA, Prosecutor)

Photo Credit: Ombudsman Ontario

“I’m committed to getting justice for victims and due punishment for criminals. I feel a lot of pressure to get accurate convictions and sentences for my clients.”

Exercise D.

1. How would your narrative support the prosecutor? What will he need from you to prove his case?

Persona #5: Mark Wright (Defense Attorney)

Photo Credit: lukeford.net

“My job is quite simple: find the holes and inconsistencies that will prove my client’s innocence. I spend a lot of time analyzing police reports to find faults, no matter how minor. I’ve been at this for 20 years, so I know some of the biggest police report weaknesses. If you aren’t sure of your story, I will question your narrative in court. I will keep pushing to see if you break from your narrative, or change your mind about what happened. My advice: don’t skip any details.”

Exercise E.

1. What are the police report weaknesses that Defense Attorney Mark Wright may be referring to? (Think about some of the common mistakes you or your peers make in your practice reports)
2. How can these minor or major mistakes help Wright in his defense?
3. Talk with a partner about strategies to correct each other’s mistakes.

Elements of A Good Report: Concise

(Tells the reader what happened in the simplest, most straightforward way possible.)

Controlling your sentence structure and diction (word choice) will help you master concise writing. Your audience is busy and pressed for time, so they need to read a report that's concise and straight to the point. This section will explain how to write concise sentences in your report narrative.

1. Writing Clear Sentences

Maintaining Logical Sentence Core:

Subject + Main Verb + Complement = Sentence Core (S-V-C concept)

Who or what is the sentence about?

First, you need to identify the **agent (who/what performs the action) as the subject or topic**. The agent should be the subject of your sentence, so the reader can easily identify who/what the sentence is about.

What's important about the subject?

Second, you should have a clear main verb. This **main verb is the action the subject performs in the sentence**. The main verb and everything that follows represent the predicate of the sentence (tells your reader what's important about the subject).

What else about the subject?

Third, a word(s) that follows the main verb is considered the complement. **The complement completes the description** of the subject/topic and the main verb/action.

With these three parts of the S-V-C concept, the reader can immediately identify the main point of your sentences.

Examples:

When I arrived, **the victim/ screamed /for help.**

S V C

The suspect/ ran /towards the back of the store.

S V C

Broken glass/ covered /the floor.

S V C

(material adopted from *Mastering Workplace Writing Skills* by Dr. Harvey Lillywhite and Dr. Kevin Dungey, Ch.5 "Composing Clear Sentences.")

2. Choosing Your Words Carefully (Diction)

Word choice greatly affects the readability of your report. Your audience's understanding of the report depends on whether or not they can comprehend your words. You don't want your audience to waste time figuring out what you meant to say or are trying to convey; you want them to comprehend the meaning instantly.

Eliminating Police Jargon

Jargon is the specialized or technical language of a trade, profession, or similar group. Police officers have specialized and technical language to communicate with each other. For example, 10-codes help officers communicate information quickly, so they don't have to spend time providing descriptions and situations in full sentences.

However, members of a jury, judges, and attorneys will most likely be unfamiliar with 10-codes, or other forms of police jargon like abbreviations and acronyms. You need to write out descriptions and situations in full sentences, so that the jury won't be confused by your police jargon.

Writing in Plain English (Plain Language)

The Plain English Movement charges writers to express their thoughts in the simplest, most straightforward way. The government and many businesses use P.E. to convey meaning as clearly as possible. P.E. is not to be confused with "dumbing down" your writing. It ensures that your readers will understand what you write; your writing is useless if your readers don't understand the meaning. P.E. also helps readers understand the meaning of your sentences quickly. The simple words help reduce what is known as "concept load," so the reader doesn't have to use as much thought to decode and process your words. Clarity equals credibility.

(material adopted from *Mastering Workplace Writing Skills* by Dr. Harvey Lillywhite and Dr. Kevin Dungey, Ch.5 "Composing Clear Sentences.")

Examples of Changing Sentences to Plain English:

Elevated Language:

1. I, officer Reddick, arrived upon the scene at approximately 1300 hours. The victim, Carla Maze, urged that the suspect was getting away and indicated for me pursue him.
2. Mr. Beckley, the proprietor, stood in the entry way absorbing the damage to his property.

Plain English:

1. I arrived to the scene at about 1300 hours. The victim, Carla Maze, said that the suspect was getting away and urged me to go after him.
2. Mr. Beckley, the store owner, stood in the entrance looking at the damage to his store.

Cutting out Wordiness

Use simple wording rather than “boilerplate” language. To increase your report’s readability (comprehension), choose a simple word over several longer words to say what you mean:

Instead of:

due to the fact that
 in order to
 bring to closure
 at this point in time
 in the event that
 with regard to
 prior to the start of
 on the occasion of
 during the time
 despite the fact that
 because of the fact that
 on the part of
 it would appear that
 under the provisions of

Say:

because
 to
 close, complete
 now, today, currently
 if
 about
 before
 on
 when
 although
 because
 by
 apparently
 under

Eliminate Bad Writing Habits

Impersonal Language

Avoid using phrases that make your report sound robotic. Phrases like “This officer” are impersonal and unnatural. You should write your report as if you were talking to your audience face-to-face. Simply use “I” to show that you are the one performing the action.

- **Avoid:** “This officer discovered that the suspect broke into the store with pliers.”
- **Write:** “I discovered that the suspect broke into the store with pliers.”

Random Capitalization

Use capitalization only for the beginning of sentences and proper nouns (first and last names, street names, dates, hospitals, etc.). Do not capitalize regular nouns like doctor, officer, suspect, victim, witness, etc.

Writing in ALL CAPS

Avoid writing your report in all capital letters. Your readers will have a hard time reading all capital letters. Sentences written in all caps are understood as shouting or trying to emphasize a certain point. You don’t need to shout the details of your report at your readers.

ALL CAPS is mostly used for important traffic signs to catch drivers’ attention. STOP, YIELD, SLOW, and MERGE, are some signs put in all caps for emphasis. Drivers need to understand the importance of stopping at a four-way intersection, or driving slowly through a school zone.

Exercise A.

Read the following sections. Notice how much faster and easier you can read the second passage after reading the first one. Caps and lowercase enhance readability.

1. ON MARCH 8, 2012, AT 1200 HOURS, I ARRIVED AT 24 MOORE STREET, BALTIMORE, MD. I NOTICED THAT THE VICTIM, MR. ERIC SMALL, WAS LYING ON THE GROUND HOLDING HIS LEFT KNEE. MR. SMALL STARTED TO YELL, “STOP. HE’S RUNNING AWAY!” I SAW THE SUSPECT RUNNING SOUTHBOUND ON MOORE WITH A RIFLE IN HIS HAND.

2. On March 8, 2012, at 1200 hours, I arrived at 24 Moore Street, Baltimore, MD. I noticed that the victim, Mr. Eric Small, was lying on the ground holding his left knee. Mr. Small started to yell, “Stop. He’s running away!” I saw the suspect running southbound on Moore with a rifle is his hand.

Element of A Good Report: Consistent

1. Use Consistent Tenses

Your report shouldn't switch back and forth from present and past tense. If events happened in the past, write your narrative in past tense.

Examples:

- **Avoid:** I arrived on the scene at 1100 hours. The victim says he was robbed. I conduct my investigation. Before I left the scene, I give the victim a Form-309.
- **Write:** I *arrived* on the scene at 1100 hours. The victim *said* he was robbed. I *conducted* my investigation. Before I left the scene, I *gave* the victim a Form-309.

2. Be Consistent with Facts and Evidence

Your narrative should be consistent throughout, from beginning to end. If you have inconsistencies in your facts or evidence, people will question your *credibility* as an authority figure who knows the facts about what happened.

Example:

- I spotted the handgun on the driver's side of the suspect's vehicle. I questioned the suspect about the weapon, and he cooperated. Then, after I completed my investigation, I retrieved the handgun from the passenger's side for evidence.

In the beginning, the officer says he saw the weapon on the driver's side, but in the last sentence he says he retrieved it from the passenger's side. Anyone reading this passage would be confused about the actual location of the weapon because the facts are inconsistent. Again, this may cause people in your audience (jury, judge, defense attorney) to poke holes in your story and question your *credibility*.

Elements of A Good Report: Correct

Active vs. Passive Voice

You should stick with active voice as much as possible, so that your report is concise and clear. Your audience should be aware of who is doing what in your narrative.

- Who=Subject
- What=The action

Examples:

1. The victim was given a Form-309.

- Your audience may ask who gave the victim this form? Who performed the action in this sentence? The answer is unknown and that creates extra problem solving and thinking for the reader.

1a. **My partner, Officer Parker, gave the victim a Form-309.**

- Now, your audience knows exactly who did what. The subject is clear, so your audience knows that Officer Parker performed the action in this sentence. Your audience does not need to do any problem solving or extra work.

2. Proper paperwork was issued at the scene.

- Who issued the paperwork? Who was the paperwork given to? What kind of paperwork was it? Your reader has a lot of questions about this sentence. They have to work hard to answer all of these questions.

2a. **I gave Ms. Ross a Form-309 and victim assistance information at the scene.**

- Now, your reader knows exactly what happened because the vague references are replaced by specific details.

Exercise A.

Turn these passive sentences into active voice.

1. There is no further information at this time and the 309 Form was issued.

2. A 309 Form was issued and the victim was told to call if there were any further questions.
3. The suspects were detained at the scene and warrant checks were ran on them.
4. The incident was reported at 1300 hours by the victim and it was categorized as a domestic violence case.
5. At the conclusion of my investigation, there were no other actions taken after the crime lab and the detectives were involved.

When To Use Passive Voice

Passive voice has a place in certain instances.

If the subject is unknown/ unimportant

1. Shots were fired.
 - You don't know who fired the shots, but it's important to note that you heard gunshots when you first arrived on the scene.
2. The victim's car was broken into, and all of her CDs were missing from her center console.
 - You don't know who broke into the car, but you want to focus on the essential information (someone broke into the car and stole property). At this time, the suspect is unknown, so the doer of the action (the subject) in the sentence is unknown.

(material adopted from *Mastering Workplace Writing Skills* by Dr. Harvey Lillywhite and Dr. Kevin Dungey, Ch.5 "Composing Clear Sentences.")

Agreement of Subject and Verb

A subject and its verb must agree in amount:

a. Singular nouns vs. Plural nouns

The boy runs. The boys run.
The bird flies. The birds fly.

b. Subjects with *and*

The teachers and students are going to the assembly.

*** When *each* or *every* comes before the compound subject, the verb is singular.**

Every teacher and student is going to the assembly.

c. Subjects with *or*

Either the cashier or the assistant manager opens the store.

d. Collective nouns act as a singular noun

The basketball team has won all of its games this year.

Exercise A.

Correct the following sentences. Be prepared to name the error(s) or explain your corrections.

1. Each witness and victim to a crime have a right to be heard.
2. The store owner and the witness has not released a statement to the officer yet.
3. My partner and I was dispatched to the 700 block of Allegheny Ave.
4. Either the manager or the witness know how the suspect escaped.
5. All of the money were stolen from Miss Smith's bedroom.

Answers to Exercise A:

1. Each witness and victim to a crime **has** a right to be heard.
2. The store owner and the witness **have** not released a statement to the officer yet.
3. My partner and I **were** dispatched to the 700 block of Allegheny Ave.
4. Either the manager or the witness **knows** how the suspect escaped.
5. All of the money **was** stolen from Miss Smith's bedroom.

Independent and Dependent Clauses

a. An **independent clause** is a complete thought, or a sentence with a subject and verb.

Example:

1. The student was called down to the principal's office.

b. A **dependent clause** is an incomplete thought that contains a subject and a verb. A dependent clause is a fragment and can be identified by a dependent marker word, or a word added to the beginning of an independent clause that turns the sentence into a fragment.

Example:

1. When the student was called down to the principal's office... (what happened when he was called down?)

Exercise B.

Correct the following dependent clauses into independent clauses. Be prepared to name the error(s) or explain your corrections.

1. Because the cat scratched at the door, while I was eating.
2. As I walked to the library to get some studying finished.
3. Whenever I asked the witness what she knew about the victim.
4. Since I take yoga classes downtown.
5. But it was hard to concentrate in the noisy café.

Answers to Exercise B:

1. While I was eating, the cat scratched at the door.
2. I walked to the library to get some studying finished.
3. I asked the witness what she knew about the victim.
4. I take yoga classes downtown.
5. It was hard to concentrate in the noisy café.

Culminating Exercises

A. Revise the following passage based on everything you've learned about passive voice vs. active voice, subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, consistent tenses, clear sentences, eliminating jargon and wordiness, etc.

“Medics arrived, witnesses were located and the scene was secured. Mr. Ridley was transported to University Shock Trauma by medic 21 where he was treated by Dr. Tersierio who advised that Mr. Ridley was in stable condition. Mr. Pierson was transported to University Shock Trauma where he was pronounced deceased at 0230 hours. Homicide Units, Sgt. Howard unit 6430, Det. Heath unit 6434 arrived on scene and took control of the investigation. Mobile Crime Lab Montgomery unit 5827 responded and processed the scene. Witnesses was transported to Homicide to interviewed.”

Write your revision below.

B. Revise the following passage based on bad writing habits: misspellings, random capitalization, redundancy, inconsistent details and impersonal language.

“Property Taken: AT&T Apple iPhone 4 cell phone”

“The suspect got upset and discharged a second round into the wall, then took an Iphone 4 from off the counter...The suspect then jumped back over the counter with the ...a plastic bag that contained the Apple iPhone...This officer preliminary investigation revealed that the suspect was described as a light skined black male, or a white male, approximately 5’9, Medium build, wearing a black ski mask with white seams, brown jacket with fur around the collar, Blue jeans and grey, red, and black shoes.”

Write your revision below.

Interview with Defense Attorney

This interview was conducted on November 15, 2013 with Frank Meyer, certified attorney at law and professor at Towson University.

Q1: What do cadets need to include in reports to pass a trial?

A1: The problem new police officers run into is when the testimony in court differs from the information present in their reports. Cadets must remember to be specific and not say things such as, “The suspect tried to escape,” in their reports or testimony.

Any time the testimony differs from the report, good defense lawyer presents this to the jury and attempt to discredit the officer. For instance, if a police officer describes the victim wearing a blue dress in a testimony, and the lawyer cannot find a description of a blue dress in the report, the lawyer could use this against the officer.

Defense lawyers try to make officers look weak, and the jury will look at officers in the same manner. Although police officers do not have all the time in the world to write an extremely detailed report, cadets must realize how important report writing is, and how they could be affected in a public trial.

Q2: How can we best help cadets prepare for their day in court?

A2: When cadets graduate and are out on their own, they should write their reports as if it was the beginning of their testimony. They must document everything as if the case was going to court.

Let’s say a gun is found at the scene of a crime and is not documented. Later, one may come to find out that gun was used in three past homicides. Now, the undocumented report is a huge deal.

A new police officer must realize when they write a report and submit it, it is placed in records forever. They must ask themselves, “If I’m on the stand, am I able to defend this case?” The jury, who has no idea what is going on, will form an opinion about a police officer based on his level of confidence during the defense lawyer’s interrogation.

There will be times when a testimony differs from a written report. However, it is an officer’s responsibility to remain confident and defend their case. If an officer becomes timid, a defense lawyer will take that opportunity to make the officer look weak and persuade the jury to discredit the officer.

Sample Police Reports and Notes

#1

On January 12, 2013 at approximately 0200 hrs I P/O Ulmer was patrolling on the 200 blk of N Franklinton Rd when I observed a black 2009 Toyota Camry with MD tag 2MD1372 parked with the front driver's side door and the front passenger side door wide open. I then observed numerous bullet holes to the front windshield and the side windows. I then observed a unk B/M later identified as Mr Tavon Pierson sitting in the front passenger seat slumped over to his left side suffering from multiple gun shot wounds. I then observed a unk B/M later identified as Mr Tyrell Ridley walking towards the patrol car stating "I got shot."

My investigation revealed that Mr Tavon Pierson and Mr Tyrell Ridley left Levels night club and walked to Mr Ridley's 2009 Toyota Camry which was parked in the 200 blk of N Franklinton Rd. After Mr Ridley got into the drivers seat and Mr Pierson got into the front passenger seat, an unk light skinned B/M began shooting numerous times with a unk caliber weapon at the vehicle. Both Mr Ridley and Mr Pierson were wounded. Mr Ridley was able to get out of the vehicle and flee N/B on the 200 blk of N Franklinton Rd after being shot in the left hamstring and grazed in the left ankle and grazed in the right side. Mr Pierson was inside the vehicle and he received one (1) gunshot wound to the right armpit, six (6) gunshot wounds to the right arm and two (2) gunshot wounds to the left side of his chest.

Medics arrived, witnesses were located and the scene was secured. Mr Ridley was transported to University Shock Trauma by medic 21 where he was treated by Dr Teseriero who advised that Mr Ridley was in stable condition. Mr Pierson was transported to University Shock Trauma where he was pronounced deceased by Dr Teseriero at 0230 hrs. Homicide Unites, Sgt Howard unit 6430, Det. Health unit 6434 arrived on scene and took control over the investigation. Mobile Crime Lab Montgomery unit 5827 responded and processed the scene. Witnesses was transported to Homicide to be interviewed.

Problematic Areas in #1:

- run-on sentences, wordiness, a lot of info packed into one sentence
- passive voice (who transported the witnesses?)
- subject-verb agreement (Witnesses was transported)

Do you notice any other problems with this report? List them here:

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#2

Property Taken

1 AT&T iPhone 4 White	443 280-3514	S/N-DNP/WHVJDPMW	est value \$300.00
1 AT&T iPhone 5 White	not in service	S/N-C39JDAE7DTTR	est value \$700.00

On 1 JAN 13 at approx 2105 hrs this officer responded to the 1000 blk of Mt Holly St for a report of an armed robbery. Upon arrival I met with Heather Gibson who stated that she was just robbed of her iPhones.

My investigation determined that Ms Gibson placed an add on Craglist-Annapolis to sell her iPhone 5 for \$700.00. Ms Gibson stated that last week she was contacted by "Mike" who wanted to buy the phone. After an exchange of email and phone calls, Ms Gibson agreed to meet "Mike" at what she believed to be his residence located at 3807 Stokes Dr. Ms Gibson then drove to the location in her 2002 GMC Yukon bearing MD tag A214123. Ms Gibson also had her daughter, Cameron Willett 10/6/08, and friend, Mary Waters W/F 1/20/86, in the vehicle with her. Ms Gibson stated they had trouble locating 3807 Stokes Dr and contacted "Mike" via cell phone. "Mike" then had Ms Gibson meet him at the corner of Stokes Dr and Mt Holly St. Ms Gibson arrived at the new location and parked curb side on the 1000 blk of Mt Holly St. "Mike" then approached the vehicle at which time Ms Waters exited the passenger side seat allowing "Mike" to get in. While sitting in the front passenger seat "Mike" looked at the iPhone 5 and then placed it in his front pocket. Ms Gibson then asked if he would like the box for the phone. "Mike" then pulled a small caliber black handgun from his pocket and stated "no, but I will take the other phone too" referring to the iPhone 4 that Ms Gibson had in her lap. "Mike" then grabbed the second iPhone from Ms Gibson and exited the vehicle. "Mike" then walked west bound onto the 3800 blk of Stokes Dr.

Ms Gibson showed this officer the boxes for the iPhones allowing me to obtain the serial numbers. An area canvass and turn up at 3807 Stokes Dr was conducted by back up units OIC Pinkosz 8C20, P/O Hafer 8C21, and P/O Brown 8C24 with negative results. Det Witmer 3818 was then contacted and advised by this officer. Ms Gibson and Ms Waters were then escorted to SWD DDU to meet with Det Witmer who then assumed control of the investigation. Ms Gibson was provided a 309 form.

Problematic Areas in #2:

- "this officer" is impersonal, just use "I"
- Ms. Gibson was provided a 309 form" (passive voice) (by who?)

Do you notice any other problems with this report? List them here:

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#3

On 31 Dec 12 at approximately 1603 hours I responded to 12 S. Abington Ave. for a report of an aggravated assault that had just occurred. Upon arrival the victim was located sitting in the basement of 12 S. Abington Ave. Mr. David J. McAllister appeared to be suffering from a laceration on the top of his head. He stated that he had been walking in the 3800 block of Old Frederick Ave. near S. Culver St. when 5-6 unknown males had jumped out of a white car and started to attack him. He was not sure if they hit him with a baseball bat or a stick but after hitting him several times he was able to break free from them and run down an alley at which point the unknown males also fled the scene. Their method of escape was unknown to Mr. McAllister. Mr. McAllister was unable to say what kind of car the unknown males had gotten out of and also stated that they did not take anything from him. After getting away Mr. McAllister walked back to his house on S. Abington Ave where he was able to call the police.

An area canvass of the location where the assault occurred yielded negative results. No crime scene could be located by responding officer. No witnesses were located that had scene the incident. Several citizens who wished to remain anonymous stated that they had been outside in the area for a while and had not seen or heard anything unusual.

Medic 12 responded to the scene and transported Mr. McAllister to Shock Trauma. A 309 form was left for Mr. McAllister. Det. Fallon of SWD DDU was notified.

Problematic Areas in #3:

- **...that had just occurred.** (first sentence) wordiness/redundancy
- Upon arrival (**comma**) the victim was **located** sitting (wordiness/tense change)
- **...appeared to be** (was?) redundancy
- ...or a stick (**comma**) but after hitting...able to break free (**period**) He ran down an alley **at which point** the unknown males also fled the scene. (wordiness)
- After getting away (**comma**)

Do you notice any other problems with this report? List them here:

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#4

Robert J. DeVault, 1101 Haverhill Rd
Property Taken
Undetermined amount of US Currency
4 Cartons of Newport Cigarettes
Several packs of Marlboro Cigarettes
Several pack of Dutch Masters Cigars
AT&T iPhone 4 cell Phone(410-245-1566)

On Monday, January 1, 2013, at approximately 1407 Hrs, I responded to 1101 Haverhill Rd, Haverhill Convenience Store, for an Armed Commercial Robbery. Upon my arrival, I was met by Asim Abbasi, Store Clerk, who advised that on January 1, 2013 at approximately 1350 Hrs, an unidentified suspect entered the location brandishing a silver revolver handgun (unknown make/ model). The suspect pointed the gun at him and his cousin Ali Khalid and told them to lay on the floor. Fearing for their safety, Mr. Abbasi and Mr. Khalid (who were standing behind the counter) both layed down on the floor at which time the suspect discharged one (1) round into the wall behind the counter. Once Mr. Abbasi and Mr. Khalid were on the floor, the suspect jumped over the counter and repeatedly asked "where's the money" Mr. Abbasi told the suspect all the money is in the cash registers. The suspect then began to remove all the cash from the cash register and the lottery register. As he was doing so, a customer, Robert DeVault Jr. entered the store and approached the front counter. The suspect pointed the handgun at hi and told him to lay on the floor. Fearing for his safety, Mr. DeVault complied. The suspect then demanded the video surveillance tapes form the store however, Mr. Abbasi did not respond to his demands. The suspect got upset and discharged a second round into the wall, then took an I phone 4 from off the counter, several packs of Dutch Masters Cigars, Marlboro cigarettes, and approxamently four cartons of Newport cigarettes and placed them in a white plastic bag. The suspect then jumped back over the counter with the undetermined amount of US currency and a white plastic bag that contained the Apple iPhone, cigars and Cigarettes. Upon running out of the store, the suspect fled location in an unknown direction with unknown means.

This officer's preliminary investigation revealed the suspected was described as a light skinned black male or a white male, approximatley 5'9, Medium build, wearing a black ski mask with white seams, brown jacket with fur around the collar, Blue jeans and gray, red, and black shoes. No injuries were reported on scene. An extensive canvass was conducted by the additional units that responded however, the suspect was not located. The store had a working Video surveillance system. Crime Lab Tech. Morehead unit # 5818 respoded and prosessed the scene. Detective Dwayne Green of the Citywide Robbery Unit also respoded and took control of this investigation.

Problematic Areas in #4:

- random capitalization: "iPhone 4 cell Phone" "Blue jeans"
- "This officer's preliminary investigation revealed..."
 - My initial investigation revealed...
- redundancy

Do you notice any other problems with this report? List them here:

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#5

ON 4 JAN 13 AT APPROX. 2115 HRS I RESPONDED FOR A CALL OF SERVICE AT 4711 SAYER AVE APT A. UPON MY ARRIVAL I SPOKE WITH MS TYMIARA SMITH (B/F 6/14/99) WHO ADVISED THAT WHILE SHE WAS OVER AT HER AUNT'S HOUSE SLEEPING IN HER BED, A MALE CAME INSIDE THE APARTMENT AND PUT A PILLOW OVER HER FACE. THE MALE WAS TRYING TO STOP HER FROM BREATHING, MS SMITH ADVISED THAT SHE DID NOT PASS OUT DURING THE INCIDENT. MS SMITH KICKED AND SLAPPED THE MALE, AND THAT IS WHEN HE RUN OUT OF THE APARTMENT. MEDICAL TREATMENT WAS REFUSED. MY INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT MS SMITH LOCKED AND SECURED THE APARTMENT WHILE SHE WAS SLEEPING. THE MALE LATER IDENTIFIED AS MR ELBERT WALKER (B/M 4/8/88) WAS THE EX-BOYFRIEND OF THE OWNER OF THE APARTMENT MS TIKEIA NICOLE BEN (B/F 11/8/91). MS BEN DID NOT REPORT ANY DAMAGES. I DID NOT OBSERVE ANY FORCE OF ENTRY TO THE DOORS AND WINDOWS. MS BEN WAS NOT AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT. MS BEN ADVISED THAT SHE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS THE KEY TO THE APARTMENT. MR WALKER FLED THE SCENE OF THE CRIME TO AN UNKNOWN LOCATION. AREA CANVASS WAS CONDUCTED WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS. A 309 FORM WAS GIVEN. WARRANT # D121556956 WAS OBTAINED.

Problematic Areas in #5

- Written in all caps
- I responded **for** a call (to?)
- I spoke with... who **advised that** (stated?)
- ...kicked and slapped the male, **and that is when he run out...**
 - ...slapped the male. Then, he ran out
- **B & E** = breaking and entering, spell out abbreviations
-he noticed and advised his parents that somebody has been in the house.
 - He noticed someone had been in the house.

Do you notice any other problems with this report? List them here:

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