

149623

# BASIC COURSE INSTRUCTOR UNIT GUIDE

18

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WRITING

June 1, 1994

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U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

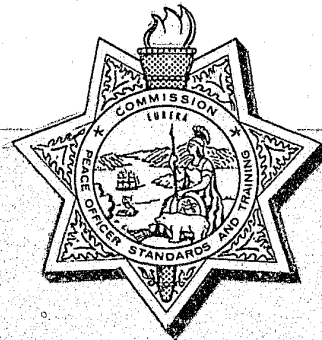
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THE COMMISSION  
ON PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

1013

The curricula contained in this document is designed as a *guideline* for the delivery of performance-based law enforcement training. It is part of the POST Basic Course guidelines system developed by California law enforcement trainers and criminal justice educators in cooperation with the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training.

The training specifications referenced herein express the required minimum content of this domain.

## UNIT GUIDE 18

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## SPECIFICATIONS FOR LEARNING DOMAIN #18: INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WRITING

March 1, 1994

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### I. INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

The goals of report writing instruction are to provide students with:

- A. an understanding of the various uses of police reports which include:
  - 1. Providing information to investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other entities
  - 2. Assisting officers in refreshing their memory before testifying
  - 3. Serving as reference documents for officers testifying at preliminary hearings regarding statements made by victims, witnesses, and other involved parties
  - 4. Providing data for criminal justice researchers who are studying and reporting on the activities of the criminal justice system
  - 5. Documenting events which involve potential civil liability
- B. the ability to write reports that conform to accepted professional standards of quality (e.g., use of first person, use of active voice, etc.);
- C. the ability to take field notes that include the information needed to complete a crime or incident report (e.g., description of suspects, names of victims, and witnesses, etc.); and
- D. the ability to reduce observations and other information to clear, concise, logically organized reports that are relatively free of mechanical writing errors;

While the curriculum will provide instruction in improving writing skills, the goals of report writing instruction do **not** include the development of basic writing skills. It is assumed that students bring with them a reasonable command of the English language.

### II. REQUIRED TOPICS

- A. How crime, incident, and arrest reports are used by the criminal justice system
- B. Notetaking
- C. Characteristics of an acceptable law enforcement report
- D. Organization and structure of report narratives
- E. Anticipating defenses which are likely to be asserted by a suspect

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## DOMAIN #18: INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WRITING

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- F. General content requirements of crime, incident, and arrest reports
- G. An understanding of the difference between facts and inference
- H. Elements of clear writing to include:
  - 1. Logical relationships between narrative elements
  - 2. Chronological sequencing of events
  - 3. Natural vocabulary
  - 4. Active voice
  - 5. First person
- I. Review of basic writing mechanics to include:
  - 1. Spelling
  - 2. Punctuation
  - 3. Grammar
  - 4. Word choice
  - 5. Syntax

### III. TEST REQUIREMENTS

- A. An exercise test that requires the student to prepare an arrest report as described below.

Given a depiction of an arrest situation which is based upon a POST-developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent academy-developed video, simulation, or scenario, the student will write an acceptable report in class.

To be of sufficient complexity, the report must reflect an arrest situation which minimally incorporates:

- 1. Elements of a crime
  - 2. Probable cause to stop
  - 3. Probable cause to search/seize
  - 4. Recovery of evidence
  - 5. Probable cause to arrest
  - 6. Admonishment of the suspect, if appropriate
- B. An exercise test that requires the student to prepare an investigative report as described below.

Given a depiction of a criminal investigation which is based upon a POST-developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent academy-developed video, simulation, or scenario, the student will write an acceptable report in class.

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To be of sufficient complexity, the report must reflect a criminal investigation which minimally incorporates:

1. Elements of a crime
2. Statements of victim(s) and/or witness(es)
3. Pertinent crime scene details
4. Physical evidence

C. To be considered acceptable, each of the reports must meet the following criteria:

1. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized, showing a sufficient command of the language to clearly communicate to the reader.
2. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report.
3. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice) that significantly diminishes its evidentiary value or usefulness.
4. The time required to complete the report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program

### IV. REQUIRED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- A. Students will be required to write five practice reports based on either POST-developed video re-enactments of crimes, investigations or law enforcement-related incidents, or based upon equivalent simulations, scenarios or videotape depictions developed by the academy.
- B. The events selected should require reports reflecting a progressive level of difficulty (e.g. from a simple incident or crime to more complex events involving the articulation of probable cause to stop, probable cause to arrest, statements of witnesses, etc.)
- C. Each learning activity must incorporate:
  1. Generation of appropriate field notes narrative
  2. Formal feedback to the student regarding the quality student writing. The purpose of requiring feedback is to provide ongoing evaluation and documentation of student strengths and weaknesses so that the student is able to progressively improve.

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- a. The adequacy of the decisions made by the cadet regarding the incident/crime. This includes:
  - (1) The determination of the existence or nonexistence of a crime
  - (2) If a crime has been committed, the proper identification of that crime
  - (3) The taking of proper safety measures
  - (4) The preservation of evidence
  - (5) The capturing of all essential information
- b. The ability of the report/narrative to communicate with the reader and employ proper format and conventions. This includes:
  - (1) The organization and development of the report
  - (2) The inclusion of relevant information
  - (3) The anticipation of possible defenses that might be asserted by the suspect
  - (4) The use of the active voice
  - (5) The use of the first person
  - (6) The proper use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice

### V. HOURLY REQUIREMENTS

Students shall be provided with a minimum of **36 hours** of instruction on preliminary investigation.

### VI. ORIGINATION DATE

July 1, 1993

### VII. REVISION DATES

March 1, 1994

# CURRICULUM

## I. INTRODUCTION TO POLICE REPORT WRITING

### 1. Responsibility for taking reports

- a. By law, the chief of police or sheriff is required to furnish a report of all felonies, and specified misdemeanor sex crimes, to the state on a form approved by the Department of Justice (reference Penal Code Sections 11107, 11108, and 11110).

- (1) The chief of police or sheriff's legal responsibility is delegated to individual officers who have a legal and moral duty to investigate and report on crimes that come to their attention. Failure to uphold this responsibility can have very negative consequences.

- (a) Deliberate failure to report a crime may be considered a dereliction of duty and grounds for disciplinary action.

- (b) Knowingly making a false report is a criminal offense.

NOTE: Specific reporting practices may be governed by individual department policies.

### 2. Definition of a police report

- a. A report relates the words or sense of something said. It is a written record or summary. It gives a formal or official account of happenings.
- b. A police report is a permanent written record of law enforcement activity which documents important facts.

### 3. Purposes of a police report

- a. To assist with the identification, apprehension and prosecution of criminals police reports:
  - (1) serve as a source document for filing criminal complaints
  - (2) provide a record of all investigations and
  - (3) provide information to identify the modus operandi (mode of operation) of individual offenders.
- b. Police reports provide information to prosecutors, defense attorneys and other law enforcement agencies. Specifically, reports:
  - (1) document agency actions and



- (2) satisfy mandatory reporting requirements (e.g. child abuse, missing persons, etc.).

**NOTE:** Instructors may wish to discuss the rule of discovery.

- c. Reports assist officers in refreshing their memory before testifying. They may also serve as the sole basis for providing testimony absent independent recollection.
  - d. Reports assist officers in preparing to provide hearsay testimony at preliminary hearings.
  - e. Reports assist criminal justice researchers in studying and reporting on the activities of the criminal justice system.
  - f. Reports document events which involve potential civil liability.
- (1) Documentation of police actions at noncriminal events may be critical during subsequent civil litigation.

Examples might include:

- (a) Accidents or injuries on city or county property
- (b) Industrial injuries where police officers respond
- (c) Fires or other events that prompt a police response.

4. Other uses of police reports

- a. Reports provide statistical information to be used to:
  - (1) analyze crime trends
  - (2) determine the need for additional employees and equipment
  - (3) determine personnel deployment requirements
  - (4) assess community needs
  - (5) generate uniform crime reports
  - (6) identify specialized enforcement needs.
- b. Reports provide a source of information for officer evaluation.
  - (1) Reports reflect upon officers':
    - (a) working knowledge of the law, department policies and procedures

- (b) ability to recognize evidence and relevant information and the ability to apply those factors effectively within the parameters of the law
  - (c) personal biases
  - (d) overall attitude toward the job and career.
- (2) Good report writers often earn choice assignments or promotions. Conversely, poor report writers may suffer a stagnant career.
- c. Reports serve as reference material used by:
  - (1) insurance companies
  - (2) the media
  - (3) local, state and federal agencies.

## 5. Types of reports

**NOTE:** Types or specific titles of police reports will vary widely among agencies. Instructors should tailor instruction to the needs of students attending the Basic Course. Below are generic descriptions of reports commonly used by agencies.

### a. Crime/incident report

- (1) A crime/incident report describes the elements of a crime and/or summarizes the incident. Such reports include:
  - (a) Identification of involved parties
  - (b) Victim/witness/suspect statements
  - (c) Officer's observations and actions.
  - (d) Description of physical evidence
  - (e) Other pertinent information

### b. Arrest report/booking sheet

- (1) The arrest report/booking sheet typically contains identifying information about the suspect and a description of charges upon which the suspect will be booked.

### c. Event-specific reports

- (1) Many agencies have separate forms for certain types of incidents. Examples include:
  - (a) Traffic collision reports

- (b) Use of force reports
    - (c) Auto theft reports
    - (d) Drug influence reports
    - (e) Driving under the influence reports.
  - d. Task-specific reports
    - (1) Agencies may also have forms related to specific procedures. Examples include:
      - (a) Evidence tag/chain of custody forms
      - (b) Laboratory service requests
      - (c) Photo reports
6. Characteristics of an effective police report
- a. To be effective police reports must be:
    - (1) Factual
      - (a) Corpus delicti: The reported facts must show that a crime has occurred. The facts, which are the evidence of the crime, are referred to as the "corpus delicti" (literally, the "body of the crime").
      - (b) Knowledge of the case: An officer reports the facts regarding an offense as he has observed them or as they have been reported to him by a witness or witnesses. If the officer reports what witnesses say, the officer must report the name and address of each of the witnesses.
    - (3) Objectivity: An officer's report must be objective and restricted to the facts of the case. It must be an accurate report of conditions as the officer found them.
    - (4) Existence of facts: Officers must report facts. Opinion, supposition, or hearsay should never be reported as being a fact.
    - (5) Opinions: The greatest care must be exercised in the expression of personal opinions, or conclusions. If a personal opinion is expressed, it should be labeled as such. The following are special cautions:
      - (a) Opinions and conclusions are subject to refutation. If an officer expresses an opinion or draws a conclusion, subsequent investigation might prove the opinion to be unwarranted or the conclusion to be in error. This can be highly embarrassing.

- (b) Opinions must be labeled as such and reasons given to support them. The reasons must be devoid of bias or prejudice.

b. Accurate

- (1) Accuracy requires correct information based upon good field notes.
- (2) Accuracy is achieved by carefully, thoughtfully, and impartially recording all the relevant information and facts.

Note: Humorous or dramatic elements: Police reports should not be written in a humorous or dramatic manner. Treating an incident that requires police attention in a humorous or dramatic way can reflect unfavorably upon the officer or the officer's department. Such elements can also distort or obscure the truth.

c. Complete

- (1) A police report must be complete because the smallest detail of a crime could be the essential factor in the ultimate determination of guilt.
  - (a) Supportive and unsupportive facts: Facts, both supportive and unsupportive, of the officer's decisions and actions must be included in the report. It is only after knowing all the facts, pro or con, that a law enforcement agency can act in a particular case.
    - 1) During a trial, the case can be seriously damaged if unsupportive information, not included in the officer's report, is brought out by cross-examination.
    - 2) The deliberate withholding of information from a police report is a serious matter. Such action can be the cause of an innocent person being falsely accused and convicted or a guilty person escaping punishment.
  - (b) Recording of data: All available information having any bearing on an incident must be recorded. Failure to include information that is pertinent and available may make extended investigation necessary at a later date. Facts that officers attempt to keep in their heads are likely to be of little value because after a period of time the memory of them becomes hazy or even inaccurate.
  - (c) Nothing left to the imagination: The report writer must record all facts concerning an incident and give the details regarding each fact that is needed. A report is not complete if any portion of it must be supplemented by verbal additions or explanations.
  - (d) Tests for completeness: A report is complete if it contains a comprehensive description of the incident and contains the facts required by the six basic questions to be answered by the investigation: who, what, where, when, how and why.

d. Concise

- (1) Reports should be concise. Wordiness tends to make a report less clear and readable.
  - (a) Brevity: The recording of facts in a police report should be brief. In the effort to achieve brevity, however, accuracy, completeness or clarity must not be sacrificed.
  - (b) Word choice and sentence length: Whenever possible, choose common words over uncommon ones. Similarly, construct sentences that are as short as possible, but no shorter.
  - (c) Repetition: It is generally not good practice in a police report to use a synonym for a word merely to avoid repeating the word. Using the same word can eliminate one possibility for misunderstanding.
  - (d) Irrelevant information: Only information pertinent to the case should be included in the report. Examples of the types of information that the officer should avoid recording are the route followed to the scene of the incident, how many fences he jumped before catching the burglar, how he felt after the chase, and humorous remarks he and others made while investigating the incident.

e. Clear

- (1) The value of a report depends to a very great extent upon the clarity with which the information is presented. Clarity is achieved by using appropriate vocabulary and good organization.
  - (a) Proper language: It is important that all facts be described in language that cannot be construed to mean anything other than what it is intended to mean. Words and phrases should be chosen so that the reader will readily comprehend the report and remember it.
  - (b) Logical order: The facts should be presented in their logical order. If a report is written in the sequence in which the investigation was conducted and a coherent narrative style is used to tie together all the elements relating to the incident, the report should be logical and coherent.
  - (c) No room for doubt: The report should be written so that no reason is left for questioning the accuracy of the officer's statements or doubting the validity of the information recorded.
- (2) Write in plain English. Do not use jargon or profanity unless making verbatim quotes.
- (3) Reports should be mechanically and grammatically correct.

f. Organized

- (1) A report should be well organized. Thoughtful planning and effective notetaking should precede the writing.

g. Legible

- (1) Handwriting should be easily readable.

h. Timely

- (1) Reports should be completed in an appropriate amount of time.

6. Requirements for report content

- a. An effective police report should tell who, what, when, where, why and how. The following are examples of these types of questions.

WHO

Who was the victim?  
Who was the complainant?  
Who discovered the crime?  
Who saw or heard anything of importance?  
Who had a motive for committing the crime?  
Who committed the crime?  
Who had the means to commit the crime?  
Who had access to the crime scene?  
Who searched for, identified and gathered evidence?  
Who was the evidence turned over to?  
With whom did the victim associate?  
With whom did the suspect associate?  
With whom was the victim last seen?  
With whom do the witnesses associate?  
With whom did the suspect commit the crime?  
Who helped the perpetrator?

WHAT

What was the crime that was committed?  
What are the elements of the crime?  
What were the actions of the suspect before and after the crime?  
What actually happened?  
What do the witnesses know about it?  
What evidence was obtained?  
What was done with the evidence?  
What weapons were used?  
What action did the officers take?  
What further action should be taken?  
What knowledge, skill or strength was needed to commit the crime?  
What other agencies were notified?  
What other agencies need to be notified?

What witnesses were not contacted?  
What time was the crime committed?  
What time was the crime reported?  
What time did the officers and the investigators arrive?  
What time were the witnesses contacted?  
What type of transportation was used?  
What was the motive for the crime?  
What weapons were used?  
What type of property was taken?  
What other crime could be associated with this one.

#### WHEN

When was the crime committed?  
When was it discovered?  
When were the authorities notified?  
When did they arrive at the scene?  
When was the victim last seen alive?  
When did officers arrive?  
When was any arrest made?  
When did witnesses hear anything unusual?  
When did the suspect decide to commit the crime?

#### WHERE

Where was the crime committed?  
Where was the crime discovered?  
Where was entry made?  
Where was the exit?  
Where was the weapon obtained that was used to commit the crime?  
Where was the victim found?  
Where was the suspect seen during the crime?  
Where was the suspect last seen?  
Where were the witnesses during the crime?  
Where did the suspect live?  
Where does the suspect currently live?  
Where is the suspect now?  
Where would the suspect likely go?  
Where was the evidence found?  
Where was the evidence stored?

#### WHY

Why was the crime committed?  
Why was a certain weapon/tool used?  
Why was the crime reported?  
Why was the crime reported late?  
Why were witnesses reluctant to give information?  
Why is the suspect lying?  
Why did the suspect commit the crime when she/he did?  
Why did the suspect commit the crime where she/he did?

## HOW

How was the crime committed?  
How did the suspect get to the scene?  
How did the suspect leave the scene?  
How did the suspect obtain the information necessary to commit the crime?  
How was the crime discovered?  
How was the weapon/tool for the crime obtained?  
How was the weapon/tool used?  
How was the crime reported?  
How was the arrest made?  
How much damage was done?  
How much property or money was taken?  
How much information is being withheld?





## II. GENERATING AN EFFECTIVE POLICE REPORT

### 1. Notetaking

#### (a) Characteristics of field notes

- (1) Field notes are brief notations concerning specific events and circumstances that are recorded while fresh in the officer's mind and are the source document for the formal police report.
- (2) Notes will normally include information regarding:
  - a) persons involved in the event
  - b) dates and times of important occurrences
  - c) exact location of occurrences and persons involved
  - d) case numbers, location of evidence, actions of assisting officers, type of incident, etc.
  - e) statements made by involved parties, such as key phrases or exact quotations, etc.
- (3) Notes should be restricted to important facts. The ability to recognize and separate important from unimportant facts is the key to good notetaking. Headings can be used to highlight important sets of facts. Details and less important facts can be added later, but while memory is still fresh.
- (4) Effective notetaking requires the officer to alternate between listening and writing. It is difficult to listen effectively while writing. Notetaking involves recording main points after listening.

#### (b) Uses of notes

- 1) Accurate notes eliminate the need to recontact involved parties to ascertain details that were forgotten because the officer relied solely on memory.
- 2) Accurate notes provide a greater degree of accuracy regarding times, statements, and events than does memory alone
- 3) Notes can assist officers in refreshing their memory before testifying.

#### (c) Evidence

- (1) Notes used in court are subject to the scrutiny of the court. The officer should be aware of the following:
  - a) The court can develop impeachable inconsistencies between reports and notes.

- b) If placed in evidence, notes may not be available until released by the court.
- c) Non-police information should not be written in the notebook.

**INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES:**

- Instructors may wish to discuss departmental policy regarding retention and types of notes.
  - A distinction should be made between notes that are essential for an accurate police report and those notes that are used for purposes other than the generation of reports.
  - Instructors may wish to discuss the legal ramifications of Evidence Code Section 771 (concept of best recollection).
- d) Methods of gathering information for notes
- (1) The steps for obtaining effective notes are the same as for effective report writing. The following questions should be addressed:
- a) Who
  - b) What
  - c) When
  - d) Where
  - e) Why
  - f) How

### III. INCIDENT-SPECIFIC REPORT WRITING CONSIDERATIONS

1. The completion of police reports requires that certain general information be written either on a form and/or within the body of the report. This information usually includes: victim, witness and suspect identifying information, property descriptions and values, and physical evidence. In addition, various crime specific investigations may require further investigative information to also be contained within the report.
2. The following are common items that may be used as a guide for completion of reports in general. Also, learning what each of your report forms requires for proper completion will expedite your interview.

#### 3. THREE PHASE INTERVIEW

- a. Use the first phase of the interview (no notes) to determine:

- (1) if, and what type of crime has been committed,
- (2) what role the person you are talking to has in the incident (victim, witness, etc.),
- (3) if there is a need for emergency medical assistance,
- (4) if there is a safety risk at the time of contact (e.g., suspect on scene, suspect just left, weapon involved). Depending on the time element, general property, weapon, and suspect information could be obtained during this phase.

- b. Upon completion of the first phase, begin the second phase (notes).

- (1) Have the person being interviewed repeat the story from beginning to end. You control the speed of delivery and gather clarifying information as needed.
- (2) Descriptions of property, suspects, etc. are obtained during this phase.

- c. Use the third phase to tell the person what you plan to report.

- (1) Advise the person that if they have additional information, or need to correct information, to do so during this phase.
- (2) Lastly, it's a good practice to repeat the information just as you plan to record it in the report itself. This helps to eliminate superfluous information.

(Prior to obtaining a statement from victim's, witnesses, etc., separate the parties to obtain individual, non-collaborated information.)

#### 4. Reporting Party/Victim/Witness Information

- a. The person's complete name, home and business addresses, phone numbers and relationship to the suspect are necessary. How this information is transferred to the report forms varies by department.

5. Suspect Information

- a. Complete name and ID information is preferred. Include any aliases, identifying marks, scars or tatoos, and relationship to the victim.
- b. If there is a probable gang affiliation, refer to your department's policy regarding the recording of this information.

(Again, keep the people you interview separated so that the descriptive information you obtain is a recall of what they saw, and not what they may have heard from someone else.)

6. Injuries

- a. Describe all injuries in the simplest terms possible.
- b. Medical release waivers should be considered and photos of injuries should be obtained when possible. This includes suspect offensive injuries.

7. Property/Physical Evidence Descriptions

- a. Describe each item in as much detail as possible.
  - (1) Include brand name, model, serial/model numbers, dimensions, owner/possessor, unique markings/numbers, color, etc.
  - (2) Also, include the value of the stolen items.
- b. Preserve physical evidence (take photos etc.).

8. Officer Narrative/Observations

- a. Report how you learned of the incident and the time you arrived.
- b. Upon arrival, note who was where and what you saw.
- c. Check to see if the elements of the crime are present.
- d. Chronologically describe your actions and what you saw.
- e. Describe, photograph, collect and book evidence.
  - (1) Indicate in the narrative when and where the evidence was found, by whom it was found, and how it is related to the incident.

#### IV. BURGLARY REPORTS

1. The preliminary investigation of a burglary must provide sufficient detail for possible follow-up investigation by an assigned investigator. In addition to the general report information, the officer on scene should describe the following:
  - a. Location - Clearly describe the structure and surroundings of the location burglarized. This will provide the investigator, or who ever reads the burglary report a mental picture of the scene. It is nice to know if the location has an alley to the rear, if there is a school near by etc.
  - b. Entry - To the best of your ability, determine how the perpetrator entered the residence or business. Report whether entry was made via the use of bodily force, pry tool, by-passing an alarm, etc.
  - c. Actions - Based on information from the victim/reporting person, describe the known actions of the culprit once entry was made. For example, if a television was taken from a dresser in the master bedroom, we know that this was one of the actions of the suspect. Documentation of what types of things were disturbed in a scene may also assist in establishing the perpetrator's M.O.
  - d. Exit - Determine how the culprit left the scene. Were all the doors locked when the victim left and upon the victim's return? How large was the entry and how big were the stolen items? If a large item is reported missing, and the entry is too small for that item to be passed through, then check to see if a door/window was unlocked upon exit. This is only a start. If the investigating officer is not satisfied, then continue to investigate.
2. The report format for burglary investigations may differ by department. Officers should check with their department's investigations division to determine the appropriate format at that local.



## V. ROBBERY REPORTS

1. In robbery incidents, it is important to determine the elements so that the incident can be correctly classified as being either a grand theft, petty theft and burglary. Although this should be screened prior to dispatch, it is very common for victim's to report that they have been "robbed", and through their excitement, have an officer dispatched on a robbery call.
2. After determining that a robbery has in fact occurred, and in addition to the general information, the report should include sufficient detail describing the following:
  - a. What were the actions of the victim, suspect and witness prior, during and after the crime?
  - b. What were the exact words spoken by the suspect?
  - c. What type of force/fear was used to commit the robbery, including threatening words or actions, and the exact sequence of the actions?
  - d. How did the suspect come to and leave the scene?
  - e. What relationship, if any, is there between the victim and suspect?
  - f. If the victim is a business, was there a camera that recorded the crime?
  - g. What was the location of the witness at the time of the robbery (was the witness able to see what he is reporting)?





## VI. HOMICIDE REPORTS

1. Generally, once it is determined that a death is due to homicide, the scene is secured and investigators are summoned. However, there are instances where the responding officers may conduct the investigation and subsequent follow-up.
2. Handle every dead body call as a homicide until it is determined to be otherwise.
  - a. Was foul play involved in the death of the victim?
  - b. If not, how do you know?
  - c. Was the death accidental?
  - d. If so, how do you know?
3. If you are unable to conclusively answer any of the questions above, secure the scene and notify your supervisor and homicide detectives.
  - a. Homicide detectives will, at a minimum, require a verbal description of the scene. They will typically ask that you answer the following questions:
    - (1) Who discovered the death?
    - (2) Who reported the death?
    - (3) Are those people at the scene?
    - (4) What is their relationship to the victim?
    - (5) What did witnesses, family and friends tell you about the victim?
    - (6) Is there any sign of forced entry into the premises?
    - (7) Does the evidence suggest that the victim was injured at another location?
    - (8) Is there evidence of a struggle?
    - (9) Where is the victim's body?
    - (10) In what position is the victim's body?
    - (11) Is there visible trauma to the body? (NOTE: DO NOT MOVE OR TAMPER WITH THE BODY.)
    - (12) Is post mortem lividity evident?
    - (13) Is rigor mortis evident?
    - (14) If lividity and/or rigor are evident, are these conditions consistent with all other evidence and information?

- (15) Was the victim moved after death?
- (16) If so, why, when and by whom?
- (17) Has a weapon or other implement of death been located?
- (18) If so, where was this item found in relation to the victim's body?
- (19) Has the condition of the weapon or implement of death been altered?
- (20) If so, why, when and by whom?
- (21) Does it appear that the victim could have used the item to commit suicide?
- (22) What collateral evidence exists (i.e., pooled blood, blood spatter, bullet defects, etc.)?
- (23) Have additional notifications been made?
  - (a) Coroner/Medical Examiner
  - (b) Support services for surviving family members
  - (c) Animal care

## VIII. ASSAULT REPORTS

1. When investigating an assault report, how the assault was committed will determine whether it is a misdemeanor or felony. In any case, there are particular details, in addition to the general information, that the investigating officer should be attentive to:
  - a. What were the actions of the victim, suspect and witness prior, during and after the crime?
  - b. Did the victim sustain an injury?
  - c. What is the condition of the victim's clothing?
  - d. What were the exact words spoken by the suspect and those of the victim, if relevant?
  - e. How did the suspect come to and leave the scene?
  - f. What relationship, if any, is there between the victim and suspect?
  - g. What may have provoked the assault?
  - h. If the assault was committed with a deadly weapon, what type of weapon was used?
  - i. When did the victim/witness first see the weapon?
  - j. Where did the victim/witness last see the weapon?
  - k. What was the location of the witness at the time of the assault (was the witness able to see what he is reporting)?



## VIII. HATE CRIMES

1. Determining whether a hate crime has been committed requires specific observations regarding characteristics of the person or facility, coupled with visual, written, or verbal information linking the incident to a hate crime motivation.
2. Consideration should be given to:
  - a. Prior history of prejudice-based incidents.
  - b. If a suspect is in custody, note any statements made which support, refute, or identify the crime as hate motivated.
  - c. If multiple incidents occurred at the same time, are all the victims of the same race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation?
  - d. Has the victim been associated with recent or past activity relating to his/her race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation (e.g., gay rallies, demonstrations, holiday celebrations, conferences/conventions, religious meetings, etc.)?
  - e. Has there been prior news coverage of events similar in nature?
  - f. Did the victim recently move into the area? Is the victim acquainted with neighbors and /or local community groups?
  - g. What were the manner and means of attack (e.g., color of paint, correctness of spelling of words, symbols or signs used, etc.)? Are there similarities to other documented incidents?
  - h. Is there an ongoing neighborhood problem that may have initiated or contributed to the act (e.g., could the act be retribution from some conflict with neighbors area juveniles, etc.)?
  - i. Does the crime indicate possible involvement by an organized group?
    - (1) Is the literature printed or handwritten?
    - (2) Does the name signify a "copy-cat" (similar typed of incident) syndrome?
    - (3) Is there any documented or suspected organized group activity in the area?
    - (4) Was this group involved in a true sense , or as a fear or scare tactic?
  - j. Does the party(s) responsible have a true understanding of the impact of the crime on the victim or other group members?



## IX. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1. In the area of domestic violence, other than the general and specific requirements of the law related to domestic violence, it is suggested that officers remember to pay particular attention to the following:

- a. Origin of the incident

- (1) By what means did you become involved?
- (2) What is the incident number?
- (3) Upon arrival, what were your observations of the scene and the victim?
- (4) Describe the victim's location upon arrival.
- (5) Record any spontaneous statements made by the victim.

- b. Injuries. Document the victim's injuries in detail, including the victim's condition both physical and emotional.

- (1) Emotionally, the individual may be:

- (a) angry
- (b) apologetic
- (c) crying
- (d) fearful
- (e) hysterical
- (f) calm
- (g) afraid
- (h) irrational
- (i) nervous
- (j) threatening

- (2) Physically, the individual may be suffering from:

- (a) pain
- (b) bruise(s)
- (c) abrasion(s)
- (d) minor cut(s)
- (e) laceration(s)
- (f) fracture(s)
- (g) concussion(s)
- (h) other(explain)

NOTE: Be sure to use concrete terms when describing these observations.

- c. Medical attention. Was medical attention rendered, offered, or refused.
- d. Safe shelter. Offer the victim safe shelter, advise of personal safety measures, and give and explain referral information.



NOTE: Explain opposing conditions in your narrative.

e. Document the victim's relationship to the suspect

- (1) spouse
- (2) former spouse
- (3) live-in boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.

X. POSSESSION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE(S)

1. This type of crime is usually initiated by some action of the investigating officer. The action could be as simple as being stopped and seeing a subject holding onto an item that in the officers opinion is an illegal substance.
2. There is specific information that should be considered when documenting the facts of the investigation and seizure of the controlled substance. A few are:
  - a. Knowledge. How did the officer know to act on his/her observation. Describe education, experience and training relative to narcotics related incidents.
  - b. Setting. Was the officer in a general area and just happened to see what occurred, or did the officer have specific information regarding criminal activity, or specific information regarding the presence of subjects involved in this type of activity at this specific location or area?
  - c. Suspect's actions. Describe, in detail, the actions of the suspect prior to, during, and after the incident, paying particular attention to the action that caught the officer's attention and subsequently formed the suspicion of criminal activity.
  - d. Defendant information. Describe how the defendant had knowledge of the presence of the substance and whether it was in his/her immediate possession/control. Include the defendant's physical demeanor or appearance, drug debris on the person, drug paraphernalia, prior arrests, associates, literature, notes, ledgers etc.
  - e. Quantity. Describe the amount of the substance and the manner that it is packaged to determine whether the suspect possesses the substance for sale or for personal use.
    - (1) Pay attention to statements by the suspect indicating that he is not a user of the substance which may indicate that he is selling it.
    - (2) Also, pay attention to any marks on the person and signs or symptoms of influence which could indicate consumption.
  - f. Money. Note the amount of money on the suspect's person and the denominations. A seller in possession would probably have more money on his/her person than a user who has spent his/her funds on what they possess.
  - g. Presumptive tests. If possible, describe any presumptive tests of the substance, indicating what the results were and how the test was administered (e.g., Valtox).



## XI. THEFT REPORTS

1. Initially, the elements should be determined to distinguish between grand theft, petty theft, robbery and burglary. These suggestions are not part of patrol procedures, or safe response guidelines, but only information for gathering specific details for the report.
2. In addition to the general information, and after determining that the crime is petty or grand theft, and not robbery or burglary, the report should include sufficient detail describing the following:
  - a. Through the interview process, the student must determine if the crime is a felony vs misdemeanor, even though the victim may say he was robbed.
  - b. What were the actions of the victim, suspect and witness prior, during and after the crime?
  - c. What were the exact words spoken by the suspect?
  - d. What type of property was taken and where was it taken from?
  - e. What is the value of the property taken?
  - f. How did the suspect come to and leave the scene?
  - g. What relationship, if any, is there between the victim and suspect?
  - h. What was the location of the witness at the time of the theft (was the witness able to see what he is reporting)?



**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR EXERCISES  
FOR LEARNING DOMAIN #18**

5.5.2 Given a depiction of an arrest situation which is based upon a POST-developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent academy-developed video, simulation, or scenario, the student will generate an acceptable report in class. The report must reflect an arrest situation which minimally incorporates:

- A. Elements of a crime
- B. Probable cause to stop
- C. Probable cause to search/seize
- D. Recovery of evidence
- E. Probable cause to arrest
- F. Admonishment of the suspect, if appropriate

To be considered acceptable, the report must meet the following criteria:

- A. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized, showing a sufficient command of the language to communicate the information
- B. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report.
- C. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice) that diminish its evidentiary value or usefulness.
- D. The time required to complete the report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program

5.5.3 Given a depiction of a criminal investigation which is based upon a POST-developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent academy-developed video, simulation, or scenario, the student will generate acceptable report in class. The report must reflect a criminal investigation which minimally incorporates:

- A. Elements of a crime
- B. Statements of victim(s) and/or witness(es)
- C. Pertinent crime scene details
- D. Physical evidence

To be considered acceptable, the report must meet the following criteria:

- A. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized, showing a sufficient command of the language to communicate the information
- B. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report.
- C. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice) that diminish its evidentiary value or usefulness.
- D. The time required to complete the report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program



**REQUIRED LEARNING ACTIVITY  
LEARNING DOMAIN #18**

- A. Students will be required to write five practice reports based on either POST-developed video re-enactments of crimes, investigations or law enforcement-related incidents, or based upon equivalent simulations, scenarios or videotape depictions developed by the academy
- B. The events selected should require reports reflecting a progressive level of difficulty (e.g., from a simple incident or crime to more complex events involving the articulation of probable cause to stop, probable cause to arrest, statements of witnesses, etc.)
- C. Each learning activity must incorporate:
  - 1. Generation of appropriate field notes narrative
  - 2. Formal feedback to the student regarding the quality of student writing. The purpose of requiring feedback is to provide ongoing evaluation and documentation of student strengths and weaknesses so that the student is able to progressively improve

Assessment of the practice reports should address:

- a. The adequacy of the decisions made by the cadet regarding the incident/crime. This includes:
  - (1) The determination of the existence or nonexistence of a crime
  - (2) If a crime has been committed, the proper identification of that crime
  - (3) The taking of proper safety measures
  - (4) The preservation of evidence
  - (5) The capturing of all essential information
- b. The ability of the report/narrative to communicate with the reader and employ proper format and conventions. This includes:
  - (1) The organization and development of the report
  - (2) The inclusion of relevant information
  - (3) The anticipation of possible defenses that might be asserted by the suspect
  - (4) The use of the active voice
  - (5) The use of the first person



- (6) The proper use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice

TOPICAL LIST OF SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND  
REFERENCES INCLUDED IN THIS SECTION

None included