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# Report Writing Manual

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Sacramento State Police Department

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SACRAMENTO STATE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
REPORT WRITING MANUAL

PART I  
GENERAL REPORT WRITING GUIDELINES

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidance to police and community service officers at the Sacramento State Police Department regarding report writing. A law enforcement officer's ability to document the facts and activities of an incident directly reflects of the professionalism of the officer and the department, and also affects the ability of the justice system to successfully prosecute a criminal case.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nearly half of a police officer's work involves writing, and because of this, the best arrests will go unprosecuted if the reporting officers do not have the necessary writing skills to record their actions in a case clearly, concisely, and accurately, with sufficient detail.

An officer's report must document every incident in a complete, clear, and concise manner. Any arrest, follow up investigation, prosecution, or administrative action that is to be taken as a result of the report must be initiated, supported, or justified by the information contained solely within the body of the report.

Consequently, every police report must be able to withstand critical review and legal scrutiny, and must be truthful, unbiased, and unprejudiced. Moreover, police officers have a moral and legal obligation to investigate all crimes that are reported to them.

## **USES OF POLICE REPORTS**

Police reports have many different uses, both within the criminal justice system and beyond:

### **Identification of Criminals**

Police reports assist with the identification, apprehension and prosecution of criminals by serving as a source document for filing criminal complaints, by providing a record of all investigations, and providing a basis for additional follow up investigations.

### **Investigative Record**

Police reports aid prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other law enforcement agencies by providing records of all investigations and serving as source documents for criminal prosecution, as well as documenting agency actions.

### **Court Preparation**

Police reports assist officers prior to or during court appearances by refreshing the officer's memory before testifying, or preparing to provide hearsay testimony at preliminary hearings.

### **Civil Liability Assessment**

Police reports are essential for risk managers, insurance companies, and civil litigation attorneys for use in determining potential civil liability by documenting events such as accidents or injuries on city, county, or state property, workman's compensation type injuries, as well as to presenting justification for an officer's behavior or actions in a civil complaint or lawsuit against the officer.

## **Statistical Analysis**

Police reports assist police and civilian administrators as well as the campus community by providing statistical information for analysis of crime trends, equipment needs, manpower issues, continued professional training requirements, and assist in the evaluation of officer performance.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE POLICE REPORT**

On a daily basis, police officers are faced with a variety of events and incidents. At each one, officers are required to make significant decisions, oftentimes without delay, and while under stress or the benefit of all the facts regarding the situation. For this reason, crime and incident reports must reflect the details of the specific crime or incident for further reference and use. While the details of every incident or crime report will likely vary, there are six characteristics that all effective reports have in common.

An effective police report is always:

1. **Factual.** A police report is an objective accounting of the relevant and observed facts of the case, and any conclusions made by the reporting officer must be supported by articulated and documented facts. Unsubstantiated opinions or conclusions are never to be included in an effective report.
2. **Accurate.** The decisions and actions taken as a result of the report must be supported by accurate information contained in the report. If any information is inaccurate, the credibility and reliability of the report will likely be jeopardized. Accuracy is achieved by carefully, precisely, and honestly reporting of all relevant information.
3. **Clear.** A police report speaks for the reporting officer when he or she is not present. There should be no doubt or confusion regarding what happened during an incident or crime, based upon the content of a police report. Clarity in report writing is achieved by clear and logical organization of information, the judicious use of simple, common, and first person language, and effective writing mechanics.
4. **Concise.** Reports should be brief but also contain all relevant information necessary for a complete understanding of the crime or incident, without additional explanation. Brevity should never take precedence over accuracy, completeness, or clarity in report writing.
5. **Complete.** A complete report will contain all the relevant facts, information, and details that the reader will need to have in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the crime or incident described in the report. The report is complete when it is a complete word picture of the incident, there are no questions left unanswered by the reader, officer actions are explained and justified by the contents of the report, and both supporting and conflicting information is included.
6. **Timely.** No decisions can be made or actions taken regarding an arrest or request for follow up investigation if a report is not submitted in a timely fashion.

## **FIELD NOTES**

An officer's field notes are the original source documents used to write a police report. For this reason, if field notes are incomplete, poorly organized, or illegible, they will be of little use to the officer in writing the resulting police report. For this reason, field notes should always be taken at the scene, especially when interviewing suspect, victims or witnesses, and whenever the officer wishes to remember specific details at a later time.

When writing field notes, officers should consider that field notes are typically more reliable than memory, especially since reports are typically written several hours after a specific incident or crime has occurred. This time lapse can often cause an officer to easily forget or confuse certain types of information, especially times, observations, addresses, and key words and phrases from statements. Moreover, the judicious use of field notes can minimize or even eliminate the need to recontact the involved parties in a case at a later time.

Every event, incident, and crime is different, and for this reason, the facts and information needed by the officer to write a police report is different. However, field notes should always be able to answer the questions what, where, when, who, how, and why regarding the incident.

Regardless of how the individual officer decides to take field notes, the following information is a snapshot of the items that should be included in field notes.

	<b>Basic Information</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
<b>Victims and Witnesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full name</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Date of birth</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Telephone numbers (home, work, cellular)</li> <li>• Address</li> <li>• Email address(es)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to contact by telephone or in person</li> <li>• Best place to contact</li> <li>• Best time to contact</li> <li>• Place of employment (including name and telephone number)</li> </ul>
<b>Occurrence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of crime</li> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Date and time of incident</li> <li>• Was physical evidence handled by officer, suspect, or victim?</li> <li>• Disposition and chain of custody for all evidence</li> <li>• Suspect direction of travel</li> <li>• Type and description of weapons</li> <li>• Threats made with weapons</li> <li>• Direct statements made by suspect</li> <li>• Case number</li> <li>• Assisting officer's actions (and supplements, if necessary)</li> </ul>	<p>All persons involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informants</li> <li>• Reporting party</li> <li>• Victims</li> <li>• Witnesses</li> <li>• Suspects, if known</li> <li>• Officers</li> <li>• Outside agencies and members of outside agencies</li> <li>• Medical personnel</li> <li>• Members of the media</li> </ul>

	<b>Basic Information</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
<b>Suspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Build</li> <li>• Height</li> <li>• Weight</li> <li>• Eye color</li> <li>• Hair color</li> <li>• Hair style</li> <li>• Facial hair</li> <li>• Clothing type</li> <li>• Clothing color</li> <li>• Clothing style</li> <li>• Name and/or street name, if known</li> <li>• Unusual physical attributes, such as scars, tattoos, a limp, moles, odor, and missing teeth</li> <li>• Can the suspect be identified by the victim or witness?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unusual or memorable gestures</li> <li>• Speech peculiarities, such as accents, tone, pitch, or noticeable speech disorder, such as stuttering</li> <li>• Jewelry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rings (identify which hand and finger)</li> <li>○ Necklaces</li> <li>○ Earrings</li> <li>○ Body piercings</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Right or left handed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Which hand was dominant?</li> <li>○ Which hand held the weapon?</li> <li>○ Which hand opened a door?</li> <li>○ Where was a watch worn?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gang affiliation (if known)</li> </ul>
<b>Incident Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scene description and photographs (if available)</li> <li>• Point of entry</li> <li>• Point of exit</li> <li>• Description of property damage</li> <li>• Types and values of property taken</li> <li>• Description of suspect vehicle</li> <li>• Nature and location of evidence collected</li> <li>• Suspect and victim injuries</li> <li>• Unique characteristics of the crime</li> <li>• Anything else not already mentioned that the officer believes is relevant to the case</li> </ul>	

## **NOTE TAKING AND CONDUCTING FIELD INTERVIEWS**

Typically, field notes are obtained from the officer's direct observations and from field interviews with suspects, victims, and witnesses. The field interview, however, is where the officer will learn the majority of the information about a crime or incident. Therefore, the statements taken during a field interview are often critical to learning about the specific facts of

a case, because the existence of certain crime elements may only be revealed from the statements of witnesses, victims, and the suspects of a case.

An effective field interview should generally follow the following five step format.

1. **Separate the involved parties.** This minimizes distractions and interruptions. Separating the involved parties also focuses their attention on speaking to the officer, rather than each other, and also minimizes manipulation of witness statements by other involved parties.
2. **Establish rapport.** Be courteous, considerate, and patient. Briefly tell the person being interviewed why the interview is being conducted, and describe the interview process to the individual.
3. **Listen attentively.** Ask the person what happened, and allow them to talk about it freely. Let them explain it in terms that they understand. Be sure to keep the person focused on the main subject being discussed in the interview. If they begin to get off topic, guide the person back to the subject, and always use active listening skills to encourage the person to talk. Listen carefully, and pay attention to the details of the incident. Don't take notes at this point in the interview!
4. **Take notes/Ask questions.** Ask the person to repeat their account of what happened, but stop the person and ask questions for clarification, where necessary. Take notes, but write in short, simple statements, highlighting the important thoughts or ideas. Be sure to obtain accurate identification information for the person at this point, and ask any additional questions that are necessary for clarification.
5. **Verify information.** Repeat specific information to the person being interviewed from the notes taken in the previous step, to ensure accuracy, and give them an opportunity to add facts. Be sure to confirm direct quotes, time relationships, weapons information, and physical descriptions of suspects. Be sure to verify any changes made in this stage.

It is important to note that while some officers may elect to record an interview with a digital voice or tape recorder, the use of a recorder may inhibit an individual from talking freely. Also, electronic devices can malfunction or fail, thereby eliminating the information from the interview. If interviews are recorded, officers should also take written notes as a backup in the event of mechanical or device failure.

## **IMPORTANT FIELD INTERVIEW SKILLS**

One of the most important skills that officers are required to have while conducting a field interview and taking field notes is determining the difference between opinions, facts, and conclusions in a statement given by a suspect or witness. Another important skill is being able to determine what information is relevant to the case or incident.

Opinions are statements that can be open to interpretation, or expresses a belief not supported by the facts of a case, while a fact is a statement that can be verified or proven by the facts of the case. A conclusion is a statement that is based upon the analysis of opinions and conclusions, and a conclusion should always be accompanied with the supporting facts and opinions.

Generally, relevant facts typically establish the facts of the case or elements of the crime. Irrelevant facts, on the other hand, usually furnish details that are not elements of the crime, or provide information that may dilute the facts of the case.

### **QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY AN EFFECTIVE REPORT**

The facts and questions that an officer includes in his or her field notes should typically provide the foundation for an effective police report. As discussed earlier, an effective police report should always answer the questions who, what, where, when, how, and why.

If any of the six questions cannot be answered by the officer's report, the report should contain as much information as possible, as the information can prove to be vital to investigators, attorneys, and other users of the report.

The following table presents examples of the specific facts and information that can be included in the body of the report to help answer of the six questions. It is not intended to be all inclusive, and used as a guide. Specific crimes or incidents will require certain information that should be noted by the investigating officer in the report.

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



	<b>Supporting Facts/Information</b>
<b>Where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• was the crime committed?</li> <li>• was the crime discovered?</li> <li>• was entry made?</li> <li>• was the exit?</li> <li>• was the weapon obtained that was used to commit the crime?</li> <li>• was the victim found?</li> <li>• was the suspect seen during the crime?</li> <li>• was the suspect last seen?</li> <li>• were the witnesses during the crime?</li> <li>• did the suspect live?</li> <li>• does the suspect currently live?</li> <li>• is the suspect now?</li> <li>• would the suspect likely go?</li> <li>• was the evidence found?</li> <li>• was the evidence stored?</li> </ul>
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are the involved parties in the incident? (i.e., victim(s), witness(es), suspect(s))</li> <li>• were the participating officers?</li> <li>• was the complainant?</li> <li>• discovered the crime?</li> <li>• saw or heard anything of importance?</li> <li>• had a motive for committing the crime?</li> <li>• committed the crime?</li> <li>• had the means to commit the crime?</li> <li>• had access to the crime scene?</li> <li>• searched for, identified and gathered evidence?</li> </ul> <p>Also with whom...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did the victim associate?</li> <li>• did the suspect associate?</li> <li>• was the victim last seen?</li> <li>• do the witnesses associate?</li> <li>• did the suspect commit the crime?</li> </ul> <p>Additional information regarding specific people can include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• phone numbers (home, cellular and work)</li> <li>• addresses (home, work, and email)</li> <li>• age and date of birth</li> <li>• social security number</li> <li>• occupations</li> <li>• physical descriptions as required</li> </ul>

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

## FUNDAMENTAL REPORT CONTENT

As previously stated, every crime or incident is different, and as a result, each report will require different information to complete a total word picture about the incident. However, every report should have certain content elements, regardless of the crime that was committed.

The following general content elements are fundamental to an effective report, however, it should be noted that in some crimes or incidents, a specific element may not be applicable.

1. **Initial information.** This should establish how the officer became involved with the specific incident and additional background information. The initial information should also describe the officer's immediate observations and any actions they took upon arrival at the scene.
2. **Identification of the crime or incident.** Always include the facts that are necessary to show that the specific crime or incident has taken place. The report should include the common name of the crime, the statutory reference number and the required elements necessary for the crime to be complete.
3. **Identification of the involved parties.** Regardless of the type of report, the report should always identify the reporting persons, victims, witnesses and suspects, if known. Always include full names, address, home, work and cellular telephone numbers. Include alternate contact information, such as work or school addresses, email addresses, and their role in the incident.
4. **Victim/witness/suspect statements.** Summary statements of all involved parties should be taken and direct quotes used, where necessary. Statements should always include the details of the events, from their own perspective.
5. **Crime scene specifics/description.** Crime scene specifics are necessary to accurately re-create the scene and events of the crime. Include photographs, where possible, and include the locations of physical evidence prior to collection. Photographs should be printed for inclusion with the report, and booked as property as evidence, where applicable.

6. **Property information.** Property information should include the color, make, model, serial number, approximate value, and full descriptions where possible. Details pertaining to stolen or recovered property, as well as property booked for safekeeping, and property booked as evidence should always be included in the report, and entered into CLETS, where applicable.
7. **Officer actions/observations.** Include descriptions and observations of all actions related to the incident. If multiple officers responded to a crime or incident, each officer involved should include a supplement that details their own actions at the incident or crime, and the supplement should be submitted for inclusion with the master report. All reports, whether a master report or supplemental report, should be written from the perspective of the writing officer, and detail their own personal actions or observations

## **RECOMMENDED GRAMMAR FOR REPORTS**

An effective report must always exhibit the writer's command of the English language, and be relatively free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and other writing mechanics, and the more effective the officer's command of the written language, the greater the clarity of the written report.

Due to the large number of grammatical guidelines in the English language, officers should have a basic understanding of the basic building blocks of sentence structure when writing reports.

### **Nouns**

Nouns are naming words, and could be used to identify people, places, or things.

### **Proper nouns**

Proper nouns refer to specific places, persons, or things, and always should begin with a capital letter. When referring to a specific person within a report, officers should use proper nouns. After the proper noun has been used once, just the last name may be used when referring to the same person.

### **Pronouns**

Pronouns are words that substitute for a noun or proper noun. There are two types of pronouns primarily used in report writing.

- **First person pronouns.** First person pronouns are used when referring to the officer writing the reports. Some examples are I/me/mine/my and we/our/ours/us (when riding with a beat partner). First person pronouns can also be used within quotes to refer to the person speaking (Wilson told me, "I ran as fast as I could."). Officers should always use first person pronouns when referring to themselves, because by doing so, the reader has a clear understanding of the officer's actions.
- **Third person pronouns.** Third person pronouns refer to the person, place or thing being written about. Examples are he/his/him, it/its and they/their/them. Third person pronouns must always agree and clearly refer to the noun or proper noun that is directly before it.

### **Tense**

Since most investigative reports are written about things that have already happened, the words that are used should clearly indicate the events occurred in the past. This is expressed through the tense of the action words (or verbs) in the report. Tense can be either present or past tense.

- Present tense. Present tense verbs express an action currently taking place. For example, the phrase “I am reading this manual” is written in the present tense.
- Past tense. Past tense verbs express actions completed in the past. For example, the phrase “I read this manual last week” is written in the past tense.

**Voice**

The term “voice,” when used to describe a type of verb, refers to whether the verb is active or passive. Reports should always be written in the active voice, as most readers find sentences written in the active voice easier to follow and understand.

- Active voice. A verb is in the active voice when the subject of the sentence is the individual or thing that is doing or performing the action. An example would be “I gave the report form to the victim.”
- Passive voice. A verb is in the passive voice when the subject of the sentence is someone or something other than the performer of the action in the sentence. *A common indicator of passive voice is the word “by” in the sentence.* An example would be “The victim was given the report form by me.”

**WRITING CLEARLY AND LOGICALLY**

As previously discussed, effective police reports must be organized, logical, and present all relevant information simply. An effective report must also be written in plain English in order to be useful and understandable for the reader.

**Paragraphs**

Paragraphs are the structural units for grouping information. Regardless of whether a narrative style format or a category format is used for the investigative report, all paragraphs within the report must be clear and easy to understand.

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

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

<b>Poorly Organized</b>	<b>Well Organized</b>
When we arrived, the husband let us into the house. We were responding to a 9-1-1 call. My partner and I had been dispatched to an incident of domestic violence. A woman called for help to keep her husband from beating her.	My partner and I were dispatched to a domestic violence incident after a woman dialed 9-1-1. The woman called for help because she was afraid her husband would beat her. When we arrived, the husband let us into the house.
Marie Parker said her husband refused to answer the door at first when he heard the man on the other side begin to shout. I took her statement approximately 45 minutes after the assault took place. She was sitting in the	I took Marie Parker’s statement approximately 45 minutes after the assault took place. Parker said she was sitting in the family room when her husband went to see who was at the door. Initially her husband refused to answer the

family room when her husband went to see who was at the door.	door when he heard the man on the other side begin to shout.
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### **Transitions**

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

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

<b>Type of Transition</b>	<b>Words/Phrases</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately</li> <li>• In the meantime</li> <li>• At the same time</li> <li>• When</li> <li>• Before</li> <li>• Prior to</li> </ul>	<p>Caster said he noticed the door was not completely shut, so he decided to find out why.</p> <p><b>Immediately after</b> entering the room, he saw the window was broken.</p>
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near</li> <li>• Beyond</li> <li>• Next to</li> <li>• Under</li> <li>• Behind</li> <li>• Around</li> </ul>	<p>Caster said he saw broken glass on the floor under the window.</p> <p><b>Near the</b> glass, he saw a large brick.</p>
Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finally</li> <li>• In addition</li> <li>• Lastly</li> <li>• First</li> <li>• Then</li> <li>• Further</li> </ul>	<p><b>In addition,</b> Caster saw his laptop computer was not on the desk where he left it the night before.</p>

### **Concrete vs Abstract Words**

Reports should be written using simple, common, and concrete language whenever possible. The use of simple language can help keep reports concise and brief, and addresses relevant information quickly and clearly.

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

<b>Abstract Words</b>	<b>Concrete Words</b>
A number of ...	Seven...
At a high rate of speed...	75 MPH...
Appeared intoxicated...	Breath smelled of an alcoholic beverage...

<b>Abstract Words</b>	<b>Concrete Words</b>
Hostile behavior...	Repeatedly struck at officers...
Physical confrontation...	Fight...
Verbal altercation...	Argument...
Extensive record...	Six DUI offenses over two years...
Employed...	Used...
Dispute...	Argument...
Inquired...	Asked...
In the vicinity of...	Near...
Articulated...	Said, told...
Hit...	Punched, slapped or clubbed...

### **Homonyms**

Homonyms are words that sound the same, but have different meanings. There are a number of frequently used words that sound alike, but have completely different spellings and meanings. When writing reports, officers should ensure that they are using the correct word for what they are trying to express.

The following table identifies the most commonly confused sound-alike words.

<b>Words</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Accept	To take with approval, or agree to	I accepted the medal with pride
Except	To omit or exclude; preposition meaning 'but'	We did everything except interview the witnesses.
Access	An approach, admittance, or route	There is an access road running east to west in front of the drug store.
Excess	Surplus; an amount greater than wanted	The amount of cocaine found was in excess of what had been initially reported.
Advice	Worthy suggestion or information; noun	My sergeant gave me advice on how to handle the situation.
Advise	To give suggestions, data or counsel; verb	My sergeant advised me on how to handle the situation.
Affect	To act upon or produce change or influence; verb	The suspect was affected by the pepper spray.
Effect	Result of cause; belongings; noun	Dilated pupils are a physical effect of the drug. The coroner removed the personal effects from the victim.
Allude	Make reference to	The witness alluded to the suspect's collection of guns.
Elude	To escape or evade	The suspect eluded arrest by going into a store.

<b>Words</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Assure	To offer assurances	The officer assured the victim that the batterer would be jailed.
Ensure	To make certain	The officer ensured the suspect was correctly handcuffed.
Insure	To make secure or certain (as with ensure); or to guarantee life or property against risk.	The man insured his house against fire and floods.
Brake	To stop a vehicle	Her car's brakes failed, and she ran into the truck in front of her.
Break	To burglarize a home or other structure; forcibly entering or exiting a house or structure; to damage.	The officer watched the suspect break into the store.
Cite	Refer to an official document or rule as proof; verb	The district attorney cited the penal code.
Site	Place or setting of an event; noun	The officers returned to the site of the crime to gather more evidence.
Sight	Ability to see	The contraband lay on the table in plain sight.
Elicit	To draw out or forth; evoke	The officer was able to elicit a confession from the suspect.
Illicit	Something not permitted by law	The suspect had committed an illicit act.
Formally	Something done ceremoniously or in a regular, methodical fashion	The suspect was formally indicted in for the crime.
Formerly	Something that happened in the past	He was formerly a detective.
Hear	To perceive sound	The officers could hear the argument through the door.
Here	Place or location	I asked the victim to come here and answer some questions.
Its	Adjective showing possession	The car lost its rear hubcap when the officer drove over the curb.
It's	Contraction of 'it is' or 'it has'	It's been six years since the officer was hired.
Know	To be cognizant of or be acquainted with	The victim claimed that she did not know the suspect.
No	Negative	The suspect said, "No."
Pain	Strong sense of hurt	The victim screamed in pain after being Tasered.

<b>Words</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Pane	Window glass set in a frame	The burglar had broken the pane to gain access to the house.
Passed	To move forward or around; to circulate	As we pursued the suspect, we passed four other vehicles on the freeway.
Past	History; ended or accomplished, beyond	The suspect had a number of past convictions.
Personal	Belonging to someone	The suspect's personal effects were booked into property.
Personnel	Company's employees	The department had a personnel meeting.
Precede	To go before in time, place or rank	The burglary preceded the rape.
Proceed	To advance, go toward	The burglary then proceeded to the bedroom.
Pride	Self-esteem	The officer took great pride in his work.
Pried	To raise, move, or force with a lever (past tense of pry)	The burglar pried the window open with a screwdriver.
Principal	Chief official; chief actor or perpetrator present at time of crime	Gary Moreno was the principal person involved in the burglary.
Principle	Rule of conduct; law of nature or scientific fact	Police officers are expected to uphold high moral principles.
Quiet	Still or silent	When we arrived at the dispute, the house was quiet.
Quite	To a great degree; completely	The suspect was quite agitated and began sweating.
Scene	Location of an event	The officers secured the crime scene.
Seen	Past tense of "to see" (sight)	The suspect was seen running from the house.
Steal	To take without permission	Robbery and theft are forms of stealing.
Steel	Strong alloy of iron	The pipe was made of steel.
Than	Introduces comparative clauses	The suspect was taller than me.
Then	Designates time (next)	The suspects then fled from the bank on foot.
There	At or in that place; to, toward, or into	Morez went there after she talked



Words	Definitions	Examples
	that place	with the officer.
They're	Short form of 'they are'	The woman said, "They're going to shoot him."
Their	Possession of them, by them	The brothers went by their home on their way to the corner.
Threw	Past tense of "throw"	She threw the vase at her husband.
Through	Motion from side to side or end to end within something	The suspect ran through the mall to evade arrest.
To	Movement toward a place, person, or thing	The victim stated he was going to the grocery store when he was stopped.
Too	Also, besides, in excessive degree	The reporting party stated that the noise was too loud for her to hear the person talking
Two	The number two (2)	The building had two entrances
Waist	Part of the body between the ribs and the hips	The suspect grabbed the victim around the waist and wrestled her to the ground.
Waste	To consume, weaken, or squander	She wasted water by washing her car twice every day.
Weak	Not strong	His use of heroin left him very weak.
Week	Seven days' duration	The suspect stalked his victim for three weeks.
Your	Belongs to a specific you or a specific person	Young heard Johnson say, "Your dog is on my property again."
You're	Short form of 'you are'	The officer said you're under arrest.
Wave	To signal	She waved to her neighbor.
Waive	To surrender or relinquish	She waived her Miranda rights.

## PROOFREADING

Proofreading may seem time-consuming, tedious, and difficult, but when writing reports where accuracy, clarity, and completeness are important, proofreading is critical. It is a difficult skill to master, yet one that cannot be overlooked.

When proofreading a report, special attention should be devoted to ensure that the following basic questions are answered:

- Are the correct crimes cited in the report?
- Is the information in the proper order?

- Are all crime elements articulated?
- Are the facts of the case correct (based on the officer's field notes)?
- Is the report well organized?
- Is all necessary information included?
- Are things said efficiently or too wordy?
- Are all conclusions supported by facts?
- Are there any gaps in logic?
- Are the names spelled correctly?

### **Proofreading Mechanics**

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

- Inappropriate use of nouns, pronouns verbs, etc.
- Vague or confusing language
- Incorrect or inappropriate use of words
- Gaps in logic or narrative flow
- Spelling errors
- Inappropriate punctuation
- Incorrect use of police, fire or EMS abbreviations
- Overuse of words, such as "that"

One of the most effective methods for proofreading the content and mechanics of any report is to slowly read the completed report aloud. When sentences are heard, it is often easier to identify mechanical errors, gaps in logical flow, skewed time sequences, incorrect verb tenses and cumbersome phrasing.

SACRAMENTO STATE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
REPORT WRITING MANUAL

PART II  
INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
REPORT FORM COMPLETION

## COMPLETION OF THE REPORT DISTRICT ATTORNEY COVER SHEET

The district attorney cover sheet shall be completed for all reports that are to be submitted to the Sacramento County District Attorney for prosecution.

***NOTE:** The responsibility for delivery of department reports to the District Attorney's office in a timely manner rests with the day shift supervisor or officer in charge, and the department detectives' office.*

The district attorney cover sheet shall be completed according to the following instructions.

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY COVER SHEET INSTRUCTIONS

**Offense.** Enter the applicable numerical code section and source for the crime being reported. If multiple crimes are being charged, this field shall contain the most serious offense.

**Report Number.** Enter the CSUS Police Department report number, preceded by the two digit year.

**In Custody Checkbox.** Check this box if the case involves an in-custody arrest.

**Cite & Release Checkbox.** Check this box if the case involves a cite and release.

**Warrant Request Checkbox.** Check this box if the case is a warrant request.

**Attn:** Enter "Intake District Attorney".

**Date/Time of Offense.** Enter the date and time the offense being charged was committed.

**Date/Time of Arrest.** Enter the date and time the suspect was arrested. If the request is a warrant request, leave blank.

**Victim #1.** Enter the last name, first name, and middle name of the primary victim.

**Victim #2.** Enter the last name, first name, and middle name of the secondary victim. If there is no secondary victim, leave blank.

**Suspect.** Enter the last name, first name, and middle name of the suspect.

**Age.** Enter the age of the suspect.

**Charge.** Enter all charges and source for the crime or crimes being reported. Enter one charge per line.

**CII #.** Enter the CII number for the suspect, if the suspect has one.

**XREF#.** Enter the Sacramento County XREF number. An XREF must be created for the suspect before the case can be taken to the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office. Contact CSUS Police dispatch for creation of an XREF number, if the suspect does not have one.

**Rap Info Enc Checkbox.** Check this box if the NCIC criminal history information is enclosed with the report. NCIC criminal history information is required before the case can be taken to the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office.

**Rap Info Ordered Checkbox.** Obsolete. Do not use.

**Rap Info No Rec Checkbox.** Check this box if the suspect does not have any criminal history.

**Case Summary.** Enter a short description that accurately describes the case and outlines all charged sections.

**Submitting Officer.** Enter the first initial, last name, and badge number of the submitting officer.

**Detail.** Enter "Patrol" or other current assignment.

**Phone.** Enter the ten digit department telephone number.

**Reviewing Officer.** Enter the first initial, last name, and badge number of the reviewing officer.

**Date/Time Submitted.** Enter the date and time the report was reviewed by the reviewing officer.

## **COMPLETION OF THE REPORT FACE PAGE**

The report face page shall be completed for all primary investigative or incident reports, but is not required on supplemental reports.

The face page contains seven blocks of data, with form fields. Each of the fields shall be completed according to the following instructions.

### **Block A – Report Header Block (Report Information)**

**Juvenile Involved Checkbox.** Check this box if the report involves a juvenile under 18 years of age.

**Confidential Checkbox.** Check this box if the crime involves §220, §236.1, §261, §261.5, §262, §264, §264.1, §265, §266, §266a, §266b, §266c, §266e, §266f, §266j, §267, §269, §273a, §273d, §273.5, §285, §286, §288, §288a, §288.2, §288.3, §288.3, §288.5, §288.7, §289, §422.6, §422.7, §422.75, §646.9, or §647.6 of the California Penal Code, and the victim has elected to exercise their right to confidentiality.

**Property/Evidence Booking Checkbox.** Check this box if property or evidence was booked in association to the report.

**Photos Checkbox.** Check this box if photographs were taken.

Photographs must be printed on a separate sheet of paper, and labeled as an attachment to the report. Multiple photographs may be printed on the same paper, as long as each photograph printed is individually labeled.

Each photograph shall be labeled as “Photograph #1, Photograph #2, Photograph #3”, and so forth, for ease of reference within the report narrative.

Photographs shall not be incorporated into the report narrative.

**Prints Checkbox.** Check this box if latent fingerprints were successfully lifted in association to the report.

**Alcohol Related Checkbox.** Check this box if alcohol was involved in the incident or crime.

**CR Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is a crime report. A crime report is defined as any occurrence in which a criminal violation occurred, even if the victim does not want prosecution, or only wants the report for “documentation purposes.”

**IR Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is an incident report, with no crime involved.

**CAS Checkbox.** Check this box if the report involves a casualty. A casualty is defined as any injury or complaint of pain that occurs to a citizen, regardless of the mode or method of injury. A report is a casualty report even if the citizen does not request medical aid, refuses medical aid or transport, or states they will visit their personal physician.

All casualty reports must be forwarded to the Sacramento State Risk Management Office.

**MP Checkbox.** Check this box if the report if the report involves a missing person.

**W&I Checkbox.** Check this box if the report involves a violation of any section of the Welfare and Institutions code.

**WA Checkbox.** Check this box if the report involves a warrant arrest, without any fresh charges added.

**Date/Time of Call.** Enter the date and time of call.

**Location of Occurrence.** Enter the location where the crime or incident occurred, whenever possible. If the crime or incident location is not known, enter “Unknown” into the field.

For known locations, enter the complete address for the location, to include the street, city, state and five digit zip code.

For locations that are on the Sacramento State campus, if the report or incident being reported occurred in a room or building, include the building and room number, in addition to the complete address.

**Report Number.** Enter the Sacramento State Police Department report number.

**Crime Definition.** Enter the common name of the most serious charge articulated in the report.

**Code Section.** Enter the applicable numerical code section for the crime being reported. The code section shall match the crime definition field.

**Source.** Enter the appropriate code source for the code section being reported.

**Event Number.** Enter the Sacramento State Police Department CAD identification number for the call being reported.

**Connected Reports.** Enter the report number(s) for any reports that are connected to the current reports. Reports that are connected are those associated by MO, suspect, victim, reporting party, or location.

If the incident being reported involves an outside agency assist, enter the outside agency report number.

If there are no connected reports, leave the field blank.

**Agency.** Enter the originating agency for the report written in the connected reports field. If there are no report numbers entered in the connected reports field, leave blank.

**Occurred On/Between.** Enter the date on which the incident being reported occurred. If a date range, enter the beginning and ending dates for the date range.

**Day of Week.** Enter the day of week on which the incident being reported occurred. If a date range, enter the beginning and ending days for the date range. Days are abbreviated.

**Time Occurred.** Enter the date on which the incident being reported occurred. If a date range, enter the beginning and ending dates for the date range. Dates are entered in the mmddyyyy format.

**Latitude/Longitude.** Enter the latitude and longitude for the location where the crime or incident took place.

### **Block B, C & D – Involved Party Information Block**

**# Box.** Enter the involved party number, in numerical order, by party type.

**Vict Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a victim. Victims shall always be listed first on the facepage, before suspects, witnesses, reporting parties, or other involved parties. If the university is the victim, enter “California State University, Sacramento”.

**Susp Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a suspect. Suspects shall always be listed after victims, but before witnesses, reporting parties, or other involved parties.

**Witn Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a witness. Witnesses shall always be listed after victims and suspects, but before reporting parties, or other involved parties.

**RP Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a reporting party. Reporting parties shall always be listed after victims, suspects, and witnesses, but before other involved parties.

**Oth Checkbox.** Check this box if the party does not fit into any of the other categories. Other involved parties shall always be listed last on reports.

**Last Name/First Name/Middle.** Enter the last name, first name, and middle name of the involved party.

If the party is a business or entity, enter the business or entity name.

**Age.** Enter the age of the involved party. Calculated from the DOB field.

**DOB.** Enter the date of birth of the involved party. If the date of birth is not known or not applicable, leave blank.

**XREF.** Enter the involved party county XREF number, if known. If not known, leave blank.

**Univ Assoc.** Enter the involved party's association to the university. Selections are Faculty, Staff, Student or None.

**Address/Perm Address.** Enter the current mailing address of the involved party, which is not a post office box. If it is a permanent address, check the 'Y' checkbox, and if it is not a permanent mailing address, check the 'N' box.

If the involved party is a business or entity, enter the business or entity mailing address. If any college, department or division at the University is the involved party, enter the mailing address of the University.

**PRI Phone.** Enter the involved parties' primary telephone number where they can be reached the majority of the time, and ensure the number is a valid working number. If they have no telephone number, leave blank.

**SEC Phone.** Enter an secondary telephone number for the involved party where they may be contacted, and ensure the number is a valid working number.

**Sex.** Enter the sex of the involved party. Dropdown list.

**Race.** Enter the race of the involved party. Dropdown list.

**Drivers License - State.** Enter the involved party's driver's license number and abbreviation for the state of issue. If the involved party only has a state-issued identification card, enter the identification card number and state abbreviation. If the involved party has no driver's license or identification card, leave blank.

**Ht.** Enter the involved party's height. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank.

**Wt.** Enter the involved party's weight. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank.

**Hair.** Enter the involved party's hair color. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Build.** Enter the involved party's build. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Eyes.** Enter the involved party's eye color. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Comp.** Enter the involved party's complexion. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Vehicle Plate – State.** Enter the involved party's vehicle license plate number and state of issue, if it is relevant to the crime or incident being reported. If the vehicle was not issued a plate, enter the VIN. If the vehicle is not relevant to the incident, leave blank.

**Vehicle Year/Make/Model/Color/Other.** Enter the year, make, model, and color for the party's vehicle, if it is relevant to the crime or incident being reported. In the 'Other' field, enter the vehicle type, such as sport utility (SU), passenger car (PS), pickup (PK), cargo van (CV) or motorcycle (MC). Also indicate the number of doors on the vehicle, if applicable. If the vehicle is not relevant to the incident, leave blank.

**MO Checkbox.** Check the box, and enter the actions used by the individual(s) to execute the crime, prevent its detection and/or facilitate escape, and enter the method of operation in the free form text box below the checkbox if the information is applicable to the crime being reported. If not known, leave blank.

**Point of Entry Checkbox.** Check the box if the crime is a burglary or trespass and the point of entry is known. Enter the point of entry in the free form text box below the checkbox. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Method Used Checkbox.** Check the box if the instrumentality of the crime is known. Enter the instrumentality (hammer, screwdriver, bolt cutter, saw, ninja rock, etc) in the free form text box below the checkbox. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Weapons Checkbox.** Check this box, and enter any weapons used by the party. If not known, leave blank.

**Scars/Marks/Tattoos Checkbox.** Check this box, and enter any recognizable scars, marks, or tattoos on the party. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Other Information.** Check this box, and enter other pertinent information about the involved party. Information that can be entered in this field can be (but is not limited to) the party's email address or additional contact information, whether the party is a faculty member, staff member or student, or if they reside in a residence hall.

## **BLOCK E – CASE SUMMARY BLOCK**

Enter a brief summary of the case into this block that accurately describes the case and outlines all charged sections.

## **BLOCK F – CASE INFO BLOCK**

**Cleared Checkbox.** Check this box if the case is cleared by arrest or other means, and specify the reason for the status in the field below the checkbox. See Cleared Cases in the Case Status Information, below.

**Closed Checkbox.** Check this box if the case is closed, and specify the reason for the status in the field below the checkbox. See Closed Cases in the Case Status Information, below.

**Pending Checkbox.** Check this box if the case is pending follow-up, and specify the reason for the status in the field below the checkbox. See Pending Cases in the Case Status Information, below.

**Unfounded Checkbox.** Check this box if the case is unfounded, and specify the reason for the status in the field below the checkbox. See Unfounded Cases in the Case Status Information, below.

**Other Checkbox.** Check this box if the case has a status not already covered, and specify the status in the field below the checkbox.

**Notification To/DA Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is to be forwarded to the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, and specify the reason for the notification.

**Notification To/Detectives Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is to be forwarded to the CSUS investigations office and specify the reason for the notification

**Notification To/Outside Agency Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is to be forwarded to an outside agency, and specify the agency and reason for the notification.

**Notification To/Other Checkbox.** Check this box if the report is to be forwarded to another agency or department not already specified, and specify the reason for the notification.

**Marsy's Card/ NA Checkbox.** Check this box if a Marsy's Card was not required to be provided as a result of the current report.

**Marsy's Card/ Provided Checkbox.** Check this box if a Marsy's Card was provided as a result of the current report.

**Marsy's Card/ Mailed Checkbox.** Check this box if a Marsy's Card was provided by mail as a result of the current report.

**Records Property Entry/Initials.** Leave blank. This field is for dispatch/records use only.

**Records Property Entry/Entered Checkbox.** Leave blank. This field is for dispatch/records use only.



**Records Property Entry/Modified Checkbox.** Leave blank. This field is for dispatch/records use only.

**Records Property Entry/Taken Amt.** Enter the total value of all property taken, lost, missing, or stolen, where applicable.

**Records Property Entry/Recovery Amt.** Enter the total amount of all property recovered or found, where applicable.

**Records Property Entry/Est. Dam. Amt.** Enter the total amount of estimated damage, where applicable.

## **BLOCK G – OFFICER/SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE BLOCK**

**Reporting Officers/Badge.** Enter the first initial, last name and badge number of the reporting officers.

**Date Submitted.** Enter the date the report was submitted for approval.

**Approved By/Badge .** Enter the first initial, last name and badge number of the approving supervisor.

**Date Approved.** Enter the date the report was approved.

**Indexed By.** Leave blank, CSUS Records use only.

## **CASE STATUS INFORMATION**

**Cleared Cases.** A case is classified as cleared when at least one person is arrested, charged with the commission of the offense, and turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). Additionally, an offense is cleared when the offender is a person less than 18 years of age and is cited to appear in juvenile court or before other juvenile authorities.

A case can also be classified as cleared when some element beyond law enforcement control prevents filing of formal charges against the offender. A report can be classified as cleared if all of the following questions can be answered in the affirmative. (1) Has the investigation definitely established the identity of the offender? (2) Is there enough information to support an arrest, charge, and turning over to the court for prosecution? (3) Is the exact location of the offender known so that the subject could be taken into custody now? (4) Is there some reason outside law enforcement control that precludes arresting, charging, and prosecuting the offender (for example, suicide, deathbed confession, double murder, etc.)? Examples of such clearances are:

1. Suicide of the offender. (The person who committed the offense is dead.)
2. Double murder. (Two persons kill each other.)
3. Deathbed confession. (The person who committed the offense dies after making the confession.)
4. Offender killed by police or citizen.
5. Confession by an offender who is already in law enforcement custody or serving a sentence. (This is actually a variation of a true clearance by arrest—the offender would not be “apprehended” but in most situations would be prosecuted on the new charge.)
6. Offender is prosecuted by state or local authorities in another city for a different offense or is prosecuted in another city or state by the federal government for an offense which may be

the same. (Law enforcement makes an attempt to return the offender for prosecution, but the other jurisdiction will not allow the release.)

7. Extradition denied.
8. Victim refuses to cooperate in the prosecution.
9. Warrant is outstanding for felon but before being arrested the offender dies. (The method of death is irrelevant.)
10. The handling of a juvenile offender either orally or by written notice to parents in instances involving minor offenses such as petty larceny. No referral is made to juvenile court as a matter of publicly accepted law enforcement policy

**Closed Cases.** A case can be classified as closed when all investigation is complete, and no additional follow-up investigation can be conducted, however, suspect identification or prosecution is deemed to be remote or unlikely. In closed cases, all serialized property information must be known.

**Pending Cases.** A case can be classified as pending when follow up investigation is going to be conducted by the individual officer or detectives.

**Unfounded Cases.** A case is classified as unfounded when it is determined that the facts of the case are proven to be false.

**Other Cases.** Cases are classified as 'other' when they are outside agency assists, or incident reports.

## COMPLETION OF THE ADDITIONAL PARTIES PAGE

The additional parties page contains blocks for six additional involved parties, with the individual being identified as a victim, suspect, witness, reporting party, or other party for each for the six blocks.

The page should be used if there are more than three involved parties in the current report. The page should be completed according with the following instructions.

### **Additional Parties Information Blocks**

**# Box.** Enter the involved party number, in numerical order, by party type.

**Vict Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a victim. Victims shall always be listed first on the facepage, before suspects, witnesses, reporting parties, or other involved parties. If the university is the victim, enter "California State University, Sacramento".

**Susp Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a suspect. Suspects shall always be listed after victims, but before witnesses, reporting parties, or other involved parties.

**Witn Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a witness. Witnesses shall always be listed after victims and suspects, but before reporting parties, or other involved parties.

**RP Checkbox.** Check this box if the party is a reporting party. Reporting parties shall always be listed after victims, suspects, and witnesses, but before other involved parties.

**Oth Checkbox.** Check this box if the party does not fit into any of the other categories. Other involved parties shall always be listed last on reports.

**Last Name/First Name/Middle.** Enter the last name, first name, and middle name of the involved party.

If the party is a business or entity, enter the business or entity name.

**Age.** Enter the age of the involved party. Calculated from the DOB field.

**DOB.** Enter the date of birth of the involved party. If the date of birth is not known or not applicable, leave blank.

**XREF.** Enter the involved party county XREF number, if known. If not known, leave blank.

**Univ Assoc.** Enter the involved party's association to the university. Selections are Faculty, Staff, Student or None.

**Address/Perm Address.** Enter the current mailing address of the involved party, which is not a post office box. If it is a permanent address, check the 'Y' checkbox, and if it is not a permanent mailing address, check the 'N' box.

If the involved party is a business or entity, enter the business or entity mailing address. If any college, department or division at the University is the involved party, enter the mailing address of the University.

**PRI Phone.** Enter the involved parties' primary telephone number where they can be reached the majority of the time, and ensure the number is a valid working number. If they have no telephone number, leave blank.

**SEC Phone.** Enter an secondary telephone number for the involved party where they may be contacted, and ensure the number is a valid working number.

**Sex.** Enter the sex of the involved party. Dropdown list.

**Race.** Enter the race of the involved party. Dropdown list.

**Drivers License - State.** Enter the involved party's driver's license number and abbreviation for the state of issue. If the involved party only has a state-issued identification card, enter the identification card number and state abbreviation. If the involved party has no driver's license or identification card, leave blank.

**Ht.** Enter the involved party's height. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank.

**Wt.** Enter the involved party's weight. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank.

**Hair.** Enter the involved party's hair color. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Build.** Enter the involved party's build. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Eyes.** Enter the involved party's eye color. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Comp.** Enter the involved party's complexion. If a description was provided by a victim or witness, leave blank. Dropdown list.

**Vehicle Plate – State.** Enter the involved party's vehicle license plate number and state of issue, if it is relevant to the crime or incident being reported. If the vehicle was not issued a plate, enter the VIN. If the vehicle is not relevant to the incident, leave blank.

**Vehicle Year/Make/Model/Color/Other.** Enter the year, make, model, and color for the party's vehicle, if it is relevant to the crime or incident being reported. In the 'Other' field, enter the vehicle type, such as sport utility (SU), passenger car (PS), pickup (PK), cargo van (CV) or motorcycle (MC). Also indicate the number of doors on the vehicle, if applicable. If the vehicle is not relevant to the incident, leave blank.

**MO Checkbox.** Check the box, and enter the actions used by the individual(s) to execute the crime, prevent its detection and/or facilitate escape, and enter the method of operation in the free form text box below the checkbox if the information is applicable to the crime being reported. If not known, leave blank.

**Point of Entry Checkbox.** Check the box if the crime is a burglary or trespass and the point of entry is known. Enter the point of entry in the free form text box below the checkbox. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Method Used Checkbox.** Check the box if the instrumentality of the crime is known. Enter the instrumentality (hammer, screwdriver, bolt cutter, saw, ninja rock, etc) in the free form text box below the checkbox. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Weapons Checkbox.** Check this box, and enter any weapons used by the party. If not known, leave blank.

**Scars/Marks/Tattoos Checkbox.** Check this box, and enter any recognizable scars, marks, or tattoos on the party. If not known or not relevant, leave blank.

**Other Information.** Check this box, and enter other pertinent information about the involved party. Information that can be entered in this field can be (but is not limited to) the party's email address or additional contact information, whether the party is a faculty member, staff member or student, or if they reside in a residence hall.

## **COMPLETION OF THE PROPERTY SHEET PAGE**

The property sheet page contains blocks for listing 21 items of property that was lost, stolen, found, booked as evidence, recovered, booked as safekeeping, or booked for destruction. The page should be used if any property is lost, stolen, found, booked as evidence, booked as safekeeping or booked for destruction. The page should be completed according with the following instructions.

### **Additional Parties Information Blocks**

**Item.** Enter the number of the item associated with the report.

**Status.** Enter the property status. Dropdown list.

**Description.** Enter the property description, and include color, make, model, serial number, and any other pertinent details to identify the property.

**Value.** Enter the fair market value of the property, and transfer the cumulative total to the face page of the report.

## COMPLETION OF THE REPORT NARRATIVE

The purpose of this section of the manual is to provide a standard guideline for the completion of all report narratives written by Sacramento State Police Department police officers.

### NARRATIVE FORMAT

The narrative format used by the department for all reports will be a chronological narrative, with categorical report headings.

Categorical headings will be in capital letters, and in bold face font. Report headings are limited to those in the table below, except in cases of driving under the influence reports.

Driving under the influence report headings will include date, time, notification, and officer actions/observations headings, a heading to document the answers to the DUI questionnaire, and headings for each of the field sobriety tests administered, as well as a summary of the reasons for arrest, and a recommendations heading. See the sample DUI report for an example of headings used.

<b><u>HEADING</u></b>	<b><u>DESCRIPTION</u></b>
Date	The date the report is written or other action was taken by the reporting officer.
Time	The time the report is written, in 24-hour format.
Notification	A short summary of the circumstances which caused the officer to arrive at the scene of the call.
Officer Actions/Observations	The actions and observations taken and noted by the officer writing the report.  This heading can include brief statements or answers given by a victim, suspect, witness, reporting party, or other party involved in the report.
Victim Statement	A detailed summary of the victim's statement to the officer writing the report.  The victim's last name will be written in parenthesis after the heading. In cases in which there are multiple involved parties with the same last name, both the first and last name will be used.
Suspect Statement	A detailed summary of the suspect's statement to the officer writing the report.  The suspect's last name will be written in parenthesis after the heading. In cases in which there are multiple involved parties with the same last name, both the first and last name will be used.

Witness Statement	<p>A detailed summary of the witness’s statement to the officer writing the report.</p> <p>The witness’s last name will be written in parenthesis after the heading. In cases in which there are multiple involved parties with the same last name, both the first and last name will be used.</p>
Reporting Party Statement	<p>A detailed summary of the reporting party’s statement to the officer writing the report.</p> <p>The reporting party’s last name will be written in parenthesis after the heading. In cases in which there are multiple involved parties with the same last name, both the first and last name will be used.</p>
Other Party Statement	<p>A detailed summary of the any additional party’s statement to the officer writing the report.</p> <p>The additional party’s last name will be written in parenthesis after the heading. In cases in which there are multiple involved parties with the same last name, both the first and last name will be used.</p>
Recommendations	<p>A brief summary of follow up required, or actions to be taken with the report, with a brief explanation. If further follow up is required, the explanation should detail who is going to conduct the follow up (eg, the officer writing the report, detectives, other named officer).</p>

**FONT TYPE/SIZE**

The font type for reports will be a 12 point, mixed-case Ariel font. This font type and size provides the best compromise between readability and paper usage. Reports will not be written in all capital or lowercase letters.

SACRAMENTO STATE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
REPORT WRITING MANUAL

PART III  
SPECIFIC REPORT INFORMATION



## **SPECIFIC REPORT INFORMATION**

Different reports, such as theft reports, burglary reports, use of force reports and driving under the influence reports, should answer particular questions and specific details, based upon the report type.

Specific questions to be answered or considered for different report types are listed below.

### **Casualty/Medical Aid Reports**

While casualty reports are typically nothing more than an incident report, their importance cannot be underestimated. The potential for civil liability from incidents in which an involved party is injured can be quite high, depending upon the circumstances. As a result, the need to carefully document the incident is of an utmost necessity. The following are elements that need to be addressed in a medical aid or casualty report.

1. **Describe the scene.** Be as thorough as possible, and include any broken concrete, improper lighting, incorrect signage, or other conditions observed.
2. **Establish the timeframe of the incident.** This information is critical to impeach and rehabilitate the statements of involved parties.
3. **Take a complete statement from all parties involved.** Include statements detailing the victim's injuries, and be sure to speak with the victim. Be as complete and thorough as possible, and if something doesn't make sense, get clarification immediately, because it may be the only time the party is contacted.
4. **Get complete contact information for all parties.** Be sure to get alternate telephone numbers and email addresses, whenever possible.
5. **Canvass the area for possible witnesses.** Don't hesitate to knock on doors, if necessary.
6. **Describe any injuries or other preexisting medical conditions described by involved parties.** A thorough description contemporaneous to the incident will prevent possible statement changes later.
7. **Take photographs of the scene, and of all involved parties.** Once again, a picture is worth a thousand words.
8. **Determine if there is video of the incident.** If there is video, obtain a copy, and book it as evidence.
9. **Get medical release statements, if necessary.** Having access to medical records from the outset can sometimes prevent excessive claims at a later time.
10. **Document the fire and medical units on scene.** If the involved party refuses medical aid, document the reason.
11. **Obtain the hospital information, if the involved party is transported.** Be sure to include this information in the report.

### **Theft/Burglary/Other Property Crime Reports**

Theft, burglary and other property crime reports should answer questions regarding modus operandi, points of entry, items taken, timeframe, and evidentiary information in order to enable investigators to link specific incidents together. The following are elements that should be addressed by an effective property crime report.

1. **Describe the scene.** Always describe the scene as it was when the victim discovered the crime, and also how the scene appeared when you arrived.
2. **Establish what crime occurred.** Articulate all elements of the crime in the report.
3. **Establish the timeframe of the crime.** This information is critical to impeach and rehabilitate the statements of suspects and victims.
4. **Take a complete statement from all parties involved.** Be as complete and thorough as possible, and if something doesn't make sense, get clarification immediately, because it may be the only time the party is contacted.
5. **Get complete contact information for all parties.** Be sure to get alternate telephone numbers and email addresses, whenever possible. Don't list a stolen, lost or missing telephone as the only contact information in the case.
6. **Thoroughly describe the property taken, damaged, or missing.** Be as thorough as possible, and follow up with the victim or responsible if necessary to obtain the information. Be sure to include the color, make, model, value, and serial number of items, where available. Also describe any owner applied markings, if applicable. If the item is a cellular telephone, obtain the MEID/IMEI numbers, if possible.
7. **Canvass the area for witnesses.** A witness can provide suspect information, or help confirm the timeframe.
8. **Look for cameras, and obtain any video surveillance.** Determine if there is any video surveillance in the area, and document it in the report. Obtain copies, if possible, of the video surveillance for the timeframe of the crime, and book as evidence. If the surveillance is only of entrances and exits, obtain it anyway,
9. **Describe the point of entry, point of exit, and mode of theft, if possible.** Criminals are creatures of habit, and will typically use the same methods to commit certain types of crimes.
10. **Ask the victim if any other people had access or permission to take their property.** This can give a starting point, and also may help narrow the timeframe of the crime.
11. **Photograph the scene, and ask the victim if they have any pictures of their property.** A picture is worth a thousand words, every time.
12. **Look for, obtain, and book all evidence, or perceived evidence.** Look for the ninja rocks around a vehicle burglary with a window smash, or look for the cut cable lock in the bushes. Don't forget to try to lift latent fingerprints, regardless of the value of the stolen property. All it takes is one print to make a case.
13. **Talk to the victim about future crime prevention techniques, if necessary.** Mention LoJack for computers, engraving, and registration of bicycles, not leaving property unattended...an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

## Use of Force Reports

Use of force reports often are subjected to a significant amount of scrutiny by both the criminal and civil courts. For this reason, specific questions and facts should be answered by a use of force report. The following are elements that need to be addressed in a use of force report.

1. **Explain the probable cause or reasonable suspicion for the contact.** Clearly articulate the purpose of the stop. Be sure to include an accurate, detailed sequence of events leading up to the stop or contact.
2. **State your facts then make the conclusions.** It is better to explain the facts of what is seen, and then explain or present a conclusion. For example, don't say 'the subject appeared angry'. Explain the subject's stance, visible or expressed emotions, the subject's present ability to complete a perceived threat, and the words used by the subject. After explaining this information, conclude the description with 'the subject appeared angry.'
3. **Past experiences are important indicators of probable future behavior.** Include past experiences at the call location, past experiences with the suspect, and knowledge relayed to by other officers or dispatch. It is common for people to act in accordance with recent past behavior, so a violent subject contacted at a particular location last week, is likely a violent subject this week.
4. **Explain any objective symptoms that are observed.** This includes observed emotions, aggressive behavior or symptoms of drug and alcohol intoxication. Once again, be sure to lay out the facts before drawing the conclusions.
5. **Present ability.** Explain the suspects' present ability to delay, obstruct, cause injury, or commit the perceived threat. What is their physical presence and what ability do they have to carry out their behaviors or threats? How far away are they? What actions have been taken for officer safety, suspect containment, or scene control? If there is some distance between the officer and suspect, explain why the distance is a factor. Many people reading a use of force report may not understand that a suspect can still attack from across the street. Also, don't forget to compare and contrast suspect size and strength with the responding officers' size and strength; both are important factors that need to be explained in order to demonstrate the need for and the type of force used.
6. **Describe the physical stance of the suspect.** Explain the suspect's body language by describing the physical stance. Does the body language telegraph their intentions to the point where it is obvious what is coming next?
7. **What words are spoken by the officer and suspect.** Explain your verbal efforts to get the person to stop doing what they are doing and explain their verbal responses. In other words, what did you say and do to prevent further problem. What did they say and do to continue to create obstructions or delays.
8. **What actions were taken in response to the suspects words or actions.** Also, explain any use of force and whether it was effective or not effective. If there is any physical violence whatsoever, regardless of whether injuries appear, always take photographs.
9. **Identify which force option was used and why it was chosen over others.** Explain what options are available, and clearly explain why the force option used was chosen.
10. **Estimate strikes unless facts indicate you know for sure.** There is no harm in watching the video while writing.
11. **Always presume a videotape is being made of the event.** With the prevalence of video enabled telephones, cameras, and other video capture devices, video of the event is highly likely. For this reason, take no action that is not justified, and never neglect to document all aspects of the arrest or incident.

12. **State when medical assistance was called and why.** Remember, police cars are used to transport prisoners, not people in medical need. If possible, bring medical aid to you. If it does not come to you, explain why it didn't.
13. **Take pictures of the scene and the suspect. When in doubt, take more pictures.** There is never enough; one picture is worth a thousand words. However, photographs should not be used in place of a written description of the injuries by the reporting officer.
14. **Contact all witnesses and document all contacts and attempts.** Contacting witnesses demonstrates professionalism and integrity, and also indicates an attempt to fully document the incident, regardless whether witnesses support the use of force incident or not. Don't forget to attempt to canvass the area for witnesses, if possible!
15. **Document the number of officers, suspects and bystanders at the scene.** Provide their names if possible, especially if they are hostile towards law enforcement. Did they say or do anything that affected the situation?
16. **Document the proximity to potential weapons.** A potential weapon is anything that can be used to hurt or cause injury, such as a stick, knives, chairs, rocks, etc.
17. **Document any special training.** Include defensive tactics training that you have had, or if the suspect has a special understanding of defensive skills.
18. **Document the duration of the incident.** Was anyone exhausted or injured during the incident.
19. **Discuss any mental illness or drug usage.** Mental illness or drug usage can explain pain tolerance or irrational responses.
20. **Describe any environmental factors that affected your decision making process.** Was there any environmental factors, such as rain or darkness that affected your decision to use a particular force option?
21. **Document the danger to the public created by this incident.** Include any past, present, or future danger that you considered as the incident unfolded. Discuss each as known at the time of the incident.
22. **Proofread the final report with your beat partner.** Describe the use of force situation to an objective listener, and have the person review the report, and have them point out any logic, grammatical, or missing points that may have been left out or inadequately described in the report.

## Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence/Battery/Other Crimes Against Persons

Sexual assaults, domestic violence, battery, and other crimes against persons are some of the most serious crimes to which officers respond. The following are elements that should be addressed by an effective report of a sexual assault, domestic violence, battery, or other crime against persons.

1. **Describe the scene.** Always describe the scene as it was when the victim discovered the crime, and also how the scene appeared when you arrived. Include distances, locations of parties, lighting conditions...anything that may be considered relevant to the incident.
2. **Establish the timeframe of the crime.** This information is critical to impeach and rehabilitate the statements of suspects and victims.
3. **Take a complete statement from all parties involved.** Be as complete and thorough as possible, and if something doesn't make sense, get clarification immediately, because it may be the only time the party is contacted.
4. **Get complete contact information for all parties.** Be sure to get alternate telephone numbers and email addresses, whenever possible. Don't list a stolen, lost or missing telephone as the only contact information in the case.
5. **Establish the relationships between all parties involved.** Doing so is important, because it may establish specific crimes, motivations, and circumstances involved in the incident.
6. **Establish what crimes occurred.** Doing so establishes probable cause for arrest. Always ensure all elements of the crime are clearly articulated.
7. **Document any injuries.** Take photographs, and obtain follow up photographs, if necessary. Be sure to obtain a medical release waiver, wherever possible. If medical transport is necessary, document the hospital.
8. **Collect any clothing and bedding involved, and book the items as evidence.** Photograph the items before booking.
9. **Document all alcohol and drug involvement by all parties.** Include the amounts, types of drugs, and frequency of ingestion during the incident, and determine past alcohol and drug usage history. Also determine if any of the parties have used alcohol or drugs together before. Be sure to document the approximate intoxication level of all involved parties, where possible.
10. **Canvass the area for witnesses.** Check other rooms, or other businesses nearby.
11. **Determine if there is video surveillance.** If so, obtain copies and book into evidence immediately. If the video surveillance is only of the entrance or exit of a building, obtain a copy anyway, even if the crime isn't visible on the video.
12. **Consider a pretext telephone call in all sexual assault cases.** Attempt to do so prior to contacting the suspect in the case. Be sure to contact Rob Gold, Supervising DDA for the DA's office SACA unit for permission prior to conducting the call. Gold can be reached at 916-956-0866 (cellular), 916-874-6543(work) or 916-451-2452(home).
13. **Offer confidentiality to the victim, and offer an advocate, if applicable.** Never forget that victims of sexual assault and other crimes are eligible for confidentiality, and have the right to an advocate.
14. **If the crime involves sexual assault, encourage the victim to undergo an evidentiary exam.** Be sure to adequately explain the purpose of the exam, and allow the victim to make the decision.

15. **Record interviews, whenever possible.** Recording interviews is up to the individual officer, but recording interviews ties a victim, suspect or witness to a specific statement, and limits later redactions or retractions of statements.
16. **Consider the possible defenses that can be used by the suspect.** When a possible defense is noted, try to rule out the defense through physical evidence, or follow up questioning.
17. **Do not jump to conclusions regarding the truthfulness of the victim, suspect or witness.** Doing so will bias the initial investigation. Always assume that the crime happened, unless there is strong evidence that indicates otherwise.

### **Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Reports**

Driving under the influence reports are often subjected to significant scrutiny, due to the social and financial impact upon arrestees as a result of a conviction. The following are elements that should be addressed by an effective driving under the influence report.

*Note: Current DUI reporting standards encourage each field sobriety test be documented in the report narrative, in addition to using DUI reporting sheets (if a DUI reporting sheet is used).*

1. **Specify the probable cause for the stop, and all observations made prior to the traffic stop.** Be sure to name specific vehicle code sections, and if possible, name multiple violations. Doing so will limit the ability for the defense to challenge the probable cause for the initial traffic stop. Document the time of the stop in the report!
2. **Identify any passengers, or other parties involved in the case. Passengers or other involved parties are witnesses, so be sure to document and treat them as such.**
3. **Describe specific objective symptoms observed.** If the case ends in a jury trial, most jurors won't understand what objective symptoms of alcohol intoxication are without an adequate description. Use terms such as 'red, glassy eyes', 'thick, slurred speech', and 'odor of an alcoholic beverage'.
4. **List each standardized field sobriety test under its own heading.** Describe the administration of the test, and the results, documenting any observed errors where the subject did not perform the test as demonstrated.
5. **Be sure to demonstrate each standardized field sobriety test prior to administration.** Document the demonstration, and if the subject had any questions.
6. **Don't say the subject failed the standardized field sobriety test.** Always say the subject did not perform the test as demonstrated. Standardized field sobriety tests are based on the number and percentages of errors observed to determine the likelihood of intoxication. Thus, they are not a pass/fail test.
7. **Always attempt perform at least three standardized field sobriety tests, not including the preliminary alcohol screening device (PAS).** Whenever possible, try to perform at least three of the following tests (but preferably all five): horizontal gaze nystagmus, finger to nose, walk and turn, one leg stand and Rhomberg internal clock. All five of these tests are validated and researched field sobriety tests.
8. **Conduct a preliminary alcohol screening test after other SFSTs are performed..** Don't do it first, and ensure the subject hasn't vomited, burped, eaten, smoked, chewed gum, or ingested anything prior to the test. Be sure to observe the subject for 15 minutes prior to conducting the PAS test. Document the PAS serial number, the temperature, and time of administration of both tests. Make sure both tests are within 0.02% agreement, and don't forget to give the PAS admonishment per 23612(i) CVC.
9. **Document all admonishments.** Be sure to include Trombetta and the PAS admonishment, if a PAS screening was given.
10. **Include the results of the Drager test in the report.** Attach the Drager printout to the report, in addition to including the results in the narrative. Include the time the Drager was administered.
11. **Document the phlebotomist's actions if a blood test is chosen.** Be sure to document the phlebotomist cleaning the subjects arm, and the type of solution used (usually povidone iodine), and the disposition of the vials of blood.
12. **Document the storage location all property in the report.** Be sure to include personal property, as well as the vehicle. Provide a property receipt, if necessary.

13. **Document the booking time of the subject in the report.** Documenting the booking time takes the report full circle, from the time of stop, until time of booking.
14. **Send the DMV a copy of the report along with the Admin Per Se form.** Also include a short summary of the stop on the back of the admin per se form. Administrative hearing officers at the DMV like having both the summary and the full report; it makes their job easier.