

**Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook**

Date Revised: September/2019

Course Goal: To develop a basic knowledge of investigative report writing, interview skills, crime scene investigation.

Session Goal: The recruit officer will have a basic understanding of how to gather information during an investigation of a crime, properly document the facts and activity on a crime report.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the legal basis for requiring investigative reports.
- Discuss the importance of taking notes in preparation for writing reports.
- Apply appropriate action for taking notes during a field interview.
- Distinguish between opinion, fact, or conclusion.
- Summarize the primary questions that must be answered by an investigative report.
- Identify the fundamental content elements on investigative reports, Initial information, and identification of the crime, identification of involved parties, Victim / witness statement, crime scene specifics, property information and officer action.
- Apply guidelines for recommending grammar used in investigative reports; include use of proper nouns, first person pronouns, third person pronouns, past tense, and active voice.
- Organize information within a paragraph for clarity and proper emphasis.
- Select language that will clearly convey information to the reader of the investigative report.
- Distinguish between commonly used words that sound alike but have different meanings.
- Proofread for content and mechanical errors, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and syntax.

Session Time: 1 hour

Resources:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop with media software developed for this session. • Field Officer's notebook • Field Officer's handout 	
Module Summary:	
Outline	Instructor Notes
I. Investigative Report Writing A. Investigative Reports and the Judicial Process 1. As much as 45% of a peace officer's work involves writing.	Ask: What percentage of time do you think officers spend writing report?

**Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook**

Good investigative skills can be diminished if officers do not have the necessary writing skills to record their observations, findings, and actions clearly and concisely.

2. An investigative report is a written document prepared by a peace officer that record in detail the officer's observations and actions as they relate to a specific event or incident.
3. Each investigative report is a legal document that becomes a permanent written record of that event or incident.
4. A suspect's freedom, rights, or privileges cannot be taken away or denied unless there is sufficient cause to justify such action.
5. In order to ensure due process, officers, prosecutors, judges, etc., must have sufficient information and evidence to initiate or continue the judicial process and successfully prosecute or exonerate a suspect.
6. An officer's report must present each event or incident in a complete and clear manner. Any investigation, arrest, prosecution, or other action taken must be initiated, supported, or justified by the information included in the report written by that officer.
7. Because peace officer's reports are so important to the judicial process, each one must be able to stand up to critical review and legal scrutiny.
8. State and federal statutes mandate that law enforcement agencies report certain events and

Lecture: Investigative report is a legal document a permanent record of an incident

[18.01.A]

Lecture: State and federal statutes mandate that law enforcement agencies report certain events and incidents

Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook

incidents. Penal Code Section 11107 requires each sheriff or police chief executive to furnish reports of specified misdemeanors and felonies to the Department of Justice.

9. Specified misdemeanors and felonies that require investigative reports, as required under Penal Code Section 11107, include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Forgery, fraud-bunco,
 - b. Bombings, receiving or selling stolen property,
 - c. Safe and commercial burglary, Grand theft,
 - d. Child abuse, homicide, threats,
 - e. Offenses involving lost, stolen, found, pledged, or pawned property,
 - f. Domestic abuse and sex crimes.
 - g. Failure to file a report.
Deliberate failure to report a crime may be considered a violation of agency regulations and grounds for disciplinary action.
 - h. Any officer who knowingly files a false report will be guilty of a crime. (Penal Code Section 118.1).
10. Uses of Investigative Reports. The investigative reports written by peace officers have many different uses within the criminal justice system and beyond.
 - a. Assist with the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of criminals.
 - b. Assist prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other law enforcement agencies.

Lecture: Failure to file a report

Lecture: Uses of Investigative Reports

Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook

<ul style="list-style-type: none">c. Assist officers prior to or during court appearances.d. Aid in determining potential civil liability.e. Assist decision makers and criminal justice researchers.f. Provide information for evaluating an officer's performance. <p>11. The report must provide not only a clear word-picture of the event or incident but also the critical information necessary for those users to do their jobs.</p> <p>B. Characteristics of an effective investigative report.</p> <p>1. No matter what type of investigative report is being written (i.e., arrest report, incident report, etc.) that report must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Factual: The factual report provides an objective accounting of the relevant facts related to the event or incident under investigation.b. Accurate: There must be no inconsistencies or discrepancies between what took place and what is documented in the officer's report.c. Clear: There should be no doubt or confusion on what the investigating officer is reporting.d. Concise: Reports should be brief yet; contain all relevant information the users will need to do their jobs.e. Complete: An officer's report must contain all the relevant	<p>Ask: What do you think makes a good investigative report?</p> <p>Lecture: Field Notes</p>
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**Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook**

information and facts the user of that report will need.

- f. Timely: No decisions can be made or actions can be taken if an officer's report does not reach the users in a timely fashion.

II. Field Notes

A. Introduction to Field Notes

1. Field notes are abbreviated notations written by an officer in the field while investigating a specific incident or crime.
2. An officer's field notes are the primary source the officer will use when writing the investigative report. If the officer's field notes are incomplete, difficult to read, or poorly organized, they will be of little use to that officer.
3. When to take notes
 - a. Field notes are recorded while information is fresh in the investigating officer's mind.
 - b. During the scene of an event or incident.
 - c. When interviewing persons (e.g., victims, witness, suspects, etc.).
 - d. Whenever an officer wishes to record specific facts for inclusion in the report.
 - e. Any time the officer wishes to remember specific details at a later time.
4. Important considerations.
 - a. An investigative report is often written several hours after the investigation of an incident has occurred or been handled. So, field notes are more reliable than an officer's memory.

[18.02.A]

Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science

S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer’s Notebook

<p>b. Field notes are the primary source of information for the investigative report.</p> <p>c. Every event or incident is different; therefore, the facts and information the officer must gather will differ. An officer’s field notes should contain the facts and information that will aid that officer in answering the questions what, when, where, who, how, and why.</p> <p>d. Well taken and organized notes provide officers with detailed information they will need to accurately write their investigative reports.</p> <p>e. Field notes are discoverable in court. If kept, they should be prepared accordingly.</p> <p>5. Information to include in the field notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Victims and witness information and statements. Detailed information of incident, suspect’s(s) descriptors and suspects actions. <p>B. Note taking Process during a Field Interview.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The effectiveness of an officer’s investigation may be dependent on that officer’s ability to obtain information and statements from the involved parties. 2. The field notes taken by officers during an interview must be clear, accurate, and complete. 3. Statements can be critical in tying together the specific facts of a specific incident or crime. The existence of some crime elements 	<p>[18.02.B]</p> <p>[18.02.C1]</p>
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**Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook**

<p>may only be revealed within the statements of witnesses, victims, and the suspects themselves.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Before the interview begins.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Separate the involved parties.b. Establish rapport.5. Three step process.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Listen Attentively, Allow the person to speak freely but Keep the person focused.b. Take Notes and Ask Questions, Ask the person to recount what has happened. Verify Information, repeat specific information to verify the information is accurate and complete. <p>C. Opinions, Facts, and Conclusions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An effective investigative report must be factual. It must present an objective accounting of the relevant facts related to the event or incident under investigation. An officer must be able to distinguish between opinion, fact, and conclusion.2. The basis for determining relevant information requires peace officers to make the fine distinctions between an opinion, a fact, and a conclusion.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Opinion: Expressed a belief not necessarily substantiated by proof.b. Fact: A statement that can be verified or proven to be real or that it occurred.c. Conclusion: A statement that is based on the analysis of facts and opinions. Conclusions should always be accompanied with the supporting facts and opinions.	<p>[18.02.C1] [18.02.C2]</p> <p>[18.02.C3]</p> <p>Facilitate: Learning Activity #1</p> <p>Use: Field Officer Notebook Power Point</p>
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Los Angeles Police Department
LD18 Investigative Report Writing
EV1 Police Science
S14 Investigative Report Writing and Officer's Notebook

- d. It is possible for information to be factual yet still not be relevant to the incident or event being investigated.

III. Officer's Notebook

- A. Note taking
- B. Routine Information
 - 1. Your name and serial number
 - 2. Your division or area address and phone number
 - 3. Date you started to use the notebook and date of last entry
- C. Daily Information
 - 1. Date
 - 2. Watch
 - 3. Unit designation
 - 4. Partner name and serial number
 - 5. Watch Commander name
- D. Roll call information
 - 1. Stolen Vehicle
 - 2. Crimes
 - 3. Community information
- E. Crime Broadcast
 - 1. Type of crime
 - 2. Time of occurrence
 - 3. Location of occurrence
 - 4. Suspect Info
 - 5. Weapon used
 - 6. Directions last Scene
 - 7. Property taken
- F. Other types of Information
 - 1. Other units involved
 - 2. Statements of parties
 - 3. Sketches at Scene