

Los Angeles Police Department  
LD18 Investigative Report Writing  
EV5 Property Crimes  
S1 Intro to Narrative

**Date Revised:** October/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. **[18:I:A]**
- Discuss the importance of taking notes in preparation for writing reports. **[18:II:A]**
- Apply appropriate action for taking notes during a field interview. **[18:II:B]**
- Distinguish between opinion, fact, or conclusion. **[18:II:C:1,2,3]**
- Summarize the primary questions that must be answered by an investigative report. **[18:III:A]**
- 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. **[18.III.B1,2,3,4,5,6,7]**
- 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. **[18.IV.A1] [18.IV. A2] [18.IV.A3] [18.IV.A4] [18.IV.A5]**
- Organize information within a paragraph for clarity and proper emphasis. **[18.IV.B]**
- Select language that will clearly convey information to the reader of the investigative report. **[18.IV.C]**
- Distinguish between commonly used words that sound alike but have different meanings. **[18.IV.D]**
- Proofread for content and mechanical errors, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and syntax. **[18.IV.E] [18.IV.E1] [18.IV.E3] [18.IV.E4] [18.IV.E5]**

**Session Time:** 2 hours

**Resources:**

- Laptop with media software developed for this module.
- LD 18
- IR face sheet
- Report writing narrative handout
- IR Notebook Divider
- General Reporting Notebook Divider

**Session Summary:**

Recruit will learn the fundamentals of writing police reports.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>c. Where?</li><li>d. Who?</li><li>e. How?</li><li>f. Why?</li><li>4. If an officer is not able to answer a question, the report should provide as much information as possible. This information may prove vital for investigators assigned to the case.</li><li>5. Supporting facts and information.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The information that answers each question above will vary depending on the details of the specific incident or crime.</li><li>b. Specific crimes will require certain information that should be noted by the investigating officer in the report.</li></ul></li><li>B. Fundamental Content Elements.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Every incident is different and different crimes require different information. On the other hand, certain content elements remain constant regardless of the crime or the formats used to present the information. An effective investigative report contains:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Initial information: establishing how the officer(s) became involved with the specific incident and additional background information.</li><li>b. Identification of the crime: Including the facts that are necessary to show that the specific crime has taken place.</li><li>c. Identification of the involved parties: such as the reporting person(s), victim(s), witness(es), or suspect(s).</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>	<p><b>[18.III.B]</b> <b>[18.III.B1,2,3,4,5,6,7]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Content Elements</p>
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<p>d. Witness/victim statements: Noting the details of the events the involved parties observed or experienced.</p> <p>e. Crime scene specifics: Necessary to accurately reestablish the scene and events of the crime.</p> <p>f. Property information: Including descriptions and details pertaining to stolen items as well as physical evidence.</p> <p>g. Officer actions: Including descriptions of all actions taken by peace officers that are related to the incident.</p> <p>2. The order in which information is presented in an investigative report is dependent upon the format used and agency policy.</p> <p>II. Investigative Report Writing Mechanics.</p> <p>A. Recommended Grammar for Investigative Reports.</p> <p>1. Peace officers must recognize that an effective report must exhibit the writer's command of the language and be relatively free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and other writing mechanics.</p> <p>2. A noun is a naming word. It can be used to identify people, places, or things. Proper nouns name specific persons, places or things and always begin with a capital letter.</p> <p>3. When referring to a specific person within a report, officers should use proper nouns (Tom Smith, Alice Jones) to clearly convey to the reader whom they</p>	<p><b>[18.IV.A]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Recommended Grammar</p> <p><b>[18.IV.A1]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Proper Nouns</p>
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are writing about. After the full name has been used once, just the last name may be used when referring to the same person. (Smith, Jones)

4. A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun or a proper noun. There are two types of pronouns of which writers of investigative reports should be aware.
  - a. First person: Use when referring to the person writing the report.
  - b. Third person: Person, place, or thing being written about.
  - c. First person pronouns can also be used within quotes to refer to the person speaking. (e.g., Wilson said, "I ran as fast as I could.")
5. When writing investigative reports, officers should use first person pronouns when referring to themselves. By doing so, the reader has a clear understanding of what the officer actually did, observed, experienced, etc.
6. When a third person pronoun is used within an investigative report, it must clearly refer to or agree with the noun or proper noun that is directly before it.
7. Alone, third person pronouns lack any specific meaning. It must be clear to the reader, exactly who, what, or where the pronoun is referring to. (e.g. Jones saw the man's car crash into the tree. Jones immediately reported the accident.)

**[18.IV. A2]**

**Lecture:** First Person

**[18.IV.A3]**

**Lecture:** Third Person

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8. To avoid confusion, it may be preferable to repeat the proper name rather than use a third person pronoun.
9. Past tense.
  - a. Since most investigative reports are written about things that have already happened, the words that are used should clearly indicate the events have already taken place.
  - b. Verbs are words or groups of words which express action. A verb's tense refers to the time the action took place. A past tense verb expresses an action completed in the past. A present tense verb expresses an action currently taking place.
10. Active voice.
  - a. The word "voice," when used to describe a type of verb, refers to whether the verb is active or passive.
  - b. A verb is in the active voice when the subject of the sentence is the individual or thing that is actually doing or performing the action. A verb is in the passive voice when the subject of the sentence is someone or something other than the doer or performer of the action
  - c. Officers writing investigative reports should use verbs in the active voice rather than the passive voice. Most readers find sentences written in the

**[18.IV.A4]**

**Lecture:** Past Tense

**[18.IV.A5]**

**Lecture:** Active Voice

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active voice easier to follow and understand.

- B. Writing Clearly and Precisely.
1. Effective investigative reports must present all relevant information simply, or logically. They must be written in plain English organized for clarity and proper emphasized in order to be useful for the reader.
  2. 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 that primary topic.
  3. Transitions words 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 investigative report.
  4. Concrete vs abstract words.
    - a. Officers who are writing investigative reports should select simple, common, concrete language whenever possible. The use of simple language can help keep reports concise and brief, addressing relevant information quickly and clearly.
    - b. Words that are used to make an investigative report sound

**[18.IV.B]**

**Lecture:** Organize Information

**[18.IV.C]**

**Lecture:** Simple Language

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eloquent or scholarly may actually serve to make the report wordy, vague and less effective. Inflated language is never appropriate and officers should resist the temptation to impress their readers.

- c. There are a number of frequently used words that sound alike but have completely different spellings and meanings. Officers should take care to use the correct word for what they are trying to say when writing investigative reports.

C. Proofreading.

1. Proofreading may seem time-consuming to both experienced and inexperienced writers. In the case of investigative reports where accuracy, clarity, and completeness are essential, proofreading is critical.
2. When proofreading reports, officers should ask themselves:
  - a. Is the correct crime(s) cited in the report?
  - b. Are all the elements appropriately articulated?
  - c. Are the facts correct (based on the officer's field notes)?
  - d. Is the report well organized?
  - e. Is all necessary information included?
  - f. Is the information in the proper order?
  - g. Are things said efficiently, or are statements too wordy?
  - h. Are all conclusions supported by facts?
  - i. Are there any gaps in logic?

**[18.IV.D]**

**Lecture:** Sound alike words

**[18.IV.E]**

**Lecture:** Proofreading



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<p>j. Are the names spelled correctly?</p> <p>3. Proofreading mechanics.</p> <p>a. 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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Inappropriate use of the parts of speech (e.g., use of nouns, pronouns verbs, etc.),</li><li>2) Language that may be vague or confusing.</li><li>3) Incorrect or inappropriate use of words, syntax.</li><li>4) Spelling errors.</li><li>5) Inappropriate punctuation.</li><li>6) Incorrect use of law enforcement abbreviations.</li></ol> <p>4. Reading aloud.</p> <p>a. Slowly reading a completed report aloud is one of the most effective methods for proofreading the content and mechanics of any document.</p> <p>b. When sentences are heard, it may be easier for the writer to identify obstacles such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Mechanical errors.</li><li>2) Gaps in logical flow.</li><li>3) Skewed time sequences.</li><li>4) Incorrect verb tenses.</li><li>5) Cumbersome phrasing.</li></ol> <p>III. Report writing guide narrative.</p> <p>1. Mandatory headings for crime reports.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. S.I.M.P.E.C.C.</li><li>b. V.W.O.E.</li></ol>	<p><b>[18.IV.E4]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Word Choice</p> <p><b>[18.IV.E5]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Syntax</p> <p><b>[18.IVE3]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Grammar</p> <p><b>[18.IV.E1]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Spelling</p> <p><b>[18.IV.E2]</b> <b>Lecture:</b> Punctuation</p> <p><b>Refer:</b> To report writing guide.</p>
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<p>2. Arrest report headings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Arrest</li><li>b. Booking</li></ul>	<p><b>Note:</b> To be covered during arrest report instruction.</p>
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