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# Narrative Writing

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Jackson Police Department

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# GENERAL NARRATIVE WRITING GUIDELINES

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidance to police and community service officers at the Jackson Police Department regarding narrative 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 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 narrative 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 narrative, the options selected and completed fields within Law Mobile Reports.

Consequently, every police narrative 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 is reported to them.

## **USES OF POLICE REPORTS**

Police narratives and reporting fields 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, worker'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:

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Timely.** No decisions can be made or actions taken regarding an arrest or request for followup 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 later.

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 re-contact 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 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 this 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. In addition, 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 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.

	Supporting Facts/Information
<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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

## 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.

Type of Transition	Words/Phrases	Examples
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>	Caster said he noticed the door was not completely shut, so he decided to find out why.  <b>Immediately after</b> entering the room, he saw the window was broken.
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>	Caster said he saw broken glass on the floor under the window.  <b>Near the</b> glass, he saw a large brick.
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>	<b>In addition,</b> Caster saw his laptop computer was not on the desk where he left it the night before.

## 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.

Abstract Words	Concrete Words
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. Type narrative in a MS Word document and indicators in regards to errors may present itself:

**Red** lines under a word indicates a possible misspelled word

**Blue** underline indicate possible grammar correction and/or incorrect word choice.

### **Suggestions:**

Utilize spell check in Law Mobile

Grammarly - free online

**ASK others to proof read**

### **COMPLETION OF THE REPORT NARRATIVE**

The purpose of this guidance is to provide standards for the completion of all report narratives written by Jackson Police Department police officers within Law Mobile.

This guide was not created to duplicate or replace any current reporting guides active and in force by the JPD Training Academy Chief, Commander(s), Instructors and Staff.



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