

Interviewing and Report Writing Rapid Reference Card™ · Jamaica

REPORT WRITING GUIDELINES

Focus on the Five W's: Who, What, Where, When, and Why

Contact Information: Note contact information for victims, suspects, and witnesses

Include All Results: Write down all results of your investigation (fingernails, footprints, etc.)

Keep Writing Simple: Try to start sentences with a person, place, or thing; keep it simple

Use Detailed Description: Thoroughly describe events (e.g. chain of custody)

Use Active Voice and Avoid Slang

Avoid Generalizations and Hunches

Check Your Spelling and Grammar

REPORT WRITING CHECKLIST

Technicalities

- Reporting agency and/or district
- Names of officers
- Signature of reporting and supervising officers
- Case number, case status, and related cases

Incident Details

- Location and time of arrival and incident
- Immediate statements of central parties
- Number of people arrested
- Description of incident site and rough map

Type of Crime & Common Details

- Any sick or injured people
- Alarm sounded
- Forced entry

Interviews of Parties

- Full name, address, and signature of all witnesses interviewed
- Relationship of parties involved in incident

REPORT WRITING CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

Interviews of Parties (Continued)

- Gender, ethnicity, physical appearance, clothing, and other identifying characteristics
- Accounts of events
- Injuries, including those not visible
- Emotional state and demeanor
- Alcohol or drug impairment

Other Essential Information

- Vehicles involved
- Evidence collected: audio, photographic, investigation results
- Children present?
- Medical help offered or refused
- Summary of actions and reasons
- Existence of orders/records: protection, probation, warrants, prior convictions
- Victim responses to questions
- Narrative of incidents
- Full name, age, and address of people at site

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

- **Contact Information:** Contact details should be noted only in the 'List of Witnesses'; Name, Address, Phone number(s)
- **Take Notes:** Date, time and location
- **Ask Permission:** Ask the witness for permission to record the statement. If you can't record, take simultaneous notes of what is said
- **Questioning:** Ask open ended questions.
- **Follow up:** Ask clarifying questions
- **Focus and Don't Interrupt:** Notice how the witness's statement relates to the crime
- **Review:** Review the contents of the statement with the witness
- **Authenticate:** The witness should sign a declaration that the statement is true to the best of their knowledge
- **Encourage:** Ask the witness to follow up with other information and instruct them not to discuss their statement with anyone else

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GENERAL TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

- **Inform:** The officer must remind the suspect or witness of his or her right to remain silent, right to communicate with an advocate, and right to be free from self-incrimination
- **Language:** If they speak another language the officer must first inform them in a language they understand before engaging
- **Don't Interrupt:** Allow the suspect or witness to complete his or her answers
- **Simple Questions:** Ask simple, open-ended questions
- **DO NOT ask leading questions**

SUSPECT INTERVIEWS

- **Right to Silence:** If the arrestee at any point invokes his right to silence or the right to consult with an advocate, the officer must cease questioning
- **Record the Interview:** Remind the suspect or witness that you will take audio or video recording of the interview
- **Seal:** Seal and store the tapes/ statements in a secure, prearranged storage area
- **Non-Verbal Cues:** Note details about suspects demeanor and body language. For example, a suspects playing with his glasses or another item may be a stalling tactic while thinking up answers
- **Actively Listen:** Ask only one question at a time and wait to hear the full answer
- **Remind:** Remind the suspect of any significant statement(s) that he/she made in another interview.
- **Confirm:** Ask if they want to confirm, deny, or add anything to the statement
- **Bond with the Suspect:** Try to form a bond so the suspect will be more likely to open up
- **Take a Break:** A 15 minute break is recommended every two hours.
- **Use of Force:** The officer may not force the arrestee to answer a question or offer the accused any promises

VICTIM INTERVIEWS

Making the Victim Comfortable

- **Children's Guardians:** Make sure that the child's legal representative and/or caregiver are present **UNLESS** you suspect that they may be involved in harming the child.
- **Remain with the Victim:** Remain physically present with the victim at all times
- **Offer Food and Water**
- **Street Clothes:** Wear street clothes, if possible
- **Body Language:** Use calm body language
- **Be Respectful:** Do not treat victims as criminals
- **Perpetrators:** Ensure that the perpetrators do not contact the victim
- **Female Officers:** Have a female officer interview female victims if possible

Questioning

- **Avoid Unnecessary Questions**
- **Privacy:** Before asking sensitive questions, ask if the victim would like to speak to you privately
- **Active Listening:** Listen attentively, make eye contact with victims, show that you care
- **Prosecution:** Do not pressure victims to participate in the prosecution of the case
- **Documentation:** Do not start with questions about documentation or legal status
- **Telling the Story of Others:** Let the victim start by describing what happened to other victims of the same perpetrator before telling his or her own story

Victim's Statement

- **Contact details:** Note the victim's full name, age, address, as well as the names and addresses of parents and other relatives in the area
- **Work details:** Ask details such as where he/she has been working as a child laborer
- **Treatment:** Ask details about how he/she has been treated (e.g. physical violence, limited food)
- **Education:** Ask if he/she is going to school and if so, note grade, name, and address of school
- **Parental Contact:** Whether the victim has had regular contact with parents and if so, how

Other Personnel

- **Service Providers:** Be ready to contact service providers for victims as needed
- **Counselors:** Make a counselor available
- **Interpreters:** Use interpreters if needed, but screen them to ensure that they do not know the victim