

Criminal Investigation,

Seventh Edition

Chapter Six

Field Notes and Reporting

Field Notes

- Field notes are important and have two primary purposes: 1) writing offense reports and 2) testifying in court.
- Field notes should be able to answer the following questions or provide the mentioned information. All of the information mentioned below may not be available, but answer the questions as possible.
 1. Who?
 - a. Who was the victim?
 - b. Who made the report?
 - c. Who discovered the offense?

Field Notes

1. Who?

- d. Who saw or heard something of importance?
- e. Who had a motive for committing the offense?
- f. Who committed the offense?
- g. Who helped the offender?
- h. Who was interviewed?
- i. Who worked on the case?
- j. Who marked the evidence?
- k. Who received the evidence?

Field Notes

1. What?
 - a. What type of offense was committed?
 - b. What actions were taken by the suspect and using what method?
 - c. What happened?
 - d. What do the witnesses know about it?
 - e. What evidence was obtained?
 - f. What was done with the evidence?
 - g. What tools or weapons were used?
 - h. What actions did you take?
 - i. What further action is needed?

Field Notes

2. What?
 - j. What knowledge, skill, or strength was needed to commit the crime?
 - k. What other agencies were notified?
 - l. What witnesses were not contacted?
 - m. What time was the offense committed?
 - n. What time was the offense reported?
 - o. What was the time of your arrival?
 - p. What time did you contact witnesses?

Field Notes

3. Where?

- a. Where was the offense discovered?
- b. Where was the offense committed?
- c. Where were the tools or weapons found?
- d. Where was the victim?
- e. Where was the suspect seen?
- f. Where were the witnesses?
- g. Where does the perpetrator live or frequently go?
- h. Where is the perpetrator?

Field Notes

3. Where?
 - i. Where would the perpetrator be most likely to go?
 - j. Where was the perpetrator apprehended?
 - k. Where was the evidence marked?
 - l. Where was the evidence stored?

Field Notes

4. When?

- a. When was the perpetrator arrested?
- b. When was the victim last seen?
- c. When did help arrive?

5. How?

- a. How was the offense committed?
- b. How did the perpetrator get to and from the scene?
- c. How did the perpetrator obtain information needed to commit the offense?

Field Notes

- d. How were the tools or weapons obtained?
 - e. How did you get your information regarding the offense?
 - f. How did you effect the arrest?
6. With What?
- a. With what trade or profession are the tools associated?
 - b. With what other offense is this one associated?

Field Notes

7. Why?
 - a. Why was the offense committed?
 - b. Why were particular tools or weapons used?
 - c. Why was the offense reported?
 - d. Why were witnesses reluctant to talk?
 - e. Why was witness eager to point out the perpetrator?
 - f. Why was there a delay in reporting the offense?

Field Notes

8. With Whom?

- a. With whom does the perpetrator associate?
- b. With whom was the victim last seen?
- c. With whom are the witnesses connected?
- d. With whom do you expect to locate the suspect?

Field Notes

9. How Much?

- a. How much damage was done?
- b. How much property was taken?
- c. How much money was taken?
- d. How much did the victim claim was stolen?
- e. How much knowledge was necessary to commit the offense?
- f. How much trouble was it to carry the property away?
- g. How much information are the witnesses giving out?
- h. How much is the victim withholding?
- i. How much additional information do you need to help clear the offense?

Writing Effective Reports

- Report writing is one of the least liked tasks completed by law enforcement officers. It is, however, one of the most important tasks. The following are some suggestions concerning report writing. However, note that some agencies may have different policies concerning report writing.

Writing Effective Reports

Suggestions:

1. Fill in all of the blanks.
2. Write the report in the first person – “I arrived at the scene,” etc.
3. Avoid unnecessary technical or legalistic jargon such as “hereinafter, point of fact, or thereof.”

Writing Effective Reports

Suggestions:

4. Write short sentences.
5. Use shorter paragraphs.
6. Support any conclusions you express with details.
7. Don't repeat facts more than once.
8. Check your spelling.
9. Edit what you write.

The End