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|  | MIDDLETON POLICE DEPARTMENT | DATE October 10, 2012 | POLICY 15.1.01 |
| SUBJECT: Qualities of a Good Report | | REVIEWED June 14, 2019 | |

History: 05/2015
[WILEAG \(5th Ed.\) Standards](#): None

Qualities of a Good Report

A report must be self-explanatory since it often is directed to a person removed from the source of the incident. The reader depends on the thoroughness and accuracy of the report to obtain the facts. If any part of the communication requires further explanation the report has failed to serve its purpose. A written report must be:

- A. **Clear.** . . The language and the format must be simple and to the point. . . facts presented should follow a logical sequence, most often the basis of the order in which they occur.
- B. **Legible.** . . When handwritten or printed they must be easily read by others. . . draft reports written so badly that they are not easily read, waste time and reflect upon the officer's concern for his work, if handwriting is not legible, it should be printed.
- C. **Complete.** . . All available and related facts should be included. . . holding back information because it might not support your own theories is unethical. . . memory alone is not sufficient to assure completeness and notes taken at the scene should be consulted, the report should answer the questions of who, what, when, where, why and how?
- D. **Accurate.** . . Factual information should form the basis upon which the report is written and opinions of the writer are proper only when called for and clearly labeled as such. . . names, descriptions, addresses, numbers and the like should be double checked for accuracy. (Doe and Roe may sound alike to some persons but they may be drawers apart in a file).
- E. **Brief.** . . Brevity is desirable to the extent it eliminates unnecessary words, not when it is achieved through the loss of facts. . . assuming the reader is ignorant requires including all facts, assuming the reader is intelligent requires brevity.
- F. **Prompt.** . . Reports should be dated and prepared as soon as possible after completion of work. . . time incident occurred, time it was reported and time of investigation should be noted.

Reports which demonstrate the qualities mentioned above reflect the ability and the attitude of the officer. Evaluations of individuals often are based upon their work as it is presented through reports.

An investigation properly conducted but inadequately reported fails to provide the department with the product needed for adequate case presentation. On the other hand, reporting cannot make up for defects or failures during the investigation.