



Writing Tips

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Quality Matters

A well-written report provides a timely, accurate, and objective account which captures personal and institutional memory. Spelling, grammar, and formatting errors, while they may seem minor, may have a significant impact on how a report is regarded or even contribute to misinterpretations.



Time Management Tip

When you prepare to write a report (e.g., reports for court), enter in the date the report is due to file and the date due to your supervisor for review in your calendar.



Editing Tips*

- When you are done with a report, if possible, walk away from it.
- Print the report and/or read it out loud.
- Does it address the 5W's & 1H?
- Proofread the report; look for spelling and grammatical errors.



5W's & 1H Examples*

Where	I arrived in Unit 6...	I arrived for a home visit at the home of Chris Client, located at 123 Main Street...
When	...on February 1, 2023, at 10:30 am.	...on February 1, 2023, at 10:30 am.
Who	Youth Young was the only youth not secured in his room.	Chris was confirmed to be the only person present in the home.
How	I confirmed this by a room-by-room security check.	I confirmed this by a room-by-room security check.
What	Youth Young refused to return to his room.	On the coffee table was a 'quarter-size' bag of marijuana.
Why	Youth Young stated, "I want to finish playing my video game."	Chris claimed the marijuana belonged to his roommate.

Tips	Examples
Write in the first person	✓ I asked the youth to review their success plan.
Use language and terminology that is commonly understandable to others, professional, and devoid of slang, labeling, or derogatory language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Labeling and Derogatory: My client is homeless bum. ✗ Labeling and Derogatory: This kid is a hot mess. ✗ Slang: I observed the client hotboxing in the car.
Distinguish between objective facts and assessments based on professional standards and judgment (subjective).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Subjective: My client was nervous. ✓ Objective: My client was rubbing his hands together and tapping his left foot.
Keep the writing simple, short, and straight to the point.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lengthy: It has come to my attention that there is a vast proliferation of undesirable vegetation surrounding the periphery of this facility. ✓ Succinct: I have noticed many weeds growing around the building.
Use the system or MS Word to spell check. Be aware of commonly misused words.	Your vs You're. Then vs Than. They're vs There vs Their. Lose vs Loose. It's vs Its. Lie vs Lay. To vs Too. Elicit vs Illicit. Further vs Farther

Note: These are simply best practices & tips and do not supersede Department policies.

* Lexipol

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