

Jack Webb (Stg. Joe Friday), famous for his saying, “Just the Facts Ma’am” from the television show Dragnet in the 1950’s and ‘60s.

Importance of Documentation

As you learned in the “Note Taking and Report Writing” module, accurately written notes, logs and reports are the best and most reliable way of describing past events.

If a police officer, property manager or attorney requested your observations of an event, having the facts written and recorded as a permanent record would be most helpful.

Assume that anything you put in writing will be permanent. Details like license plate numbers, suspect and witness descriptions, vehicle descriptions, exact quotes of what was said, as well as all the other sights, sounds, colors and environmental aspects might be lost if not written down.

Documentation might later be used to help solve a crime, identify a suspect, assist the police or be used

as evidence in a court case. It may also be used by clients to make management decisions or be part of your supervisor’s evaluation of your performance.

Proper Documentation

Take responsibility to document even the smallest or least significant details of your everyday observations and surroundings.

Take the time to carefully review what you have written. Ask yourself if the material will be clear and informative to all its potential readers.

Potential readers may include clients, management, law enforcement or a court of law. If needed, add more details until the document is a complete and accurate record or log of the facts.

Proper documentation allows the reader to understand clearly what they are reading and provides them with the factual information they need to make decisions or take appropriate actions.

A written document should not require further explanation of what the document is reporting. Besides your notes, Daily Activity Reports and Incident Reports, there may be additional documents and forms to complete.

Other documents and forms for which you may be responsible include:

- Bomb threat reports
- Fire alarm reports
- Lost and found property reports
- Equipment maintenance reports
- Mileage or expense reports
- Key control logs
- Sign-in logs for visitors
- Employee special registers for items like ID badges
- Logs of vehicles entering or leaving the premises
- Radio logs

Facts vs. Assumptions

Facts

A fact is what has actually happened, or is known to be true. Facts include the following:

- A real occurrence, an actual event
- Knowledge or information based on real occurrences
- An action that has been performed, especially a crime or a security incident

Examples of facts include such things as the time, date, color of a vehicle and the height of a suspect.

Assumptions

Assumptions on the other hand are defined as the act of taking something for granted.

Assumptions are also defined as something accepted as true without proof.

Examples of assumptions include believing you know whether or not a suspect is guilty or that a witness is reliable.

Facts	Assumptions
<p>As I came around the corner, about 1215, I saw two young men kneeling at the entrance door to suite 735. One was holding a pry-bar. The door had deep indentations around the door lock.</p>	<p>The men are burglars.</p>
<p>At 0915 an unknown man in his mid-30s, about 5 feet tall, was walking inside of a fenced area, looking at the loading dock.</p>	<p>A man was wandering around area, looking at the loading dock for something to steal.</p>
<p>At 1630, a young man (name unknown), mid-20s, was weaving back and forth and almost fell down twice in the two minutes I observed him.</p>	<p>He was drunk and couldn't even walk right.</p>
<p>A woman got into a newer white, Ford Explorer and attempted to start it.</p>	<p>She tried to steal the car.</p>
<p>A girl picked up a pearl necklace at 1834, examined it, placed in her black leather purse, and walked directly to the north exit.</p>	<p>After she stole a necklace, she tried to get away by the north exit.</p>

A security officer must stick to the facts and not offer opinions or make assumptions.

Keys to Proper Documentation

When answering the 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where and Why), details can be included such as those describing people, weapons, vehicles and locations. The following tips will help you add such details.

Describing a Person

- Sex
- Race or national origin
- Age (estimated)
- Height—use comparisons with your own height, a door or some other standard measure
- Weight (estimated)
- Build: husky, slim or muscular
- Way of walking—slow, fast or limp

Facial Features

- Hair—color, texture, hairline and style; possible dyes or wig
- Forehead—forehead height, and whether the skin is smooth, creased or wrinkled
- Eyes—color, shape, clear or bloodshot, heaviness of eyelashes and eyebrows
- Nose—overall shape of the nose (long, wide, flat, etc.) and nostrils (wide, narrow, flared)
- Cheeks—flesh sunken, filled out, dried or oily. Are there wrinkles around nose or mouth? Are the

cheekbones high or low, wide or narrow?

- Ears—size and prominence (protruding or flat against the head)
- Mouth—lips thin, medium or full. Do the corners turn up, turn down, or are they level?
- Chin—shape of the chin (round, oval, pointed, or square), double chin, dimpled, or have a cleft?
- Neck—protruding Adam's apple or hanging jowls
- Complexion—pores, pockmarks, acne, razor rash, bumps
- Facial hair—clean-shaven, unshaven, beard, mustache, goatee or sideburns
- Tattoos—shape and style; on what part of body

Voice

- Voice—pitch (high, low, or medium pitched), tone (flat or melodic), rasp, lisp
- Speech—articulate, accent, use of slang

Clothing

- Hats—color, style, ornaments, how it is worn (bill forward, backward, to one side)
- Coat—color and style (suit coat, jacket, topcoat or overcoat)

- Shirts/Blouse/Dress—color, design, type of sleeves and collar
- Trousers/Slacks/Skirts—color, style, cuffs
- Socks—color, pattern, length
- Shoes—color, style of shoes, brand name for sneakers (if possible), condition
- Accessories—sweater, scarf, gloves, necktie
- Jewelry—rings, watches, bracelets, necklaces
- General appearance—neat or sloppy? Clean or dirty?
- Oddities—look for clothing too large or too small, odd colors, patchwork

Describing a Weapon

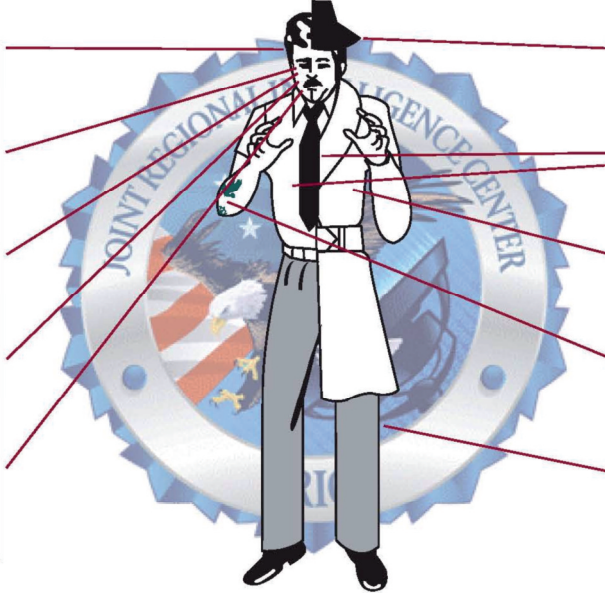
- What type (revolver, handgun, shotgun or knife)




Describing a Vehicle

- Vehicle type (automobile, truck or van)
- Color
- Make and model
- Condition of the vehicle (dirty or damaged)
- License plate number (note if no license plate)

Describing a Person

SEX	RACE	AGE	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	WEAPON TYPE	
HAIR					HAT (color, type)	
GLASSES TYPE					SHIRT	TIE
SCARS/MARKS					COAT	
COMPLEXION					TATTOOS	
FACIAL HAIR					TROUSERS	
ACTIVITY			DIRECTION OF TRAVEL			

Describing a Vehicle



ACTIVITY		DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	
PLATE	MAKE/MODEL	COLOR	GRAPHICS
WHEELS	WINDOWS	LIFTED/LOWERED	MISC.

Describing the Location of a Hazard or an Object

When describing locations, you can use the directions of a compass (North, South, East and West) or the points on a clock.

When describing the relationship of one object to another, it helps to think of the face of a clock, with the main object in the center of the clock and all other objects corresponding to an hour on the clock face. For example, when you describe the other objects you can report that object A was located at 12 o'clock from object B at a distance of about 10 feet.

What Documentation Belongs and Does Not Belong in a Report?

When reporting an event, not all information is relevant and needs to be included.

To help understand what documentation should and should not be included in a report, the following is a sample of information that should be and some information (**bolded**) that should not be included.

The accident occurred at 1:45 p.m. on the North East corner of the intersection of Main Street and Grand Avenue. An eyewitness was standing at the intersection and provided the following details:

The witness, identified as Mrs. Jane Doe, is a female, age 39 years. **She is married and has three grown children.** Mrs. Doe works as an accountant for the CPA firm of Jones and Jones, located in the

building on the South West corner of Main and Grand, at 112 Main Street, Suite 705. **(The gray building with a silver awning.)** Her telephone number is (123) 456-7890.

Mrs. Jones stated that, "While standing at the intersection of Main and Grand on the South West corner, I saw a blue car (subsequently identified to be a 1999 Toyota Avalon, license plate # 123 ABC), heading south on Grand Avenue. I saw the blue car run the red light at the intersection and hit a white car (subsequently identified as a Honda Accord, license plate # 456 DFG). The blue car hit the right front passenger door of the white car as the white car was turning left onto Main Street." Mrs. Doe claims she witnessed the entire accident and will testify to that fact. **She came across as very honest.** Mrs. Doe wears spectacles. From her position she had a clear and unobstructed view of the intersection. **She attends church every Sunday and sings in the choir.**