

**Unit Goal: Demonstrate effective written communication skills.**

**24.1 Identify the components of a sentence.**

**Components of a sentence:**

- Adjective – An adjective is a word that typically describes or modifies the meaning of a noun. Adjectives serve to point out a quality of a thing named (“a **brave** officer”, “a **new** car”), to indicate its quantity or extent (“**some** reports”), or to specify a thing as distinct from something else (“**this** suspect”, “**those** witnesses”).
- Adverb – An adverb is a word or combination of words typically serving as a modifier of a verb, an adjective, another adverb, a preposition, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence, and expressing some relation of manner or quality, place, time, degree, number, cause, opposition, affirmation, or denial. Adverbs answer such questions as:
  - When? (“Please reply **at once**.”)
  - How long? (“This investigation is taking **forever**.”)
  - Where? (“The victim died **there**.”)
  - In what direction? (“Pull the trigger **backward**.”)
  - How? (“The detectives moved **expeditiously** on the project.”)
  - To what degree? (“The book was **very** popular.”)
- Noun – A noun is a word that is the name of something (a person, animal, place, object, quality, concept, or action). “The **officer** received an **assignment**.”
- Preposition – A preposition is a word that combines with a noun, pronoun, or noun equivalent (as a phrase or clause) to form a phrase that usually acts as an adverb, adjective, or noun. “They expected resistance **on** their part.” “He sat down **beside** her.”
- Verb – Verbs express an act, occurrence, or mode of being. “The suspect **ran** from the officer.” “The witness **panicked** once on the stand.”
- Pronoun – A pronoun is a word that is used as a substitute for a noun or noun equivalent. “**Who** is **she**?”

**Lecture scenario:** Have students complete Sentence Parts exercise in Chapter Resources.

**24.2 Identify the process of writing complete sentences.**

**Characteristics of a sentence:**

- A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.
- A sentence typically contains both a subject and a predicate, begins with a capital letter, and ends with a punctuation mark.
- A sentence should be short, simple, and concise.
- A sentence should be unmistakably clear to the reader.

**Importance of complete sentences in written communication:**

- Your written communication will be one of the factors used to evaluate your competence as a peace officer.
- Your written communication may be seen by a diverse audience (your agency, the criminal justice system, the public, etc.).
- Your written communication may serve as a source document for judicial and administrative proceedings.

**Problems with sentence construction:**

- People often speak in incomplete sentences. If the listener does not understand what is said, they can ask the speaker to clarify. However, this is often not possible with written communications. Therefore, written communications must state complete thoughts to ensure that the reader understands the author's meaning.
- When someone writes the same way they talk, two serious errors may occur: sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

**Sentence fragments:**

- A sentence fragment is a group of words that is only a piece, or "fragment," of a complete sentence. This may make it difficult for the reader to understand its meaning.
- Example: The mirror in the hall closet.

**Run-on sentences:**

- Run-on sentences cause confusion for the reader and can lead to incorrect conclusions about the intent of the writing.
- Two or more sentences written as one result in a run-on sentence.
- Closely related sentences are often mistakenly combined into one.
- Example: The officer chased the suspect, and the suspect had a gun.

**Lecture Scenario:** Have students complete exercises in Chapter Resources sections:

- Fragments and Run-ons
- Sentence Errors

### 24.3 Recognize sentence clarity problems and correct them.

**The placement of modifiers:**

- A modifier is a word or set of words that qualifies or limits another word or set of words.
- A misplaced modifier is one that attaches itself to the wrong word or words in the sentence.
- Because a misplaced modifier presents the reader with an unintended meaning or forces them to try to figure out the meaning of the sentence, misinterpretation by the reader often results.
- Place every modifier as close as possible to the word it modifies.
  - WRONG: We saw many swimming pools flying over California.
  - RIGHT: While flying over California, we saw many swimming pools.

**Double negatives:**

- When two negative words are used in the same clause, the result is a double negative.
- The following negative terms should be used one at a time, not in pairs: no, not, never, none, no one, nobody, nothing, nowhere, and neither.
  - WRONG: **Nobody** saw **nothing**. / There is **not no** time left.
  - RIGHT: **Nobody** saw **anything**. / There is **no** time left.
- The following words are negative in meaning and should not be used in the same clause with any of the negative words above: barely, scarcely, and hardly.
  - WRONG: I **can't hardly** see the road in this fog.
  - RIGHT: I **can hardly** see the road in this fog.

**Passive voice:**

- When the verb is in the active voice, the subject performs the action. When the verb is in the passive voice, the subject receives the action.

- Use the active voice - the sentence is clearer and stronger. When the actor is not known, the passive voice may be necessary.
  - Passive: **The bystander was hit** by a stray bullet.
  - Active: **A stray bullet hit** a bystander.

**Quotation marks:**

- Quotation marks help enclose direct quotations, but not indirect quotations.
- When quoting someone's exact words, you **must** use quotation marks.
  - Example: Riley yawned and said, "Let's go."
- If not quoting verbatim, do not use quotation marks.
  - Example: Riley yawned and said that we should go.

**Slang, jargon, and nonstandard abbreviations:**

- Unless it is being quoted for a purpose (e.g., a statement made by a suspect), do not use slang and jargon.
  - Slang: The person said that someone **trashed** their car.  
Corrected: The person said someone **damaged** their car.  
Quoted: The person said someone "**trashed**" their car.
  - Jargon: I responded to a **10-50**.  
Corrected: I responded to a **traffic crash**.
  - Jargon: Deputy Brown arrested Crain for **dee-wee**.  
Corrected: Deputy Brown arrested Crain for **Driving While Intoxicated**.
- Nonstandard abbreviations should be avoided. However, if used, they must first be preceded by the full word. For instance, "The training material was provided by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer (TCOLE). TCOLE is located in Austin, Texas."
  - WRONG: We **ID'd** the **S** from the **APB**.
  - RIGHT: We **identified** the **suspect** from the **all-points-bulletin broadcast (APB)**.

**Lecture Scenario:** Have students complete Chapter Resources exercises on Misplaced Modifiers, Double Negatives, and Quotation Marks.

**Examples of commonly misused words:**

Words that sound alike, or nearly alike, but have different meanings often cause trouble. Here are a few of the most common pairs with correct definitions and examples:

- **ACCEPT** – to receive  
They **accept** direction well.  
  
EXCEPT – to take or leave out  
Please take all the weapons off the shelf **except** for those already numbered.
- **AFFECT** – verb, to influence  
Lack of exercise **affects** your ability to effectively perform your duties.  
  
EFFECT – noun, result; verb, to cause something to come into being  
The subtle **effect** of the lighting made the room look ominous.
- **A LOT** – many

We saw **a lot** of hay bales on the drive here.

Note: this is always two words.

ALOT

Note: this form is incorrect and does not have a meaning.

- ALL READY – prepared  
The prisoners were **all ready** for transport when the truck arrived.

ALREADY – by this time

The suspect was **already** gone when the officers arrived.

- ALTOGETHER – entirely  
**Altogether**, I thought that the state's argument before the jury was excellent.

ALL TOGETHER – gathered, with everything in one place

We were **all together** at the family reunion last spring.

- ASCENT – climb  
The plane's **ascent** made my ears pop.

ASSENT – agreement

The suspected **assented** to being handcuffed.

- BREATH – noun, air inhaled or exhaled  
You could see his **breath** in the cold air.

BREATHE – verb, to inhale or exhale

If you don't **breathe**, then you are dead.

- CAPITAL – seat of government. Also, financial resources.  
The **capital** of Texas is Austin.  
The business had enough **capital** to open a new store.

CAPITOL – the actual building in which the legislative body meets.

Congress met at the **capitol** this morning.

- CITE – to quote or document  
The officer's report **cited** ten witnesses who observed the offense.

SIGHT – vision

The **sight** of the suspect in the courtroom frightened the victim.

SITE – position or place

The new courthouse was built on the **site** of the old railway terminal.

- CONSCIENCE – sense of right and wrong  
The officer's **conscience** kept them from falsifying the report.

CONSCIOUS – awake

They were **conscious** when the burglar entered the house.

- COUNCIL – a group that consults or advises  
The members of the **council** voted in favor of the new budget.

COUNSEL – to advise

Though their attorney **counseled** them not to, they robbed the bank anyway.

- ELICIT – to draw or bring out  
The officer **elicited** the name of the drug dealers from the neighbors.

ILLICIT – illegal

The drug dealers were then arrested for their **illicit** activities.

- ITS – of or belonging to it  
That dog begins barking as soon as it sees **its** owner leave for work.

IT'S – contraction for it is

**It's** another long day working the street for Officer Jones.

- LIE – to lie down (Of a person or animal. Hint: people can tell lies.)  
I have a headache, so I'm going to **lie** down for a while.  
Note: also lying, lay, has/have lain. Example: the dog has lain in the shade all day; yesterday, the dog lay there for twelve hours.

LAY – to set an object down

"**Lay** down that gun, Bubba," the sheriff demanded.

Note: also laying, laid, has/have laid. Example: At that point, Bubba laid the gun on the ground.

- PASSED – verb, past tense of "to pass," to have moved  
The train **passed** through town like a speeding bullet.

PAST – belonging to a former time or place

Who was the **past** sheriff of Comal County?

- PRECEDE – to come before

Ronald Regan **preceded** Bill Clinton as U.S. President.

PROCEED – to go forward

After questioned by the prosecutor, the witness **proceeded** to explain what he saw at the crime scene.

- PRINCIPAL – adjective, most important; noun, a person who has authority

The **principal** ingredient in pecan pie is pecans.

The **principal** of the school seemed 100 years old to the first graders.

PRINCIPLE – a general or fundamental truth

The **principle** of “innocent until proven guilty” is a fundamental tenet of American jurisprudence.

- SUPPOSED TO – correct form for "to be obligated to" or "presumed to," NOT "suppose to" When am I **supposed to** appear in court?

SUPPOSE – to guess or make a conjecture

Do you **suppose** I will have to testify?

- THAN – use with comparisons

I would rather work with Officer Williams **than** Officer Jones.

THEN – at that time, or next

I reviewed my field notes, **then** wrote my report.

- THEIR – possessive form of they

**Their** car was stolen last night.

THERE – indicates location

I loved Seattle and want to go **there** again.

THEY'RE – contraction for "they are"

**They're** always late for work.

- THROUGH – by means of; finished; into or out of

The investigation lasted **through** the night.

THRU – abbreviated slang for through; not appropriate in standard writing.

THREW – past tense of throw

The judge **threw** out the testimony as hearsay.

- THOROUGH – careful or complete

Because of the **thorough** investigation, the defendant was found guilty and given a life sentence.

THOUGH – however; nevertheless

Sergeant looks like a tough bulldog, **though** they are as kind as a little puppy dog.

- TO – toward

They went **to** the market.

TOO – also, or excessively

They drank **too** much before driving home and were arrested for DWI.

TWO – a number

Only **two** recruits failed the academy.

- WHO – pronoun typically refers to a person or persons and some animals

They wondered **who** could have committed such a violent murder.

Rin Tin Tin, **who** made 26 movies before his death in 1932, remains one of the most famous dogs in history.

- WHICH – pronoun, typically refers to things and animals

**Which** gun was used in the murder?

THAT – is a pronoun that refers to both beings and things

**That** is the weapon used.

- WHO – used as a subject or as a subject complement (see above)

Tracy is the person **who** you need to see.

WHOM – used as an object

To **whom** are you referring?

**Other commonly misused words include:**

- Whose/Who's
- Your/You're
- Weather/Whether
- A while/Awhile
- Besides/Beside
- Everyday/Every day
- Can/May
- Advice/Advise
- Infer/Imply

- Few/Fewer/Less
- Like/As
- Farther/Further
- Amount/Number
- Bring/Take
- Will/Shall
- All of/All
- Among/Between
- But/However
- Different from/Other than (not “different from”)
- Disinterested/Uninterested
- Due to/Because of
- I.e./E.g.
- And/Or/Nor
- Oral/Verbal
- Plead/Pled
- Proved/Proven
- Say/State
- When/Where (as in the incorrect “times where...”)

**Problems with verbosity:**

Often, in an unnecessary attempt to impress the reader, the writer uses unnecessary phrases or words. This should be avoided.

**Examples:**

- “At this point in time”
- “Have knowledge of ...” (use “know”)
- “In a hasty manner” (use “hastily”)
- “In connection with” or “In regard to” (use “regarding”)
- “In the event that” (use “if”)
- “It should be noted that”
- “The fact that”
- “The question as to whether” (use “the question whether”)
- “There is no doubt but that” (use “no doubt,” “undoubtedly”)

**Getting rid of deadwood (phrases and repetition):**

Police reports are not prose. Flowery and fancy words and phrases are unnecessary and distracting. Such words and phrases are considered “deadwood,” and should be kept out of your documents. Below are numerous examples of “deadwood” phrases followed by the term which instead should be used.

- A majority of – most
- After the conclusion of – after
- Ascertain the location of – find
- At such time as – when
- At the present time – now



- In view of the fact that – because, since
- Is capable of – can
- Is found to be – is
- It is possible that – perhaps
- Make inquiry regarding – ask about, inquire about
- Notwithstanding the fact that – although
- On the basis of – from, because, by
- Provided that – if
- Put an end to – end
- Reach a conclusion – conclude
- Subsequent to – after
- Utilize or utilization – use

The needless repetition of similar words which say the same thing is another form of “deadwood.” Such phrases are easily shortened.

- Adequate enough – adequate (or enough)
- Appear(s) to be – appear(s)
- Basic essentials – basics (or essentials)
- Close proximity – proximity
- Consensus of opinion – consensus
- Cooperated together – cooperated
- General rule – rule
- Joint cooperation – cooperation
- Necessary requirement – requirement
- Rate of speed – speed
- Resemble in appearance – resemble
- True facts – facts
- Very unique – unique

#### **24.4 Discuss the appropriate use of punctuation.**

##### **Common punctuation marks:**

- |                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| • Apostrophe        | '   |
| • Brackets          | [ ] |
| • Colon             | :   |
| • Comma             | ,   |
| • Dash/Hyphen       | – - |
| • Ellipsis          | ... |
| • Exclamation Point | !   |
| • Parentheses       | ( ) |
| • Period            | .   |
| • Question mark     | ?   |
| • Quotation marks   | ""  |
| • Semicolon         | ;   |
| • Slash             | /   |

**Instructor Note:** Refer to Chapter Resources for the “Brief Guide to Punctuation.” Use these materials as a class.

#### **24.5 Describe the critical nature of effective field notes.**

**Lecture scenario:** Have students write reports during this section.

- Students should be shown examples of reports to be used as a teaching tool.
- Students should use law enforcement report forms to complete information discussed in this chapter.

**Definition:**

Field notes are brief notations concerning specific events and circumstances that are recorded while fresh in the officer’s mind and used to prepare a report.

**Uses:**

- Provides basis for report writing.
- Reduces need to re-contact parties involved.
- Provides greater accuracy relative to time, statements, and events than memory alone.

**Lecture Scenario:** Use possible scenario to give students practice in notetaking.

- When note-taking keep several things in mind:
  - Non-police information and personal comments should not be included.
    - If brought to court, notes are subject to scrutiny.
    - If placed into evidence, notes may not be available until released by the court.
  - Be very careful when transferring information from field notes to reports.
    - Ensure there are no impeachable discrepancies.
    - Field notes and report must be consistent.
  - It is recommended that once information from field notes has been transcribed to a report, the notes be destroyed.
    - Check agency policy

#### **24.6 Demonstrate observation and descriptive skills.**

**Practical scenario:** Pre-instruction writing activity

- The students have ten (10) minutes to write and turn in a description of one person near them in class.
- The students have ten (10) minutes to write and turn in a description of the classroom.
- The students have ten (10) minutes to write and turn in a description of their surroundings on the way to the classroom.

**Instructor Note:** Have students turn in writing activity and hold the descriptions until the end of the writing unit. At that time, return them to the students, have them repeat the exercise, and assess their progress.

It is important to practice observation and descriptive writing skills often.

**Observation:**

- An officer’s ability to be descriptive in field notes and reports is based on their observation skills. All five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) are used in observation.

- Observation skills are a perishable skill and must be frequently practiced in order to keep them sharp.

**Describing:**

- The peace officer must be able to describe people, places, and things by using specific, clear, and vivid language, which takes practice.
- Describing people is one of the most difficult tasks for an officer. Include all descriptive characteristics of persons, such as their manner of speaking or walking, accents, their movements, or the things they are carrying.
- Describe people in a systematic manner, beginning with race, sex, and age, and continuing with a head-to-toe description, being especially careful to note any features that would make the person easily identifiable such as scars, tattoos, and disfigurements.
- Places should be described beginning at one point, then proceeding in one direction, such as left-to-right or top-to-bottom, to ensure that the description is thorough and systematic. The goal is to paint a picture of the place using words.
- When describing things, look for all distinguishing marks and anything that might be compared or related to a commonly known thing or idea. Look for color, size, shape, texture, location, and type. For instance, when describing a vehicle, it would be useful to note any damage, bumper stickers, or after-market enhancements.

**Instructor Note:** Refer to the Chapter Resources for worksheet on “Categories/Examples to Help in Descriptive Writing.”

**24.7 List the types of information that should be entered into the officer’s field notebook.**

**Persons:**

- Suspect(s)
- Victim(s)
- Witness(es)

**Describe suspects and victims from head to toe:**

- Race and sex
- Height and weight
- Hair – color, style, curly, straight, etc.
- Hat – color, style
- Face – complexion
- Eyes – color, shape
- Nose – mouth area and any distinguishing marks
- Shirt – color, style
- Pants – color, style
- Shoes – color, style
- Other distinguishing marks (e.g., tattoos, scars, limp, missing teeth, etc.)
- Injuries

**Lecture Scenario:**

- Have students break up in groups of two.
- Hand out a photo of a person to each group.
- Have students describe the physical characteristics of the individual in the photo.

- Focus on conveying specific things about the individual that would set that individual apart.
- Each group should share results with class.

**Practical Scenario: “Box of Things” activity**

- Collect 10-15 everyday items (with a good mix of police/non-police specific items, varied in colors, textures, sizes, etc.). Place the items in a box so that all of them are visible when the students look in the box from above.
- Tell the students the box contains several items.
- Ask students to describe the items in writing.
- No talking will be allowed during this exercise.

**Scenario First Round:**

- Allow several of the students at a time to look into the box for exactly 10 seconds. They cannot take notes, draw on a pad, etc. Have each group go back to their desks to write down what they can recall about the items. Continue until all of the students have finished.
- Have the students tell you only one thing: how many items they saw. Don't let anyone say anything more than the number they recall.

**Scenario Second Round:**

- Allow each group to return to the box to look again - this time for 15 seconds. Let them write their notes again.
- Discuss the results.

**Scenario Third Round:**

- After everyone has looked into the box for the second time and had time to write, remind them to think about the many different ways to describe each item, such as:
  - color
  - size
  - shape
  - texture
  - probable weight
  - use
  - distinguishing marks
  - location, especially relative to other things
- Allow each group to come back up to the box- this time for 15 seconds. They can pick up the items. Remind them to check texture, feel, weight, etc. Encourage them to use vivid language when writing the third round of notes.
- Discuss the results.

**Scenario Follow-up:**

- Take each item out of the box and discuss with students how it was described in their notes.
  - Explain that describing precisely, vividly, and quickly is of paramount importance for peace officers.
  - An officer should keep all of their senses attuned at all times.

**Describing vehicles:**

- Describe from top to bottom.
- “CYMBAL”:
  - C – Color - top to bottom
  - Y – Year
  - M – Make/Model
  - B – Body style
  - L – License plate: year of expiration, state registered
- VIN (Vehicle Identification Number)
- Estimated value
- Distinguishing marks/damages
- Is the vehicle insured?
- Is the vehicle financed?

**Lecture Scenario:** Have the students describe vehicles from a photo.

- Focus on specific things about vehicle that would set it apart from others (rims, tint, stickers, damage, etc.).

**Other property:**

- Description will differ by the type of property, but should include:
  - Manufacturer
  - Model name/number
  - Serial number
  - Cost/value
  - Size
  - Color
  - Style
  - Use (if not obvious)
  - Location found (and disposition, when appropriate)

**Lecture Scenario:** Have students describe physical characteristics of another’s property.

- Have the students break into pairs.
- Have students describe the physical characteristics of another’s cell phone or other property.
- Be able to differentiate by items that may seem to look the same.
- Look for unique identifiers, cracked screen, case, etc.

**Practical Scenario:** Providing descriptions

- Communicating description – 15 minutes
  - Instructor should provide a geometric/abstract design.
  - Choose a student to come to the front of the class to describe the design to the class.
  - The other students are to draw the design as described.
  - Allow this to continue for a few minutes, until the student has a hit a dead end, gives up, or is finished.
- Describing pictures
  - Instructor should provide several pictures - choose those that contain a variety of subjects, including people and places.

- Have students choose and write an in-depth description of one of the pictures – 5-10 minutes.
- Trade papers. Peers are to give suggestions about how to enhance the description – 5 minutes.
- Students work on their descriptions – 5-10 minutes.
- Share with class

**Date(s) and time(s):**

- If an individual is not able to give an exact date and time, figure out between what time the offense occurred. For example, if a burglary of a motor vehicle occurred overnight outside a residence, ask the last time the individual left the vehicle with the property inside and what time they found it. The offense time frame may span two different days, especially in overnight offenses.

**Exact location of occurrence:**

- If on a public street, a general address (e.g., 4500 Harry Hines Blvd.) will suffice but officers should attempt to determine the exact location of the offense to assist investigators and associate the offense in case of future calls to the same location.

**Persons involved:**

- Suspect
- Victim
- Witnesses
- Other officers

**Other possible information:**

- Contact information, alternate contact numbers
- Case number
- Assisting officer activity
- Location and chain of evidence/custody
- Type of incident

**24.8 List questions to be answered in field notes to complete a report.**

**Who?:**

- Persons involved should be identified by their role as suspect, victim, or witness.
- Correct spelling of complete name, address, telephone number, work address and telephone numbers, contact information for someone who can reach them
- Any aliases used
- Involvement
- Sex and race
- Occupation (if employed)
- Student/school, school ID number
- Age and date of birth
- Driver's license or other official ID (e.g., social security number, passport number, foreign consulate card)

**What?:**

- Type of offense committed
- Type of property involved

- Means of transportation used (if any, or by foot), last known direction of travel
- Statements made (exact words, if possible)
- Unusual characteristics or actions

**When?:**

- Date and time
- Offense occurred
- Discovered
- Reported
- Evidence located
- Witness(es) and victim(s) contacted
- Arrest(s) made

**Where?:**

- Exact location of offense and evidence
- Reference points
- Type of area (e.g., residential, business, open field)
- Location of victims, witnesses, or suspects in relation to crime

**Why?:**

- Any statement or evidence supporting a possible cause or motive (e.g., revenge, drug addiction, monetary gain, accident)

**How?:**

- Offense occurred
- Suspect approached (or gained access/entry) and exited
- Law enforcement was notified
- Officer approached the scene
- Scene and persons involved appeared

**Practical Scenario:** After this section, the students will break into groups of three. One individual will simulate being the victim of a crime, one individual will take the lead on fully documenting the circumstances of the incident, and the third individual will simulate being the cover portion of a contact/cover team and interject if the contact individual overlooks information.

**Instructor Note:** Begin familiarization with cover/contact practices (officer safety). Have students begin to develop a routine of collecting information to reduce chance of missing critical information.

## **24.9 Discuss the uses and essential characteristics of police reports.**

**Official uses of the police report:**

- Permanent record of facts
- Coordination of follow-up
- Basis for prosecution and defense
- Performance evaluations of officer
- Statistical data
- Reference material

**Instructor Note:** In addition to the above activity, practical application of this segment should occur during the criminal investigation block of instruction.

**24.10 List the eight essential criteria of a good police report.**

**The eight essential criteria of a good police report:**

- Accurate
- Concise
- Complete
- Clear
- Legible
- Objective
- Grammatically correct
- Correct spelling

**Instructor Note:** The use of first- or third-person writing will depend on agency policy.

**Practical Scenario:** Sharpening descriptions

Practical scenario 1:

- Distribute a template paper to students with 5 columns (one column for each sense).
- Divide the students into partners.
- Using the columns, have students record descriptions for each of the following:
  - Sounds in a supermarket
  - Textures in a room in your house
  - Smell of a meal that you ate recently
  - Taste of your favorite food (or one that you hate)
  - Describe the sky - at dawn or at sunset
- Students will turn in papers after 15 minutes.

Practical scenario 2:

- Have students describe what they might see, hear, smell, feel, taste walking on the beach on a rainy day – 5 minutes.
- Whole class to share beach descriptions – 3-5 minutes.

Practical scenario 3:

- Set another scene for same procedure. ("Imagine you are in the middle of a jewelry store robbery in a store with 5-7 customers and employees.")
- Have students write a description of the scene – 10 minutes.
- Share in small groups – 5 minutes.
- Instruct students to go back and look at their lists of descriptions for all activities:
  - Are the words specific and well chosen?
  - Do they convey thoughts clearly?
  - Could another person visualize what is described?

**24.11 List the common types of police reports.**

- Arrest reports
- Incident reports
- Offense reports



- Crash reports
- Supplemental reports

**24.12 Identify the difference between chronological and categorical ordering in report writing.**

- Chronological - arrangement of information in order of occurrence
- Categorical - arrangement of information by category (e.g., witnesses, suspects, crime elements)

**Instructor Note:** This subject may be governed by agency policy.

**24.13 List the three basic kinds of information necessary in police reports.**

- Identification of the involved persons, vehicles, etc.
- Narrative description of the offense or incident
- Elements of the offense or probable cause

**Instructor Note:** Explain to the student that some procedures regarding juveniles, sex offenders, and victims of family violence may be governed by statute or agency policy.

**24.14 Identify the importance of separating fact from opinion in police reports.**

Unless required, officers' opinions should not be included in the police report. Anything other than facts must be labeled as such to avoid any possible confusion.

**24.15 Identify the statutory authority relating to confidentiality of sex offense victims.**

- A victim may choose a pseudonym to designate his or her identity in all public files and records concerning the offense.
- See CCP, Chapter 58.
- Agency policy will dictate how this is documented.

**Practical Scenario:** Have the students write at least two sample police reports (one property crime, one crime against a person), more if time allows.

- Gauge student comprehension of material.
- Identify students that may need additional time with spelling and grammar.

## CHAPTER RESOURCES

### Sentence Parts Exercise Sheet

Fill in the name of each part of the sentences below.  
(Some have more than one correct answer.)

Someone	threw a rock.			
Something	happened	to	them.	
People	were	in	the office.	
They	heard	loud	noises.	
We	slowly	moved	toward	the house.

**Sentence Parts  
(KEY)**

Someone	threw a rock.			
Noun (Subject)	Predicate			
Something	happened	to	them.	
Noun (Subject)	Verb	Preposition	Pronoun	
People	were	in	the office.	
Noun (Subject)	Verb	Preposition	Noun	
They	heard	loud	noises.	
Pronoun (Subject)	Verb	Adjective	Noun	
We	slowly	moved	toward	the house.
Pronoun (Subject)	Adverb	Verb	Preposition	Noun

**Fragments and Run-ons  
Exercise Sheet**

1. Had melted in the summer heat.
2. Mysteries are my favorite books I read them all the time.
3. The mirror in the hall closet.
4. We were on alert all day my nerves are on end.
5. Mr. Morris, my next-door neighbor, never bothers anyone.
6. Lightning struck the barn
7. Watching the ships come in.
8. That easy course.
9. We had baton practices until five we have a test tomorrow.
10. The speeding car skidded around the turn it went into the ditch.

**Fragments and Run-ons  
(KEY)**

(Note: fragment completions are just examples.)

1. (fragment, no subject)  
My ice cream had melted in the summer heat.
2. (run-on sentence)  
Mysteries are my favorite books; I read them all the time.
3. (fragment, no verb)  
The mirror in the hall closet fell off the wall during the storm.
4. (run-on sentence)  
My nerves are on end because we were on alert all day.
5. (complete sentence – no changes needed)  
Mr. Morris, my next-door neighbor, never bothers anyone.
6. (complete sentence, end mark)  
Lightning struck the barn.
7. (fragment, no verb)  
Watching the ships come in calms my soul.
8. (fragment, no verb)  
That easy course turned into a nightmare!
9. (run-on sentence)  
We had baton practices until five. We have a test tomorrow.
10. (run-on sentence)  
The speeding car skidded around the turn and went into the ditch.

**Sentence Errors**  
**(Examples and Non-examples)**  
**Exercise Sheet**

1. An unmarked police car.
2. Jody won.
3. The toy collection booth was a success we gathered over 1,000 toys.
4. Shaking with fear, the sergeant reprimanded the cadet.
5. A clever dog knows it's master.
6. The foreigner does not speak scarcely a word of English.
7. There wasn't nothing you could have done to help.
8. She died in the house in which she was born at the age of 88.
9. The maid told the detective his dying words were the butler did it.
10. Clear understandable writing will be one of your greatest assets practiced daily in the academy.

**Sentence Errors**  
**Examples and Non-examples**  
**(KEY)**

Below are the sentence errors, as applicable, along with possible solutions to correct the sentences.

1. (sentence fragment)  
An unmarked police car drove by the residence.
2. (complete sentence – no changes needed)
3. (run-on sentence)  
The toy collection booth was a success. We gathered over 1,000 toys.  
OR  
The toy collection was a success; we gathered over 1,000 toys.
4. (misplaced modifier)  
The sergeant reprimanded the cadet, who was shaking with fear.  
OR  
The cadet, who was shaking with fear, was reprimanded by the sergeant.
5. (incorrect word use)  
A clever dog knows its master.
6. (double negative)  
The foreigner scarcely speaks a word of English.
7. (double negative)  
There was nothing you could have done to help.  
OR  
There wasn't anything you could have done to help.
8. (misplaced modifier)  
She died in the house where she was born 88 years ago.
9. (misused quotation marks)  
The maid told the detective his dying words were, "The butler did it."
10. (run-on sentence)  
Clear, understandable writing will be one of your greatest assets; practiced daily in the academy.

**Misplaced Modifiers, Double Negatives, Quotation Marks  
Exercise Sheet**

1. The company has patented a crushproof helmet for football players made of plastic.
2. The crowd roared when the horse jumped over the fence and burst into applause.
3. The boy was yelling, I won't; his mother was shouting, You will; and the dog was barking.
4. Neither of them went nowhere.
5. Sleeping under a good tent, the insects will not bother you.
6. Out in west Texas, they can't hardly wait to get some rain.
7. To learn to play the piano, Johns mother made him practice every day.
8. Wrapped in a large wet towel, the flames surrounded her as she ran.
9. Ray kept saying I'm okay; however, the doctor thought otherwise.
10. Stan doesn't hardly work at all.
11. He thanked them for baking him a cake yesterday.
12. Mary said No one will help me take care of Jane.
13. The officer shouted Get out of the way.
14. The owner said The top branches of that tree near the front gate are crooked.



**Misplaced Modifiers, Double Negatives, Quotation Marks  
(KEY)**

1. The company has patented a crushproof, plastic helmet for football players.
2. The crowd roared and burst into applause when the horse jumped over the fence.
3. The boy was yelling, "I won't!" His mother was shouting, "You will!" The dog was barking.
4. Neither of them went anywhere.
5. The insects will not bother you if you are sleeping under a good tent.
6. Out in west Texas, they can't wait to get some rain.
7. John's mother made him practice every day so that he would learn to play better.
8. The flames surrounded her as she ran with a large wet towel wrapped around her.
9. Ray kept saying, "I'm okay." However, the doctor thought otherwise.
10. Stan doesn't work very much.
11. He thanked them, yesterday, for baking him a cake.
12. Mary said, "No one will help me take care of Jane."
13. The officer shouted, "Get out of the way!"
14. The owner said, "The top branches of that tree near the front gate are crooked."

## A Brief Guide to Punctuation

Adapted from Merriam-Webster's Notebook Dictionary

Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1996

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### APOSTROPHE: '

1. **Indicates the possessive case of nouns and indefinite pronouns**
  - the boy's mother
  - the boys' mothers
  - It is anyone's guess.
2. **Marks omissions in contracted words**
  - didn't
  - o'clock
3. **Often forms plurals of letters, figures, and words referred to as words**
  - You should dot your i's and cross your t's.
  - several 8's
  - She has trouble pronouncing her the's.

### BRACKETS: [ ]

1. **Set off extraneous data such as editorial additions esp. within quoted material**
  - wrote that the author was "trying to dazzle his readers with phrases like *jeu de mots* [play on words]"
2. **Function as parentheses within parentheses**
  - Bowman Act (22 Stat., ch. 4, § [or sec.] 4, p. 50)

### COLON: :

1. **Introduces word, clause, or phrase that explains, illustrates, amplifies, or restates what has gone before**
  - The sentence was poorly constructed: it lacked both unity and coherence.
2. **Introduces a series**
  - Three countries were represented: England, France, and Belgium.
3. **Introduces lengthy quoted material set off from the rest of a text by indentation but not by quotation marks**
  - I quote from the text of Chapter One:
4. **Separates data in time-telling, and data in bibliographic and biblical references**
  - 8:30 a.m.
  - New York: Smith Publishing Co.
  - John 4:10
5. **Separates titles and subtitles (as of books)**
  - *The Tragic Dynasty: A History of the Romanovs*
6. **Follows the salutation in formal correspondence**
  - Dear Sir:

- Gentlemen:

**COMMA: ,**

1. **Separates main clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, or for), and very short clauses not so joined**
  - She knew very little about him, and he volunteered nothing.
  - I came, I saw, I conquered.
2. **Sets off an adverbial clause (or a long phrase) that precedes the main clause**
  - When she found that her friends had deserted her, she sat down and cried.
3. **Sets off from the rest of the sentence transitional words and expressions – on the contrary, on the other hand, conjunctive adverbs – consequently, furthermore, however, and expressions that introduce an illustration or example – namely, for example**
  - Your second question, on the other hand, remains open.
  - The mystery, however, remains unsolved.
  - She expects to travel through two countries, namely, France and England.
4. **Separates words, phrases, or clauses in a series and coordinates adjectives modifying a noun**
  - Men, women, and children crowded into the square.
  - The harsh, cold wind was strong.
5. **Sets off from the rest of the sentence parenthetical elements (as nonrestrictive modifiers)**
  - Our guide, who wore a blue beret, was an experienced traveler.
  - We visited Gettysburg, the site of a famous battle.
6. **Introduces a direct quotation, terminates a direct quotation that is neither a question nor an exclamation, and encloses split quotations**
  - John said, “I am leaving.”
  - “I am leaving,” John said.
  - “I am leaving,” John said with determination, “even if you want me to stay.”
7. **Sets off words in direct address, absolute phrases, and mild interjections**
  - You may go, Mary, if you wish.
  - I fear the encounter, his temper being what it is.
  - Ah, that’s my idea of an excellent dinner.
8. **Separates a question from the rest of the sentence which it ends**
  - It’s a fine day, isn’t it?
9. **Indicates the omission of a word or words, and esp. a word or words used earlier in the sentence**
  - Common stocks are preferred by some investors; bonds, by others.
10. **Is used to avoid ambiguity**
  - To Mary, Jane was someone special.
11. **Sets off geographical names – a state or country from city, items in dates, and addresses from the rest of a text**
  - Shreveport, Louisiana, is the site of a large air base.
  - On Sunday, June 23, 1940, he was wounded.
  - Number 10 Downing Street, London, is a famous address.

**12. Follows the salutation in informal correspondence and follows the closing line of a formal or informal letter**

- Dear Mary,
- Affectionately,
- Very truly yours,

**DASH: —**

**1. Usually marks an abrupt change or break in the continuity of a sentence**

- When in 1960 the stockpile was sold off — indeed, dumped as surplus — natural-rubber sales were hard hit. — Barry Commoner

**2. Introduces a summary statement after a series**

- Oil, steel, and wheat — these are the sinews of industrialization.

**3. Often precedes the attribution of a quotation**

- My foot is on my native heath.... — Sir Walter Scott

**ELLIPSIS: ... ....**

**1. Indicates the omission of one or more words within a quoted passage**

- The head is not more native to the heart...than is the throne of Denmark to thy father. — Shakespeare

**2. Four dots indicates the omission of one or more sentences within the passage or the omission of words at the end of a sentence**

- Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure.... Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. — Helen Keller

**3. Indicates halting speech or an unfinished sentence in dialogue**

- I'd like to...that is...if you don't mind..." He faltered and then stopped speaking.

**EXCLAMATION POINT: !**

**1. Terminates an emphatic phrase or sentence**

- Get out of here!

**2. Terminates an emphatic interjection**

- Encore!

**HYPHEN: -**

**1. Marks separation or division of a word at the end of a line of text – e.g., in this paragraph as shown.**

**2. Is used between some prefix and word combinations, as prefix + proper name – pre-Renaissance; prefix ending with a vowel + word beginning often with the same vowel – co-opted, re-ink; stressed prefix + word, esp. when this combination is similar to a different one – “re-cover a sofa” as opposed to “recover from an illness”.**

**3. Is used in some compounds, esp. those containing prepositions**

- president-elect
- sister-in-law

**4. Is often used between elements of a unit modifier in attributive position in order to avoid ambiguity**

- He is a small-business man.
- She has gray-green eyes.
- 5. **Suspends the first part of a hyphenated compound when used with another hyphenated compound**
  - a six- or eight-cylinder engine
- 6. **Is used in writing out compound numbers between 21 and 99**
  - thirty-four
  - one hundred twenty-eight
- 7. **Is used between the numerator and the denominator in writing out fractions esp. when they are used as modifiers**
  - a two-thirds majority of the vote
- 8. **Serves instead of the phrase “up to and including” between numbers and dates**
  - pages 40-98
  - the decade 1960-69

**PARENTHESES: ( )**

1. **Set off supplementary, parenthetical, or explanatory material when the interruption is more marked than usually indicated by commas**
  - Three old destroyers (all now out of commission) will be scrapped.
  - He is hoping (as we all are) that this time he will succeed.
2. **Enclose numerals which confirm a written number in a text**
  - Delivery will be made in thirty (30) days.
3. **Enclose numbers or letters in a series**
  - We must set forth (1) our long-term goals, (2) our immediate objectives, and (3) the means at our disposal.

**PERIOD: .**

1. **Terminates sentences or sentence fragments that are neither interrogatory nor exclamatory**
  - Obey the law.
  - He obeyed the law.
2. **Follows some abbreviations and contractions**
  - Dr.
  - Jr.
  - etc.
  - cont.

**QUESTION MARK: ?**

1. **Terminates a direct question**
  - Who threw the bomb?
  - “Who threw the bomb?” he asked.
  - To ask the question “who threw the bomb?” is unnecessary.
2. **Indicates the writer’s ignorance or uncertainty**
  - Omar Khayyam, Persian poet (1048?-1122)

**QUOTATION MARKS, DOUBLE: “ ”**

1. **Enclose direct quotations in conventional usage**
  - He said, “I am leaving.”
2. **Enclose words or phrases borrowed from others, words used in a special way, and often slang when it is introduced into formal writing**
  - He called himself “emperor,” but he was really just a dictator.
  - He was arrested for smuggling “smack.”
3. **Enclose titles of short poems, short stories, articles, lectures, chapters of books, songs, short musical compositions, and radio and TV programs**
  - Robert Frost’s “Dust of Snow”
  - Pushkin’s “Queen of Spades”
  - The third chapter of *Treasure Island* is entitled “The Black Spot.”
  - Ravel’s “Bolero”
  - NBC’s “Today Show”
4. **Are used with other punctuation marks in the following ways: the period and the comma fall within the quotation marks**
5. “I am leaving,” he said.
6. His camera was described as “waterproof,” but “moisture-resistant” would have been a better description.
7. **The semi-colon falls outside the quotation marks** – He spoke of his “little cottage in the country”; he might have called it a mansion.
8. **The dash, the question mark, and the exclamation point fall within the quotation marks when they refer to the quoted matter only; they fall outside when they refer to the whole sentence**
  - He asked, “When did you leave?”
  - What is the meaning of “the open door”?
  - The sergeant shouted, “Halt!”
  - Save us from his “mercy”!

**QUOTATION MARKS, SINGLE: ‘ ’**

1. **Enclose a quotation within a quotation in conventional usage**
  - The witness said, “I distinctly heard him say, ‘Don’t be late,’ and then I heard the door close.”

**SEMICOLON: ;**

1. **Links the main clauses not joined by coordinating conjunctions**
  - Some people have the ability to write well; others do not.
2. **Links main clauses joined by conjunctive adverbs** – consequently, furthermore, however.
  - Speeding is illegal; furthermore, it is very dangerous.
3. **Links clauses which themselves contain commas even when such clauses are joined by coordinating conjunctions**

- Mr. King, whom you met yesterday, will represent us on the committee; but you should follow the proceedings yourself, because they are vitally important to us.

**SLASH: /**

1. **Separates alternatives**

- ...designs intended for high-heat and/or high-speed applications — F. S. Badger, Jr.

2. **Separates successive divisions (as months or years) of an extended period of time**

- the fiscal year 1972/73

3. **Serves as a dividing line between run-in lines of poetry**

- Say, sages, what's the charm on earth/Can turn death's dart aside?—Robert Burns

4. **Often represents per in abbreviations**

- 9 ft/sec
- 20 km/hr

## Categories/Examples to Help in Descriptive Writing

### Sight:

colors	speed	facial expression
sizes	direction	simile/comparison
shapes	manner of walking	height
distinct marks	manner of movement	weight
shininess	neatness/orderliness	proportions
smoothness	furtiveness	location
brightness	clothing	relation to surroundings
lights (on/off)	accessories	hand placement
cleanness	altered appearance	

### Hearing:

volume	dead telephones	defined by noises	
simile/comparison	number of people	pace	unexpected noises
ID clues	repetitions	distance	location and time
hollowness	direction	type of weapon	

#### (walking noises)

limping	jumping
shuffling	walking
running	stumbling
scotting	stumbling

#### (speech)

heavy/gasping
raspy
sighing
hyperventilating

#### (breathing)

slurred
guttural
gendered

#### (car noises)

backfire	muffler	brake squeal
smooth-running	clacking	car doors closing
missing	engine sound	gunning the motor

#### (miscellaneous noises)

scratching	clicking	dragging
cutting	punching	sliding
snapping	scraping	tearing
ripping	slamming	
cocking	ticking	

### Touch:

temperature	cleanness	weather	imprints
thickness	alive/dead	firmness	vibrations
powdery/granular	find weapons	shape	wetness
location clues	size	sharpness	simile/comparison
texture	hollowness	stickiness	air flow



**Smell:**

perfumes	incense	animals
sulfur matches	breath	humidity
cooking odors	location clues	gun powder
compare to familiar	mustiness	gases
newness of things	motor exhausts	blood
personal scents	drugs	fuels
cigarettes/cigars/pipes	leather	

**Taste:**

Most tastes in police work are secondary functions of smell (e.g., salty air).

## SOURCES

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