

POLICE OFFICERS AND REPORT WRITING

by Reggie Koch
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In my job, I review many police reports.

When I was a police officer studying at the university, a writing professor from there had an accident one day, and he was appalled at the poor report-writing skills of the investigating officer. He began looking at other police reports, and he discovered that police overall are horrible report writers. So, he and a colleague put together a short class aimed at police officers. I was fortunate enough to be included in that class. After that day, it has never ceased to amaze me how police have developed these report-writing (and testifying) skills that they THINK makes them sound more professional, but . . . not so much.

Now, I can hardly read a police report without starting to giggle.

HERE IS THE GENERAL RULE: The more you try to hype it up and make it sound super professional, the more it sucks.

I am fluent in both languages, so let me interpret some phrases for you:

- I exited my unit = I got out of my car
- I initiated my emergency operation equipment = I turned on my blue lights and siren
- Multiple individuals = several people
- Affirmative = yes
- Negative = no
- At the present time = now
- In close proximity to = near
- I endeavored = I tried
- I ascertained = I saw/heard/was told OR I learned
- The reporting officer/this officer = I
- Executed a turn = turned
- Proceeded in a southerly direction = went south
- Engage in a physical confrontation = fight

The list goes on and on.

Dear police friends, a tip: When you are writing, stop. Think about what you want to say. Imagine that you are saying it to your mom. Write it down that way. The people in the jury will not be police officers (almost NEVER). They will be ordinary people like your mom.

Trust me. It will sound SO much better.