Annotated Police Report Example

A fictional U.S.-style incident report showing how to separate an officer's observations, another person's statements, police actions, and unresolved information.

Training example only. Every name, place, event, agency, badge number, and case number in this document is fictional. Police forms and terminology vary by agency and state. This is not legal advice or an official report-writing standard.

Fictional report overview

AGENCY Westbridge Police Department	**CASE NUMBER** FP-2026-0417
REPORT TYPE Initial incident report	**STATUS** Open / no arrest
INCIDENT Reported theft from a motor vehicle	**LOCATION** 2140 Westbridge Avenue
REPORTED WINDOW April 17, 2026, 5:55-6:35 p.m.	**OFFICER ARRIVAL** April 17, 2026, 6:51 p.m.
REPORTING PERSON Jordan Lee - vehicle owner	**WITNESS** Alex Morgan
REPORTING OFFICER Officer Riley Chen #417	**SUBJECT** Unknown

How to use this example

1. Read the narrative once for sequence. Do not interpret every detail on the first pass.
2. Read it again for attribution. Ask who personally saw, heard, said, or did each thing.
3. Compare the text with the report fields. Times, roles, property, evidence, and status should connect.
4. Finish with the checklist. Note missing pages, attachments, redactions, and unresolved facts.

The complete fictional narrative

Read this page as though it were the narrative section of an initial incident report.

1. On 04/17/2026 at approximately 1851 hours, I, Officer Riley Chen #417, responded to the Westbridge Market parking lot at 2140 Westbridge Avenue regarding a reported theft from a vehicle.

2. Upon arrival, I contacted the vehicle owner, Jordan Lee, near a blue 2021 Honda Accord. I observed that the front passenger window was shattered. Broken glass was present on the front passenger seat and on the pavement beside the vehicle.

3. Lee stated that the vehicle had been parked and locked at approximately 1755 hours. Lee stated that, upon returning at approximately 1835 hours, the passenger window was broken and a gray backpack was missing from the front passenger floorboard.

4. Lee described the backpack as containing a black laptop computer, charging cable, and paper notebook. Lee estimated the combined value at $1,180. I did not independently verify ownership or value at the scene.

5. Witness Alex Morgan stated that, at approximately 1815 hours, Morgan heard glass break and saw a person wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt standing beside the passenger side of the Accord. Morgan reported seeing the person enter the passenger side of a red pickup truck before the truck left toward Pine Street.

6. Morgan could not describe the person's face and did not see a license plate. Morgan stated that the time was an estimate based on checking a phone shortly afterward.

7. I photographed the damaged window, the glass, and the vehicle interior. I did not locate the missing property in or around the immediate parking area. No usable serial number for the laptop was available at the scene.

8. A store employee advised that exterior surveillance cameras may cover part of the parking lot. I requested that the store preserve footage from 1750 to 1840 hours. I did not review or collect the footage before completing this initial report.

9. I provided Lee with the case number and instructions for submitting the laptop serial number and any additional documentation. The report was forwarded to the Property Crimes Unit for follow-up. No suspect had been identified and no arrest had been made when this report was submitted.

Reading note: The narrative records an alleged theft and the officer's response. It does not establish who committed the offense, whether the witness was correct, or whether the reported property and value were later verified.

Annotated breakdown

Each number below refers to the matching paragraph in the narrative.

1.	CONTEXT	Administrative context The date, time, officer, location, and reason for dispatch identify the report. “Reported theft” describes the call; it is not a finding of guilt.
2.	OBSERVED	Officer observation The officer says they personally saw the vehicle, broken window, and glass. The sentence does not explain who caused the damage.
3.	STATED	Owner statement Parking time, return time, locking the car, and the missing backpack come from Lee. Attribution matters.
4.	LIMIT	Reported details and stated limit The contents and value are reported by Lee. The officer expressly records that ownership and value were not independently verified at the scene.
5.	STATED	Witness statement The sound, clothing, movement, and red truck come from Morgan. The officer does not claim to have seen these events.
6.	LIMIT	Uncertainty The report preserves limits in the witness account: no face, no plate, and an estimated time.
7.	ACTION	Police action and negative result The officer photographed the scene and searched the immediate area. “Did not locate” describes the scope and result of that search.
8.	PENDING	Possible evidence not yet reviewed A store employee says video may exist. Preservation was requested, but the footage was not reviewed or collected before the initial report.
9.	STATUS	Next steps and case status The report records instructions, referral, and the status at submission: no identified suspect and no arrest.

Useful reading rule
If the report says “Lee stated,” the report proves that the officer documented Lee's statement. The words alone do not prove that every detail in the statement is true. Compare the statement with observations, recordings, physical evidence, and later supplements.

What this report says - and what it does not

Use careful language when summarizing an initial report.

THE REPORT SAYS	THE REPORT DOES NOT ESTABLISH
● An officer responded at approximately 6:51 p.m.	● Who broke the window or took the backpack.
● The officer observed a shattered window and broken glass.	● Whether the witness correctly interpreted or remembered the event.
● Lee reported a missing backpack and described its contents and value.	● Whether the red pickup was connected to an offense.
● Morgan reported hearing glass break and seeing a person and red pickup.	● Whether the property list, ownership, or value was later verified.
● The officer photographed the scene and requested video preservation.	● What the surveillance footage shows.
● No suspect was identified and no arrest had been made at submission.	● Whether probable cause, charges, or a court outcome followed later.

Five common reading mistakes

1. Treating role labels as verdicts
   “Victim,” “suspect,” and “subject” identify report roles. They do not replace a later legal decision.
2. Removing attribution
   Changing “Morgan stated that...” to “The person did...” turns a documented statement into an unsupported fact.
3. Combining different times
   Incident, report, dispatch, arrival, and submission times can all be different.
4. Ignoring stated limits
   Estimated times, incomplete descriptions, missing serial numbers, and unreviewed video define what was still unknown.
5. Assuming the initial report is complete
   Supplements may later add video review, interviews, evidence, corrections, an arrest, or a closure decision.

Careful summary: “Lee reported that a backpack was taken from the vehicle. The responding officer documented damage, photographed the scene, and requested preservation of possible surveillance footage. No suspect had been identified when the initial report was submitted.”

Printable police report reading checklist

Use this with any U.S. incident, arrest, crash, or supplemental report. Local forms and terminology vary.

1. Identify the document

- ☐ Confirm the agency, report type, case or incident number, and page count.
- ☐ Check whether it is initial, supplemental, amended, approved, pending, or closed.
- ☐ Confirm that every page and referenced attachment you received belongs to the same case.

2. Build the timeline

- ☐ Separate incident time, report time, dispatch time, arrival time, arrest time, and approval time.
- ☐ Mark estimated times and date ranges. Do not convert them into exact times.
- ☐ Check whether later supplements change or add to the sequence.

3. Map people and roles

- ☐ List each reporting person, complainant, victim, witness, subject, suspect, arrestee, driver, and owner.
- ☐ Track person or vehicle numbers across the narrative, diagrams, and attachments.
- ☐ Remember that a role label is not a finding of guilt or legal responsibility.

4. Separate information by source

- ☐ Underline the officer's personal observations: “I saw,” “I heard,” “I located.”
- ☐ Circle attributed statements: “Lee stated,” “the witness reported.”
- ☐ Box police actions and assessments: photographed, searched, arrested, referred, determined.
- ☐ Flag uncertainty: approximately, estimated, unknown, unable to verify, not yet reviewed.

5. Check evidence and scope

- ☐ List photographs, video, audio, diagrams, property, evidence, citations, and body-camera references.
- ☐ Note what was collected, reviewed, preserved, requested, missing, or still pending.
- ☐ Use the official form key or agency manual for codes and numbered boxes.

6. Test your conclusion

- ☐ Write one sentence stating what the report documents without dropping attribution.
- ☐ Write one sentence stating what remains unresolved or outside the report's scope.
- ☐ Do not treat an allegation, arrest, charge, prosecutor decision, and court result as the same stage.

My two-sentence summary

Source and scope

Created as a companion to ForeverPolice.com, “How to Read a Police Report: A Step-by-Step Guide.” This example is not based on a real case, person, agency, or official form.