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# CHAPTER 2

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## Oral versus Written Communication

- A. Introduction
  - 1. Communication Defined
  - 2. Entropy and Negative Entropy
  - 3. Redundancy
  - 4. How the Process Occurs
  - 5. Channels and Directions
- B. Written Communication
  - 1. Writing Defined
- C. Rules for Improvement
  - 1. Correct Word Usage
  - 2. Potential Trouble Spots
  - 3. Better-Writing Drill
  - 4. Compound Words
- D. Summary
- E. Key Terms
- F. Review Questions
- G. Practical Applications
- H. Endnotes

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should understand the following concepts:

- The process of communication
- The different types of channels and directions of communication
- The basic elements of writing

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Every word that you write in your report, you must be able to justify in a court of law.*

—VETERAN PROSECUTOR TO A ROOKIE COP

The preceding quotation is one that every officer should remember when he or she picks up a pen or sits down at a computer to fill out a police report. A police officer must be able to explain why the report was written as filed, justify any omissions, and testify from the contents of the report in a court of law. Testifying in court combines both written and oral communication skills. Testifying, however, is only a small part of a law enforcement officer's duties. A professional must master written and oral communication skills to effectively carry out the diverse duties that are encountered by officers in any modern police agency.

A document published by the U.S. Navy states that communicating is essentially a mental maze to be mastered. To improve it we must become more aware of the proper paths to take and the dead ends to avoid. Poor communications is a waste of everyone's time and energy and, in reality, there is no excuse for it. According to the Navy document, barriers to effective communication can exist only in an atmosphere of apathy and, with common sense, can usually be dealt with successfully.<sup>1</sup>

Oral communication skills are necessary to talk with members of the general public, request assistance from other officers, advise suspects of their *Miranda* rights, and inform supervisors that certain actions have occurred. In addition, oral skills are needed for officers to understand and transmit statements made by citizens, suspects, and superiors.

Written communication skills are required for law officers to fill out various police reports, draft narrative summaries, and understand written policy directives.<sup>2</sup> Written reports are the basis for recalling past events, and police officers rely on them daily when they testify in court. The ability to write in a clear and concise manner does not come naturally. Like any activity, it must be practiced until it is mastered. Once mastered, this skill must continually be used or it will become unfocused and useless. A professional athlete spends hours each day honing the skills necessary to participate in a sport. Police officers, however, may spend less than 10 percent of any shift writing reports about their activity.

All police officers, from rookies to chiefs, must be able to speak, listen, write, and understand. The ability to effectively communicate orally does not eliminate the need for writing. Conversely, effective writing does not eradicate the requirement for good oral communication skills. These skills are intertwined and dependent on each other. Effective police officers acquire, maintain, and continually sharpen both skills. Oral communication is the foundation on which written skills are built.

### Communication Defined

The communication process is both a simple and a complex series of events. So that you can properly understand this process, the term *communication* must be defined. The definition of "communication" has concerned scholars since the time of ancient Greece. The authors of one text stated that at least 94 definitions of *communication* exist.<sup>3</sup>

English literary critic and author I. A. Richards in 1928 offered one of the first—and in some ways still the best—definitions of communication as a discrete aspect of human enterprise:

Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced, and in that other mind an experience occurs which is like the experience in the first mind, and is caused in part by that experience.

While Richards's definition is both general and rough, its application to nearly all kinds of communication—including those between humans and animals—separated the contents of messages from the processes in human affairs by which these messages are transmitted.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of which definition you choose, it encompasses the following three elements:

1. It is a process, not an isolated event.
2. It involves at least two persons.
3. Its primary purpose is the exchange of information.

*Communication* can thus be defined as “a process involving several steps, among two or more persons, for the primary purpose of exchanging information.” In the following sections, we discuss this process and explain the different directions or channels through which information is processed.

A communication is susceptible to considerable modification and mediation. Entropy distorts, whereas negative entropy and redundancy clarify. As each of these types of modification and mediation occurs differently in the communication process, the chances of the communication being received and correctly understood vary.

## Entropy and Negative Entropy

Entropy originally was considered as a noise source by Claude Shannon, but was later associated with the principle of entropy derived from physics, which has been imposed on the communication model. In most communication entropy is analogous to audio or visual static—that is, to outside influences that diminish the integrity of the communication and, possibly, distort the message for the receiver. Negative entropy occurs in instances in which messages, although incomplete or blurred, are nevertheless received intact. It occurs because of the ability of the receiver either to fill in missing details or to recognize, despite distortion or a paucity of information, both the intent and content of the communication.

## Redundancy

Redundancy is the repetition of elements within a message. It prevents the failure of communication of information and is considered to be the greatest antidote to entropy. Most written and spoken statements, for example, are roughly half-redundant. For example, if 50 percent of the words of an article were to be taken away at random, an intelligible message would still remain. Similarly, if we hear only half the words of a radio news commentator, we usually understand the broadcast. Redundancy occurs in most human activities. Because it helps to overcome the various forms of entropy that turn intelligible messages into unintelligible ones, it is an indispensable element for effective communication.

## How the Process Occurs

In this section, we examine how the process of communication takes place and explain the three elements of the communication process.

### *Communication Is a Process, Not an Isolated Event*

Some authorities believe as many as seven distinct steps compose the communication process.<sup>5</sup> For simplicity, however, we will break down the flow of information into five basic steps. Communication requires (1) transmitting an idea, (2) sending the idea through a medium, (3) receiving the message, (4) understanding the idea, and (5) providing feedback to the message sender. If a failure occurs during any of these five steps, the communication process becomes flawed, and information will not flow in a smooth, accurate manner.

**Transmitting an idea** This step implies the formation of one or several thoughts and the desire to express these ideas. Every day, people have thoughts that are better left unsaid, but they act on these thoughts anyway—even though expressing these thoughts, or the reason for certain actions, to another person might be inappropriate.

For example, a fellow officer might have a bad body odor. In such a situation, another officer might express his or her feelings, either in a joking manner or otherwise: “Boy, I can tell you love garlic on your bread; I can still smell it this morning. Why didn’t you bring me some?” This kind of message, coupled with the act of moving away from your partner, is an expression that has been transmitted and acted on.

In contrast, you might simply move away and not express any offense if the person is unknown to you or you are uncomfortable communicating sensitive thoughts or ideas. Therefore, for communication to occur, an idea must be formed and an intentional act must take place to transmit that idea to another person.

**Sending the idea through a medium** Once a message is formed, it must be sent. There are many ways to transmit ideas: orally, in writing, or by action. Everyone understands the difference between an oral reprimand and a written reprimand that is made a permanent part of an officer’s personnel file. The same information can be conveyed by either medium; however, a written reprimand is considered more grave than an oral reprimand. By the same token, written memorandums are more formal and more serious than oral directions are. Even spoken communications have many variations, and the tone of voice may have a dramatic impact. “I would like you to leave” can be a soft-spoken, friendly request, or it can be shouted and delivered as an order. Thus, the *medium*—the method by which an idea is transmitted—will determine how it is received and acted on.

**Receiving the message** Drafting a memorandum or standard operating procedure (SOP) without distributing it to department personnel does not accomplish anything. In addition, the memorandum or SOP must be understood by the parties it affects. Thus, receipt of the message is a critical step in the communication process. It is the reverse of message transmission in that the message must be received and acted on for it to be effective.

**Understanding the idea** Transmitting a message is useless unless someone comprehends its content. Because this step occurs prior to receipt of any feedback, the sender should attempt to place him- or herself in the receiving party’s position and frame the

message so that the essence of the idea is communicated. Therefore, it is critical that the message be clear and easily understood by the receiving party.

**Providing feedback to the message sender** Providing feedback is the last step in the communication process, the point at which the communication loop is closed. By this, we mean that the sender receives data indicating that the message was understood or needs clarification.

Let us now return to the example of a departmental SOP document. Normally, many such documents are circulated in draft form for review and comment. Individuals in the affected divisions of the department comment on the impact of the SOP on their operations and suggest any changes that would improve their operations or would assist in carrying out the objective of the SOP. The division officer responsible for submitting the final draft of the document to the chief for signature then makes any necessary changes to the SOP, on the basis of the comments from the other divisions. This process is an example of providing feedback in a formal setting.

Feedback may also occur orally—such as when one partner tells another, “I don’t understand what you want me to do”—or by actions, such as a quizzical look or a shrug. No matter what form feedback takes, its purpose is to acknowledge the receipt of the message, to clarify the content of the message, or to indicate some response to the message. Feedback is discussed in more detail subsequently in this chapter.

### ***Communication Involves at Least Two Persons***

Communication does not occur in a vacuum. The desire or motivation to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings is based on the need for expression from one person to another. Many people talk to themselves at times, whether with an expletive when they hit their thumb with a hammer or with a simple question to themselves, such as, “How could I have been so stupid?” The purpose of these statements, however, is not to convey information to another person; rather, they are rhetorical or reactive types of utterances. The purpose of communication is the expression or transmission of data. Communication is not limited to one-on-one situations, however. Law officers communicate to individuals, to groups, and, in some cases, to the general public. A patrol officer may face all these situations during a single day.

The officer may start the day in roll-call training by asking the patrol sergeant about the condition of a new stop sign at an intersection on the officer’s beat. This questioning involves one-on-one communication. Later, during the shift, the officer may address a crowd of citizens at the scene of an accident, requesting that they move out of the way of the emergency vehicle. This request is communication with a group. Finally, the officer may describe the accident for Action News on television. This discussion is communication with the general public. All these examples reinforce the principle that communication involves the transmission of data to someone else.

### ***The Primary Purpose of Communication Is the Exchange of Information***

Most of the time, people do not act without an objective. Although patrol officers may engage in small talk to pass the early morning hours on a stakeout, even this type of communication serves a need: to pass the time and keep each officer alert, to form or maintain a professional association or friendship, or to serve another purpose.

The exchange of information also occurs both formally and informally. For example, on a formal level, the information may be a new departmental directive regarding the use of force that each officer must sign after he or she has read it, or the information might be a roll-call briefing on the modus operandi of a serial rapist. At an informal level, two officers may discuss, over a cup of coffee, which type of handgun is the best weapon to carry while off duty.

## Channels and Directions

Channels and directions of communication deal with the flow or movement of information from the sender to the recipient. *Channels of information* refer to the methods or avenues by which information flows from one party to another, and *direction of information* indicates the way in which communication flows.

### Channels

Two communication channels are used in any organization: formal and informal.

**Formal channels** The traditional route or method of communication in any police organization usually follows the chain of command. This type of communication channel is typified by formal orders, directives, and written memorandums. These forms of communication provide a sense of order and security to a police organization. Excessive or exclusive use of formal communications within a law enforcement agency, however, has several disadvantages. First, strict adherence to formal channels of communication is a time- and personnel-consuming effort. The memorandums must be carefully drafted, endorsed through the chain of command, and forwarded to the addressee pursuant to departmental policy. The second major drawback of formal channels of communication is the effect they have on the free flow of information. By nature, their rigidity restricts spontaneous ideas and thought. Third, formal routes usually require a written record, which may further restrict the flow of information because many people hesitate to put their thoughts or ideas in writing. A fourth disadvantage is the inability of this form of communication to respond rapidly to changing situations. As mentioned, formal channels are naturally rigid, and any change or modification must be reviewed within these same channels. If new situations arise, the modification process may not be able to keep pace with the need for change.

Considering all these disadvantages, the need for formal channels of communication might be questioned. Nonetheless, formal channels also provide certain advantages to any organization and to law enforcement agencies specifically. First, formal communication ensures uniformity—all officers within the department receive the same information. This factor is critical when new directives are formulated or when information concerning certain crimes needs to be passed to all officers on patrol. Second, formal communication is usually clearer and more concise than is informal communication, so less confusion arises regarding the purpose or content of the message. Finally, formal communication establishes a paper trail for purposes of court hearings.

Formal communication channels are a fact of life in any large organization. With law enforcement's emphasis on court hearings and testimony, the need for this type of communication is critical.

**Informal channels** As mentioned previously, total reliance on formal communication channels can be detrimental to the effective operation of a police department. Informal channels—that is, the grapevine, or departmental gossip—are the unofficial routes

of communication within a law enforcement agency. These channels do not appear on any organizational chart, and they may not be officially sanctioned by the department. Nevertheless, they, too, are a fact of life. A police department is a notorious rumor mill regarding what goes on within the department. But informal channels of communication do more than serve as a conduit for idle gossip—they provide a needed link within the organization.

Most formal communication channels flow from the top of an organization to the bottom. Few police departments provide for formal communication across the organization. Informal communication channels provide this necessary linkage.

Informal channels are used within a department in a number of situations. One of the most common is the interaction between detectives and patrol officers. At times, detectives approach patrol officers to ask for clarification of an initial report. Conversely, a patrol officer may remember something about a crime scene that was not recorded and go to the detective assigned to the case to discuss the matter and determine whether a follow-up report detailing the additional fact should be submitted to the detective's sergeant.

Another instance in which informal channels are used is when time is a critical factor. The formal channel would require the information to go up the chain of command and come back down to the intended recipient. This process is time consuming. By using informal channels, the officer can cut across lines of authority and responsibility to pass on the information quickly.

Informal communication channels are also used in situations in which two sections or divisions need to cooperate on a case or with regard to a series of crimes. Robbery and homicide divisions may find themselves in this situation when a robbery victim is killed. The robbery division might have information that would assist the homicide detective in solving the crime.

Because informal channels of communication provide an alternative method of receiving information, senior law enforcement officials should not attempt to extinguish them. Rather, they should allow them to exist in a form that enhances the effectiveness of the organization. In fact, some scholars have suggested that formal and informal channels of communication be blended into one communications network that is responsive to the departmental goals.<sup>6</sup>

**Summary** Formal and informal channels of communication provide the means or avenues for the movement of information within a police department. These are the highways and back roads on which information moves from one point to another. The formal channels are similar to highways—they are well known, clearly marked, and occasionally congested with traffic. The informal channels are sometimes known only to the locals—they twist and turn and often encounter detours and other roadblocks.

### ***Directions***

Although channels of communication explain how information moves in an organization, they do not explain the different directions in which information travels. Information may travel in any number of directions within an organization, but the most common movements are upward, downward, and horizontal.<sup>7</sup> In the remaining portion of this section, we examine the directions of communication flow within a law enforcement agency.

The most obvious directions of information flow in any organization are upward and downward. This is traditionally the chain of command, and it coincides with the formal channels of communication.

**Downward communication** *Downward communication* is information that travels from managers or supervisors to subordinates. Downward communication is usually classified into three broad categories: (1) orders, (2) procedures, and (3) personnel information.

*Orders* are downward communications that relate to a specific job assignment or performance. An example is the patrol listing that assigns officers to various beats, shifts, and work days. Orders are specific and usually related to a short time period. They are directed at individual officers rather than at the whole department.

*Procedures* are downward communications directed to a broad subject. For example, departmental *SOPs* (*standing, or standard, operating procedures*) are information that flows from the top to the bottom of an organization along the formal channels of communication. SOPs are intended to exist for an indefinite period and apply to all personnel, or to certain classes of personnel, within the department.

*Personnel information* is a broad area of communication that covers the entire spectrum of personnel issues, from performance evaluations to authorization of overtime or leave time. In many instances, this type of information has a substantial impact on the morale of the department. This type of downward communication has a direct impact on the personal lives of officers and their families.

**Upward communication** The three types of downward communication are critical to management's ability to direct the department. The second direction of communication, upward communication, however, is just as important to the healthy functioning of a law enforcement agency. *Upward communication* is information from subordinates that travels from the bottom of the department to its managers. This type of communication may be divided into three major categories: (1) performance communication, (2) information, and (3) clarification.

*Performance communication* is information that travels upward to police managers from subordinates to keep the managers informed about their subordinates' performance. This information could be statistics gathered by the patrol sergeant on the number of arrests made during each shift or complaints by individual officers about working conditions. This form of upward communication may go through either formal channels or informal channels, but it is more likely to take place through formal channels, in the form of reports on the performance of certain divisions or sections.

*Information* is a form of upward communication that is usually in response to a request from supervisors. For example, a draft of an SOP for record filing is distributed to certain patrol sergeants by the lieutenant of records. Accompanying this draft is a request that the documents be reviewed from a patrol perspective and any comments for possible changes to the draft sent back. This type of upward communication usually flows through the formal channels of a department because it is a type of formalized feedback.

*Clarification* is the final form of upward communication. As its name implies, it is a request from subordinates for managers to make a previous downward communication more understandable. Similar to the upward flow of information, clarification usually occurs within the formal channels of a law enforcement department. For example,



an upward request for clarification could deal with a new directive on the number of leave days officers are authorized during official holidays. Does the holiday count against an officer's leave if it falls on a normal day off? Or, must the officer work even if he or she has requested vacation? Unfortunately, many police agencies' personnel directives are unclear, and officers or their immediate supervisors will request either an oral interpretation or written guidance to explain the broad policy statement in the directive.

Upward communication serves a critical function in a law enforcement agency. It provides police supervisors with a form of feedback that can assist them in performing their duties.

**Horizontal communication** The third and final direction that communications may take is horizontal. *Horizontal communication* is the flow of information among officers at the same organizational level. This type of communication provides a necessary link between officers and divisions within the department. Horizontal communication may be classified into three categories: (1) coordination, (2) social issues, and (3) problem solving.

*Horizontal coordination communication* is an attempt by several parties to ensure the proper order or relationship between various law enforcement functions. Persons engaged in this type of communication are concerned with the proper performance of various tasks. For example, the robbery detail needs to coordinate with the patrol units in the area when planning to stake out a store that they believe may be hit in the near future.

*Social issues* are also critical in any police organization. Horizontal communication is used by individual officers as a way to have contact with their peers and friends in the department. This form of communication may run the spectrum from an invitation to have a beer after the shift to the imposition of social expectations on fellow officers by passing the word that Officer X was seen at a local bar and had to be driven home by a friend.

The final form of horizontal communication—*problem solving*—concerns the ability of peers to discuss and solve common problems. All people are reluctant to reinvent the wheel. If someone has already devised a solution that works, for the most part people will readily adopt such an approach. Peace officers are no different. An officer who is confronted with a problem will discuss the issue with peers in an effort to determine whether someone else has faced the issue and how they solved it.

### **Summary**

The channels and directions that communication takes are important in understanding how information moves from the sender to the receiver. Formal channels of communication are the easiest to recognize because they traditionally follow the chain of command. Informal channels of communication, however, provide a necessary link within any organization. Communications may move in any number of directions, the most common being downward, upward, and horizontal. This network of information within an organization provides the glue that holds it together in good times and bad.

In this section, we discussed the concept of communication and defined this term. We examined how communication is processed and reviewed how it travels from one person or place to another. Understanding communication, however, is just the beginning of understanding communication in a police agency. Another aspect of communication is the written word.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND COURTESY

Displaying courtesy to citizens is an important part of any law enforcement officer's duties. People express themselves in a number of ways, and the way officers express themselves to citizens is an extremely important aspect of the law enforcement profession. Seven simple guidelines follow that address the most common applications of courtesy and communication in law enforcement:<sup>8</sup>

1. *Introductions.* Whenever practical, all officers should identify themselves by title and name on first contact with a citizen. Furthermore, the simple use of common greetings such as "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" can go a long way toward setting the tone of any encounter.
2. *Tone of voice.* Speech is the primary communication tool used by law enforcement officers. Officers should always be aware of their tone of voice and use it to their advantage. The voice should never betray anger, contempt, sarcasm, or other inflections that are likely to provoke opposition.
3. *Forms of address.* Officers should not address citizens by their first names unless the circumstances clearly make doing so appropriate.
4. *Body language.* Although officers must often assume stances that are required to preserve safety during encounters with the public, care must be taken to avoid mannerisms that needlessly provoke negative reactions from citizens. Resting a hand on the butt of a weapon is one example of such behavior.
5. *Profanity.* The use of profanity is never appropriate.
6. *Demeaning remarks.* Any form of address that ridicules a citizen or expresses contempt is never appropriate.
7. *Explaining what law officers do.* The most simple form of courtesy and communication is explaining what you as a law officer are doing and why.

## ORAL COMMUNICATION

Talking and listening are skills you learn at an early age. As you progress through school, these skills are sharpened under pain of failing classes. After formal schooling ends, the police academy is behind you, and you are a sworn officer on the street, you will find yourself in a subculture that has its own formal

language, customs, and traditions. Not only must officers communicate within their immediate professional circle, but all law enforcement officers must interact with various groups outside the police department. This interaction requires the ability to communicate with others on many levels.

## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Voltaire used to read to his cook everything he wrote. If she could not understand it, he would rewrite it.<sup>9</sup> If one of the world's most famous philosophers could rewrite his works in an effort to make them more understandable, so can any law enforcement officer.<sup>10</sup>

One of the main problems with written communication is the lack of instant feedback. Oral communication is interactive and allows for almost instantaneous correction by using feedback to clarify any misunderstanding. Written communication does not provide this mechanism. If a report, memorandum, or directive is ambiguous, that fact must be transmitted to the writer after the document has been placed in circulation. Because of this lack of instantaneous feedback, written communication requires more effort than oral communication does.

Records and record keeping occupy a critical place in any law enforcement agency. Without the ability to communicate in writing, any police department would be crippled. Arrest reports, follow-up reports, departmental directives, and budget documents are just a few examples of necessary written statements that are present in any police agency—large or small.

## Writing Defined

The term *writing* has many definitions. In this text, we deal with a specialized form of writing—report writing for law enforcement professionals. On the basis of the scope of this text, *writing* may be defined as “a method of recording and communicating ideas by means of a system of visual marks.” This definition has three basic elements:

1. *A recording of ideas.* Writing is lasting. It is a permanent form of communication. The spoken word is gone from our senses as soon as it ends, whereas writing is a permanent record of our thoughts and ideas. It may be reviewed ten days or ten years after it is transmitted.
2. *A method of communication.* In the preceding section, we explained the process of communication. One of the distinctions between oral communication and written communication is the lack of instant feedback that allows the person transmitting the data to correct, refine, or focus the information into a more understandable format.
3. *A system of visual marks.* Writing used to be confined to printed or cursive matter. If a person’s printing or handwriting was illegible, other people had to struggle to interpret it. The fact that the person was using known and accepted words, however, helped them decipher the meaning of the printed or written message. In this day of computers, certain symbols have taken on meanings. For instance, the symbol *C:\* has an accepted meaning for almost anyone who uses computers. Similarly, *.\** carries a distinct meaning. In police work, numbers are just as important. Depending on the jurisdiction, a certain collection of numbers connotes a crime. *P.C. 459* indicates a burglary in California. These numbers are usually shorthand for the criminal statute defining the crime. For example, in *California Penal Code*, § 459, the elements of burglary are listed. Each jurisdiction has its own set of numbers that are recognizable to its police officers. These numbers may be shorthand for crimes, may be specialized codes used over the radio, or may represent other law enforcement–related activities that have by custom or practice become known by a string of numbers.

Writing police reports is no easy task. Nor can any single test deal with the many forms and procedures used by the various law enforcement agencies in the United States or the world. A few simple guidelines, however, may help any law enforcement officer when he or she begins to draft police reports.

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## RULES FOR IMPROVEMENT

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### Correct Word Usage

In English, the word *cleave* can mean “to cut in half” or “to hold two halves together.” The word *set* has 126 meanings as a verb, 58 as a noun, and 10 as a participial adjective.<sup>11</sup> As a result, incorrect word usage is a common problem in written communications. Following are rules for the correct usage of 16 commonly used words.

**1. When to use *a* and when to use *an***

When the first letter of the next word is a vowel, use *an*—*a* car, *an* arm, *a* boat, *an* eye.

When the first letter of an abbreviation is pronounced as a vowel, use *an*—*an* FBI agent, *an* IBM employee, *a* CSU employee.

**2. When to use *appendices* and when to use *appendixes***

In modern usage, either is correct.

**3. When to use *compare to* and when to use *compare with***

*Compare to* should be used to liken one thing to another.

She *compares* Houston *to* Los Angeles. [Meaning that she sees them as similar]

*Compare with* should be used to discuss the relative merits of two things.

Los Angeles, when *compared with* San Francisco, is flat.

**4. When to use *connote* and when to use *denote***

*Denote* means “to convey information.”

*Connote* means “to imply additional aspects that follow from what is denoted.”

The coat I am wearing as I approached the house might *denote* that I am warm but *connote* that I have a new coat.

**5. When to use *discreet* and when to use *discrete***

Use *discreet* when you mean “circumspect,” “careful,” or “showing good judgment.”

Use *discrete* to mean “unattached” or “unrelated.”

The police officer promised to be *discreet* when asking questions of the neighbors.

The officer’s report was composed of five *discrete* parts.

**6. When to use *drunk driving* and when to use *drunken driving***

*Drunken* is the usual and preferred form when the word appears adjectively before a noun.

The *drunken* driver was arrested.

[*Note*: Not all style arbiters agree on this usage.]

**7. When to use *Earth* and when to use *earth***

When the word is used to refer to a planet, use *Earth*.

When the word is used in more general terms, use *earth*.

The *Earth* is a planet in our solar system.

The weapon was fired into the *earth*.

**8. When to use *especially* and when to use *specially***

*Specially* means “for a specific purpose or occasion.” If you can substitute the word *particularly*, then use *especially*.

### Potential Trouble Spots

Following are five rules that will help you avoid typical problems in writing.

1. All sentences must have a subject—except imperatives, in which the subject *you* is understood.  
 Have a collection of books. [No sentence; no subject]  
 Have a good patrol. [Complete sentence; *you* is implied]
2. Do not repeat the subject of a sentence.  
 The *police officer he* approached the car.
3. Do not repeat an object or an adverb in an adjective clause.  
 The police station *where I work there* is near my apartment.
4. Use *at, on, in,* and *by* to show time and place.  
 Will you be *at* the station?  
 Will you meet me *on* Broad Street?  
 We will meet again *in* December.  
 The roll call begins *at* 7:20 A.M. (*not* The roll call begins *on* 7:20 A.M.)
5. Use an *-ed* or *-d* ending to express the past tense of regular verbs.  
 During the weekend, the chief retired *d* from the department.

### Better-Writing Drill

Law enforcement officers are often required to use nouns and adjectives to describe a suspect, a witness, or a victim’s nationality. The following chart lists the name of a country or region and the corresponding noun and adjective for that country. Look at the country name and attempt to spell the noun and adjective for that country correctly.

Country or Region	Noun	Adjective
Afghanistan	Afghan(s)	Afghan
Argentina	Argentine(s)	Argentine
Australia	Australian(s)	Australian
Belgium	Belgian(s)	Belgian
Brazil	Brazilian(s)	Brazilian
Canada	Canadian(s)	Canadian
Colombia	Colombian(s)	Colombian
Cuba	Cuban(s)	Cuban
Denmark	Dane(s)	Danish
Haiti	Haitian(s)	Haitian
Laos	Lao or Laotian(s)	Lao or Laotian
Mexico	Mexican(s)	Mexican
Spain	Spaniard(s)	Spanish
Thailand	Thailander	Thai
Vietnam	Vietnamese	Vietnamese

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## COMPOUND WORDS

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A compound word, with or without a hyphen, conveys an idea that is not as clearly or quickly conveyed by the separate words. Word forms constantly undergo modification. Two-word forms often acquire the hyphen first and are printed as one word later. Not infrequently, however, the transition is from the two- to the one-word form, bypassing the hyphenated stage. The following sections present examples of compound words and some guidelines for their formation.

### Solid Compounds

#### 1. One-word compounds.

antiunion	newsprint	rulemaking
backpay	nighttime	runoff
biweekly	engineroom	nonunion
evenhanded	nonworking	bookseller
checkoff	interstate	pickup
subregion	checkout	intrastate

#### 2. Suffixes in compound words.

The following italicized suffixes are usually nonhyphenated, but a hyphen is used with proper names and to avoid tripling a consonant.

giveaway	moviegoer	
showdown	kilogram	
twentyfold	manhood	
spoonful	lifelike	
innermost		
cutoff	areawide	clockwise
but		
Florida-like	bell-like	

#### 3. Prefixes in compound words.

##### a. Prefixes written solid

amoral	electromagnet	midsummer	pseudonym	
aftercare	antedate	forefinger	multicolor	semiannual
antitrust	stepfather	biannual	supermarket	inbound

##### b. Prefixes with capitalized words. Use a hyphen with capitalized words unless the combined form has acquired independent meaning.

ante-Norman	inter-American
anti-Semitic	mid-April
non-Government	trans-Canadian
but	
nongovernmental	transatlantic

### Hyphen Omitted in Compound Words

#### 1. When the meaning is clear and readability is not aided.

a 401(k) provision	civil rights case
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civil service examination      due process law  
 flood control study              fringe benefit plan

2. When the last element of a predicate adjective is a present or past participle.

The area was used for drug dealing.      The area is drought stricken.  
 The effects were far reaching.              The boy is freckle faced.

3. When the first element of a two-word modifier is an adverb ending in *ly* or the first two elements of a three-word modifier are adverbs.

eagerly awaited moment                      wholly owned subsidiary but  
 ever-normal granary                              ever-rising earnings  
 unusually high strung supervisor              longer than usual lunch period  
 still-lingering doubt                              well-kept office  
 still-new car    well-known lawyer

**SUMMARY**

As much as 70 percent of people’s time is spent communicating with others. Communication is a process involving several steps, among two or more persons, for the primary purpose of exchanging information. This process requires sending an idea, receiving the idea, understanding the idea, and providing feedback to the message sender.

Information moves through various channels and in various directions. In most police departments, formal communication channels follow the chain of command and have several advantages and disadvantages. Informal communication channels also exist in all law enforcement agencies. These informal channels should be used to upgrade the flow of information within the department.

Written communication is more difficult to master than oral communication because of the lack of instant feedback when written communication is used. Police reports form the basis for future action in the criminal justice system. Prosecutors rely on them when issuing criminal complaints. Officers will refer to them to refresh their memories when testifying in court. Probation officers may review them when deciding what form of punishment the accused should receive.

There is no simple method by which a police officer becomes an experienced writer. Practice, hard work, and attention to detail are the key ingredients of a successfully drafted police report.

**KEY TERMS**

**Channels of information** The methods or avenues by which information flows from one party to another

**Clarification** A request from subordinates for managers to make a previous downward communication more understandable

**Communication** A process involving sev-

eral steps, among two or more persons, for the primary purpose of exchanging information

**Direction of information** The way in which communication flows

**Downward communication** Information that travels from managers or supervisors to subordinates

**Horizontal communication** The flow of information among officers at the same organizational level

**Horizontal coordination communication** An attempt by several parties to ensure the proper order or relationship between various law enforcement functions

**Information** A form of upward communication that is usually in response to a request from supervisors

**Medium** The method by which an idea is transmitted (e.g., telephone, written orders, or e-mail)

**Orders** Downward communications that relate to a specific job assignment or performance

**Performance communication** Information that travels upward to police managers from subordinates to keep the managers informed about their subordinates' performance

**Personnel information** A broad area of communication that covers the entire spectrum of personnel issues, from performance evaluations to authorization of overtime or leave time

**Problem solving** Horizontal communications designed to solve current problems within the department

**Procedures** Downward communications directed to a broad subject

**Social issues** Horizontal communications that concern social aspects or events (e.g., using an e-mail to invite a fellow officer to go to the ball game with you)

**SOPs (standing, or standard, operating procedures)** Information that flows from the top to the bottom of an organization along the formal channels of communication. SOPs are intended to exist for an indefinite period and apply to all personnel, or to certain classes of personnel, within the department. They are set procedures to be used when certain events or circumstances occur. For example, most police departments have an SOP for the investigation of a shooting by a police officer

**Upward communication** Information that travels from subordinates to managers

**Writing** A method of recording and communicating ideas by means of a system of visual marks

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## REVIEW QUESTIONS

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1. What is more important—oral or written communication? Why? Justify your answer.
2. If you could use only one channel of information in an agency, which would it be? Why?
3. On the basis of your reading to this point, what is the purpose of a written report? How is it different from an oral report?
4. Why is improving your communication skills important?
5. What are the chief differences between oral communication and written communication?

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## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

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1. The most effective way to improve your writing is to do freewriting exercises regularly, at least twice a week. These exercises are sometimes called “babbling” exercises. The idea is to write for at least ten minutes without stopping. Never look back, and do not stop to correct spelling or to think about what you are doing. The only re-



quirement in the exercise is to never stop writing until the time has expired. During this semester, do one freewriting exercise regarding any subject before each class. At the end of the semester, compare your earlier free-writing exercises with your later examples. You should notice an improvement in your writing ability.

2. Punctuate the following sentence.

Woman without her man is a savage.<sup>12</sup>

Compare your punctuation with that of your classmates. Does punctuation change the meaning of the sentence?

3. Circle the correctly spelled word in each of the following rows.

abutement	abuttment	abutment	abuttement
accessible	acessible	acessibile	accessibile
beligerent	beligeront	belligerent	beligorent
bactera	bacteria	bacterria	bateria
cartilage	cortilage	cartolige	cartilag
conscientious	consceintious	consceintous	conscientous
dupilicate	duplicat	duplicate	duplecate
eavise	evasive	eavaise	evsiave
gurdian	guardian	guardin	gaurdian
homice	homicide	homcide	homcidi

4. Rewrite the following sentences as needed.

a. He saw the bank rounding the corner.

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b. The officer found marijuana outside the car wrapped in paper.

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c. Went to the crime scene and lost his gun.

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d. He ran quick.

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e. Drinking coffee often keeps me and him awake.

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5. Define and explain the following words or terms.

a. performance communication

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b. upward communication

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c. horizontal communication

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d. direction of information

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e. channels of information

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6. The following paragraph was taken from a police report. Make it a better paragraph.

At this point, this officer asked subject Hamm what transpired and the subject simply did not answer this officer. It should be noted that at this time Officer Smith arrived and the scence and while this officer was briefing Officer Smith the subjects were once again facing each other and at this time this

officer heard subject Hamm state “Okay you still want to fitgh. At this time the officer stepped among the subjects and drewed his baton from the baton ring and ordering the subjects to go to the rear of the vehicle.”

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## ENDNOTES

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1. See U.S. Navy Publication, *Don't Talk: Communicate* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1980).
2. Michael T. D'Aulizio and Kathy M. Sheehan, “Instituting Quality Control Measures for Police Reports,” *The Police Chief* (October 1992): 129.
3. Harry W. More and W. Fred Wegener, *Effective Police Supervision* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson, 1990), 38.
4. See Colin Cherry, *On Human Communication* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1978).
5. See R. C. Huseman, *Interpersonal Communication: A Guide for Staff Development* (Athens, Ga.: Institute of Government, University of Georgia, August 1974).
6. Bernard Beryls and Gary A. Steiner, *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 370.
7. See Anthony Davis, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 235–47.
8. Thomas J. Lange, “Cultivating the Practice of Courtesy,” *The Police Chief* (January 1989): 35.
9. Voltaire (1694–1778) was a famous French writer and philosopher. He traveled throughout Europe and penned numerous treaties, poems, and articles. Considered one of the most prolific writers of that period, he wrote memorable passages distinguished by elegance, perspicuity, and wit. One of his most famous essays was “The Henriad” (1728).
10. We (both authors) were marine officers, and our superiors drilled into us in basic school to KISS (Keep it simple) when formulating or writing orders.
11. Bill Bryson, *Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 139.
12. One English professor directed her students to punctuate this sentence correctly. One male student wrote this: “Woman, without her man, is a savage.” A female student wrote this: “Woman! Without her, man is a savage.”