



## Officials Incident Report Writing Guide

Writing a clear, concise and accurate report can be a challenging, if not daunting, task. So if you are one of those individuals whose report writing is limited to the ever-so-rare ejection report, let us go over a few things that will help you improve your reports and assist recipients in understanding the events that occurred.

An officials report is a description of the **facts** surrounding a particular incident. A well-written factual report plays an important role in describing an incident and assisting those responsible in determining what should, or should not, happen to the offenders. As a result, it is of utmost importance that the officials report is detailed, factual and easy to read.

Reports should be prepared in a timely manner and accurately represent the incident in a clear, concise, well-organized, and comprehensive manner. All relevant details should be included and any ***information elaborating the facts, offering opinions, or providing unnecessary commentary are not appropriate.***

It is important for the reporting official to utilize proper wording, grammar, spelling, punctuation and terminology consistent with rulebook cases pertinent to the incident. The writer should avoid incomplete or improper sentence structure as it leads to confusion or misinterpretation.

Do not over or understate the facts or the actions of the involved parties and do not rationalize in order to minimize anyone's involvement in the incident. Likewise, it is just as important that the reporting official does not minimize the mistakes or failures made by other officials that may have led to the incident. Those actions suggest an inability of the official to accept responsibility for his or her own actions. A fair and honest evaluation of an incident is difficult if the actions of the other involved official(s) are absent from the report. Failure to disclose the actions of an official or his partner(s) could negatively affect the reputation of the reporting official and damage the integrity of officiating as a whole.

Remember, in this age of video technology and improved cellphones, every action and official is under continuing scrutiny. No official wants to be "caught" stretching or avoiding the facts when presenting their report.

When writing your report, here are some tips that will help you:

1. **Keep it simple.** One sentence, one idea. Short sentences are easy to read and understand. Long drawn out sentences can complicate grammar and punctuation, and open the door for sentence errors.
2. **Use simple language.** Avoid words not used in everyday conversation. An officials report should not require a Google search to understand. Avoid slang, abbreviations and unprofessional language in your

descriptions. However, when directly quoting the parties involved, exact language should not be paraphrased (see item four below).

3. **Write in properly formed paragraphs** by organizing information into groups...what happened, who said what and what actions you took.
4. **A quote is a quote**...even if it is profane. As offensive as it may be, statements made by the cited parties, including foul or offensive language, needs to be spelled out and quoted in the report. It is not acceptable to say “the F-word,” “bad language,” or “F@#!” to describe profane language. You must spell it out.
5. **Open with the basic facts** of who, what, when, where and why. Writing an opening sentence or statement lets the reader know what the report is about before they read in its entirety. Write an opening that includes objective information. **For example:** On Monday, January 19, 2018, during the 135-pound match between Joe Shoe from Chelsea and Frank Sock from Hart, Shoe screamed and complained that Sock had bitten him.
6. **Describe what happened.** After the opening statement, use the full names, the uniform numbers, the specific position and/or title, and the respective institution name for anyone referred to in the report, including your partner(s).
7. **Accurately report the role** you and/or partner(s) may have played in the incident. Do not omit any information describing the involvement you or your partner(s) may have had even if it reflects poorly upon you. Keep in mind that for the most part, video does not lie and spectators can make good witnesses. Any information you withhold or inaccurately report could surface later, causing problems for you, your partner(s), your assigner, your coordinator, and the MHSAA. Protect your integrity and the integrity of officiating by telling the truth, even if it does not cast you in the best light.
8. **Include information presented to** you by your partner(s), if you have a partner. Your partner(s) make great witnesses and might able to provide additional information you may not know about. Before you write your report, make sure you ask your partner(s) what they may have seen or heard. If need be, write it down or better yet, have them write it down themselves. After writing your report, let your partner(s) proofread it before submitting it. They may have additional information or find mistakes needing correction.
9. **Proofread your report** for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Do not rely solely on spellchecker to review your report. Make sure you read it and if need be, let someone else read it. Double check your facts and make sure your report is accurate.
10. **Submit your report and keep a copy for your records.** If you do not receive an email confirmation the report has been submitted, contact the Officials Department at 517.332.5046.

Remember, the report should provide a clear and accurate picture of what happened. The basic facts of who did what, when, where and why are noted using proper writing techniques. It needs to be short, simple and to the point; but most importantly, give the entire fact-based description of the incident.