

Rough-Guide-on-using-a-Pocketbook

Introduction

Before we can cover the subject of evidence, we need to know what it means. Evidence is about the gathering of information. We use this information to build a picture of the facts of a case. The more information we have, the clearer the picture.

However, when an investigation begins, we do not know what information is, or is not, important. A SO will not be able to decide the importance of a piece of information. All a SO can do, is ensure the proper recording of information, for use as admissible evidence. Admissible evidence is evidence, which is acceptable for use in a hearing or trial.

As a SO, you have two main responsibilities for evidence. Firstly, there is the “preservation of the crime scene”. Secondly, it is the provision of supporting documentation required as part of your general duties. The correct completion of documents is the best way to show, you applied any rules, regulations, or procedures, reasonably and sensibly, to your actions. **It is your personal insurance policy.** If you do not do this, you leave yourself open to all sorts of accusations

Self-protection is your most important reason for recording evidence. To be properly protected you must know the law!

The second main responsibility for evidence is concerned with documentation. The pocketbook is part of this documentation. Police Officers are required to carry a pocketbook. They carry it and complete it for a reason. Similarly, it is a SO's most important piece of equipment. Properly maintained it offers considerable protection. This is because it provides a record of events in writing. Therefore, just like a Police Officer, you have the time to ensure your entry puts your actions in the best possible light.

When an incident occurs, you write the notes as quickly as possible. Sometimes known as “Contemporaneous notes”, they are admissible in a Court, or Hearing. You may use them to prepare your report or witness statement. You can refer to them prior to, or whilst giving evidence in a trial. **You should record everything that happens, from the time you commence your duties, to the finish of your shift. Start and finish times, breaks, telephone calls, patrols, checks, H&S issues, etc.**

It is your personal insurance policy.

The main rules of the personal pocketbook

For a pocketbook, or any report, you must follow certain rules. These rules show investigators, Lawyers, Judges, Juries etc, you have not, altered, hidden or tampered with any evidence. Your Pocketbook demonstrates your consistency and professionalism.

1. The Pocketbook has a margin down the left hand side of each page.
2. Each page is sequentially numbered; 1, 2, 3, etc.
3. Under no circumstances should a page be removed
4. If a page is missed, it should be crossed through, with the statement “Missed in error”.
5. Do not leave lines or spaces during your entry
6. Start your next entry on the line immediately below your last entry. No lines or gaps.
7. All entries should be made in ink (black is best as it makes photocopying easier)

8. Cross mistakes through with a single line – so you can still read the entry! I.e. ~~Mistake~~
Mistake
9. Do not use correction fluid
10. Do not enter addresses, telephone numbers, etc
- 11. Never enter passwords or alarm codes**
12. Always enter the time and date of an entry into the margin.
13. Always put your initials next to mistakes
14. Always put your initials at the end of entry.

Note: If you forget something about the incident, which you later remember, then add it as a new entry.