

How to Write a Motor Vehicle Accident Report

Typically when you're in an accident on the road, the police will complete a police report describing the accident. However, in some cases you may need to submit your own report, either to your insurance company or your state's DMV. If you...

Part 1 of 3:

Gathering Information

1.



Get identification and insurance information from the other driver. Regardless of who is at fault, you and the other driver need to exchange names and insurance information. Copy the information from the other driver's insurance card.^[2]

1. Check to make sure that there are no injuries. If someone is hurt, call for help first before trying to get their information.
2. Get the other driver's license. Write down their name, home address, birth date, and gender. You'll also want the name of the state that issued their license, their license number, and the date it expires. Give them this information for yourself as well.
3. If the other driver does not have insurance or identification, call the police. Tell the police that you cannot get the required legal documents of the other driver. They will come out and handle the situation.

2.



Write down information about the vehicles involved. For each vehicle involved in the accident, you will need to have the year, make, model, and color in your accident report. You also want to be able to state generally what kind of vehicle it is – whether a car, truck, SUV, or motorcycle.^[3]

1. Write down specifics about where there is damage. For example, you might say "Sedan has broken bumper and dent in the rear quarter panel."
2. Take down the license tag number for all the vehicles, along with the name of the state. You also might want to make note of the vehicle's VINs (vehicle identification numbers) for insurance purposes.

3.



Ask for identification and contact information for everyone on scene. You don't necessarily need driver's license numbers from anyone who wasn't involved in the accident, but if they're willing to provide a witness statement you need to be able to get in contact with them later.^[4]

1. If you get their phone number, make a note of when is the best time to reach them at that number.

4.



Take pictures of the scene. If you have a camera or a smart phone handy, take as many pictures as possible of the location of the accident and the damage done to the vehicles. If there is any debris in the road, take pictures of that as well.^[5]

1. Take your photos as soon as possible after the accident occurs, so the light and weather conditions are similar. Photograph the scene from multiple angles if it is possible for you to do this safely.
2. You also might want to take pictures of all the people involved in the accident. These can be helpful later if someone claims an injury later when they seemed fine at the scene.
3. If you were injured, take pictures of your injuries as soon as possible – ideally, before they are treated by a medical professional.

5.



Get statements from any witnesses. If there were people around who saw the accident and are willing to give an official statement regarding what they saw, try to talk to them as soon as possible after the accident.^[6]

1. It's best to get a statement from a witness at the scene, and then get their phone number in case you need to follow up with them later. Many witnesses won't come forward after the accident. If possible, take a video or audio recording on your phone of their statement.
2. Write down exactly where they were when the accident occurred. If possible, take pictures of the scene from where they were standing, so you have an image of their vantage point. If there are any signs, posts, trees, or other objects obscuring their line of sight, make a note of those as well.

Part 2 of 3:

Describing the Incident



List the names and identifying information of all people involved. One of the first pieces of information in your accident report will be your name, address, phone number, driver's license, and insurance information.^[7]

1. You'll also need the same information for any other drivers who were involved in the accident. If there were passengers or pedestrians also involved in the accident, provide their names, ages, and genders.
2. Get numbers of first-responder vehicles and the names and badge numbers of first responders, if possible.

2.



State the conditions when the accident occurred. Weather, lighting, and road conditions can all play a part in determining who was at fault for a motor vehicle accident. Record these details from memory if possible, or use your photos as references.^[8]

1. Your city or state may have a specific form for you to fill out that includes spaces for specific details, such as the weather, light, and road conditions.
2. If you don't remember the conditions and weren't able to take any photos, leave these details blank – don't just guess or look up an old weather report. You need to be able to vouch for every detail included in your report.
3. Provide any photos or videos you have showing the conditions at the time of the accident to support your case.

3.



Detail the location of the accident. Your report must identify the precise location where the accident occurred. The information you include will depend on where it took place and the type of roadway.^[9]

1. For example, if the accident occurred on the interstate, you would need to note the name and direction of the interstate as well as the mile markers or any exits before and after the accident. Include the estimated distance from the nearest marker.
2. On city streets, you also might want to include any landmarks. Describe the street, including whether there is a sidewalk or bike lane.
3. If any other property was involved, describe it as well as where it is relative to the street.



Provide a chronological account of what happened. The main section of your motor vehicle accident report will explain what you and the other driver were doing immediately before the accident. Be as detailed as possible, but keep your tone objective and stick to the facts.^[10]

1. For example, suppose the other driver rolled through an intersection and hit the side of your car while you had the right of way. You can say that you had the right of way – that's a fact. However, a statement such as "the other driver wasn't paying attention" would be an opinion.
2. If there are gaps in your memory or specific details you don't remember, state in your report that you don't remember. That way you can fill in the detail later if your memory returns.
3. If there were pedestrians involved, describe what they were doing. For example, the pedestrian may have been crossing the street in the sidewalk, or may have run out in traffic to retrieve something.

5.



Identify any witnesses. If anyone saw the accident and provided you with a statement or contact information at the scene, you should include information about them on your accident report. Include as much information about the person as possible, including their name, age, and gender.^[11]

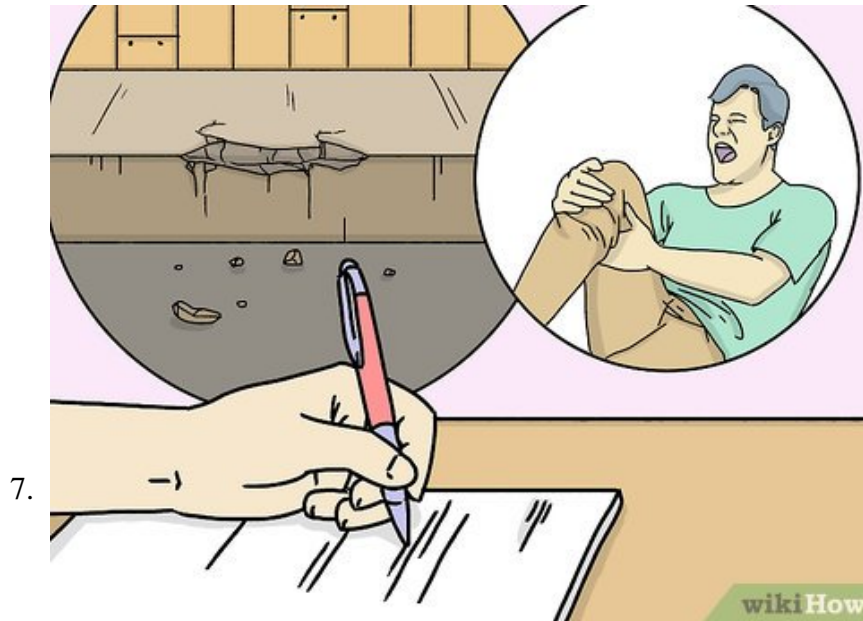
1. You also might want to describe where they were located relative to the scene of the accident and what they saw. For example, the person may have been standing on the corner waiting to cross the street when the accident happened, or they may have come over afterward.
2. If you managed to get a video or recording of the witness, include it in your report. If the witness doesn't come forward, this recording can act as evidence instead.

6.



Discuss what happened after the accident. After the moment of impact, describe everything that happened next in as much detail as you can recall. Include information about whether the vehicles were operational or moved to the side of the road.^[12]

1. If you or anyone else called 911, give an approximate time that call took place and describe who showed up at the scene.
2. If paramedics arrived, discuss whether anyone was treated at the scene or transported to a hospital for further treatment.

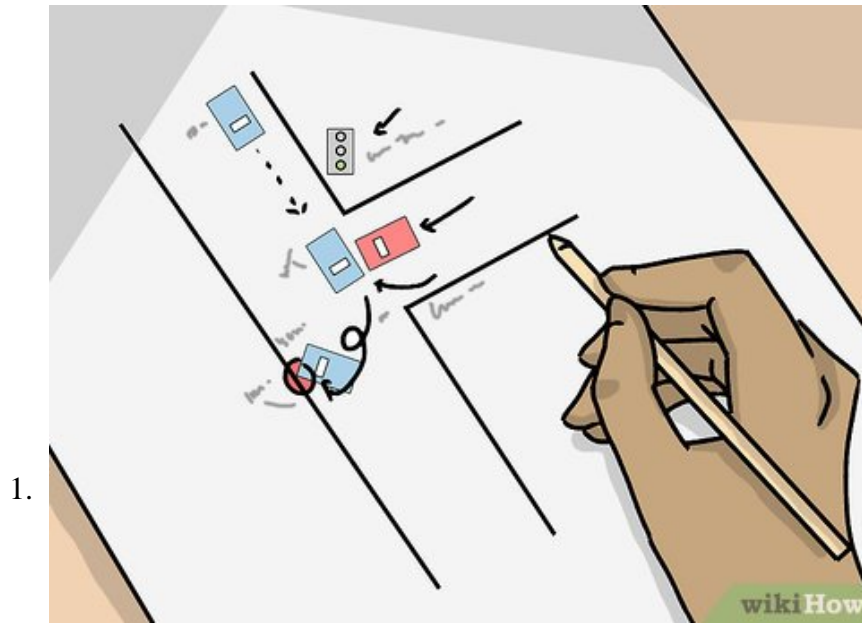


Detail any injuries and property damage. If you or anyone else was injured in the accident, you must describe those injuries in detail, including any plans for treatment. Provide similar detail about damage to the vehicles and damage to any other property as a result of the accident.^[13]

1. Provide a rough estimate of property damage or damage to vehicles involved in the crash. You should state specifically if you believe a vehicle to be totaled.
2. If there were any fatalities as a result of the accident, list them separately. Include the name, age, and gender of anyone injured, and classify the severity of their injuries as best you can. Describe where on the body the injury was located and the person's role in the accident. If they were immediately transported to a hospital, provide the name of the hospital where they were taken.

Part 3 of 3:

Diagramming the Scene



Sketch out the streets. Most accident report forms have a space for you to diagram how the accident took place. If you took photos at the scene, you can use them as a guide to make sure your drawing is as accurate as possible.^[14]

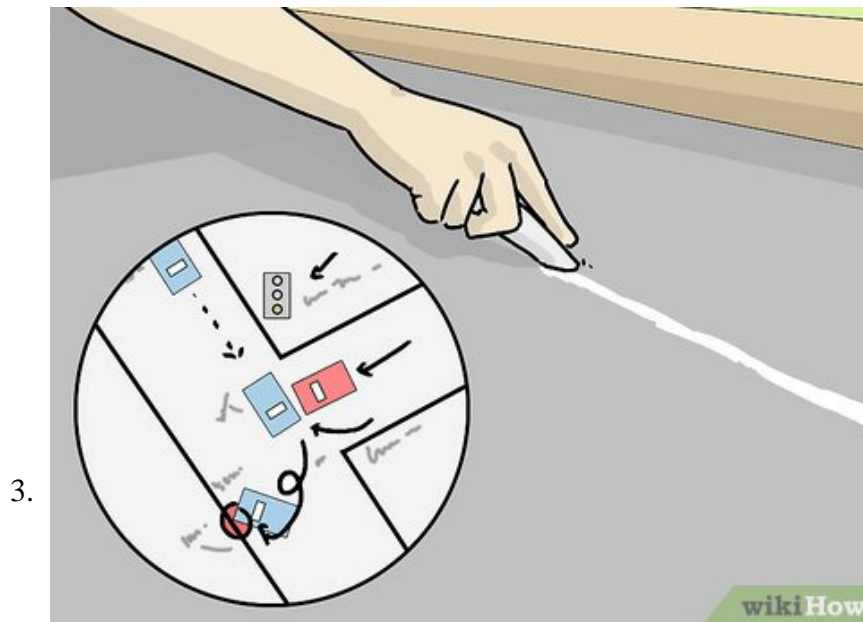
1. Just stick to the specific road or other area where the accident took place. There's no need to include adjoining blocks or side streets if they weren't directly involved in the accident.
2. Make sure you have the correct number of lanes and that any traffic lights or signs are marked correctly.



Orient your drawing. While your drawing doesn't necessarily have to be to scale, you will need to indicate the direction in which everyone was traveling. Find which direction would be north according to the way you've drawn the streets, and mark all four directions on your drawing.^[15]

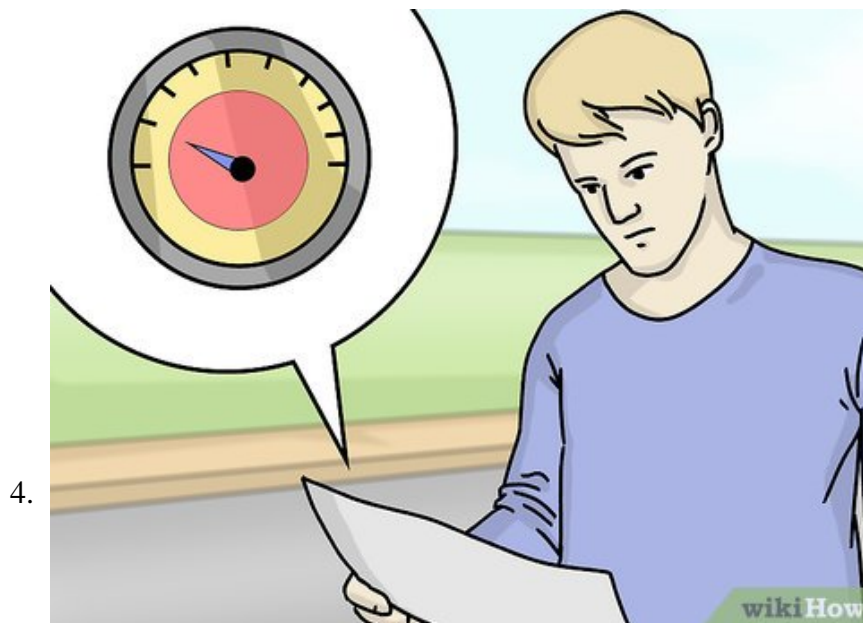
1. For example, suppose the accident occurred at an intersection. You were heading north, while the other car was headed west. Draw an arrow for the cars to indicate the direction in which they're

traveling, and write out each of the directions along the four sides of your drawing.



Place the cars in the roadway. Once you have the streets sketched out, draw boxes to represent your own car and any other cars involved in the accident. Number the cars, making your own car number one since you're drawing the diagram.^[16]

1. If there were other cars nearby that weren't involved in the accident, you can still draw boxes for them if you want, but don't worry about getting too detailed. Other cars are only really important to the extent that they affected the ability of you or the other driver to avoid the accident.

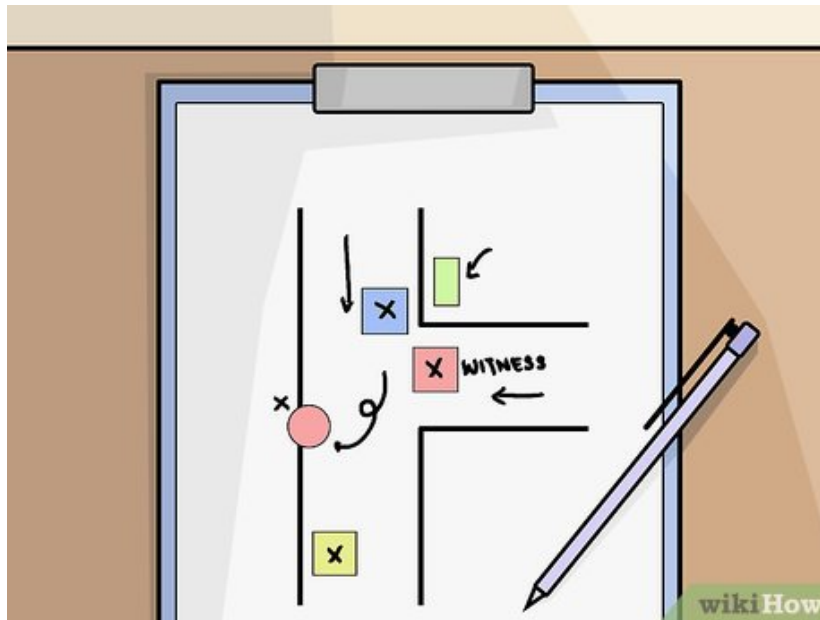


Include information about the impact. In your diagram, you need to show how the cars impacted each other or other property. Include the point of impact and the approximate speed all cars were traveling.^[17]

1. If the speed the cars were traveling is in dispute, make a note of this on your report, but keep your reported facts objective. If you thought the driver of the other car was going faster than they claimed they were going, simply say it appeared they were going one speed, but they claim they were going

another speed.

5.



Note the location of any witnesses. If you talked to witnesses at the scene who agreed to provide a witness statement, place an "X" on your diagram at their location and write their name and "witness" next to the "X."^[18]

1. If they were in another vehicle but were not involved in the accident, draw a box to represent their vehicle and put their "X" inside. Note if they were a passenger or driver of the vehicle, and where they were seated.
2. If a witness's view was partially obstructed, include whatever obstructed their view in your diagram.

6.



Sign and date your accident report. When you've finished your accident report, look over it carefully and make sure everything you've reported is true and objective, and that you've included as much detail as possible.^[19]

1. After you sign and date your accident report, make a copy of it for your records before you submit it to the relevant authorities.
2. Generally you want to submit your accident report as soon as possible after the accident occurred. Check with the company or department where you need to send your report and find out if there's a deadline you must meet.

Sample Accident Report

Picture 19 of How to Write a Motor Vehicle Accident Report
Sample Motor Vehicle Accident Report

Picture 20 of How to Write a Motor Vehicle Accident Report
Annotated Accident Report

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