

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Examples of questions Criminal Justice writing prompts ask: Why do we have laws? What is deviance? What makes a legal system effective?

AUDIENCE

- Peers or supervisors in an organization
- Members of other organizations
- Readers of professional and academic publications
- The general public

TYPES OF ASSIGNMENTS

- **Research Papers:** Explore a topic through primary and secondary sources
- **Analytical Papers:** Apply certain theories and their practical applications to a specific situation, issue, or written work
- **Argument/Position Papers:** Present both sides of an issue and take a position based on empirical data (not opinion)
- **Investigative and Administrative Reports**
- **Policy Memos**
- **Case Briefs:** Highlight specific issues and facts within a specific case; written with a legal audience in mind, such as a judge or senior attorney
- **Case Plans**

STANDARD ELEMENTS

- **Issue:** State the issue
- **Rules:** State all relevant case law to your issue
- **Analysis:** Explain why each case law applies
- **Conclusion:** Provide a solution to your issue

TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- **Quantitative:** Statistics, incarceration rates, geographical data involving crime, etc.
- **Qualitative:** Personal observations, responses to polls, and stories told about personal experiences
- **Historical**
- **Legal**

CITATIONS

Use APA and the author-date system of CMS. Both styles require parenthetical citations and a reference list. The author-date system of Chicago does not require footnotes.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

- Use specialized vocabulary used such as “methods,” “results,” “double-blind study,” etc.
- When reporting conclusions and discussing another’s work, use past tense
- When discussing results, use present tense
- Avoid using subjective expressions like “I think” and “I feel”



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