



# Basic Academy Curriculum Style and Content Guide

Version A2023

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## **Introduction**

Consistent content and writing standards are needed to build effective job training curriculum for adult learners. This document (and all attachments) aims to provide instructional designers and curriculum developers with specific content, formatting, branding, style, and other writing standards for all training materials published as part of an Idaho POST approved Basic Academy.

## **Copyright and Fair Use Guidelines**

All Idaho POST training materials must be void of all U.S. and Idaho copyright violations.

## **Version Control**

Revisions are improvements to Idaho POST Training materials will be ongoing. Versioning systems identify the most current training materials available for delivery. Idaho POST shall archive all past versions.

Version control numbers shall be included on all Idaho POST training materials including lesson manuscripts, handouts, and visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint® slides). Idaho POST uses a sequential lettering and year system to identify the most current training materials available. For example, a version control number of “C2023” means the document is in its third iteration (i.e., C) and was last revised in 2023. Version control numbers shall appear in the following locations:

- A. Lesson plan cover page
- B. All page footers for lesson plans, handouts, and testing documents.

## Lesson Plans

All Idaho POST training lessons shall provide full sentence or narrative content.

*Lesson plans should be written to a degree that another subject matter expert could teach from it.*

All Idaho POST training topics shall be developed and distributed using separate “instructor” and “student” lessons. Except for content intended explicitly for instructors (e.g., choreography notes for when to show a slide), “instructor” and “student” lesson content must be identical. When building lesson manuscripts, curriculum developers should write the “instructor” lesson first, then delete all content intended solely for instructors to create the corresponding “student” lesson.

### A. Formatting

All lesson plans shall use a standard 8.5” (w) x 11” (h) page size and be developed using the most current version of Microsoft Word® software. See Attachment A: Instructor Lesson Plan Template for additional content and formatting standards.

#### 1) Cover Page

- a. Idaho POST Logo 2.46” (H) x 2.7” (W)
- b. The specific discipline (i.e., Patrol, Adult Detention, Misdemeanor Probation etc.)
- c. Class Name
- d. Version control number
- e. “Instructor” or “Student” version

#### 2) Page Margins (Narrow)

- a. Top (1”)
- b. Bottom (1”)
- c. Left (0.5”)
- d. Right (0.5”)

#### 3) Headers and Footers

- a. Header – The page header must be contained within the top margin. Page headers must include the topic title and end-user (i.e., “instructor” or “student”).
- b. Footer – The page footer must be contained within the bottom margin. Page footers must include the specific discipline (i.e., Patrol), the class name, the version control number, and the page number.

#### 4) Typography

- a. Font type, size, and color – A twelve (12) point Palatino Linotype, Times New Roman, or Garamond font shall be used for all lesson manuscripts. The primary font color is black, but developers may use different colors sparingly to emphasize content (e.g., identify hyperlinks).
- b. Line justification and spacing – The primary line justification for text is “left.” Line spacing for all sentences is Single (1).
- c. Text emphasis – **Bold**, *italics*, and ***bold/italic*** can be used to help emphasize content. When using text emphasis features, be consistent, avoid overuse, and do not combine more than two. Consider the following examples.
  1. Use **bold** or ***bold/italic*** to emphasize critical concepts.
  2. Use *italics* for statements (e.g., “quotation marks”) made by people.
  3. Underline can only be used for hyperlinks to internal documents or external internet content.

#### B. Essential Lesson Plan Components

All Idaho POST lesson plans must contain specific components.

- 1) Version control number
- 2) Lesson goal
- 3) Learning objectives.

- 4) The minimum number of hours required to deliver the topic. When applicable, an itemized breakdown of hours required for classroom instruction, practical exercises, and skills testing shall be included.
- 5) All instructional methods needed to deliver the lesson, This includes but is not limited to facilitated discussions, classroom activities, and practical exercises.
- 6) All required training aids, handouts, videos, and equipment to deliver the topic.
- 7) References and resources used to prepare the lesson.
- 8) A list of all subject matter experts, legal reviewers, and other personnel who authored, or revised the lesson by month and year.

### C. References

To ensure Idaho POST training materials are evidence-based and consistent with best practices, every lesson shall use valid and relevant references.

- 1) Acceptable references for Idaho POST training materials include the following:
  - a. Books
  - b. Case and statutory laws
  - c. Periodicals and articles
  - d. Academic and industry journals
  - e. Research articles
  - f. Internal articles and blogs
- 2) All references and corresponding endnotes must be cited using MLA, APA, or Chicago style. The style must be used consistently throughout the lesson.
- 3) Lesson Plan Structure  
Every lesson shall contain the following three (3) main sections:
  - a. Introduction

- b. Body
- c. Conclusion

4) Instructor Version Lesson Plan

- a. Instructor notes – Specific content designed exclusively for instructors shall be included in the lesson plan and must include the following information:
  - 1. Preparation strategies – to include materials needed, and classroom setup (if different than traditional classroom setting).
  - 2. Directions for administering class discussions and activities, practical exercises or skills testing.
  
- b. Choreography notes – All “instructor lessons” shall include content that gives instructors direction on when to perform a specific activity, task, or adult learning strategy. Choreography notes include but are not limited to reminders on when to show visual aids, distribute handouts, conduct a practical exercise, or facilitate open discussions.

Instructor choreography notes are entered into the left column of the lesson plan template.

As a reminder, except for specific content intended for instructors, all instructor and student version lesson plan content must be identical. Curriculum developers should write the “instructor” lesson first and then delete all choreography notes to create the corresponding “student” lesson.

## Handouts

Microsoft Word is recommended for developing handouts.

- A. Handout content may include but is not limited to the following:
  - 1) Case studies and examples
  - 2) Material for students to complete or use during exercises.

- 3) Skills test grading rubric
- 4) Condensed lesson content for students to use as a reference or future on-duty job aid.

#### B. Headers and Footers

- 1) Header – The 8" x 5" by .25 (h) border must be contained within the top margin.
- 2) Footer – The handout footer must be contained within the bottom margin and include the following:
  - a. Version control number, topic title, and curriculum name (e.g., Patrol, Detention, etc.) at the bottom left.

## Static Visual Aids

Static visual aids shall be developed using PowerPoint to support lesson plan content.

- 1) Slide Margins – All slides shall be developed using widescreen (i.e., 16:9) size with the following margins.
  - a. Top (.5")
  - b. Bottom (1")
  - c. Left (.5")
  - d. Right (.5")
- 2) Typography
  - a. Font type and color – Century Gothic shall be used for headers using small caps. Corbel shall be used for the body font for all slides, and the primary font color is black. Developers may use different font colors to emphasize content (e.g., identify hyperlinks to external internet content.).
  - b. Font size and justification
    1. Main Title Slide – **Bold** and 48 point; left justification
    2. Header titles: **Bold** and 40-44 point; left justification.

3. Slide body text; minimum 22-point font. The primary line justification for slide body text is “left” but can be adjusted to accommodate content (e.g., images).
- c. Text emphasis -**Bold**, *italics*, and ***bold/italics*** can be used to help emphasize content.
- d. Slide body content
  1. Text – Slides should not contain more than 100 words. PowerPoint slides are best utilized as an outline to emphasize important content.
  2. Images
    - a. Do not use images that are grainy or unclear.
    - b. Only use images that further illustrate or explain content. Do not insert arbitrary images to fill white space.
  3. Slide transitions and text animation
    - c. Use any *subtle* slide transition. Animations/transitions must be consistent throughout the presentation unless used to illustrate/emphasize a specific point.
    - d. Avoid using more than five (5) text animations (clicks) per slide.

## End of Topic Testing

The two (2) types of tests for Idaho POST training are written exams and skills tests.

- A. Written tests – Written tests shall be developed when applicable according to performance outcomes and learning objectives. All written exam questions shall use a true/false or a multiple-choice format. Multiple choice questions shall have four (4) possible answers. Answers will include three (3) wrong answer options and one (1) correct answer. Consider the following example:

$$3+1 = ?$$

- a. 73 (obviously wrong answer)
- b. 2 (mostly wrong answer; student may subtract)



- c. 4.3 (partly wrong answer)
- d. 4 (correct answer)

All end-of-topic written test questions use a combination of *recall*, *identification*, and *application* formats.

B. *Recall* questions test student ability to memorize specific information. This includes but is not limited to definitions and legal requirements (e.g., days, hours, ages). The difficulty level for recall questions is low. The following is an example *recall* question.

\_\_\_\_\_ is facts and circumstances sufficient to convince a reasonable person to believe a crime was committed and the person suspected, more likely than not, committed it.

- e. Civil Law (obviously wrong answer)
- f. Exigent circumstances (mostly wrong answer)
- g. Reasonable suspicion (partly wrong answer)
- h. Probable cause (correct answer)

C. *Identification* questions test student ability to choose the correct answer when presented with a set of facts. The difficulty level for *identification* questions is moderate to high. The following is an example *identification* question.

Which type of motor vehicle skids are generally less than 3 feet long and occur when a locked wheel momentarily lifts off, then comes back onto the roadway.

- a. Scuffs (mostly wrong answer)
- b. Gap skids (partly wrong answer)
- c. Skip skids (correct answer)
- d. Gouge marks (obviously wrong answer)

Note: The above question could also be presented to students using images. For example: What type of motor vehicle skid is shown in the following picture?

- D. *Application* questions test student ability to apply, problem-solve, or demonstrate specific knowledge given a job-related scenario. The difficulty level for *application* questions is moderate to high.

Officer Dodder responded to a 911 “hang-up” call at 101 Galeon Road. When Officer Dodder arrived, he heard what sounded like a woman screaming inside the home. Officer Dodder knocked on the door and said, “Police Department – is everything okay?! Does anyone inside need help?!” A man inside the home said, “Leave us alone.” Officer Dodder heard the same woman screaming again and asked, “Is everyone okay?! Do you need help?!” There is no response. The door is closed and locked. Officer Dodder forced the door open and made entry. A man and woman were inside the home, but everything was okay.

Given only the facts and circumstances provided above, did Officer Dodder have authority to enter the house?

- a. Yes, because there was a possible urgent necessity for Officer Dodder to render aid. (Correct answer)
- b. Yes, because Officer Dodder went in under the Plain View (hearing) exception. (Mostly wrong answer)
- c. Yes, because Officer Dodder had reasonable suspicion to believe the woman called 911. (Partly wrong answer)
- d. No, because the man inside the home said, “Lead us alone.” (Obviously wrong answer)

#### E. Skills Tests

End-of-topic skills tests shall be developed when applicable according to performance outcomes and learning objectives. Skills tests can be task specific or scenario based. More than one skills test may be administered for a single Idaho POST lesson.

End-of-topic skills tests must be administered according to parameters outlined in the “instructor” lesson (i.e., scripts and grading rubrics), but only **AFTER** the entire topic or specific skill has been fully covered.

All pass/fail grading rubrics used for end-of-topic skills tests shall be included in “instructor” and “student” lessons as handouts. This allows students to know all performance criteria evaluated by instructors for skills testing in advance.

## Writing Styles

Writing styles include but are not limited to punctuation, abbreviations, verb tense, voice, and word choice. The following writing style standards shall be used when developing Idaho POST training materials.

- A. Readability – To effectively engage adult learners, Idaho POST materials should be written below a 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Document grade level readability is determined by the average sentence length and the average number of syllables per word. Curriculum developers should make every effort to use short sentences with limited punctuation and words with the fewest syllables.
- B. Voice – The subject in an active voice sentence performs the action. The subject in a passive voice sentence receives the action. More words and syllables are generally needed for the passive voice. Use the active voice when developing Idaho POST materials.
  - 1) Active: The dog bit the man
  - 2) Passive: The man was bitten by the dog
- C. Verb Tense – Use appropriate time tense for verbs. Use a consistent verb tense for the Idaho POST training materials.
  - 1) Past Tense: The officer asked a question.
  - 2) Progressive Present Tense: The officer is asking a question.
- D. Word Choice – Eliminate unnecessary words. Consider the following examples:
  - 1) A period of one week (week is a single period of time).
  - 2) End result (end is a result).
  - 3) Round in shape (round is a shape).
  - 4) Large in size (large is a size).
  - 6) Red in color (red is a color).

- 7) Detected an odor (smelled).
- 8) Prior to (before).

The *Elements of Style* by William Strunk & E.B. White offers simple writing strategies that make documents easier to read and understand.

E. Abbreviations – Do not use abbreviations for common words (e.g., b/c = because). Completely spell out the word.

- 1) Do not use abbreviations alone to explain units of measurement (e.g., lbs = pounds; in. = inches). Use numbers, words, or a combination. The following examples are acceptable writing standards.
  - a. He weighed 150 pounds.
  - b. He weighed one hundred and fifty pounds.
  - c. He weighed one hundred and fifty (150) pounds.
- 2) Use Latin abbreviations i.e., and e.g., correctly.
  - a. E.g., is short for *exempli gratia* which means “for the sake of example.” It introduces one or more examples but is not a complete list. Consider the following:  
An officer’s duty belt carries several items (e.g., gun, radio, flashlight, baton).
  - b. I.e., is short for *id est* which means “in other words.” It is not used to provide examples. Consider the following:  
Do not address or refer to readers as ‘you’ (i.e., You must be able to write an accurate report).  
E.g., and i.e., are both lowercase when used in the middle of a sentence (i.e., like this). Use a period after both letters in both abbreviations followed by a comma. Separate e.g., examples with a comma.

F. Numbers – spell out lone or single digit numbers from zero to nine and use figures for 10 and above. Use a comma for numbers greater than 999, unless it is a year, street address, broadcast frequency, room, serial, or telephone number. When using numbers to explain content, use the actual number, text, or combination. Consider the following examples.

- 1) The officer took five steps back.
- 2) The officer took five (5) steps back.
- 3) The officer took 10 steps back.

Always use the dollar symbol (\$) for currency and include a decimal for cents even when there are none. Consider the following examples.

- 1) The stolen television was worth \$1,135.00.
- 2) The amount listed on the store receipt was \$423.89.

#### F. Capitalization

- 1) Always capitalize the first word of a sentence
- 2) Always capitalize names and proper nouns
- 3) Capitalize the first word of a quote when the quote is a complete sentence (e.g., Carolyn said, "I need to finish this project.") Do not capitalize the first word of partial quotes (e.g., Nicole said she was "too busy" to watch the game.)
- 4) Do not use all capital letters to emphasize content.

#### G. Punctuation

##### 1) Commas, Semicolons, and Colons

- a. Commas create pause points for readers. Comas also make longer sentences and increase reading grade level. It is generally better to eliminate the comma and create two shorter sentences. Use commas to separate items in a series.

The following is one example:

- i. Take photographs of the gun, holster, bullets, and magazine.

- b. Semicolons connect related items with greater emphasis than commas. The most common use of the semicolon is to join two independent clauses without using a conjunction (e.g., and, or, like). The following is one example:

- i. The lottery winners for yesterday's drawing are Joyce Jones from Harrisburg, PA; Randy Smith from Raleigh, NC; and David Wilson from Mishawaka, IN.

- c. Colons are the gateway inviting readers to move on and learn more. a Colon direct you to the information following it. The following is an example:
  - i. There are three muscle types in the body: cardiac, smooth, and skeletal.

2) Quotation Marks

- a. Use quotation marks with direct quotes to identify what a person said (e.g., Tim said “I stopped the car when the light was red.”).
- b. Use quotations with titles of certain works to imply alternate meanings and to set words apart from the rest of the sentence (e.g., “inhale” means to take a breath).

3) Parentheses – Words inside the parentheses provide extra information about something else in the sentence or paragraph. Parentheses can also be used to repeat information, provide examples or separate content. Consider the following examples:

- a. Take three (3) photos of each item.
- b. Take (1) overall, (2) midrange, and (3) closeup photos.

4) Brackets – Brackets are commonly used to show words added to a direct quotation. Sometimes, when quoting a person or document, adding words is needed to provide context or clarify. Consider the following example:

- a. “Larry and I went [to the beach] and had a lot of fun”