

MANUAL OF OFFICE PROCEDURE

The Manual of Office Procedure is intended to serve as a guide for regulating office procedure in the office of the Heads of Departments. It can also be adopted for use in the regional, district or sub-offices of various Departments with suitable changes if necessary.

Definitions:

Tappal: All communications received in the office which are official, unofficial or demi-official are until registry known as tappal.

Current: Communications received in the office which are distributed to the sections with the dated seal and a number is called the current. The number assigned to a current is called a current number.

Case: A case consists of current file, note file and any previous papers and books put up for reference.

Current file: Current file is that part of a case consisting of papers received, drafts of interim references, replies thereto and draft of final orders issued. It is arranged chronologically from top to bottom.

Note file: Note file is that part of a case which contains the notes written by clerks and other officers including the Director. It is written to facilitate the disposal of the case.

Disposal: Disposal is the statement of the final decision of head of office on any case submitted for information and orders.

Back file: The disposals containing decisions already taken put up for reference to processing fresh cases are called back files.

Drafting: Drafting is the preparation of any communication which is proposed to be issued.

Enclosure: A communication or a statement or a plan, sketch or other document which is attached to another communication to supplement or elucidate the point is called an enclosure.

Arising Reference: Any reference issued from the office which originates the file.

Demi-Official correspondence: A correspondence is called Demi-Official when Govt. officers correspond with each other or with any member of the public on administrative or official matters without official formality and with a personal touch.

Flagging: Flagging is the process of attaching to the top of papers put up for reference in a case, slips with alphabetical letters.

Linking: When one case has relevance in relation to another case, both the cases are submitted together and this process is called linking of files.

Registry: A paper is said to be registered when it is given a current no. and entered with abstract in the PR.

Referencing: Referencing is the process of putting up in a case, previous correspondence, laws, rules, reports etc. required for its disposal, flagging them and indicating the fact in the margin of the note file/current file.

New case: A paper which is not connected with a pending case in the office or one which originates in the office is termed as a new case.

Issue: A term used to denote the process of copying and despatching communications.

Put up papers: Put up papers means the previous orders or other papers connected with or having a bearing on the subject of a current under consideration and put up with the current.

Official correspondence: A correspondence is called official when one Govt. officer addresses or is addressed by another Govt. officer or by any public body or private individual in writing in accordance with certain fixed rules as to form, matter and procedure and with the intention that such correspondence may be the public record regarding the question discussed.

Section: The minor division of the office consisting of a Superintendent and one or more clerks.

Old Case: A reply to a reference issued from the office or a paper which though not a reply of that nature has for any other reason to be filed with the current already pending is called an old case.

Tagging: The current and its enclosures are punched at the top left hand corner and a tag is passed through the hole. This process is called tagging.

TAPPAL

All communication received in the office until numbering is known as tappal. It may be cards, envelopes, packets or telegram. Tappal is received by the tappal clerk and acknowledged. Telegram received is sent to the concerned officer and he will give back the same to the clerk after opening.

Tappal received after office hours are kept in a box. The same will be opened on the next day along with the tappal of that day. Tappal is opened in the presence of the Head Office or authorized officer. The officer can make necessary instructions at that time on Tappal.

The tappal is then date sealed, numbered and sorted section wise and entered in the Distribution Register by the tappal clerk. Then it is sent to the Section Superintendent for distribution to the concerned section clerks along with the Distribution Register. The concerned clerk acknowledges the tappal by taking the same after verifying the distribution register.

Papers which need not be entered in DR

Telegraphic messages, tour programmes, spare copies, unstamped or insufficiently stamped petitions, papers wrongly addressed, applications which are not in the prescribed form, gazettes, printed pamphlets and publication need not be entered in the DR.

When valuables are received in office

1. Enter them in the Security Register by Tappal clerk.
2. Separate from the communications.
3. Hand over it to the Manager for safe custody after acknowledgement from the manager.

Stamp affixed petition

1. Defaced and punched by Tappal clerk.
2. Superintendent should see it is done.

Urgent and telegraphic communications on Holidays

1. Those received on holidays and out of office hours will be sent to Head of office by special messenger.
2. Action should be taken on the day itself if necessary.

Functions of Office Section: The office section under the charge of an Office Supdt. attends mainly to the receipt of papers, its distribution, despatch of outward communications, transmission of disposals to records, upkeep of specified registers, procurement and distribution of stationery etc.

Personal Register:

- Currents to be acknowledged in the DR and registered in the Personal Register.
- Only bound volumes to be used – 10 columns.
- Name of the Superintendent and Clerk to be pasted on the cover.
- Superintendent to certify the register.
- New PR opened for every calendar year.
- Sufficient blank pages to be left to carry over pending files.
- All currents to be entered in the PR in the order of current number.
- Normally 3 entries in one page.
- Title/subject to be brief and clear.
- Nature of reference issued, reminders sent and received should be noted.
- Nature of disposal with date to be noted in red ink in column 10.
- When closed column(1) should be rounded off in red ink.
- Provide sufficient lines in the PR when protracted correspondence is anticipated – only 1 or 2 entries in one page.
- If space is inadequate, paste slips.
- Delay or neglect in entering the currents in the PR amounts to dereliction of duty.
- Old cases need not be given Serial No. while registering in the PR.

Referencing: Referencing is a process of putting up in a case previous correspondence, rules, reports etc. required for its disposal, flagging them and indicating the fact in the margin of note file/current file/draft in which they are mentioned or quoted.

Every paper quoted by its number and date in the current file should be put up. If it is in the current file, the page number may be indicated in pencil in the margin. If it is in a disposed file, it may be obtained from records and flagged and the relevant para and page number indicated in margin.

For every statement made in the note file, an authority must be quoted. If it is in the current file, the page number may be quoted in the body of the note at the end of each sentence in brackets in pencil. If it is in a disfile, the old disposal is flagged and the disposal number, relevant page and para noted in the note file and its flag letter noted in pencil in the margin.

Flagging: Every disposal files mentioned in the current file or note file to which a reference is made in the file, should be put up for reference with flags attached to the docket. Flags should not be pinned to any page of the current file/note file. When there are more than one disposal for reference, flags should be attached in alphabetical order. There must be only one flag on a disfile. If there is more than one disposal, one flag should not cover another. Flags bearing the same letter should not again be attached to the disposals put up for reference in a file.

Linking of files: Linking of files becomes necessary when a reference is made in a file to a paper or notes or orders in another pending file. The two files are then linked and attention invited to the concerned pages of the linked file. The principal file is kept above but its strings are tied below and the file referred to, is kept below and with its strings the two files are tied. The papers in the two files should remain unchanged.

Files should not be linked unnecessarily. Linking should be made only if it is absolutely necessary for disposing of the case. If possible, extracts from the other files can be taken and put up to avoid linking of files. If the two files contain similar issues, the two files can be combined into one.

Note file and Current file: A case or file consists of a note file, current file and put up papers, if any. Note file and current file are kept separate till disposal of the case. Current file is tagged to a blue fly leaf. Current file consists of communications received and references issued. Note file is separate and tagged to a yellow fly leaf. Note is written to facilitate the disposal of the case. A note is continued till a final decision is taken in the case.

Noting: The aim of a note is to present the facts in the most intelligible, condensed and convenient form so that the decision taking authority may take a quick and correct decision. Past history of the case, precedents, if any etc. are to be mentioned in the note. Rules and regulations and standing orders relating to the case should be quoted and discussed briefly. All materials should be analyzed and the pros and cons of the matter discussed properly. There is no necessity to reproduce the matter contained in the current file, but the deficiencies and omissions should be supplied in the note. It should be as brief as possible. For ready reference, back files, extracts of rules and regulations or reference books should also be put up along with the file with proper referencing. Note must run continuously. Precis of contents of the current file can be written where the communication is too lengthy. The clerks and superintendents are not expected to give any opinion or suggestions. In simple cases, a draft can also be put up along with a note.

Method of Noting: Notes will be written in foolscap size sheets with 1/3 margin. On the top will be written the subject in red ink. The file number will be noted on the top left corner. Note sheets will be tagged to a yellow fly leaf. Pages on both sides and paragraphs will be given numbers. When a reference is issued, that fact will be indicated in square brackets underlined by red ink in the note. Similarly, receipt of communications will also be noted in square brackets in the note file. Officer's queries in the current file will be copied in the note file and answered in the note file. When drafts are put up for approval that fact should be indicated in the note file.

Note file will be separate from the current file till its disposal. Note file will be placed above the current file always. While submitting the file to officers, blank sheets should be added to the note file. Handwriting should be legible and tidy. A note should not end at the very end of a page. Below

each completed note the clerk or superintendent who prepared it, should put his initials and date, in the left hand side.

Drafting: Drafts are written in separate sheets. Long drafts must be typed. Sufficient space should be left for making corrections. They are placed above the current file and below the note file. At the head of every draft it should be noted whether it is a letter, memorandum or D.O. etc. In draft letters, the name, designation of the addressee will come above while in the proceedings, memorandum etc. the list of addressees will be given at the bottom of the draft. Draft should not contain information more than what is necessary. The matter in the draft should not drag government/HOD into controversies.

Draft must be complete and brief. As far as possible enclosures should be minimised. Self contained drafts are always good. They should be written in polite but effective language which can convey the spirit of the decision taken in the office. Amount indicated in drafts should be written in words also; Piecemeal correspondence should be avoided

Points to be borne in mind while preparing drafts: Drafts should be written or typed in half margin in separate sheets. The margin should not be used for writing explanatory notes. Only the flag number of the disposal quoted or page number of the current file or note file quoted should be indicated in pencil in the margin. Drafts should be complete and brief. A slip bearing DFA (Draft For Approval) may be attached with the draft. Nature of disposal such as R Dis, D Dis, K Dis, etc. should be indicated above the draft. The next reminder date may be indicated below or in the margin. Enclosures, if any, to be sent to any of the addressee may be clearly specified. Care should always be given for correct usage and good language.

Forms of Correspondence

- Letter Form
- Proceedings Form
- Memorandum Form
- Endorsement Form
- Demi-Official Form
- Circular Form
- UO Note Form

- Office Order Form
- Telegram/Fax

1. Letter Form

All official correspondence whether to non-officials or subordinates or higher authorities shall be in the form of letter. Letter form should be used in the following cases for correspondence.

- Government
- An equal or higher authority
- The PSC
- The Board of Revenue (Land Revenue Commissioner)
- An Officer not in the administrative control of the Government of Kerala.
- The VC or Registrar of the University.
- MLA, MP
- The President or Chairman of any Local Self Governing Institution or Co-operative Society.
- A non-official or a non-official association or society of distinction.
- When one department addresses an officer of another department
- Subordinates

2. Proceedings Form

When the Head of the Institution takes an important decision or records his decision in exercise of a statutory power, such order is communicated in the form of proceedings.

3. Memorandum Form

It is used only for internal use of office such as to communicate and call for information between the sections of the same office. Charge memo and show case notice are issued in the Memorandum Form.

4. Endorsement Form

When a paper or its copy has to be sent to a subordinate office for information or remarks or disposal, it is sent in the form of an Endorsement.

When it is for remarks it is N REFERENCE and when it is for information it is N DISPOSAL.

5. Demi-Official Correspondence (DO Letter)

When an officer personally correspond with another officer or non official without the formalities of official procedure with the intention of interchange of opinion or information or with a view to get the personal attention of the officer concerned, DO letter form is used. DO Letters cannot be referred in communications.

6. Circular

Important instructions of a standing nature to be uniformly followed by various authorities are communicated in the form of a circular.

Rules of correspondence

- Only the Head of the Department can address the Government directly.
- Regional officers and District Officers can address the Government through Head.
- The contents in any communication must be complete, condensed and without too much enclosures.
- Repetition and unnecessary details should be avoided.
- As far as possible one topic will be included in one communication.
- DO letter shall not be quoted in official correspondence.
- The Head of office shall sign fair copies of letters addressed to higher authorities.
- In other cases, by the officer to whom this power is delegated.
- All communication must be issued in the name of Head of the office.
- All proceedings must be signed by the Head of office.
- If the Head does not sign the letter, the word 'for' should be entered before the designation and authorized person should sign.
- Communication to the High Court will be addressed to the Registrar and letters to PSC will be addressed to the Secretary.
- Letters to the Corporations/Municipalities will be addressed to the Commissioner or the Mayor.
- The prefix Shri, Smt, Kumari will be used as form of address.

- The salutation of letters should be ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’ and the subscription should be ‘Yours faithfully’.
- Amount, if any, specified in the communication should be written in figures and words.

Despatch: The clerk should see that the dispatch has been correctly made and reminder dates, if any, noted in the reminder diary. If it is only an interim reference, the draft, after issue, will be added to the current file, page numbered and the file kept in the shelf. In the case of final disposal, the file is arranged properly, the arrangement being first the note file, then the current file. On the outside of the disposal jackets are boldly marked, the name of the department and office, nature of disposal, pages in the file, year of the file. The back file referred to will be noted in the inside of the jacket. Similarly, the disfile taken for reference, a forward number will be noted. Such chain referencing is very essential. Before sending the disposal to record, the Superintendent should satisfy that no further action is necessary.

Records Section: Records Section is a very important section as far as an office is concerned. The old records, containing important orders and decisions and valuable registers have to be arranged and kept in a section for future reference. If these documents are kept in the respective seats they will be lost. It may not be easy to find them out. Even if they are found out, a lot of time would be wasted for searching such documents. Therefore, it is necessary to keep these documents in an arranged manner so that it may be made available within the shortest time possible. If disposals are kept in the same seat, a lot of space will also be necessary to keep them. So, a systematic arrangement is necessary to keep the old records, to make them available for immediate reference and also for weeding out of the old records.

Disposals:

Different kinds of disposals

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|----------------|---|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. R Disposal | : | Retain | - | To be retained permanently |
| 2. D Disposal | : | Destroy | - | To be destroyed after 10 years |
| 3. K Disposal | : | Keep | - | To be destroyed after 3 years |
| 4. L Disposal | : | Lodge | - | To be destroyed after 1 year |
| 5. N Disposals | are those to be sent out in original (need not be retained) | | | |

6. F Disposals are those that are to be filed.

- X marked on a paper need not be registered.
- XN do not register but return in original
- XL does not register but lodged.

Only papers of an ephemeral character which are not numbered will be given XN/XL disposal.

Indexing: The object of indexing is to enable one to trace papers containing orders passed on any particular subject. Index slips on all important orders passed from a Dept. are consolidated annually and typed or printed for perusal of the officer and reference by office. This helps office to put up for reference orders of similar nature issued earlier and thus helps to bring continuity and consistency in Government administration.

A list of standard heads are given in the MOP. The index contains Head, Sub Head and Title. The head is selected from the approved list. The head must be a word that will naturally occur to any one who wants the paper. Consistency is essential in the selection of index heads. Even if the heads are badly chosen, so long as there is consistency, there is no harm. After the Head and Sub Head comes local classification and then title. Brevity is the merit of a title. If the title gives the message at a sight like press headlines, the title is good. Papers relating to officers should be indexed under the name of the officer concerned.

Eg: Estt – Collegiate Education – Promotion and Transfer – Teaching Staff – Orders issued.

Checks on delays and arrears in Office: It is the duty of the Head of Office, Superintendent, Manager to check delays in the transaction of business in their offices. Their responsibility to check arrears and delays are two-fold: (1) to ensure proper processing of papers already in the section (2) to ensure that reports called for from subordinate offices are not delayed. They must periodically inspect PRs of Clerks, call book, register of periodicals, stock file etc.

Inspection of Personal Register: Inspection of personal register is an effective mechanism for checking delay and arrears. The HOD must prescribe a schedule for inspection of PRs by the Officers. Supdts, must inspect the PR every month. The Inspecting Officer must see that papers are submitted by the clerk with in 5 days of receipt. The PR should be accompanied by a running note for inspection. The queries or remarks made based on the inspection must be answered immediately and registers resubmitted.

Call Book: When action in a file for a conceivable time, say 3 months to 6, is not active, then such entries are closed in the PR and they are entered in the call book to be opened on a specified date or earlier. There should be only one common CB for a section. The reopening of files to be ensured by the Inspecting Officers.

Reminder Diary: The RD is primarily intended to remind initiation of further action in any file on a specified future date. The clerk's first duty on each working day is to examine the entries in his RD against that date.

Periodical Register: Periodical registers should be maintained in sections receiving as well as issuing periodical returns to watch their punctual receipt and dispatch. Each clerk will maintain a Register.

Lie over cases: Cases which are ordered by the Head of Office to be kept in abeyance for a definite period, say not exceeding 3 months is known as Lie over cases. This type of cases should also be noted in the Reminder diary, so that action can be taken at the appropriate time.

Stock File: Permanent files of important orders should be maintained for reference and should be carefully kept upto date. Each stock file will have a table of contents prefixed to it giving the number and date of each paper filed, its title and its page in the file for easy reference.

Monthly Business Statement: The monthly business statement (arrear list) is intended to bring to the notice of superior officers the slackness in disposal or accumulation of arrears. This is taken as a reflection of the transaction of business in the section. Before 5th of every month each section has to prepare its monthly business statement.

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