

The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with important and timely information about interactions with law enforcement, especially at traffic stops.

Many people have their first encounter with law enforcement when they are stopped for a traffic violation. This can be a stressful situation for everyone, especially for young drivers. Understanding the rules and regulations that govern traffic stops will help you be well informed and better prepared for those encounters.

This brochure will provide you with knowledge of the traffic stop process and the confidence to interact with law enforcement officers in a safe and respectful way so that everyone gets home safely.

The information in this brochure is general in nature and is not intended as legal advice. Please understand that laws are subject to change. If you have a legal question or if you need legal advice or help, contact an attorney.

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We understand that no one likes to get pulled over, and that the situation can be unexpected and stressful. This brochure addresses how interactions between police and citizens can result in safe and respectful outcomes consistent with the rights of both citizens and law enforcement officers.



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**A Citizen's Guide To The
Routine Traffic Stop.**

**Learn how a traffic stop works,
your rights and how to best
handle this situation.**



What To Do If You Are Pulled Over By The Police.

This 8-step guide teaches citizens how to interact with officers at traffic stops so that **encounters with police result in positive outcomes and everyone gets home safely.** Traffic stops can be stressful for most people, especially young drivers.

WHY WOULD AN OFFICER PULL ME OVER ?

An officer can pull you over for all kinds of reasons. For example speeding or running a red light; or for minor infractions such as having a broken taillight.

Regardless of why you are pulled over, it is important to **remain calm and respectful.** Even an ordinary stop should be treated seriously. Your goal is to have the interaction proceed quickly and legally and that all parties get home safely.

1 You see a police car behind you with flashing lights.

What To Do:

Safely pull over to the right hand side of the road as soon as possible.

What Not To Do:

Do not prolong the process of pulling over. The officer might think you are being evasive or are engaged in a criminal act.

What To Do:

When you have come to a stop, **discontinue any phone calls, turn off your music and roll down your window.**

What Not To Do:

Do not dig around in your vehicle. The officer might think you are hiding something or reaching for a weapon.

2 The officer will approach your car.

What To Do:

Stay in your car with your hands on the steering wheel and the hands of your passengers clearly visible.

What Not To Do:

Do not get out of your car. The officer might think you are being aggressive or preparing to run away. Even if you are frightened, **never run from police.**

What To Do:

Let the officer talk first and manage the conversation.

What Not To Do:

Do not start talking, especially in an angry or confrontational tone. **Do not make any hurried or unexplained moves.**

3 The officer will ask you some initial questions, for example, "Do you know why I pulled you over?"

What To Do:

Answer the questions in a prompt and courteous manner with a simple yes or no. Although you have the right to remain silent **it is smart to create a positive atmosphere of cooperation with the officer.**

What Not To Do:

Do not start to make excuses. An attitude of respect is important in dealing with officers.

4 The officer will most likely ask to see your driver license and your proof of insurance.

What To Do:

If you have the requested information, **provide the officer with your license and proof of insurance.**

What Not To Do:

If the information is in your glove box or console, inform the officer that you are going to open the glove box to retrieve the requested information. **Do not put your hands in your pockets** - the officer may think you are reaching for a weapon. **Never give an officer a fake ID.** This is a serious offense and could result in your license being suspended.

5 The officer will most likely return to his vehicle to verify your driver license and proof of insurance.

What To Do:

Treat the situation seriously and **remain calm and respectful during this process.**

What Not To Do:

Do not make any sudden or aggressive moves or use threatening language. **Your goal is to not escalate the interaction unnecessarily.**

6 The officer will return to your car and explain why he pulled you over. He may issue you a citation.

What To Do:

If you get a ticket, you must sign the ticket. This is not an admission of guilt; it is simply an agreement to contact the court within the time specified.

What Not To Do:

Above all, you do not want an arrest on your record. Do not confront or threaten an officer. This will not lead to a positive outcome and may cause the interaction to intensify. Under no circumstances should you physically touch an officer.

7 The officer will return to his vehicle and will let you know when you are free to go.

What To Do:

If you feel as though the officer acted inappropriately, **you have the right to file a complaint** with the officer's agency. However, if you feel the officer acted in a supportive and positive way **you may file a compliment on his/her behalf.**

What Not To Do:

If you get a ticket, **do not disregard the ticket.** Failure to appear in court on the appointed day may lead to additional fines and possibly a warrant for your arrest.

8 Suppose you believe that you don't deserve a ticket.

What To Do:

Contact the court within the time specified on the ticket and follow all directions. Fairness will be determined in court, where you may argue or appeal your case. **If you have any specific questions, please contact a lawyer to seek legal advice.**

What Not To Do:

Do not argue with the officer by the side of the road. The proper place to explain your position is in court.

Remember, you cannot control how the officer will handle the interaction. However, you can control how you handle the interaction. If both you and the officer maintain a courteous attitude and stay calm, a potentially stressful interaction will proceed quickly and legally. The interaction will not escalate into a larger and more dangerous situation and all parties involved will get home safely.