

# What To Do When Stopped By A Law Enforcement Officer



## Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Innocent people are stopped by the police and sometimes they get embarrassed or angry. Although the stop may seem wrong or unfair, the police believe they have a reason to stop and talk with you. Sometimes they just want to know if you are a witness to a crime or if you know about something suspicious. Sometimes they stop you because some other person reported something suspicious about you or someone looks like you if you are stopped follow these rules:

- 1. Stay calm.** Even if you feel it's unfair to be stopped by the police, stay calm, quite and polite. Do not do or say threatening things. A bad attitude will make police believe you are dangerous.
- 2. Stay still.** Walking, moving around or running away will make police think you are dangerous.

- 3. Stay patient.** Even a traffic ticket can take 20 minutes or more before you are free to leave. During this time the police usually tell you nothing. It is easy to get embarrassed and angry but anger will only make the police believe you are dangerous.

- 4. Show hands.** Hidden hands or moving hands will make the police believe you have something dangerous in your hands.

### SAFE THINGS TO DO WHEN STOPPED IN A CAR

- 1.** Slow down and pull over to the side of the road when it is safe to do so. If you speed up the police will believe you are dangerous. If you try to run away the police will believe you are dangerous and you can be arrested.

- 2.** If you are unsure whether the car is a police car or not, drive slowly and pull over to a public place with good lighting and stop.

- 3. Stay in your seat!** Moving around, changing seats or getting out of the car will make the police believe you are dangerous. Only exit the vehicle if you are instructed to do so by the police officer.

- 4.** Keep your hands on the steering wheel if you are the driver. Keep your hands open and on your lap if you are a passenger. Hidden hands will make the police think you are holding something dangerous. If it is dark, turn on the inside car light.

- 5.** Give the police your driver's license and car registration if you are asked. If your license and registration are in a pocket, glove compartment or other hidden area, tell the police. Then slowly get the papers out for the police to see. If you

move too quickly towards a hidden compartment the police will worry something dangerous is in the compartment.

- 6.** You have the right to politely deny a request by a police officer to search your car; however, if probable cause is present, the officer has the right to search your vehicle without your consent

- 7.** The officer will tell you why they stopped your car, and if they are going to give you a ticket. If you want to explain something to the officer do so politely BEFORE the officer writes the ticket. Once a ticket is written it cannot be changed or thrown away.

- 8.** If the officer gives you a ticket, sign it. Signing a ticket does not mean you are guilty. If you are not guilty go to traffic court and present your case to a judge. **If you do not sign the ticket you can be arrested.**

- 9.** If the officer does not tell you why she/he stopped you and does not write a ticket, it may mean the officer has reasons to believe you or other passengers in the car were involved in a crime. Stay calm, still and patient while the officers investigate. The officer will ask you a series of simple questions, please cooperate and answer each question to the best of your ability.

### QUESTIONS/COMPLIMENTS/COMPLAINTS

If you have a question about procedures or a complaint about your treatment, contact the Police Department ( 305-949-5500) and ask to speak with a supervisor. You may also send a letter of compliment if you feel the officer was particularly helpful in your situation. Compliments or complaints about an officer's conduct should be made within a reasonable time.