

What To Do When You're Pulled Over



Seeing flashing red and blue lights in the rearview mirror is one of every motorist's worst nightmares. But it happens every day. And if it hasn't already happened to you before, it's probably going to at some point. What you might not know is that what you do and how you behave when you're pulled over by the police could determine whether you're given a ticket or a warning.

Pull over quickly and safely

Quickly adhering to a police officer's command to pull to the side of the road is critical to ensuring you don't rub them the wrong way. Most importantly, pull over safely. Check to make sure you've got enough room to pull off the road before moving your car into the breakdown lane. If you don't, you could earn yourself an additional citation for unsafe driving.

Take additional safety precautions

Once you've pulled over in a safe location, turn your engine off, set the emergency brake, and turn on your hazard lights. Bear in mind that thousands of law enforcement officials are injured during traffic stops every year. The police officer will appreciate your willingness to look out for his safety and the safety of other drivers on the road.

Establish yourself as a non-threat

According to statistics, more than 1,500 police officers have died in the line of duty in the last ten years. It's a dangerous job that every man or woman in blue takes seriously. Bear in mind that routine traffic stops can be dangerous situations for police officers. Anytime you're pulled over, roll down your window and place your hands on the steering wheel. Don't step out of the car unless you're asked to. If it's dark out, turn on your car's interior light so that the officer can see you aren't a threat.

Provide your driver's license and registration

This is normally the first thing that a police officer will ask you for when you're pulled over. You may also be asked for your proof of car insurance, depending on what state you're driving in. As an added safety measure, don't start searching for your wallet or your insurance papers until the police officer has asked you for them. Observing you fumbling through your glove compartment before you've been asked for these credentials could be cause for alarm in a police officer and at the very least could result in them searching your car if they think you're trying to hide something.

Be calm and courteous

Understand that *how* you speak to a police officer could be what saves you from getting a ticket. Avoid potentially addressing him/her as "officer," in case you've been pulled over by, for example, a higher ranking sergeant. Instead, answer all questions that are posed to you with "sir/ma'am." Try to be as friendly as possible. Giving a police officer a poor attitude is a great way of ensuring that he or she won't let you off with a warning.

Don't try to bribe the officer

Few things can get you in trouble faster than offering to pay a police officer to let you go about your way. It's also important to remember that tickets are only payable via the mail, online, or in person at a traffic court building. Innocently offering to pay for your ticket on the stop could be misconstrued as an attempt to bribe the officer. Take no chances here.

Don't admit any guilt

This is not an invitation to argue with a police officer who just pulled you over for doing 55mph in a 35mph zone. This simply means that you should never give a police officer any additional ammunition that could work against you, should you decide to contest your ticket in court. He or she will likely take copious notes of everything you say and in many cases traffic stops are audio and videotaped.

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