

What Should I Do If I Am Stopped By The Police?

A GUIDE FOR THE STUDENTS,
FACULTY, AND STAFF
MEMBERS OF
NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Northwestern University Police Department has deep respect for the diversity of our community. We are committed to serving and protecting our community in a fair and impartial manner that promotes respect and inclusiveness of all members of our community. We are dedicated to protecting the rights of all community members at all times.

Stopping members of the community for traffic enforcement, or any other reason, based solely on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic background, or gender is illegal, unconstitutional, unprofessional, and inconsistent with the values, ethics and ideals of the police profession and the university.

We recognize that being stopped or encountered by the police can be a significant emotional experience. To help you understand why you might be stopped by an officer, and how you can expect to be treated, it's important for you to understand what you can expect when an officer stops you.

We also want you to know that you have the right to compliment or complain about an officer's actions. The department will fully uphold its obligation to the community to thoroughly, fairly and impartially investigate incidents of racial profiling or other police misconduct. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us. We want to hear from you!

REFERRALS:

Emergency 911
Non-Emergency 847-491-3254

Chief of Police 847-491-4934
Dean of Students 847-491-8431
Office of the Provost 847-491-5117
Ethics Point 866-294-3545
<https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/7325/index.html>

University Police – Compliments/Complaints
<http://www.northwestern.edu/up/forms/comp.html>

DEPARTMENT LOCATION & HOURS

Northwestern University Police Department
211 East Superior Street - Chicago Campus
1819 Hinman Avenue - Evanston Campus

Patrol and Operation Hours:
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Administration Hours:
Mon-Fri 9:00am - 5:00pm

TRAFFIC STOPS

Why am I being stopped by the police?

The most likely reason why people are stopped while driving is for violations of the vehicle code. These violations fall into two categories, moving and non-moving violations.

- Moving violations include: improper lane change, failure to stop at a red light or stop sign, and driving in excess of the posted speed limit.
- Non-moving violations include: occupants not wearing a seat belt, children not properly restrained, broken tail light or brake light, and failure to possess valid drivers license, vehicle registration or proof of insurance.

Other reasons you may be stopped include:

- Criminal investigations: you or your vehicle may match the description of a suspect in a crime.
- Courtesy or safety concerns: your trunk may be open, or something may be hanging from, or be on top of, your car.
- A warrant exists for an occupant of the vehicle.

I'm being pulled over by the police, what do I do?

- Slow down
- Safely pull over to the right side of the road
- Make a complete stop
- Leave your seat belt fastened
- Stay in the car (do not get out of the car unless instructed to do so by the police officer)
- Keep your hands visible

- When asked, show the officer your driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance
- Be respectful, even if you disagree with the reason you've been stopped

I disagree with the reason I was stopped, what do I do?

- Keep track of all pertinent information about the stop, including the officer's name and identification number
- If you are issued a citation and disagree with it, you have the right to present your case to a judge
- If you do not agree with the reason for the stop or are offended by the officer's demeanor, you have the ability to complain to the officer's supervisor by contacting the police department. Officers are unable to handle complaints at the scene

RESPONSIBILITIES

What are my responsibilities as the owner of a vehicle?

As the owner, it is your responsibility to ensure that the person driving the vehicle has a valid driver's license and is a safe driver.

What are my responsibilities as a driver?

As the driver, it is your responsibility (not the owner's) to ensure that the vehicle you're driving is insured and that the proper vehicle registration and proof of insurance are in the car.

You are also responsible for:

- The conduct of the passengers, including throwing trash out the window, hanging their arms or legs out of the window, or acting in a disorderly manner
- Ensuring that all passengers are wearing their seatbelts and that children are properly secured

What must I have to lawfully operate a motor vehicle?

- Valid driver's license
- Proof of vehicle registration
- Proof of current insurance

What if I don't have that with me when I'm stopped?

Depending on the circumstances:

- You could be given a warning.
- You could be issued a citation.
- You could be arrested.
- Your vehicle could be towed.

OTHER STOPS

Why am I being stopped by the police?

A person might be stopped if the officer has reason to believe the person:

- Has committed a crime.
- Is about to commit a crime.
- Has evidence of a crime.

Other reasons may include:

- Officers are seeking information about a crime.
- Alerting people of safety concerns.
- Another person may have reported suspicious activity or behavior.
- To confirm authorization to be in a sensitive or restricted area on campus.

What is Suspicious Activity or Behaviors?

A reasonable suspicion based on observed behavior, conduct or actions that a person may be engaged in criminal, dishonest, or dangerous activity.

Our officers will not identify a person as "suspicious" by their appearance. They will stop persons as "suspicious" based on that person's actions, behavior and conduct that may be in violation of law or university policy.

We request additional information from reporting persons –they should be able to articulate suspicion based on the same criteria.

For more information on reporting crimes, emergencies and suspicious activity please see:

<http://www.northwestern.edu/up/crime/reporting.html>

What do I do if I'm stopped?

- Keep your hands where the officer can see them, don't put them in your pockets.
- Stay put and stay calm, don't walk or run from police.
- Don't interfere with an officer making an arrest, making a traffic stop or questioning other persons.
- If directed to do so, comply with the procedures for a search. You may be subjected to a pat-down search if the officer has reasonable suspicion that you may be carrying a weapon or dangerous object.

I disagree with the reason I was stopped, what do I do?

- Keep track of all pertinent information about the stop, including the officer's name and identification number.
- If you are arrested and disagree with the reason, you have the right to legal representation and all sides of your case can be presented in court to the judge.
- If you do not agree with the reason for the stop or are offended by the officer's demeanor, you have the ability to complain to the officer's supervisor by contacting the police department. Officers are unable to handle complaints at the scene.

POLICE AT YOUR RESIDENCE

Why are the police at my Residence?

A police officer can enter a residence if:

- You give them consent.
- They have an arrest or search warrant.
- There are exigent circumstances, i.e., in pursuit of a suspect who just entered your home, or they believe a suspect or evidence will be lost if they wait for a warrant.
- They are performing emergency community care-taking functions, i.e., rendering first aid, preventing serious harm to a person or property, or locating a missing person.

What happens if I'm arrested?

- If you are arrested, you must be told what you're being charged with.
- Don't resist arrest, even if you disagree with the reason or charge.
- Following your arrest, if you are charged with a crime, you have the right to legal representation.

If you are a foreign national:

- At the time of arrest law enforcement officers have a legal obligation to advise you of your right to communicate with your nation's Consulate.
- If you request that your Consular Office be notified by the arresting officers, this notification will occur without delay.

What are my constitutional rights?

If you are being questioned after an arrest, all persons (juveniles and adults) have the following rights, referred to as the Miranda rights:

- You have the right to remain silent.
- Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.
- You have the right to talk to an attorney and have him or her present while you are questioned.
- If you cannot afford to hire an attorney, one will be appointed to represent you at no expense.

What do the police have a right to do?

- Police may use reasonable force to make an arrest or detain someone.
- If they have probable cause, they can search you, your vehicle, and, in some cases, your residence.
- If they have probable cause, they can seize your property.
- If they have reasonable suspicion that you have a weapon or dangerous object, they can search you.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS AND AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIVERSITY¹

Student Rights

For a complete discussion, refer to the current version of the Northwestern University Student Handbook.

