

High Point Police Department

What To Do When Stopped By The Police



HIGH POINT POLICE DEPARTMENT
<https://www.highpointnc.gov/police>

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

The High Point Police Department understands that being stopped by a police officer usually causes high levels of anxiety. The person stopped does not know what is about to happen and the officer does not know whether the person they have just stopped is dangerous and poses a threat to them. It is our desire that both officers and citizens remain safe in these encounters and so we have put together this pamphlet to answer some of the basic questions about stops and what citizens should do. This brochure is not meant as legal advice and should not take the place of your consulting with a licensed attorney about your rights in a particular situation.



High Point Police Department

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What To Do When Stopped By The Police

Being stopped by the police is a high stress event for both you and the police officer. There are several things that you can do when stopped that will help the encounter to go smoothly and end safely.

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The most important thing to do when stopped is keep your hands visible unless instructed by the officer to retrieve something. If you are stopped when driving a car, place your hands on the steering wheel and turn on your dome light if it is dark. Avoid moving around a lot and reaching in various places as the officer is approaching. The officer cannot tell if you are reaching for your registration or a gun.

If you are stopped while driving a vehicle, the officer will likely ask for your license, registration, and proof of liability insurance. State law (G.S. 20-29) requires you to produce your license and/or give your name to the officer. You are also legally required to exit the vehicle if the officer requests.

WHY WOULD THE POLICE STOP ME?

There are many factors that may lead the police to approach and/or detain you. Every situation is different and the officer may consider one or more of the following factors:

- You are near a location where a crime has been recently reported or discovered.
- You may be—knowingly or unknowingly—a fact witness to a criminal event or a potential criminal target.
- You are hanging around with people or locations being monitored by the police to prevent crimes.
- You are acting in a manner which appears to be suspicious, potentially criminal or the police believe you may be in possession of stolen property, contraband, or weapons.
- You have committed a traffic violation or other illegal act.
- You have been identified to the police by someone else or you fit the description of a criminal actor.
- Some other facts or circumstances that cause the officer to reasonably suspect a violation of the law has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur.

There are certainly times when an officer stops/detains a person only to realize that his or her suspicion was unfounded or the information was mistaken. The officer will usually be able to end such a stop quickly and send the person on their way. However, if the person refuses to answer simple police questions, gives false, evasive, or contradictory information, or is combative and uses derogatory or offensive language when approached, this may be perceived as suspicious or threatening, causing the stop to take longer and increasing the chance of a bad encounter.

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IF YOU THINK THE POLICE ARE WRONG

Sometimes you may think the police should not have stopped you or should not have written you a ticket or arrested you. The time to complain or argue is NOT during the stop! You have two options if you disagree with an action taken by a High Point Police Officer:

- If you were given a ticket or charged with a crime, you will be given a court date. You may speak to a lawyer before your court date or simply plead Not Guilty in court and tell the judge why you believe the officer was incorrect.
- Whether you were charged or not, if you believe the officer acted inappropriately, you may call the Professional Standards Division of the High Point Police Department at (336) 887-7973 and file a complaint.

OTHER DO'S AND DON'T'S

- DO: Speak respectfully to the officer.
- DO: Keep your hands where the police can see them.
- DO: Follow the officer's instructions.
- DO: Avoid arguing with the officer at the scene.
- DON'T: run.
- DON'T: touch the police officer.
- DON'T: get out of the car unless the officer asks.