Why do police stop people?

There are many different reasons why you might be stopped by the police. Whatever the reason, the officer needs your cooperation.

- You may have committed a traffic violation.
- You may fit the description of a suspect.
- The officer might think you are in trouble and need help.
- You may have witnessed a crime.

If you are stopped by the police while driving, you may feel confused anxious, or even angry. These are natural feelings, but remember, traffic stops can also be stressful and dangerous for the police officer. Each year, a number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making the “routine traffic stop.” Police officers are especially vulnerable during the hours of darkness.

With this in mind, there are things that you, as a law abiding citizen, can do to help lessen the unpleasantness of the experience.

**Remember:**

In all cases, a citizen is required to cooperate with police.

**When stopped by police, remember:**

1. A police officer may pull you over at any time for a traffic offense or police investigation.
2. When you see the red overhead lights and/or hear the siren, remain calm and safely pull over parallel to the right side of the road.
3. Remain in your vehicle unless the officer advises otherwise.
4. Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.
5. Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle.
6. Do not immediately reach for your license or other documents until the officer requests them. NYS Law requires drivers to show their license, registration and insurance card upon request.
7. If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
8. If the stop occurs during darkness, put on your dome or interior lights so the officer can easily see that all is in order.
9. If there are passengers in your vehicle, encourage them to remain quiet and cooperate with instructions. You, as the operator, are solely responsible for your vehicle and its occupants.
10. The officer may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, ask the officer for details.
11. Avoid becoming argumentative. Arguing will not change the officer’s mind. If you contest the violation, you will have an opportunity to address the matter in court.
12. Be honest with the officer. If you really didn’t see the stop sign, or were unaware of the speed limit, let the officer know. Being honest about any situation never hurts.
13. Many departments use one-man patrol cars, especially in the suburbs. It would be normal to see two or three marked units on a routine traffic stop.
14. Finally, if you receive a ticket, accept it calmly. Accepting it is not an admission of guilt.

**NYS Vehicle & Traffic Law** requires that all drivers shall yield the right of way to emergency vehicles. Drivers are to im-
Immediately pull over parallel to the right-hand edge, stop and remain in a stopped position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

**Personal Safety Tips:**

1. Keep vehicle doors locked at all times.
2. Carry proper identification - a valid driver’s license, proof of vehicle registration and proof of insurance. Know where the information is at all times.
3. If stopped by an unmarked vehicle, request to see identification. If you are still not satisfied with the officer’s identification, call 911 for verification or tell the officer you will drive to a police department.

**Questions/Compliments/Complaints**

If you have a question about procedures or a complaint about your treatment, contact the department 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.

**Emergency Numbers**

**UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**
386-7777

**HEALTH SERVICES CENTER**
386-7333

**FIRE AND RESCUE**
386-4544

**CANTON VILLAGE POLICE**
386-4561

**SHERIFF’S OFFICE**
379-2222

The University Police Department also lends out jumper cables and a gas can when needed. College I.D. remains in the office until cables or gas can is returned.

**STOP**

**What to do When Stopped by the Police**

**NEW YORK STATE UNIVERSITY POLICE**

**To Serve and Protect**

**SUNY CANTON**

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