



## Have you been stopped by the police?

### Know your rights when police stop you

The police can stop and ask you questions at any moment. This is called a 'stop and question'.

The police can also stop you to search you but only if they have good reasons to think you have an illegal item on you or you've been involved in a crime. This is called a 'stop and search'.

### Stop and question

#### Who can do this?

- You can be stopped and questioned by the police at any time.
- A police community support officer (PCSO) has to be in uniform to do this. A police officer doesn't, but has to show you their badge.

#### What happens?

During a 'stop and question', a police officer can ask you your name, what you're doing in that location, and where you're going.

#### Your rights

- You can walk away and not answer their questions. The police can't search or arrest you for this, unless there are other reasons to suspect you.
- You can ask the police officer: 'Are you detaining me?' You can only be detained for a 'stop and search'.
- If the officer says: 'no, I'm not detaining you', then it is a 'stop and question' and you can leave.
- Usually, a record will be made of the stop and question. You can ask for this record.

## Stop and search

### Who can do this?

A police officer can do this. They should be in uniform or should show you their identity card.

### When can they do this?

According to the law, the police officer can only stop and search you for specific reasons. Please see the table below

A police officer needs to have **good reasons ('reasonable grounds')** to search you. If they don't have reasonable grounds, then a **senior police officer needs to approve** the stop and search.

The police officer needs to suspect that:

Need to have reasonable grounds	Don't need to have reasonable grounds
You have <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• illegal drugs</li><li>• a weapon</li><li>• stolen property</li><li>• an item that can be used to carry out a crime</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• serious violence might happen</li><li>• you have a weapon on you</li><li>• you've used a weapon</li><li>• you're in a specific place.</li></ul>

## What happens during a search?

Before searching you, the police officer has to tell you:

- their name and police station (unless it may place the officer in danger)
- what they think they'll find when searching you
- why they want to search you
- why they can legally search you
- you can have a record of the search or a copy of it



During a 'stop and search', you will be asked for your name and address, date of birth, and ethnicity. You don't have to answer these questions.



### Be aware

- If you don't cooperate with the search, the officer can use **reasonable force** against you.
- You can be **arrested** for resisting the search.
- You can be **arrested** depending on what is found during the search.

### Can a police officer ask you to remove your clothes?

A police officer can ask you to take off your coat, jacket or gloves (your outer clothes) in public. A police officer can also search your shoes, socks, headgear and pockets.

### Only a police officer of the same sex as you can do this.

You can be asked to take off more clothes (for example your jumper) and anything you're wearing for religious reasons (for example a veil). This called a 'more thorough search'. This can only be done if you're out of public view (for example in a police van). This doesn't mean you're being arrested.

When an officer wants to do a 'more thorough search', they have to tell you why. **It can't be because they haven't found anything yet.**

### What is a 'strip search'?

- A strip search is when all your clothes are removed.
- This can only happen in a police station or a designated area like a police tent. It must be done **out of public view** and by an **officer of the same sex**. No officer of the opposite sex should be able to see this.
- If you're 17 years old or under an **'appropriate adult' must be present**. An appropriate adult can be your parent, guardian, social worker, another family member (over 18).



## Can a police officer stop me while driving?

- A police officer can stop any vehicle at any time.
- They can ask to see driving documents, look at the car's condition or deal with any driving offence. This is called a 'vehicle stop'.
- If they ask you to account for yourself (or anyone else in the car), this is a stop and question (also called a 'stop and account').
- If they search you or the car (or anyone else in the car), this is a stop and search.

## Your rights

- You don't have to answer the police officer's questions (unless they're reporting you for an offence).
- Police officers shouldn't suspect you based on how you look (eg. your age, race, clothes...) or because you've committed a crime in the past. Unless you match the description of a suspect.
- Police officers should always be polite and respectful.
- If you've been asked to remove your clothes, you can ask for more privacy. If you feel that you've not been given the privacy you asked for, ask them to put that in their record.
- You can record the stop and search on your phone but make sure it doesn't get in the way of the stop and search being done. You need to ask permission to do this.
- You can ask for the search record or a copy of it **within 3 months of the search**. Many police forces will give you a reference number that you can use to obtain a copy of the search record at the police station.



## What is a search record?

A search record is a document that includes information on a stop and search:

- the officer's details
- date, time and place of the stop and search
- reason for the stop and search
- outcome of the stop and search
- your self-defined ethnicity
- vehicle registration number (if relevant)
- what the officer was looking for and anything they found
- your name or a description if you refuse to give your name.

## Sources

- Information by GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/police-powers-to-stop-and-search-your-rights>
- Information by charity Release: <https://www.release.org.uk/law/stop-and-search>
- Information by Met Police: <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/st-s/stop-and-search/stop-and-search-process/>

## More information

- See this blog post on complaining about a stop and search **ADD LINK HERE**
- Link to the Y-Stop app: <https://y-stop.org/complaints>
- See this guide on making a complaint: <https://www.stop-watch.org/uploads/documents/complaintsguide.pdf>
- See information by Release: <https://www.release.org.uk/law/stop-and-search>
- Guide by Y-Stop on how to handle a stop and search: <https://y-stop.org/sites/default/files/resources/Search%20Card.pdf>



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