

BASIC LEGAL INFO

Safety

When dealing with the police, keep your hands in view and don't make sudden movements. Avoid passing behind them. Nervous cops are dangerous cops. Also, never touch the police or their equipment (vehicles, flashlights, animals, etc.) — you can get beaten up and charged with assault.

Talking to Cops

Whenever the cops ask you anything besides your name and address, it's legally safest to say these Magic Words: "I am going to remain silent. I want to see a lawyer." This invokes the rights that protect you from interrogation. When you say this, the cops are legally required to stop asking you questions. They probably won't stop, so just repeat the Magic Words until they catch on.

What you say can be used against you. It's better not to wait for the cops to read you your rights — you know what your rights are, so you can invoke them by saying the Magic Words, "I am going to remain silent. I want to see a lawyer."

Cops and other government agents are legally allowed to lie when they're investigating, and they are trained to be manipulative. Insist upon speaking with friends and lawyers before you answer any questions or sign anything.

Searches

Don't consent to a search! If the police try to search your house, car, backpack, pockets, etc. say the Magic Words II: "I do not consent to this search." This may not stop them from forcing their way in and searching anyway, but if they searched illegally, they probably won't be able to use the evidence in court. You have nothing to lose from refusing to consent to a search and lots to gain. Do not physically resist cops when they are trying to search because you could get hurt and charged with resisting arrest or assault. Just keep repeating the Magic Words II so that the cops and all witnesses know that this is your policy.

If the cops have a search warrant, nothing changes — it's legally safest to just say "I do not consent to this search."

Take Notes!

Whenever you interact with or observe the police, always write down what is said and who said it. Also write down the cops' names and badge numbers and the names and contact information of any witnesses. Record everything that happens. If you are expecting a lot of police contact, get in the habit of carrying a small tape recorder and a camera with you.

If you are risking arrest, have an affinity group whose members are committed to organizing jail and court support if it is needed.

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