

This is a sample conversation of a traffic stop. Students: read with a partner. Then discuss in the group.

Do you know why I pulled you over?

No, officer I don't.

You were speeding. I clocked you at 55.

Oh, I'm very sorry. What is the speed limit here?

The speed limit is 45. You were going 10 miles over.

I'm really sorry. I'll be more careful from now on.

May I see your license and proof of insurance.

Certainly. My insurance card is in my glove box and my license is in my purse in the trunk. I'll have to get out to get it.

Fine. When was the last time you received a traffic ticket.

I haven't had a ticket in a long time. About 10 years I believe.

Everything seems to be in order. I'm going to give you a warning ticket today. I want you to slow down and drive carefully.

Oh, thank you officer. I certainly will slow down.

Sign here.

Ok, thanks.

Have a nice day and let off that accelerator.

Yes officer, I'll do that.

Questions and Answers:

What if a policeman pulls me over?

1. Move the car safely to the right edge of the roadway or street as soon as possible and stop.
2. Place the gear selector in park, set the emergency brake, turn the engine off and turn on your hazard lights.
3. REMAIN IN THE VEHICLE, lower the driver's window and wait for the officer to issue further instructions. Keep your hands in view.

What can I be ticketed for?

Failure to stop at a stop sign or traffic light

Speeding (speeding in a school zone or work zone results in higher fines)

Failure to yield right of way

Failure to control speed

Drunk driving – Driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or higher (0.05% if you are under 18) is illegal, and penalties for drunk driving in Texas are severe.

Seat belts – You and your passengers can be given tickets for not wearing seat belts. Children under 4 years old or who weigh less than 40 pounds must be protected by a special **safety seat**.

Failure to provide proof of liability insurance

What if I get a ticket?

1. Sign it. A ticket has nothing to do with your guilt or innocence. When you sign, you promise to appear in court. If you do not sign the ticket, the police officer can arrest you.
2. If you do not want to appear in court, you can simply mail in the fine. If the fine is very high you can sometimes get it reduced by attending driver safety classes. In some cases, this will remove the ticket from your record. Taking driver safety courses will also lower your insurance rates. Call the government office (city or county) where the ticket was issued and ask what your options are for handling the ticket.

Idioms: Discuss the meaning and use in a sentence

New sheriff in town

This is used when a new authority figure takes charge. EX Brad better stop goofing off at work. There's a new sheriff in town now.

On the run

If someone is on the run, they are avoiding arrest and hiding from the police. EX They found the convicts at last. They'd been on the run for two weeks.

Serve time

When someone is serving time, they are in prison. EX Joe is serving time for embezzling.

Highway robbery

Something that is ridiculously expensive, especially when you have no choice but to pay, is a highway robbery. EX My rent has gone up 20%. That's highway robbery.

Clear your name

To prove your innocence. EX: The woman went to court to clear her name of the false charges.

Discussion:

Recently in Austin, there was a case where a man cleared his name. He was arrested many years ago for the murder of his wife. However, recently DNA evidence proved that his wife was killed by someone else. He was released from prison after serving for 25 years. His name has been cleared.

Now that we have DNA evidence, many people who have been imprisoned for crimes for years are being found innocent and released. We like to believe that our judicial system is fair and results in the right person going to jail. It shocks us to find that this isn't always true.

There is an organization in the U.S. called "The Innocence Project". They are dedicated to getting people released from prison who have been wrongfully convicted. They use DNA testing to prove their innocence. They have secured the release of 305 people so far.

Talk about the criminal justice system in your country. Do you think there are people in jail who have been wrongly convicted in your country? Is there a way for them to prove their innocence? Is there an appeals process in your court system? Does your country have an organization like The Innocence Project? What do you think about an organization such as this?