

What Happens When You Go To Traffic Court



The Judicial Branch of the State of Connecticut complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need a reasonable accommodation, in accordance with the ADA, contact a Judicial Branch employee or an ADA contact person listed at www.jud.ct.gov/ada/.



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You received a Complaint Ticket, which you may hear referred to as an infraction or a violation. When you decided to plead "Not Guilty," you signed the back of the ticket and sent it to the Centralized Infractions Bureau (CIB), you called CIB at (860) 263-2750 or you plead not guilty on line.

Your case has been transferred to a Superior Court location for the area where your ticket was issued. You probably have questions about what will happen when you come to court. This brochure will answer some of your questions. For more information go to the Branch website at <http://www.jud.ct.gov/faq/traffic.html>, the Clerk's Office, or Court Service Centers and Public Information Desks.

The information in this brochure is not a substitute for legal advice.

Do I have to have a Lawyer?

You do not have to have a lawyer come with you to court, and the court does not appoint a lawyer for you in infraction cases. You may bring a lawyer to court if you want.

Is there a dress code or any requirements about what I can wear to court?

The court is a formal setting so you should dress appropriately. For example, you should probably not wear t-shirts or jeans with holes in them, tank tops, halter tops, or revealing clothing.

Where can I park?

Some courthouses have parking, but many do not. You may need to park in a nearby lot or garage or find on-street metered parking. For information, please check the website: http://www.jud.ct.gov/directory/court_directions.htm or call the clerk's office.

What time should I come to the courthouse?

You will want to be at the courthouse at least 15 minutes before the time that is in the Notice you received. Courts have metal detectors at their entrances, so it may take extra time to enter the building.

What will happen when I get to the courthouse?

The courthouse doors open at 8:30 AM. Please be prepared to wait briefly in a line at the entrance. When you enter the courthouse, you will have to walk through a metal detector. The metal detector is operated by the Judicial Marshals, who provide security for the courthouse.

Any metal items can set off the metal detector. You will have to empty your pockets of all metal objects before walking through the metal detector, and anything you bring with you will be scanned. If your belt has a large metal buckle or your jacket has large metal buttons or zippers, for example, you may be asked to take it off. Things that could be used as a weapon (for example, a pocket knife) will be taken from you so please do not bring them with you. ➡

Where do I go once I get into the courthouse?

Once you have gone through the metal detectors, you should find the courtroom for your case. In some courthouses, lists of the cases scheduled for the day (dockets) are posted on the wall in the lobby or hallway. You may see several lists of cases. Cases are listed alphabetically by the person's last name. If you don't see your name on a list or if there are no lists posted in the hallway or lobby, please go to the Clerk's Office or the Public Information Desk and ask for help.

What do I do next?

You must meet with the State's Attorney (also called a prosecutor), who represents the state. Where you go to meet with the state's attorney is different from courthouse to courthouse. If you are not sure where the state's attorney is, please go the Clerk's Office, the Public Information Desk or the Court Service Center for help.

What happens after I meet with the State's Attorney?

After meeting with you, the State's Attorney may:

- Tell you that no further action will be taken on your case. This is called a Nolle.
- Offer to let you pay a smaller fine to end your case; or
- Tell you that the original fine will not be reduced and must be paid in full.

What if I do not want to pay any fine at all?

If you do not want to pay the reduced fine or the full fine, you may ask for a court trial with a Magistrate. You can't have a jury trial in an infraction case.

Will my court trial take place right away?

Your trial in front of the Magistrate will not take place on the first day you come to court. It will be scheduled for a future date. The court will send you a notice of the date and time for your trial. At that hearing, the Magistrate will listen to you and to the person who gave you the ticket. You may also bring witnesses and evidence to the court. If you decide to ask for a trial, you cannot take any of the offers made to you by the prosecutor and the Magistrate may add court costs and fees to any fine that is ordered.

If I lose my trial before the Magistrate, is there anything I can do?

You may apply for a trial by a Superior Court Judge up to 5 days after the decision is made by the Magistrate. The clerk's office can give you an application to ask for a new trial (trial de novo). The trial will be scheduled at a future date with a Superior Court Judge. It will not be a jury trial. Once you have the trial in front of the Judge, you will not be able to take the decision of the Magistrate or to any offer from the prosecutor.

If I have to pay a fine, what methods of payment does the court accept?

- Cash
- Personal check: You must have a valid photo ID and the preprinted name and address on the check must match your ID.
- Credit Card: You may pay with your Master Card or Visa.
- Money order or Certified Bank Check: You must have the money order or check made out in the *exact amount* of the fine.

Where do I pay my fine?

All fines must be paid at the Clerk's Office. You will get a receipt when you pay your fine.

What happens if I do not pay my fine or I don't come to court at all?

If you do not pay your fine or if you do not come to court, your driver's license may be suspended and you may have to pay additional costs. Courts do not suspend your license or reinstate your license. If your license is suspended, you should contact the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) at (860) 263-5720 for information.

How will this ticket (infraction) affect my license?

After a hearing (before a Magistrate or a Judge), if there is a conviction (a finding of guilty) or a bond forfeiture, points will be assessed against your license by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). You may get more information on the assessment of points on the DMV website at: <http://www.ct.gov/dmv/lib/dmv/regulations/137a.pdf>

How long will I be at court?

How long you will be at court depends on the number of cases at the court that day. You should plan on being at the court for the whole day, but court staff will try to get you out as quickly as possible. Most cases will be finished before lunch.

What are the basic rules of courtroom conduct?

Before you enter the courtroom, please:

- Turn off any cell phone, beeper, and pager you may have
- Throw away all food, drinks and chewing gum
- Take off any hat you are wearing unless you wear it for religious reasons

When you are in the courtroom, please:

- Sit quietly until it is your turn to speak
- Stand when the Magistrate enters or leaves the courtroom and when you are speaking with the Magistrate
- Refer to the Magistrate as "Magistrate" or "your honor."
- Be sure to answer all questions out loud
- Do not interrupt other people when they are speaking.