

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects “the freedom of speech” as well as “the right of the people peaceably to assemble.” So you have a **constitutional right to demonstrate**. Police in D.C. generally understand and respect that right. People demonstrate here every day, and arrests are rare, except for people who decide to risk arrest. Still, it pays to be prepared. This guide can help.

## PART 1. PLAN AHEAD

### KNOW THE TERRITORY

DC has four quadrants: NW, NE, SE, and SW. They meet at the Capitol. Most monuments and federal buildings are on and around the National Mall, which divides NW from SW. If you see an address, pay attention to the quadrant!

### GETTING A PERMIT

Getting a permit is a good idea, to alert police what you’ll be doing and reserve your location. Rules and procedures vary based on location. For details, visit: [acludc.org/permits](http://acludc.org/permits)

### PREPARE TO ENCOUNTER LAW ENFORCEMENT

- **Risking arrest?** Carry \$100 cash and 3 days’ worth of any essential medication, in its original bottle. Make emergency childcare plans if you have children. Put a password on your phone to protect against searches. Memorize (or write on your arm) numbers for your family, your lawyer, and jail support.
- **Not a U.S. citizen?** Know your immigration number (“A” number) if you have one. Visit [nipnl.org/tools.html](http://nipnl.org/tools.html) for additional guidance.
- **Undocumented, under court supervision, or have a record?** Think hard and talk to a lawyer about the risks of arrest! Consequences can be worse for you than most people.
- **A person with a disability, special medical needs, or limited English?** Carry a card or wear a bracelet to explain your situation should the need arise.
- **Gender non-conforming?** MPD respects gender designations on driver’s licenses so have an accurate license if possible.

## PART 5. USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS & ADDRESSES: (202)...

MPD Information	300 Indiana Ave NW	727-9099
Central Cell Block	300 Indiana Ave NW	727-4222
MPD 1st District	101 M St SW	698-0555
Park Police D-1	960 Ohio Dr SW	426-6710
Park Police D-5	1901 Anacostia Dr SE	610-8703
Capitol Police	119 D St NE	224-5151

For each precinct’s number, visit: [acludc.org/precincts](http://acludc.org/precincts)

Need a hospital? For a map with contact information, visit: [acludc.org/hospitals](http://acludc.org/hospitals)

### GETTING MORE INFORMATION

Looking for specific information about a case? To learn...

- Time/room number of someone’s arraignment: call Pretrial Services at (202) 585-7030 ext. 2.
- If someone has been arrested by MPD: (202) 727-4383 (*Federal authorities won’t tell you whether someone has been arrested.*)



## DEMONSTRATIONS IN D.C. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Black Lives Matter DC

BYP100 DC

DC-NLG

#KeepDC4Me

Stop Police Terror Project DC

Law4BlackLives-DC

[www.law4blacklivesdc.com](http://www.law4blacklivesdc.com)

ACLU of the  
District of Columbia

[www.acludc.org](http://www.acludc.org)



## PART 2. KNOW THE COPS

D.C. has many police agencies. Which one you'll see depends on where you are. Here are arm patches for the major ones so you can recognize them.

### LOCAL

Metro stations and D.C. streets and sidewalks are under local jurisdiction, policed mainly by:

D.C. Metropolitan  
Police Department (MPD)



Metro Transit Police



### FEDERAL

All green space downtown (even small parks), the National Mall, federal buildings/monuments (and nearby sidewalks), and Rock Creek Park are federal land, policed mainly by:

Park Police



Federal Protective Service



Capitol Police

(near U.S. Capitol/Union Station)



Secret Service

(uniformed)



## PART 3. LAW ENFORCEMENT: DOS & DON'TS

### When interacting with police

- **Do** keep your hands in plain view.
- **Do** feel free to videotape officers; it's legal as long as you're not so close to them as to be interfering.
- **Do** ask: **"Am I free to leave?"** If the officer says yes, calmly and silently walk away.
- **Do** ask (if not free to leave): **"Am I under arrest?"** If the officer says yes, ask: **"For what crime?"**
- **Don't** make sudden movements or point at the officer.
- **Don't** touch the officers or their equipment.
- **Don't** yell or otherwise escalate the situation.

### When being questioned

- **Do** say, **"I wish to remain silent"**—and repeat if questioning continues.
- **Do** try to memorize the officer's badge number.
- **Don't** say anything other than your name and address.
- **Don't** reveal information just because the police have made a promise to you; they can lie to you.
- **Don't** lie to the police or provide fake documents.
- **Don't** discuss your immigration status, but **do** show your immigration papers if asked **by an immigration agent**.

### When being searched

- **Do** say, **"I do not consent to this search"** if the police try or ask to search you or your car or belongings.
- **Don't** physically resist a search or struggle; if you do, you can be charged with assault.

### When being arrested

- **Do** say: **"I wish to remain silent. I want a lawyer."**
- **Do** give your name and address if asked.
- **Do** know that police can lie to you (if, for instance, they promise you'll get out faster if you answer questions).
- **Don't** resist, even if you believe the arrest is unfair.
- **Don't** give explanations or excuses.

### If you feel your rights have been violated

Police misconduct can't be challenged on the street. **Try to record the incident on your phone or write down everything you can:** badge and patrol car numbers, which agency the officers were from, and contact information for witnesses. Take photos of any injuries (but seek medical attention first!). Keep all official paperwork and receipts for medical treatment. Then file a **written** complaint with the agency's internal affairs division or civilian complaint board. Contact an attorney for additional help.

## PART 4. IF YOU ARE ARRESTED

- **Booking** may happen at the local precinct, Park Police headquarters, or the Capitol. You will be either:
  1. cited (given a court date) and released; or
  2. allowed to "post and forfeit" (pay to have case dropped; arrest will remain on record but no conviction) – amount depends on charge but usually \$25-100 for demonstration-related offenses; or
  3. detained at Central Cell Block, 300 Indiana Ave NW, until brought to court.
- **Signing papers.** Read all papers fully. Ask for an interpreter if you need one. Don't write or sign a confession or waiver of rights. If you are given a "waiver" card, check the box that you will not answer questions without a lawyer.
- **Phone calls.** You'll get a phone call only if held overnight.
- **Charging.** Prosecutors decide, during business hours, either to charge you or "no-paper" the case (let you go).
- **Pretrial services interview.** If detained and set for arraignment, D.C. Pretrial Services Agency or Court Social Services will interview you. The interview is voluntary but not confidential. It's OK to participate, but don't talk about the incident and arrest, or any unlawful activity. The judge uses the interview to decide how soon you'll be released.
- **Arraignment** is when you learn the charges against you, and whether you'll be released pending your next court date. Arraignment is not trial. Details in the next section.

## ARRAIGNMENT

- A lawyer will be there to help you. You will be charged with a crime, will enter a plea, and may (depending on your income) be given a lawyer to help going forward.
- If you're not a citizen, ask your lawyer about the effect of a conviction on your immigration status.
- The judge decides whether to release you, and you will have a date set for your next hearing.
- The government may seek an order that you stay away from where you were arrested. If you want to return there to protest or for another reason, tell your lawyer why and ask your lawyer to object.
- You'll likely be arraigned the day after arrest (same day if arrested early). Saturday arrestees must wait until Monday.
- Arraignment occurs at Superior Court, 500 Indiana Ave NW—at 9:30 or 10am for citations, at 11am for juveniles; at 1pm if you have been detained. No arraignments on Sundays.