

Police powers to stop and search: your rights

The police have powers to stop and question you at any time - they can search you depending on the situation.

A police community support officer (PCSO) must be in uniform when they stop and question you. A police officer doesn't always have to be in uniform but if they're not wearing uniform they must show you their warrant card.

Stop and question: police powers

A police officer has powers to stop you at any time and ask you:

- what you're doing
- why you're in an area and/or where you're going

However, you don't have to answer any questions the police officer asks you.

Stop and search: police powers

A police officer has powers to stop and search you if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect you're carrying:

- illegal drugs
- a weapon
- stolen property
- something which could be used to commit a crime, eg a crowbar

You can only be stopped and searched without reasonable grounds if it has been approved by a senior police officer. This can happen if it is suspected that:

- serious violence could take place
- you're carrying a weapon or have used one
- you're in a specific location or area

Before you're searched

Before you're searched the police officer must tell you:

- their name and police station
- what they expect to find, eg drugs
- the reason they want to search you, eg it looks like you're hiding something
- why they are legally allowed to search you
- that you can have a record of the search and if this isn't possible at the time, how you can get a copy

Removing clothing: police powers

A police officer can ask you to take off your coat, jacket or gloves.

The police might ask you to take off other clothes and anything you're wearing for religious reasons - eg a veil or turban. If they do, they must take you somewhere out of public view.

If the officer wants to remove more than a jacket and gloves they must be the same sex as you.

<https://www.gov.uk/police-powers-to-stop-and-search-your-rights>