

CHAPTER 9:

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE COPS COME KNOCKIN'

Section A: First Contact With The Cops

If the cops come knockin', you got two choices. You can either ignore them or you can answer the door. Of course, if they have an arrest warrant and reasonably think you're hiding inside, they might end up busting through the door anyway. If you decide to answer the door and the cops say they have an arrest warrant, you should go outside to talk to them. Make sure to shut the door behind you when you do. On the other hand, if they don't say they have an arrest warrant, don't step outside. Talk to them from inside the house, preferably with the door slightly open. We'll explain more in Chapter 12 about what to do if the cops come knockin' with an arrest warrant. For now, though, we're just concentrating on what to do when the cops come with a search warrant.

Section B: What To Do If The Police Have A Search Warrant

If the police ask to come in, calmly ask them from behind your closed door if they have a search warrant. If they say, "yes," open the door and read it to make sure that it's legit. Make sure that the warrant has the correct address, that the date on the warrant is fairly recent (usually no more than a couple of weeks) and that it has a judge's signature. When we say that the warrant has to have the correct address we mean that it should have your exact address. If you live in an apartment or condo, it should have your apartment number and not just the building number. If the warrant has the wrong address, is too old, or isn't signed by a judge, it's not legit. An illegit warrant means the cops aren't allowed to come in. But, you have to tell them that you don't consent to them searching your home or your stuff because the warrant is not right. How do you do that? Just say, "Officer, the address on this warrant is wrong (or the date is more than a few weeks old, or this warrant wasn't signed by a judge) so I do not consent to you searching my home or my things."



When The Cops Come Knockin'

Just in case you're wondering if you should try to physically stop the cops from coming in, the answer should be obvious. Heck no! One of three things will probably happen. The cops will either A) decide not to go in, B) beat your brains out, arrest you and go in anyway or C) shoot and kill you. If you're a male, and especially if you're a minority, scenario B and C are more likely to happen than if you're white or female. Be smart and just let them do their thing. When it's time, make sure you tell your attorney that the cops didn't listen to you when you told them that you weren't giving them permission to search.

When the cops search your stuff, don't expect them to handle your things with love. They may just trash your crib. And, if they do, they ain't gonna clean up the mess either. If this happens, you need to take pictures of your place after the cops have trashed it and give those pictures to your attorney, they might be helpful down the line in your case.

TO RECAP

- **Always read any search warrant that a cop shows you very closely.**
- **If a warrant isn't legit, you can keep the cops from searching your stuff.**

Section C: Can We Have Permission, Pretty Please?

The easiest way for a cop to get in and search your house, your stuff or even you without getting a warrant is by getting your permission. The police can search your house and/or your personal things without a warrant if you tell them it's cool. Cops sometimes try to trick people into giving permission to search. For instance, a cop might walk up to you on the street real friendly asking to check out your bag. He'll say something like, "Hey mind if I take a look in your duffle bag?" Or he may reach for your bag and say, "You don't mind do you?" Without thinking you say, "No, I don't mind." Next thing you know, he's going through your bag.