

# Stop and Search- guidance for children



## What is stop and search?



Stop and search is the name for the powers the police have to detain a person and search them without the person being under arrest.

The main goal of stop and search is to allow police officers to deal with things they think are suspicious without needing to arrest people.

When a police officer uses stop and search on someone, the person is not allowed to leave until the search has finished.

The officer will search them by patting down the person or looking in places like pockets or bags. They might also search their vehicle if they were stopped in one.

If they don't find anything, the person can leave.

If they do find something that the person isn't supposed to have or is illegal, the person might be arrested.

## What things can police officers look for in a stop and search?



Police officers can use their stop and search powers to search for things that are against the law to have, such as:

- Drugs (such as cannabis, cocaine or Spice)
- Items people might use to steal or damage things (e.g. spray paint, tools to take tags off clothes from shops)
- Weapons like knives or machetes
- Stolen items
- Fireworks

## Can police officers stop and search anyone?

Police officers are allowed to use their stop and search powers on anyone, but they must be able to explain to a person why they are searching them.

If a police officer stops someone, they must tell the person why they are stopping them and not anyone else who is walking past or across the street, for example.

The officer must tell the person why they think they might find the thing they are looking for when they search them.

An example of this might be-



*A man has been looking in car windows and trying to open car doors. Someone has called the police to report him as they think he might be trying to break into cars. The person described the man as being 40 years old, with brown hair, glasses and wearing a blue coat.*

*The police officer drives to the place where the man was last seen and sees a man who looks like the description that the person who called police gave.*

*The officer stops the man for a stop search. They tell the man that they think he looks like the person that was described looking into cars and that they think he might have something stolen from a car or something to be used to break into a car.*

## What should a police officer tell someone they are stopping and searching?



There are lots of things that a police officer must tell someone **before** they search them.

Police officers call this **GOWISELY** and the letters stand for what a person must be told.

**G** - grounds - this is why the officer is stopping the person (think about the example with the man seen looking in car windows)

**O** - object - this is what the officer is looking for

**W** - warrant card - if the police officer is not in uniform like in the picture, they must show you their warrant card, which is their police ID card

**I** - identity- the officer must tell you their name and the number on their shoulder, which helps identify them

**S**- station- this is the police station they work in

**E**- entitlement- the officer must offer the person a receipt. Its a small bit of paper that tells the person their rights in the stop and search. They don't have to take it but it does mean that person has a record of what happened if they want it

**L**- legal power- this is the bit of the law that lets the officer stop and search, some common examples are the Misuse of Drugs Act or the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (also known as PACE!)

**Y**- this stands for "you are detained". The officer might say these exact words or something a bit like them. What it means is that the person knows they're not allowed to go anywhere until the search is finished

## What else should the police officer do if they stop and search someone?



**Turn on their camera**- all police officers should be wearing a video camera- some will have it on their body armour and others might have it on a holster they wear over their shoulders.

Whenever they do a stop search, they must turn it on to record.

**Ask the person how they define their ethnicity**- this might seem like a weird question and the officers should have a list the person can pick from to make it easier. The reason we ask is this is to help us understand who we are using our powers on, as we haven't always done this very fairly.

**Think about whether the person is safe, especially if they are under 18** - they should think about whether the person they have stopped is safe. Some people might be carrying things they shouldn't be because someone they're scared of has asked them to. Some people might be at risk from the situation they're in and the stop might be a chance for the police to take positive action to help someone.



**If they decide to use handcuffs, explain why they are using them**- if an officer decides to handcuff someone when they stop and search them, they must have a reason why. They should explain to the person why they are using handcuffs. They should not keep them on any longer than they need to be.

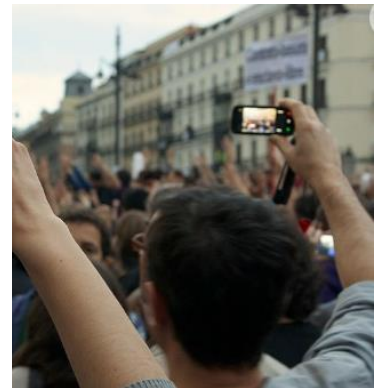
## What are people allowed to do during a stop and search?

**Ask questions**- if they are not sure about why they have been stopped or what is happening, they are allowed to ask questions

**Film**- a person can film a stop and search, but it must not get in the way of the officer doing the search, which includes putting the camera too close to the officer or directly in their face, especially if the torch or flash is on

**Not give their name and address**- a person does not have to give their name and address in a stop and search. The officer will probably ask, which they are allowed to do, but the person doesn't have to tell them if they don't want to.

Only if something is found during the search, the person will have to give their name and address to the officer.



# What can a person be asked to take off and where should the search take place?

If the search happens in the street or where other people can see it, then the police officer can only ask the person to remove **JOG**.

This stands for:

- Jacket
- Outer coat
- Gloves

If the officer wants to search under any clothes or hats, or in shoes, for example- they must take the person to a place where no one else can see the search happening.

A person does not have to remove any headwear in public, this includes durags, headscarves, turbans or hijabs.

Most searches will be done at the place where the officer stops the person.

The only time a person will be taken to somewhere more private, such as a police station, will be if the officer thinks the item they're looking for is hidden underneath someone's clothes.