



# My license might be suspended. What can I do?

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❖ You can find all the packets and fact sheets we link to here at [WashingtonLawHelp.org](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org).

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## Should I read this?

Many types of traffic tickets and situations can affect your Washington state driver's license. **This fact sheet explains some common situations that can cause license suspension and introduces the basics about traffic ticket suspensions.**

**Your license could be suspended for other reasons that don't have to do with a traffic ticket.** You can read more about the different reasons for license suspension in this fact sheet.

**If your driver's license has not been suspended yet but you have a non-criminal traffic infraction (or ticket), you might have options:**

Depending on the type of ticket, you may be able to:

- Contest the ticket and ask for a hearing
- Ask for a payment plan to pay the fine

You should follow the instructions on the notice to respond to the infraction.

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❖ **Do not ignore your traffic ticket!** Your license can be suspended for failing to respond to a summons or appear at a court hearing for a non-criminal moving violation like speeding.

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## What if I cannot afford to pay my fines?

**As of 2023, your driver's license can't be suspended for failing to pay a non-criminal traffic ticket. But, your license can still be suspended for:**

- Failing to respond to a summons related to a traffic ticket
- Failing to appear at a court hearing for a moving violation
- Failing to appear at a court hearing for a criminal traffic violation

**This means you cannot ignore a ticket!** Ignoring a ticket can result in suspension.

Read this fact sheet to learn what to do to avoid suspension and how to ask for help with your fines:

- [I just got a traffic ticket. What can I do to avoid license suspension?](#)

## Do you think your license is suspended because of traffic tickets?

If you think your license is suspended due to an unpaid ticket, it is important to know what type of ticket you got. Different rules will apply to your situation depending on which type of ticket you got. Your ticket could have been a criminal traffic ticket or a non-criminal traffic ticket.

**There are 2 main types of traffic tickets. You need to know which one yours is.**

- 1. Non-Criminal traffic tickets** (These are also called "traffic infractions" or "civil" traffic violations)
  - **Non-criminal traffic tickets** are tickets for things like: speeding, faulty equipment, not having insurance and parking tickets.
  - If you have unpaid fines related to a non-criminal traffic ticket, you can ask for a payment plan or community service to pay the fine.
  - You also might be able to get your license back.
  - You can learn more about non-criminal traffic tickets in this form packet:
    - [Got unpaid non-criminal traffic fines? You may be able to get your](#)

[license back.](#)

## 2. Criminal traffic tickets (or criminal traffic convictions):

- Criminal traffic tickets are traffic violations that are handled in criminal court. These are often also called criminal traffic “convictions”.
- **Some types of criminal traffic violations are:** driving while under the influence, hit and run, driving with a suspended license and reckless driving.

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❖ You have a right to an attorney when you appear in court to respond to a criminal traffic offense.

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- **If you have unpaid fines related to a criminal traffic ticket, you can ask for a hearing to reduce your legal financial obligations related to the ticket.**
- You may also be able to get your license back. You can learn more about how to do that in this fact sheet:
  - [Got unpaid criminal traffic fines? You may be able to get your license back.](#)

## How do I know if my ticket was criminal or non-criminal?

When you get a traffic ticket or notice of infraction, you can sometimes find the type of ticket listed on the notice itself. Usually a **non-criminal infraction** notice will have a fine amount listed on the ticket itself. If there is not a fine amount listed and the notice says that a court appearance is required, **then it is a criminal traffic ticket.**

## Before driving, check the status of your license.

If you are not sure about the status of your license, do not drive. Check the status of your license online by running a search at the [Department of Licensing](#) (DOL) or call 360-902-3900.

If you call, be patient. Listen to the pre-recorded message in its entirety and follow instructions. You will get through to a person eventually. For either option, you will

need your Washington driver's license number and your date of birth.

This information is free to access. You won't need account or login information.

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- ❖ Update your address with DOL to make sure DOL always has the address where you get your mail. You don't want to miss important information about the status of your license.
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## My license is suspended. What should I do first to try to get it reinstated?

First, try to find out why your license is suspended. Register for a free and secure account with the DOL [License eXpress](#) at [secure.dol.wa.gov/home](https://secure.dol.wa.gov/home). You will need an email address to activate your account.

Don't have an email address? Call DOL's automated phone line at 360-902-3900.

Once you know why it was suspended, follow the specific steps for your type of situation.

## The state suspends a license for a variety of reasons. Each reason has different steps to reinstatement.

[WashingtonLawHelp.org](#) provides free publications and self-help materials about some common reasons a driver's license may be suspended or revoked.

If you are trying to **avoid suspension** for unpaid non-criminal traffic fines, read this fact sheet:

- [I just got a traffic ticket? What can I do to avoid license suspension?](#)

Some common suspension reasons include:

- Unpaid **criminal** traffic tickets or convictions:
  - [Got unpaid criminal traffic fines? You may be able to get your license back.](#)
- Unpaid **non-criminal** traffic tickets or infractions:
  - [Got unpaid non-criminal traffic fines? You may be able to get your license back](#)

- Behind on child support:
  - [Child Support and License Suspension](#)
- Car accident and uninsured driver:
  - [What happens if there is an accident and I am uninsured?](#)
- Unpaid criminal fines:
  - [How to ask a court to cancel your non-restitution interest and/or reduce your LFOs](#)
  - You can also learn more about asking a court to reduce your legal financial obligations at the courts.wa.gov webpage about [General Rule 39](#) (GR 39).

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❖ **Out of state suspension:** If your driver's license from another state is suspended, Washington also suspends your license. *This is true even if Washington DOL has issued you a license that looks valid.* You must contact that state's driver license agency to find out how to fix your suspension.

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## My license is suspended, but I need to drive. What can I do?

You can apply to DOL for an [Occupational/Restricted License](#) or an [Interlock Driver License](#), at [dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/restricted.html](http://dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/restricted.html), depending on the reason for your license suspension. There are eligibility requirements. Financial support is available for low-income individuals.

## Can I get help paying for the costs of getting my license reinstated?

Financial resources may be available through community programs such as:

- Department of Social and Health Services TANF/BFT programs
- Your local social service agency
- Supportive services programs available through Wellness Clinics
- Vocational rehabilitation programs for people living with disabilities

- Tribal Employment Rights Offices (TERO) or Tribal Social Service Programs
- Veterans' programs
- [Treehouse](#) for youth in foster care

## Get Legal Help

- **Apply online:** [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://nwjustice.org/apply-online)
- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 211 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am and 12:15 pm or apply online at [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://nwjustice.org/apply-online).
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111

**Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

Interpreters provided.

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