

What to Do When You're Pulled Over While Driving

Passenger Version



Created in collaboration with

**Special Needs Support Center
Police Officers of the Upper Valley
Dartmouth Senior Design Challenge**

Preface

What is a traffic stop?

Traffic stops, which are also commonly referred to as being “pulled over,” are a temporary detention of the driver of a vehicle by the police to investigate a potential crime or minor law violation.

What is the purpose of this social story?

The purpose of this story is to walk you through the experience of being pulled over as a passenger. The prospect of being pulled over can be stressful, so we want to help you feel more confident to safely interact with police officers by preparing you for what to expect and what to do if the situation ever arises.

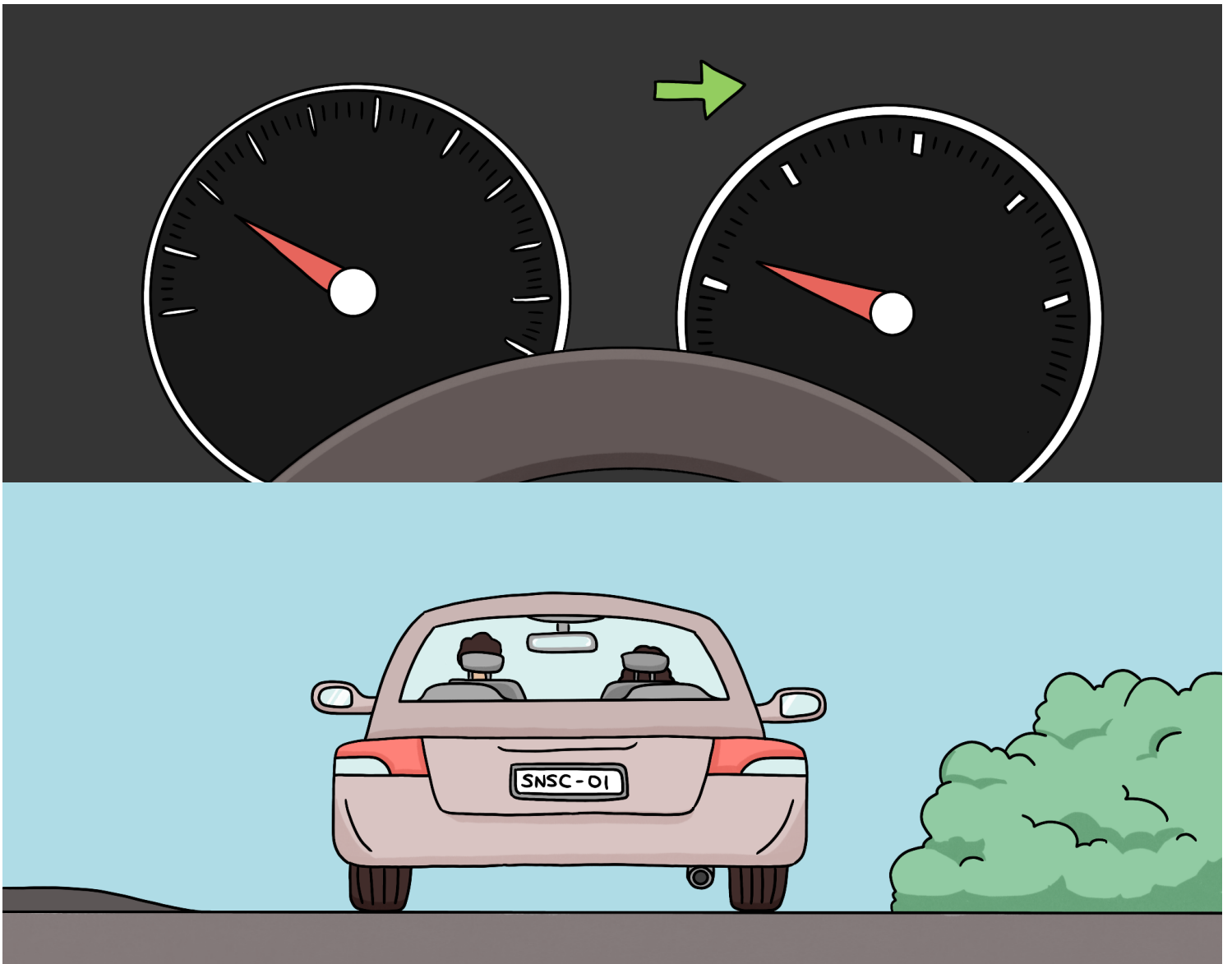
Disclaimer:

The scenario in this social story is a general outline of what to expect in a traffic stop, drawn from verified online sources and endorsed by local NH/VT police officers.

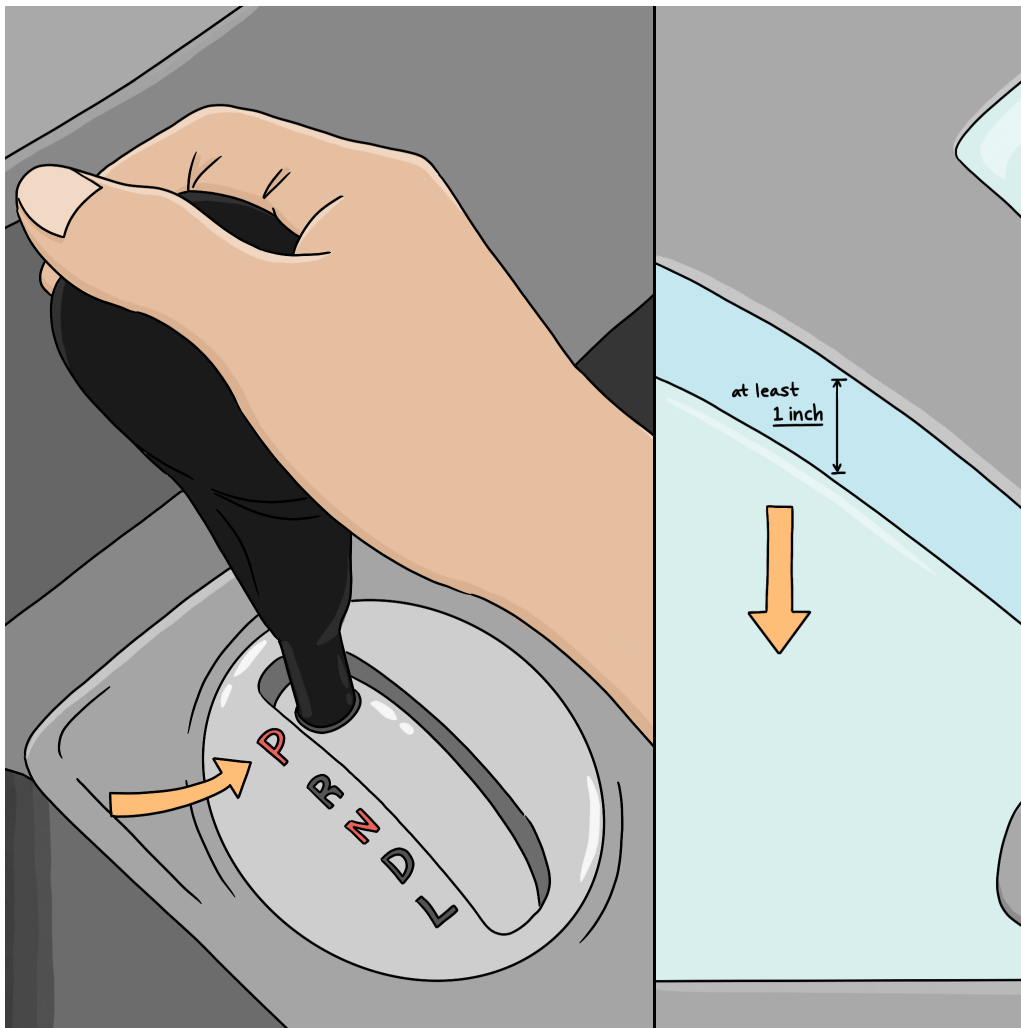
However, each traffic stop situation is different and may be handled differently depending on the police officer.



Tara is sitting in the passenger seat with her brother who is driving. They notice that a police car is following them with its blue lights flashing.



Tara's brother uses his right turn signal to show the police officer that he understands and is trying to pull over to the right side of the road safely.



Tara's brother then comes to a complete stop in a safe area. Tara is calm and quiet as her brother parks the car.

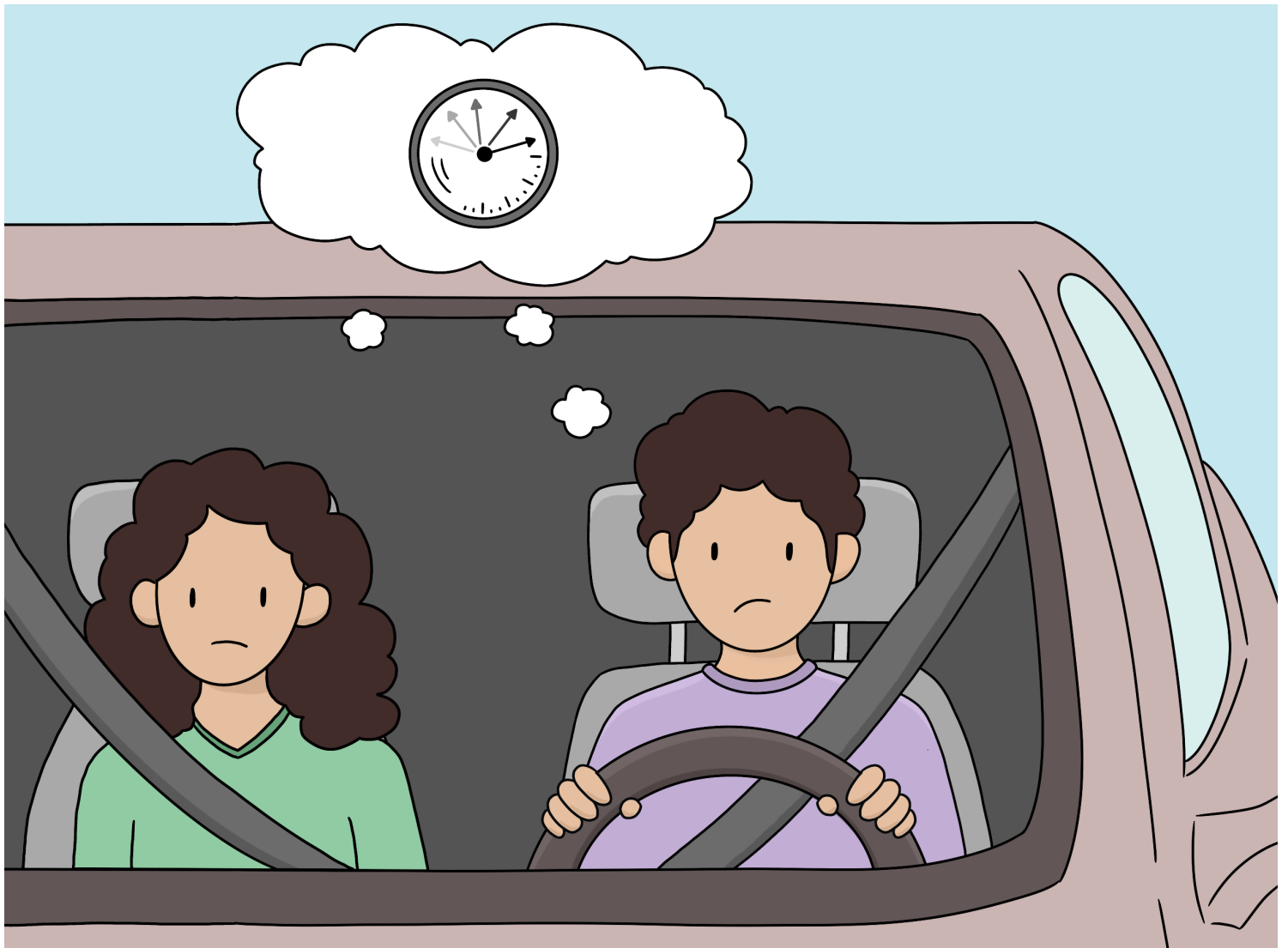
He rolls his window down enough so that he can communicate with the officer and pass documents back and forth.

He then turns off the car.



Tara keeps her hands wherever is comfortable and in view of the officer — either quietly on her lap or resting on the dashboard.

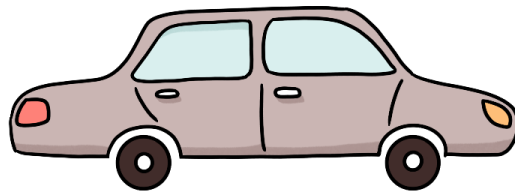
This is to signal to the officer that she doesn't intend to be a threat and wants to cooperate.



Tara and her brother both stay inside of the car. Tara knows she should stay inside of the car — unless the police officer instructs her otherwise — both for her own safety and the safety of the officer.

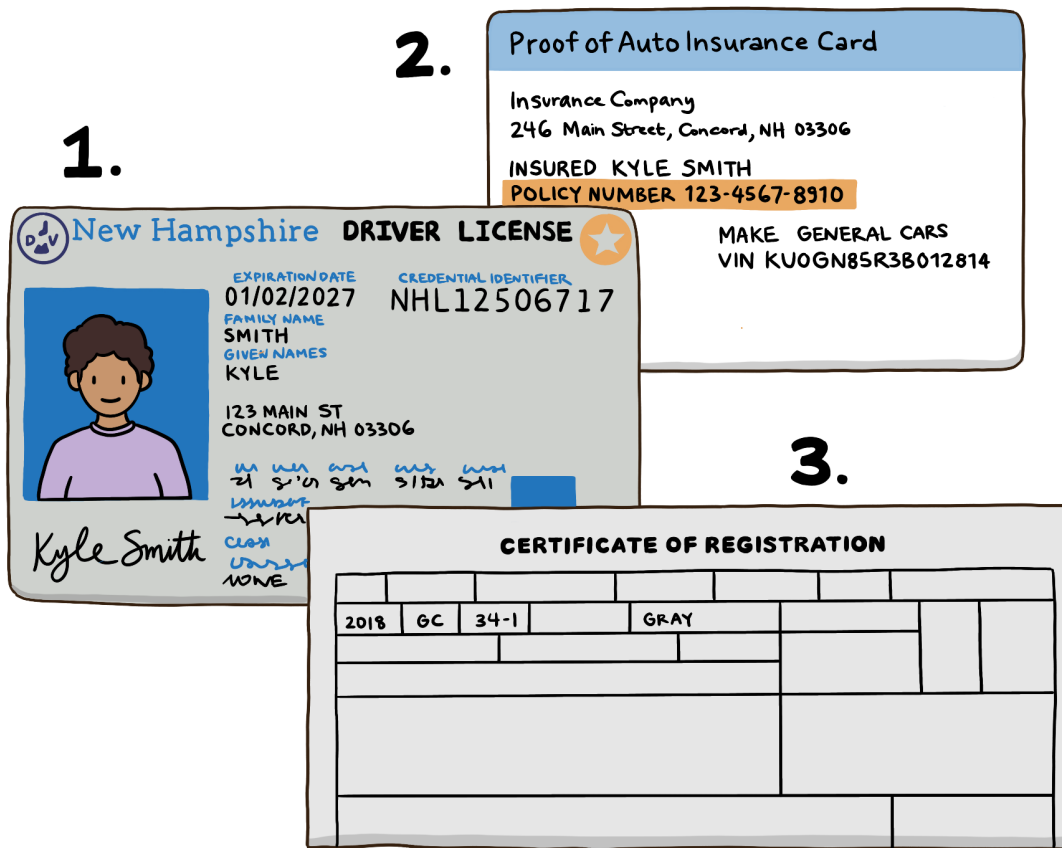
Sometimes the officer can take a while to approach the car, so Tara and her brother wait patiently.

**PLEASE
STAY IN
YOUR CAR**



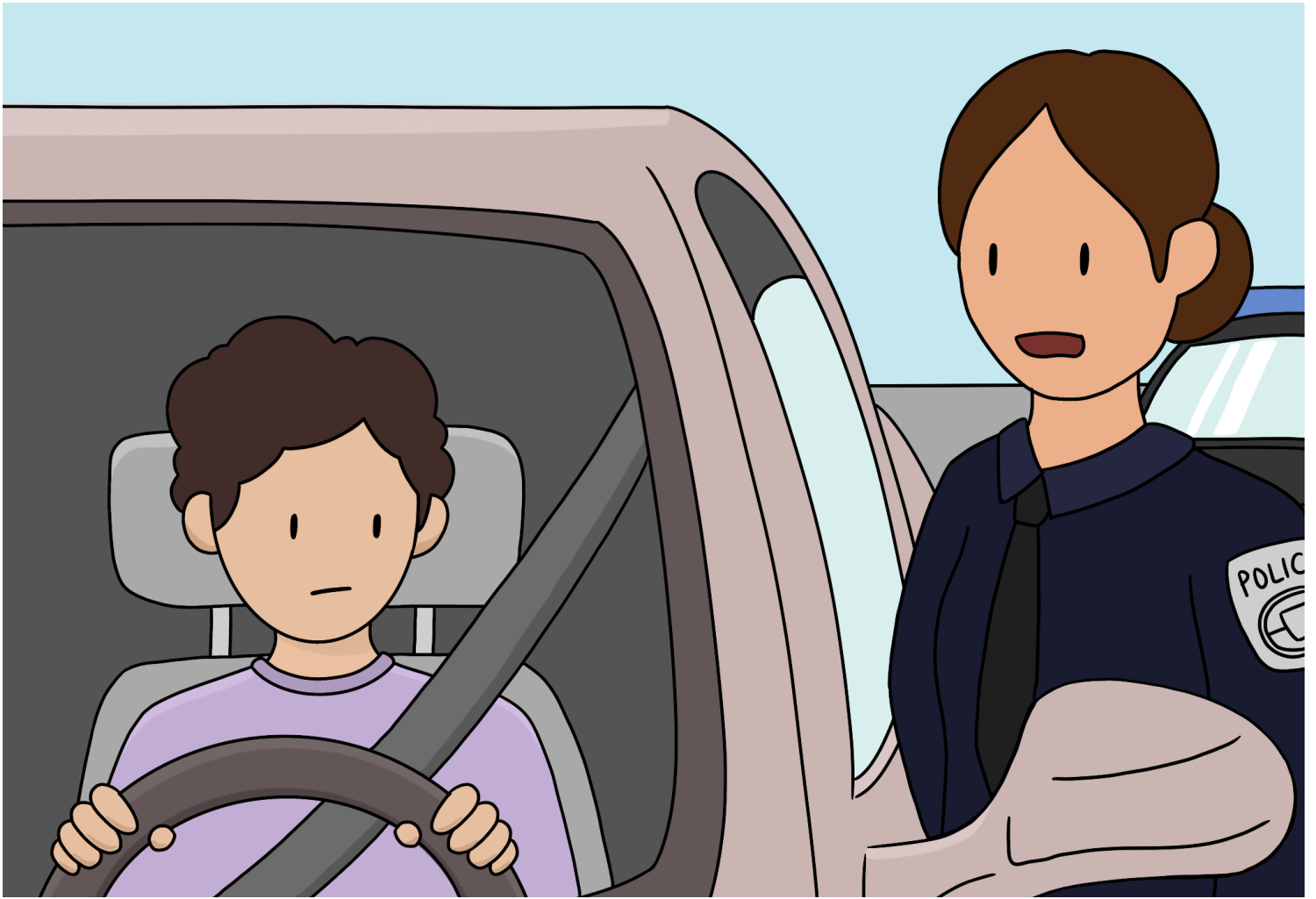
While she's waiting, Tara thinks about getting out of the car to approach the officer but she remembers learning that this may signal a threat to the officer's safety.

Tara and her brother wait for the officer to come to them and provide further directions.



The police officer asks Tara’s brother for his driver’s license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration. He hands them to the officer through the window.

Although it is not required, Tara feels comfortable sharing her disability because it will help the police officer be more understanding. She explains to the officer that she is on the autism spectrum.



While the police officer is talking to her brother, Tara remains calm and quiet and doesn't interrupt.

She and her brother stay put until the officer tells them they can leave.



The police officer informs Tara's brother that she pulled him over because he was driving over the speed limit.

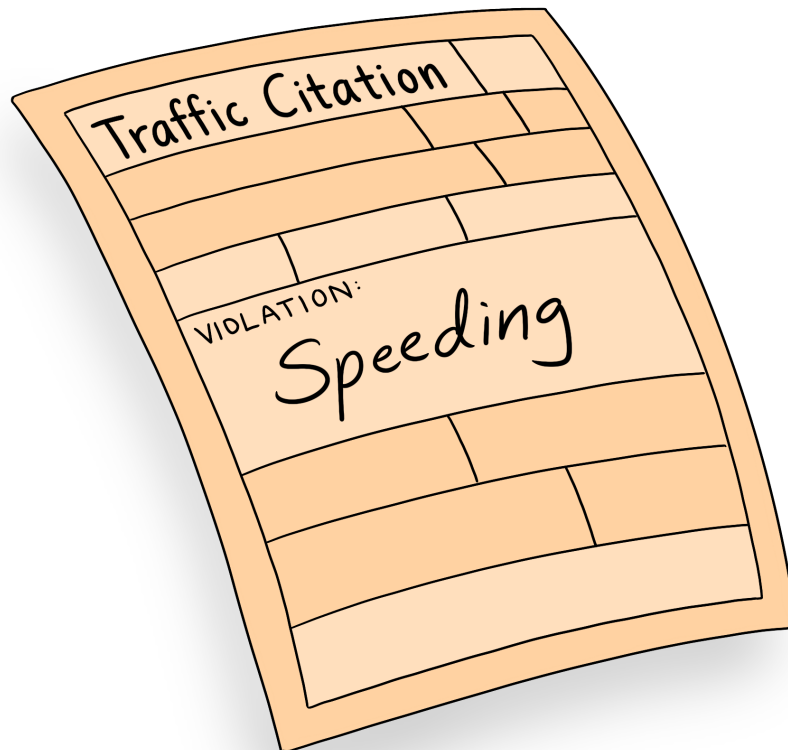
Tara feels a little scared and nervous, which is very common when people are pulled over. but she understands that the officer is doing her job.

Potential Outcomes

There are many different reasons that police will pull over drivers. In any interaction, it is important to remain calm and cooperative.

There are a number of potential outcomes from being pulled over. You could be issued a warning, a ticket, or the stop could lead to an arrest; which could result in a suspension of your license, depending on the violation you were arrested and convicted of.

SPEEDING



If you are pulled over for driving above the speed limit, the officer may issue you a speeding ticket. This typically is given to you while you are pulled over, but it may also be sent via mail. There is usually a fine and you can decide whether to pay the fine or go to the court and contest the ticket.

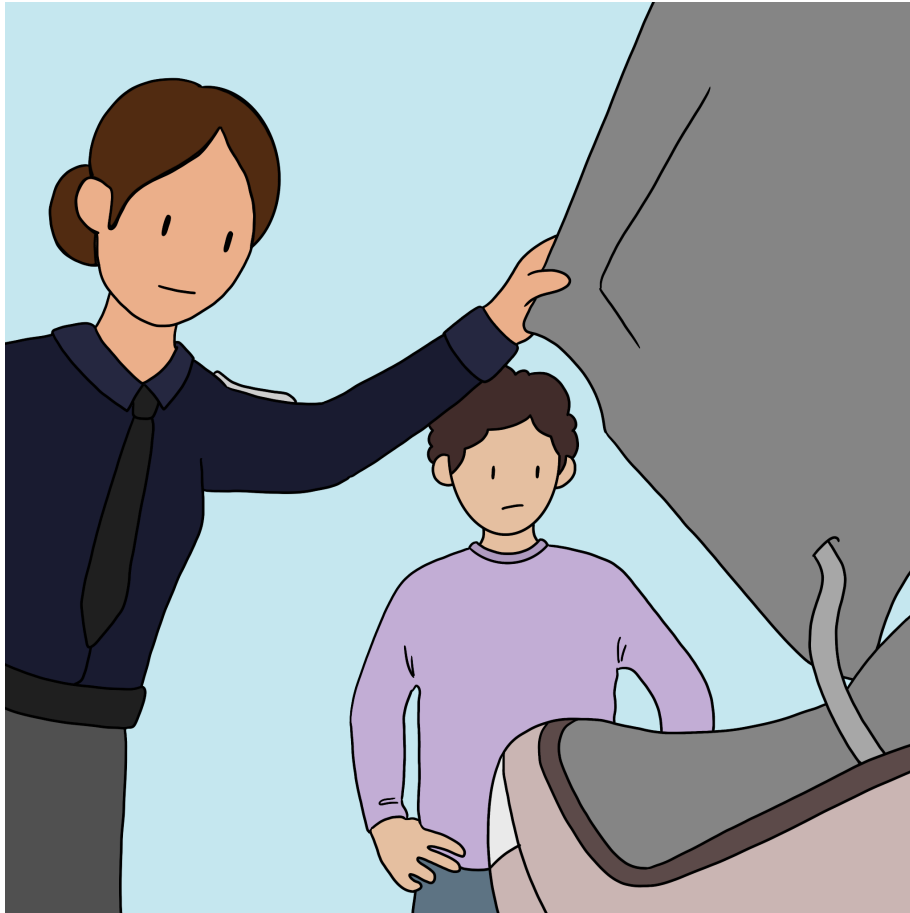
BREATHALYZER TESTS



One reason you may be pulled over is if the officer suspects you are driving under the influence. If this happens, you may be asked to step out of the car and perform a series of standardized field sobriety tests that consists of tasks that are designed to assess your balance, coordination, and multitasking ability.

If they have reason to suspect you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you may be arrested and later asked to take a breathalyzer or blood test. Depending on the results of these tests, your license could be suspended, but this varies greatly on a case by case basis.

VEHICLE SEARCH



While this doesn't happen often, a police officer may have reason to believe that you are hiding contraband inside of your car. If this happens, they may ask for your consent to search your car.

As the driver of the car, it is your right to refuse this, but if the officer can demonstrate probable cause in a search warrant to a judge, they may be given the legal authority to search your vehicle.

Dedicated to all the individuals, family members, and first responders that shared their experiences for this project - we couldn't have done it without you!

*From the Senior Design Challenge Team
Arielle, Ardelle, Cecily, and Wylie*



Illustrations by Ardelle Ning