

Tickets and a towed car

Moderate · 30 min · The fine, or the tow and storage fees

A ticket has a deadline, and ignoring it adds fees and can lead to more trouble. Pay it, fix it, or ask for a trial, and ask about traffic school or a payment plan. Towed? Call the number on the tow-away sign, bring ID and proof you own the car, and go fast, because storage fees add up.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ The ticket or tow notice
- ☐ A card or cash for fees
- ☐ Your license, registration and proof of insurance
- ☐ Photos of where you parked, if you think the tow was wrong

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Read the ticket.** It says what law the officer says you broke, which court has your case, and what to do by when.
- 2 **Watch the mail.** In California, the court sends a reminder (courtesy) notice with how much you owe, your due date and whether you can do traffic school. It can take 30 days or more; if it doesn't come, call the court.
- 3 **Pick an option: pay, fix it (for a fix-it ticket, show proof you fixed the problem and pay a small fee), or ask for a trial if you disagree.** Paying means you agree you did it.
- 4 **Ask about traffic school.** In California, if you're eligible and finish on time, the point is hidden from insurance companies, so it usually won't raise your rates.
- 5 **Can't afford it?** Ask the court. It may give you more time, lower the amount, set up a payment plan or let you do community service.
- 6 **Car towed from a parking lot?** Call the phone number on the no-parking or tow-away sign to find it.
- 7 **Go get it with ID, proof you own or are allowed to use the car, and money for the towing and storage fees.** Storage fees keep adding up, so go as soon as you can.
- 8 **Think the tow was wrong?** Photograph the signs and where you parked. In Texas, you can ask for a tow hearing at a Justice of the Peace court within 14 days of the tow.

Watch out Courts don't text for money. The California courts say they will never text, call or email you to ask for payment, and fake ticket texts are a scam. Look up the court yourself. In California, ignoring a ticket can add up to \$100 in late fees and a "failure to appear" charge. Rules vary by state; the examples here are from California and Texas.

DAD NOTE *Open the envelope. Tickets and tows both get more expensive every day you avoid them.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/car-ownership/tickets-and-a-towed-car/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: Judicial Branch of California; Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.