

Using Your Visor Cards

If you are ever stopped by the police, follow these steps in this order.

1. Pull over and stop safely. (If it is dark and you are able to, stop under a street lamp, or pull into a lighted parking area. This will make it easier for you to speechread.)
2. Immediately flip your sun visor down, unhook the end by the rearview mirror, and swing it over so your Visor Card is clearly visible in the driver's side window. If you have two visor cards and you think a police officer will come to the passenger side, deploy that visor too. Even better, deploy both visor cards every time you are stopped. That way, you have your bases covered, no matter what happens.
3. Open your driver's side window all the way. (Police officers get very nervous with today's dark windows!) Also open the passenger's-side window if you flipped that visor down as well.
4. If it is dark, turn on your dome light.
5. Place both of your hands on the steering wheel well before any police officer approaches your vehicle. Police officers want to see both your hands at all times. The safest place is to put them on the wheel at the standard driving positions of 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock. Keep your hands on the wheel until after you establish effective communication with the police officer. Have the officer remove your Visor Card and read the instructions on the back so he knows how to effectively communicate with you.

That's all there is to it! You may never have to use your visor cards, but if you ever do get pulled over, you are prepared. You can "hang loose" and let your Visor Cards do the work of bridging the initial communications gap with the police.

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"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life [which also includes perfect hearing] through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

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Visor Cards Bridging the Communications Gap When Stopped by the Police

Question: I am hard of hearing. If I am stopped by the police at night, what is the best way for me to let the police know that I can't hear their orders. I don't want to be manhandled or shot for deliberately disobeying orders I cannot hear.—S. D.

Answer: Good question. Let me answer by playing this same scenario twice, but with two very different outcomes. First, picture this one.

Late one stormy night you are driving home alone. Suddenly red and blue flashing lights punctuate the darkness behind you. You don't know whether you are being pulled over for speeding, for having a broken tail light, or because you are driving a car that looks suspiciously like the get-a-way vehicle seen fleeing from the scene of a nearby convenience store robbery.

You immediately pull over to the side of the road and stop. You can't see a thing as you are blinded by the headlights behind you. You don't hear the police officers ordering you to get out of your car and walk backwards towards them. Because you do not follow their directions, the police officers treat you as a threat to them, and in your case, storm your car,

drag you from your vehicle, throw you to the ground and handcuff you.

This never should have happened—but did—because the police officers thought you were deliberately disobeying them, and therefore must be hiding something. It never crosses their minds that you neither heard nor understood them because you have a hearing loss.

Does this happen in real life. You bet. For example, Terrence Cantrell, who is deaf, said police once stopped him because his car was the same model as the vehicle of a theft suspect. Officers pointed their guns at him as he tried to tell them he was deaf. "Without the ability to communicate, I was frozen," he related.

(Continued from front cover)

Here is another man's experience. He relates: "I got pulled over and my deaf ears thought the officer on the loud speaker told me to get out of the car. So I got out with my hands in the air like a good criminal. The cop quickly pulled his gun out and aimed it right in my face! He then told me 'I told you to stay in the car'. He drew his pistol out so fast he could have accidentally bumped the trigger and killed me. My 3-year old son was in the car with me and saw the whole thing."

Here's yet another real-life example. In this case police were also looking for a vehicle that matched this man's vehicle. In this case, police were looking for an armed suspect. Here's how the Modesto Bee newspaper article began: "One rainy night last spring, a swarm of Modesto police cars descended on a truck that was heading north. The pickup stopped and the officers ordered the driver to get out with his hands up.

Modesto resident Harry "Dan" Tessien sat in his truck, waiting.

Officer Daniel Starr repeated his order several times.

Tessien sat in his truck, waiting.

Starr gave his order in Spanish.

Tessien sat in his truck, waiting.

Officer Yair Oaxaca fired a beanbag shotgun at the pickup's back window, sending a spray of shattered glass throughout the cab.

Tessien leapt out of his seat, and Oaxaca fired a beanbag into his abdomen. Officer Rodney Garcia delivered two more rounds because Tessien still had not raised his hands.

Oaxaca and Garcia delivered six more rounds, according to their reports, hitting the man in the torso and legs as he

ran for cover and ducked under the front bumper of his truck."¹

Now picture the first scenario above, but this time using a visor card to get the police officer's attention. It's another dark, stormy night when you are pulled over. This time, you know exactly what to do. After you have stopped, you immediately reach up and pull your sun visor down, unhook the end and swing it to face your side window. You open your driver's-side window all the way, turn on the dome light, then put both of your hands in plain sight on the steering wheel and wait.

You don't move, even though you are apprehensive, because you faintly hear, but can't understand, any of the instructions blaring from the police loud-hailer. Finally a police officer approaches your door. He shines his flashlight in your window. Instead of dragging you out of your car, he reads the sign attached to your visor. Immediately his demeanor changes. Why? Because he now knows the reason you did not obey his orders. Your visor card, in big, bold letters declares, "**Driver is Hard of Hearing,**" or "**Driver is Deaf.**"

You can't blame the police for being careful. Theirs is a dangerous job, especially at night. Thus, it is vitally important to establish at the outset that your communications needs are totally different from those of people with normal hearing.

This is where your visor card silently, but effectively, works on your behalf. The front of the card immediately alerts police officers to the fact that there is a communication problem; tells them what the communication problem is; and gives them instructions on how to effectively overcome this problem.

¹ The Modesto Bee, Modesto, CA, April 22, 2007.

Correctly Placing Your Visor Cards

Your Visor Cards are useless unless they are instantly available whenever you need them. You don't want to have to rummage around in the glove box or under the seat when you are pulled over. (Police officers may think you are reaching for a gun and act accordingly.)

The Visor Card is called a visor card for good reason. You attach it to your sun visor. That way, it is normally out of sight, yet instantly available when needed.

Here's how to mount it. Fold down your sun visor. Place the Visor Card on your sun visor—right side up facing you when your visor is down. Hold it in place with two elastic bands around both the Visor Card and sun visor.

With the sun visor up, your Visor Card is hidden out of sight so you are not advertising the fact that you are hard of hearing, but it is in place, ready for instant use whenever you need it.

Two Visor Cards are Better than One

So far, I have talked about using just one visor card on the driver's side. However, you should consider having two visor cards—one for each side. Here's why.

If you are stopped along a busy highway, especially one with narrow shoulders, sometimes the police officer may go to the passenger-side window because it is safer. Police officers have been hit by vehicles whizzing past, so in such situations, they may choose to play it safe and come to the passenger-side window. As a result, you will want to have Visor Cards for each side of your car.

In addition, if the police suspect that you are driving a get-a-way car, for example, two police officers may approach your vehicle at the same time, one on each side. This is another excellent reason to have two visor cards displayed, so both police officers instantly know you can't hear.

Page 4 explains the proper procedures for using your Visor Cards.

Obtaining Visor Cards of Your Own

Now that you've seen just how well visor cards can work for hard of hearing people, you're probably thinking, "I want one too!" Your next question likely will be, "Where can I get visor cards for my vehicle?"

Although visor cards are available from various agencies in a few states, these cards have one major fault. They lump deaf and hard of hearing people together, as though both groups have similar communication needs. This is just not true.

Now, however, the Center for Hearing Loss Help has designed two different visor cards. One specifically spells out the communication needs of hard of hearing people. The other one explains the communication needs of deaf people. Download the card that best meets your communications needs.

1. Hard of Hearing Visor Card

Obtain a free copy of the hard of hearing visor card by going to <http://hearingloss->

[help.com/blog/visor-cardsbridging-the-communications-gap-when-stopped-by-the-police/](http://hearinglosshelp.com/blog/visor-cardsbridging-the-communications-gap-when-stopped-by-the-police/) and following the instructions given in the article, or if you prefer, you can purchase a Hard of Hearing Visor Card Pak already made up. The pak includes 1 Hard of Hearing laminated visor card; 1 laminated wallet card; and a typeset copy of this article on how to use your visor card. Order your Hard of Hearing visor card pak from <http://hearinglosshelp.com/shop/visor-cards-hard-of-hearing/>.

2. Deaf Visor Card

Obtain a free copy of the deaf visor card by going to <http://hearinglosshelp.com/blog/visor-cardsbridging-the-communications-gap-when-stopped-by-the-police/> and following the instructions given in the article, or if you prefer, you can purchase a Deaf Visor Card Pak already made up. The pak includes 1 laminated Deaf visor card; 1 laminated wallet card; and a typeset copy of this article on how to use your visor card. Order your Deaf visor card pak from <http://hearinglosshelp.com/shop/visor-cards-deaf/>.