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While you can do some preliminary work in trying to determine if there's a warrant for your arrest, it might be best to consult a lawyer. Witthaya Prasongsin/Getty Images It's understandable that you might want to know if the cops are looking for you — and more specifically, whether the authorities have issued a warrant for your arrest. Short of strolling into the local police station and asking them about said warrant, there are a number of ways to figure out if there's an active warrant in your name. Warrants don't just appear out of thin air. A judge issues an arrest warrant (a form authorizing the police to arrest you and present you before the court) upon probable cause. Probable cause means that a law enforcement officer believes that he or she has enough information regarding a crime to make a legitimate arrest [source: FindLaw]. There are two kinds of warrants: arrest and bench. Arrest warrants occur if you've committed criminal activity and the police actively come looking for you. Bench warrants are issued by judges (from the "bench") when you fail to follow the rules of the court, for instance, you missed a trial date or didn't pay a traffic ticket. In those cases, the police won't come looking for you, but if you're stopped for something like speeding and they find a bench warrant was issued against you in the state's computer, you could be taken to jail [sources: Lawson & Berry, Flanagan & Associates]. In those circumstances, you may not have a clue that a warrant's been issued against you. Here are some ways you can find out if you have an outstanding warrant [source: Hernandez]: Look up the local records website for your county court or sheriff's department. In populous counties, these sites are updated regularly with accurate information. In small counties and areas with understaffed sheriff's offices, these kinds of online resources may not exist, or they may not be accurate. Also, some kinds of information (like domestic violence cases) are not likely to be public record.If you think there is a federal warrant outstanding, you will have to contact the federal court for your district.Call a local bail bondsman. He may have access to the county database containing active arrest warrants.Hire an attorney. Attorneys have access to databases that are not available to the general public. Of course, hiring an attorney will cost money, but you will get the information you are looking for.You can also check for arrest warrants on public records search sites like Governmentregistry.org. These for-profit, third-party websites ping various records databases, including warrants. Keep in mind that these types of sites don't offer up their data for free. You'll typically have to give a credit card number to get any sort of usable information, and you won't know for sure whether the information is up-to-date.If you're willing to take the chance of being questioned, you can call a police station to check if there's an arrest warrant against you. They may provide warrant information as long as you provide a full name and a date of birth. Another alternative would be to have a friend call on your behalf. As an ex 101 and 999 operator I can categorically answer this. The operator will usually be a civilian not a sworn officer. They can look on PNC to see if you are wanted, but would normally just look on their local systems, unless they can see a glaring "wanted on warrant by another force" especially if your name/ phone number is already known to them to check you were not wanted for a serious crime, even if you were they WOULD NOT tell you, they would simply alert the officer/ station looking for you, depending on the seriousness of the alleged crime. The reason for this is as exactly described I could for example give Name, date of birth and home address of a friend of mine and the person on the phone who talks to 30-50 people A DAY, over a 10 hour shift would not know I was not my friend. The operator (call taker) would then be in breach of GDPR, with potentially very large fines for them and or the police service, not even to say operationally difficult, as generally if a person is thought they are wanted they go to ground or disappear and normally has a reason to think they may be, either they have gotten away with something or think that an officer may be looking for them. Even if an officer comes to your address and you are not there they will simply ask the person who answered the door to confirm their identity and ask you to contact them be this for an arranged voluntary interview or arrest by appointment. Most arrests are by appointment these days, so there is minimal waiting around for duty solicitors, this has the advantage of less waisted custody time for you and longer for them to get evidence to prove or disprove your involvement. The same goes for a "missing person" who you believe to be in Custody, if they are an adult they have a chance to make a phone call to another adult to let them know they are in custody, unless it is operationally prudent to keep the person "incommunicado" , ie a person may destroy evidence or if they are wanted for this or similar crime they again may go "missing themselves". They will ask you what efforts have you made to find them, ie have you called them, gone to their address, contacted the local a&e, when did you last speak to them or how often do you speak to them, Do they have any special needs that make them more vulnerable. If they are in custody they may tell you "we have no concerns for their safety", it generally means they are in Custody or we have contacted them and they have assured our officers they are safe. They are trying to get you to read between the lines. Do not keep asking can you tell me if they are in Custody or the reply you will get will sound like a broken record, I cannot tell you as they are an adult and would have a right to contact a person . We do however have no concerns at this time. (a child/ person with obvious learning difficulties or ability to communicate is slightly different, but they would need to be convinced that the person is the child's parent/ guardian and normally this would either be a check from a known phone number ringing in or the custody sergeant would make the decision if they wanted to speak to you.) As an ex 101 and 999 operator I can categorically answer this. The operator will usually be a civilian not a sworn officer. 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In some cases, you may not even know there is a warrant for your arrest, which means you could be taken into custody at a routine traffic stop, the office, or your own home. Dealing with your arrest warrant is crucial to avoid accumulating fines and further complications. There are several ways to find out if there is a warrant for your arrest, and understanding your options helps you best resolve the issue. Search for a warrant on government websites, or by using a third-party online service, checking public records, or calling the court clerk. Learn all the details, including when the warrant was issued, date of offense, and case type, and note the bail amount as well. Deal with the warrant quickly; contact an attorney if needed, and turn yourself in to the courthouse clerk to avoid future penalties. 1 Search official government websites. If you have access to the Internet, then you can quickly find out whether or not there is a local warrant out for your arrest. Go to the city, county, state or federal website where you think you might have a warrant for arrest. Government websites are kept up-to-date, which makes them a reliable way to get information.[1] All federal government websites end in .gov, while those for states can end in either .gov or .us. Look for the "Legal" or "Health and Safety" sections to see if they offer a warrant search. Alternatively, try entering a phrase such as "arrest warrant" in the search bar on the website's home page. Some counties do not offer online warrant searches. In that case, look at the local sheriff or police department site for contact information. 2 Call the court clerk. If you would like to speak to someone, you can call the court directly. You can call any court in the state that you believe the warrant may be in, because states maintain a warrant database that can be accessed from any state court. Do not identify yourself; instead, simply ask if there is an outstanding warrant for "Person X" (using your name here) in a criminal or civil case. Have the following information ready: the case number (if you know it), name, birth date, and Social Security number.[2] The court clerk of one circuit may not be able to give you information if you have an arrest warrant from a different circuit court. Keep in mind that for some cases such as family and juvenile delinquency cases, and domestic violence cases involving protective, peace, or restraining orders, you may not be able to find information through the court clerk. However, the clerk should still be able to tell you about an arrest warrant, even if he or she cannot give your specific information on the case itself. Criminal cases are mostly public record, so you should not have an issue getting information on these. However, some types of civil cases are not public record, such as family and juvenile delinquency cases, and domestic violence cases involving protective, peace, or restraining orders. For these types of cases, consider consulting a bail bondsman or attorney. You can also call the county, state, or federal clerk's office. Note that if you call from your own phone, the police may be able to locate and arrest you. They can trace the phone number to an address, or to any billing information associated with that phone number. If you are nervous about calling yourself, ask a close friend or family member to call for you.[3] Advertisement 3 Check the public records at a county courthouse. You can use the computers at your county court to search warrants. If you feel uncomfortable doing this yourself, ask someone to do it for you (a friend, family member, attorney, or bail bondsman). Most minor offenses will not lead to an immediate arrest. You may be able to pay a fine and settle the matter quickly.[4] Be warned, however, that if there is warrant issued for you, you risk being taken into custody. 4 Use an online third-party service. There are a number of websites that can perform a warrant search for you. Some are free, and others charge a fee.[5] These services are quick and easy, but may not give you all of the information you're looking for. For example, they may provide vital statistics and property ownership, but not information about arrest warrants. For this reason, these services should be a last resort.[6] Advertisement 1 Find out when the warrant was issued. Sometimes people can be completely unaware that they have a warrant out for their arrest. Knowing when the warrant was issued could shed light on some important details. There may be fines associated with your charge that have been accumulating since the warrant was issued. These will be listed among the warrant information. If the warrant was issued a long time ago, you'll want to get the matter settled quickly before incurring any further penalties. Additionally, in some case, if the warrant was issued long ago, a person cannot be prosecuted for the crime. It is not that the warrant has expired, but some crimes have a limited statute of limitations (period in which the suspect can be prosecuted). Therefore, if you believe that you may have a warrant out for your arrest for an underlying incident that occurred over 2 years ago, look up the charge that would appear on the warrant (or something similar) to see if there is a limit on the time that the warrant would be valid.[7] 2 Inquire about the charges. If you know what you're being charged with, you can more adequately prepare your response. Vital information includes the date of offense, the details of the charges, and the case type (e.g., felony, misdemeanor, traffic ticket, etc.).[8] You may be able to avoid being arrested by paying a fine. The severity of your charge may influence your choice of legal representation. Also note any date of conviction, sentencing, disposition, and probation, if they apply to your case. 3 Note the bail amount. If you're concerned that you will go to jail, knowing the predetermined bail amount for your charge could help you raise the funds to avoid jail time while awaiting your trial. Advertisement 1 Deal with the warrant as soon as possible. Regardless of the charge, the best thing you can do for yourself is to respond quickly. Being proactive about your warrant helps you avoid being arrested publicly and at inopportune times. Moreover, it limits any accruing fees. 2 Contact an attorney. In the event that a warrant has been issued for a major offense, you will most likely want to contact a criminal defense lawyer. An attorney can help you understand your warrant and will make suggestions as to possible next steps. In addition, an attorney can accompany you to the local court to inquire about your warrant. Bring the warrant number and all relevant information you have so far.[9] Find an attorney that specializes in your type of case (you should know the case type from the warrant information – see Part 2, Step 2). Avoid picking the first name you see in the phonebook or any other advertisement. Instead, get a referral from someone who's been in a similar situation, or someone knows a good attorney. You can also find attorneys by looking at your state bar association website. (A directory of state bar associations can be found at Meet with the attorney first to make sure that they're someone you're comfortable with and can trust. If you're unable to pay for a lawyer, contact the public defender's office of the county where your warrant was issued. Ask to speak with the duty attorney and explain you'd like to clear your warrant. 3 Turn yourself in. Turning yourself in can help make the process smoother, reducing the risk of more severe punishment and fines, and, in some cases, the creation of a criminal record. Start by turning yourself in to the courthouse clerk. Ask for information about what steps to take next, but make sure you have the right clerk. For county and state warrants, talk to the county clerk; for federal warrants, talk to the clerk of the U.S. District Court. Bring an attorney or legal representative with you for advice. Some misdemeanor and minor charges may be taken care of without a hearing. If you turn yourself in to a police station, you may end up being put directly in jail until your appointed time in court. A court-appointed attorney will be provided for you for free if you turn yourself in. Fortunately, the constitution requires all jurisdictions to provide you representation in case any charge involves possible time imprisonment. 4 Do not ignore the warrant. This will only catch up to you. The next time you get pulled over for speeding, or even go the county clerk's office for routine matters, you could be arrested on the spot. Advertisement Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks Thanks Thanks Show More Tips Advertisement The preceding article consists of legal information, and it should not be construed as legal advice. This article was co-authored by Clinton M. Sandvick, JD, PhD. Clinton M. Sandvick worked as a civil litigator in California for over 7 years. He received his JD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1998 and his PhD in American History from the University of Oregon in 2013. This article has been viewed 1,289,556 times. Co-authors: 29 Updated: March 10, 2025 Views: 1,289,556 Categories: Vital Records Article SummaryXTo see if you have a warrant out for your arrest, go to the city, county, state, or federal website where you think you might have an arrest warrant. Then, look under the "Legal" or "Health and Safety" sections for a warrant search. Or, type "Arrest warrant" in the search bar of the home page. If you'd rather speak to someone, call any court in your state and ask if there's a warrant out for you, since states maintain a warrant database that's accessible from any court. However, use your name in the 3rd person if you want to remain anonymous. Alternatively, use an online 3rd party service that can perform warrant searches. Since some of these services charge a fee and only give you vital statistics and property information, make sure use them as a last resort. For more tips from our Legal co-author, including how to turn yourself in to the courts, read on! Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,289,556 times. "Great site! I had no idea it was so easy to acquire such information. I see now that all it takes is some reading. This site is a great head start. Thank you!"..." more Share your story As an ex 101 and 999 operator I can categorically answer this. The operator will usually be a civilian not a sworn officer. They can look on PNC to see if you are wanted, but would normally just look on their local systems, unless they can see a glaring "wanted on warrant by another force" especially if your name/ phone number is already known to them to check you were not wanted for a serious crime, even if you were they WOULD NOT tell you, they would simply alert the officer/ station looking for you, depending on the seriousness of the alleged crime. The reason for this is as exactly described I could for example give Name, date of birth and home address of a friend of mine and the person on the phone who talks to 30-50 people A DAY, over a 10 hour shift would not know I was not my friend. 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Several methods are available to ascertain this information, each offering varying levels of accessibility, accuracy, and privacy. Local Law Enforcement Verification A straightforward way to check for an active arrest warrant is through local law enforcement. This involves contacting or visiting the police department or sheriff's office in the jurisdiction where the warrant may have been issued. Law enforcement agencies maintain records of active warrants and may provide this information upon request. However, in-person visits could result in immediate arrest if a warrant is confirmed. When contacting law enforcement, ask about their specific procedures for warrant verification. Some departments require identification or additional details, while others may allow anonymous inquiries over the phone or through online portals. Availability of these services varies, and some jurisdictions may charge a small fee for processing requests. Courthouse Record Search Courthouse records are another way to determine if a warrant exists. Courthouses maintain records of legal proceedings, including warrants. To search, visit the clerk's office in the relevant courthouse. Clerks can assist with accessing these records and navigating the search process. Many jurisdictions make such records public, though access policies and fees can vary. Providing accurate information, such as a full name and date of birth, ensures more precise search results. Some courthouses also offer online databases for remote searches, which may require registration or a fee. These records often include details like the nature of the alleged offense and the issuing judge, offering valuable insight into the legal situation. Statewide Criminal Databases Statewide criminal databases offer a broader option for verifying arrest warrants, consolidating information from various jurisdictions. Managed by state law enforcement agencies, these databases provide centralized access to criminal records, including warrants, and are particularly useful if the warrant's location is unknown. Accessing a statewide database often involves using official state-run online portals. Some states provide free access to basic information, while others charge fees for detailed reports. These databases typically require personal identifying information, such as a name and date of birth, to conduct a search. Be cautious to use official resources to avoid scams or inaccurate data. Online Warrant Lookups Online warrant lookups provide a modern, convenient way to access public records. Many jurisdictions now offer online portals managed by state or local government agencies, ensuring reliability. These platforms enable faster, more discreet inquiries compared to traditional methods. Users can search for warrants by entering personal details into these portals. While some jurisdictions offer the service free of charge, others may charge a fee to cover administrative costs. These fees can vary based on the level of information provided. Consulting a Legal Professional Consulting a legal professional is highly recommended if you suspect an outstanding arrest warrant. Attorneys can navigate the legal system, provide tailored advice, and interpret records. They can also negotiate with law enforcement or prepare you for court proceedings, ensuring confidentiality in your inquiries. Legal professionals have access to resources not readily available to the public, which may uncover critical information. They can also communicate directly with authorities to negotiate terms that might avoid immediate arrest. Additionally, an attorney can explain the potential consequences of the warrant and help you develop an effective legal strategy, whether challenging the warrant or arranging a voluntary surrender. Understanding the Legal Consequences of an Arrest Warrant An arrest warrant carries serious legal consequences that can affect many aspects of your life. Warrants are issued by a judge or magistrate, authorizing law enforcement to detain an individual based on probable cause that they have committed a crime. Once issued, a warrant remains active until the individual is apprehended or resolves the matter legally. This can lead to sudden arrests at home, work, or during routine traffic stops. Warrants can also impede travel, as they may be flagged during security checks at airports or borders. The consequences of an arrest warrant vary depending on the alleged offense. For minor infractions, it may result in a court summons. For serious charges, however, an arrest could lead to detention until a bail hearing. Ignoring an outstanding warrant may result in additional charges, such as failure to appear, which can carry penalties including fines or jail time. Understanding these implications is essential for addressing the situation effectively. How to Find Out if Someone Has Died How to write a letter to a magistrate How to Locate an Inmate in Prison How to find my lost father for free How to find out what a person was sentenced... How to Find Out Where People Are Buried for... How to write a character reference letter... How to find out if an offender has been released... How to Check Hospital Admissions For a Missing... How to address a retired colonel How to find someone in a UK prison Pro & Cons of the Criminal Justice System How to write an early release letter to a... How to find someone's maiden name How to Write a Character Reference for Child... The Consequences of the First Offense of... How do I find out the date someone got married? How to Evict a Partner