



DISTRICT COURT 15-1-04  
GWENN S. KNAPP  
MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGE  
BOROUGH OF WEST CHESTER (EAST)  
COUNTY OF CHESTER

DISTRICT COURT  
**BLUES**

# Park, Where?

Parking tickets can be issued for violations of a number of Pennsylvania Statutes and local West Chester Borough Ordinances. Pennsylvania Vehicle Code can be found online at [http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/vehicle\\_code/index.shtml](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/vehicle_code/index.shtml), and most statutes related to parking can be found in Chapter 33, [http://www.dot10.state.pa.us/pdot/forms/vehicle\\_code/chapter33.pdf](http://www.dot10.state.pa.us/pdot/forms/vehicle_code/chapter33.pdf). Local ordinance information can be obtained by contacting West Chester Parking Services and Enforcement Department at 610-696-4521, or stopping by their office on the first floor of the West Chester Municipal Building at 401 East Gay Street, West Chester. Search the Code for the Borough of West Chester at <http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/globalsearch.asp>.

*Following are excerpts from the District Court 15-1-04 website section on parking <http://www.JudgeKnapp.com/parking.html>, and also from essays written by young people who have pled or been found guilty of multiple parking violations.*

(In the interest of promoting proper use of the English language, essays may be edited for spelling and grammar.)

**Q: What is this Parking Citation, and how is it different from a parking ticket?**

**A:** If a car is parked illegally in West Chester borough, a Parking Enforcement or Police Officer can record the vehicle tag number and description, issue a parking ticket, and placed it in the windshield of the vehicle. If the fine on the ticket is paid within the specified time period (two weeks), there are no additional costs and the case is closed.

However, if a ticket is issued and not paid, the ticket information is sent to Penn DOT to obtain vehicle registration information. When this information is returned to the Parking Department, a Citation is filed with the District Court, which then sends out a Summons to notify the Defendant of the charge, fines, and costs.

◆ **I am a procrastinator.** Anyone who lives in West Chester knows that the parking situation is somewhat strict. In the fall, I received four parking tickets. I really could not afford to pay them, and instead of asking for help from my parents or finding a better job, I chose to ignore them and put off taking responsibility for them, thinking that they would just go away.

In February, I lost my job. A week later, I started getting summonses in the mail. Four summons for four tickets, totally \$222. *All of a sudden, I was in trouble with the law, and I had no idea how I was going to pay all the fines and costs.*

The thing is, though, if I had been more responsible I could have avoided these tickets completely. Through this ordeal I have found that there is no point in procrastinating because it causes unnecessary stress, and the task is not going to just go away. I never realized before how much procrastination has affected my life. If I would just pay more attention and plan better, I would not find myself always late, stressed and worried.

**Q: What if I didn't get the original ticket?**

**A:** The owner of a motor vehicle has the obligation to abide by all laws governing the operation of that vehicle. A Citation, which carries fines and Court costs, can be issued for the violation of any pertinent law, including parking ordinances. A parking ticket, allowing payment of fine only, is issued as a courtesy extended for a limited time period. Understanding that the parking ticket delivery system is imperfect, and that it is nevertheless your responsibility to park legally, you have the right to call the Parking Services & Enforcement Department at 610-696-4521 anytime you have parked illegally and ask them to run your plate number to find out if a ticket was issued to your vehicle.

◆ **Recently I have let parking tickets stack up to an insurmountable number.** I realize now that it is imperative for me to pay very close attention to what street sides cannot be parked on at specified times. It has also become extremely apparent that any parking tickets received need to be taken care of immediately. Ninety dollars is far too much to pay to park at an airport, let alone in front of your own house. *It is irresponsible and inexcusable to let parking tickets escalate to a situation in which a constable is looking to handcuff you and take you to court.* I realize now that parking tickets in West Chester are no laughing matter. The penalty of having a warrant out for your arrest is serious, and I will do everything in my power to get the situation under control, and do my best to never let myself get into a predicament like this again.

**Q: Why are the Citation costs so much higher than the fine for the original ticket?**

**A:** The original ticket was issued as a courtesy allowing payment of the fine only for a limited period of time. If the ticket is not paid in a timely fashion, and the information is sent to Penn DOT for a Citation to be issued and filed with the Court, the matter will include Court costs. Among those costs are items marked J.C.P. (Judicial Computer Project), and A.C.J. (Access to Justice), which are statewide Citation costs.

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◆ **It is funny to look back on my college career and think that some of the most valuable lessons I have learned came at the expense of parking.** I am the type of person who likes to learn my lessons the hard way, and I am the first and foremost example of what *not* to do in relationship to parking tickets.

*My advice to freshmen:* If you haven't yet perused the whole West Chester scene, take a ride around and notice every single parking sign and regulation on each street. There are No Parking signs for times and days, different alphabet letters assigned to different areas, plus alleyways and driveways. Read all of the signs carefully and follow them to the T. If it says you cannot park there, you can't. If you do *you will* receive a parking ticket.

My foremost advice to all new freshman students is, *if you do not need a car here, do not bring it!* I needed my car for work. If you need your car, it is imperative that you go to the borough office on Gay and Adams Streets and learn eligibility requirements for student and residential parking permits. If you do qualify for a permit, learn all the rules too. Even with a permit, you are responsible for following all parking regulations.

Now my most important piece of advice is to *pay your parking tickets!* I cannot stress this enough. Here is the journey of an unpaid parking ticket: Most start at \$15. If it is not paid in fifteen days, it becomes a citation with fines and costs totaling \$55.50. But this is not the end. If you decide to still not pay or otherwise respond to the court, a warrant will be issued for your arrest, and the costs rise to almost \$100. If you continue to ignore it, a Pennsylvania State Constable will be sent to find you and bring you in. At this stage, the costs are well over \$100, and you will be brought before a Judge to answer to the charges against you.

Trust me, I know it stinks because as a college student even fifteen dollars is precious, but fifteen is better than fifty-five, one hundred, and one hundred forty plus an arrest. So, *pay your tickets when they are fifteen dollars!*

*My parking troubles and tribulations:* My parking issues began my second semester at WCU. In addition to not having a parking permit, I also did not take notice of the parking restriction signs posted all over. So, I was predisposed to receiving many tickets. As a naïve freshman, I believed that if I didn't pay them, they would magically disappear, so that is the route I decided to take. Things came in the mail and I just threw them away. I thought if I avoided them long enough, eventually they would stop coming and be forgotten. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

This pattern did not catch up to me until close to the end of my third semester, almost a year later. I was in my house, brushing my teeth, when two older men walked in and asked my name. No sooner did I tell them than I was in handcuffs in their car on my way to see the Judge. In my avoidance of tickets, I had accumulated over \$1600 in fines and costs at this time. Luckily for me, good friends lent me some money and my unbelievably kind-hearted dad wired money that night, even though he barely had it. I still had to pay off the rest to the courts and pay back my friends and family. Things did not get better from there.

At this point, I was still getting parking tickets because I still had not gotten a parking permit. So now I had \$15 parking tickets, but I also had to keep up with a payment plan. Basically I was stuck in a never-ended cycle of parking tickets. That has been my other life in college. I go to school, I work, and I pay off parking tickets. In all, my parking violations cost me about five thousand dollars in three years, plus unbelievable stress.

*Lessons I have learned:* Like I said, I learn my lessons the hard way. Through all this, I have learned a lot about myself and life. I have learned that you cannot ignore your problems whatever they may be. If anything, avoidance just makes the problem worse. In life, you need to conquer your problems head-on. I have also learned something about people. We are all different and go through different things. We all have our flaws and that's what makes us human. The last thing I learned is that there is no substitute for perseverance. In any goal you set, do not give up.

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**Q: What if I was not the driver of the car?**

**A:** If you give someone else permission to drive your car, be aware that parking violations are the responsibility of the owner of a motor vehicle, and Parking Citations can only be issued to the registered owner of that vehicle. The driver can appear as a fact witness at trial.

If you wish to enter a plea of Guilty, but have the driver assume responsibility for time payments of the fines and costs, an Authorization for Payment Plan form must be filled out, signed by the registered owner, and submitted to the court. *Note:* The tickets remain in the owner's name.

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◆ **Parking tickets have done nothing but cause problems for my family and me.** Since the car is filed under my father's name, my tickets automatically affect him. I have inadvertently involved him even though he has done nothing wrong. Also, my tickets have involved my mother because she is the one that has to deal with things like this. She tries to make sure that I follow the rules, and she does not approve of me causing problems for my family or of me starting to disobey the law at any level.

Parking tickets are the consequence of being irresponsible. When you drive your car and you decide to park somewhere that you were not supposed to, you have breached your duty and are liable. I have learned from this experience that disobeying the law is not a good thing. It results in a lot of time-consuming, costly, and unnecessary problems. They waste my time, create a burden on my family, and cause me to lose money I don't have to spend on parking tickets.

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**Q: Now there is a Warrant for my arrest. Am I really going to be arrested for a Parking Citation(s)?**

**A:** A Warrant issued for failure to respond to a Parking Citation, or to make required payments after a Guilty disposition for a Parking violation, is a valid warrant which will be treated like any other active arrest warrant.

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◆ **My parking ticket situation has taught me that putting off problems will not make them go away...they will only get bigger.** Also, I cannot feel sorry for myself when life hands me challenges. It is very easy to do this, but a responsible adult faces these challenges head on. I am fully certain that I will never park illegally again in my entire life... no matter what!

The most important lesson this entire experience has taught me is that people can change. Just because my life has not turned out yet the way I envisioned it does not mean that I should settle for things the way they are. I view my life the way it is as a problem. When I parked illegally and failed to pay my fines, that was a problem, I am not going to sit back and let the problems in my life fester the way I did my parking tickets. I am doing something about it and my life is getting better each day.

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