

Your Plea in Court

Before Court begins, you must decide upon and enter a plea to the charge against you.

If you signed a citation in front of an officer, you did not plead guilty, but only signed a promise to appear in Court on your appearance date.

There are three possible pleas to a complaint:

1. Guilty
2. No Contest
3. Not Guilty

Your decision on what plea to enter is the most important decision you will have to make. We suggest that you read the following explanations before entering your plea.

Plea of No Contest

A plea of NO CONTEST simply means that you do not wish to contest the City's charge against you, but wish to talk to the Judge about mitigating circumstances.

Judgment will be entered by the Judge and some penalty will be set.

A plea of no contest cannot be used against you in a civil suit for damages.

Plea of Guilty

By a plea of GUILTY, you admit that you committed the act charged, that the act is prohibited by law, and that you have no defense for your act.

Before entering your plea of guilty, you need to understand the following:

1. The City has the burden of proving its case against you.

You have the right to hear the City's evidence and to require it to prove its case, when you go to trial.

The law does not require you to prove anything.

2. If you were involved in a traffic accident at the time of the alleged offense, your plea of guilty could be used later in a civil suit for damages as an admission by you that you were at fault or were the party responsible for the accident.

Plea of Not Guilty

A plea of NOT GUILTY means that you are informing the Court that you deny guilt and that the City must prove its charges against you.

If you plead NOT GUILTY, you will need to decide whether or not to employ an attorney to represent you at trial or at a plea docket. You may defend yourself, but no one else except an attorney may represent you.

However, if you are a minor (under 18 years of age) one of your parents should be present. If you defend yourself, please consult the [At Trial section](#), regarding the trial procedure and the manner of presenting your case.

Under our American system of justice, all persons are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. On a plea of NOT GUILTY, a trial is held and the city is required to prove all allegations against you as contained in the formal complaint beyond a reasonable doubt, before a verdict of guilty can be reached.