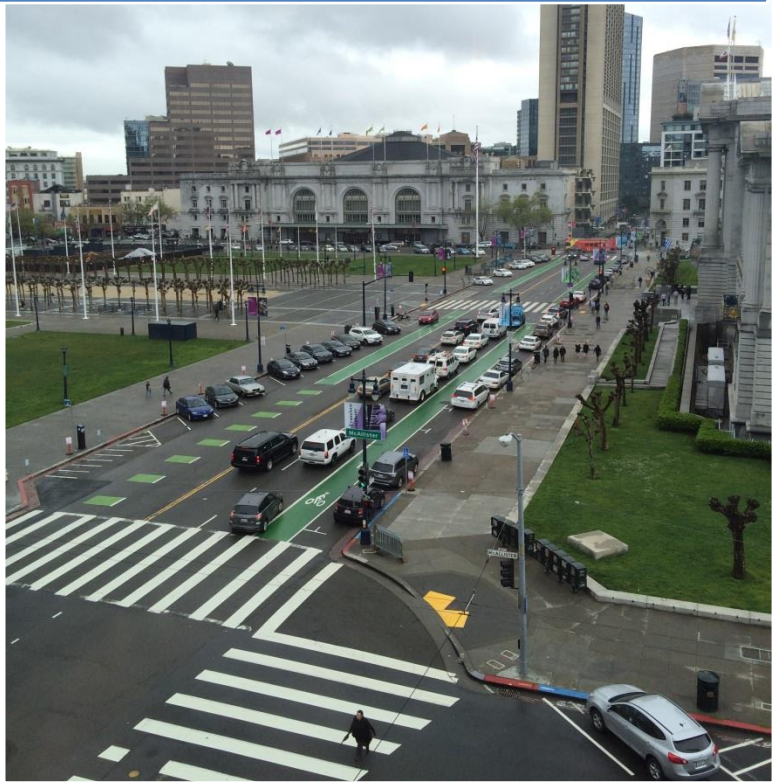


# Traffic Court Guide

## San Francisco Superior Court



### Hall of Justice

850 Bryant Street, Room 145

San Francisco, CA 94103

Monday – Friday (except Court holidays)

8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

(415) 551-8550

<http://sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic>

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## Room 145: Traffic Clerk Windows

At these windows, you can...

1. **Pay fines with check or money order only at the drop box at the end of the hall. At the window you can pay with cash, check, money order, Visa, Mastercard, or Discover.**
2. **Correct a “fix-it” ticket by showing proof of correction and pay fine for correctable violations.**
3. **Schedule an arraignment**
4. **Pay full bail to schedule trial without arraignment**
5. **Request Trial by Written Declaration**
6. **Pay your fine and request traffic school (if eligible)**
7. **Request a leniency form.**



## Reminder Notice

A **Reminder Notice** is mailed to the address listed on the citation. This notice is usually received within 21 days from the date the citation was issued.

**The notice contains information about the requirements and options available for resolving the ticket, such as:**

- Amount of the bail (fine) and due date
- Proof of correction information for compliance violations
- Traffic School and Scheduling information

Failure to receive a courtesy notice is not a legal excuse for failing to respond to a citation.

**It is not mandatory that the Court send you a Reminder Notice. By signing the citation, in front of the officer, you have agreed to appear and/or respond to the citation in lieu of being arrested.**

**Failure to appear or resolve a citation on or before the due date may result in:**

- Imposition of a \$100 Civil Assessment in addition to the fine
- Notification to DMV of your failure to appear

## Options for Payment

### 1. In-person at 850 Bryant Street, Room 145, San Francisco

- a. Clerk's window from 8:30-12:30
- b. Deposit payment in the **drop box** at the end of the hall by Room 145.

### 2. By Mail

Include your citation number on your check or money order and mail payment to:

San Francisco Superior Court  
850 Bryant St., Room 145  
San Francisco, CA 94103-4610

*\*Do not send cash through the mail.*

### 3. By Phone

Call the following toll-free number to make payments by phone:

(415) 551-8550

### 4. Online with credit card

Using this link, <http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/traffic-citations>, you can:

1. Look up the exact amount due.
2. Look up your citation number using your driver's license.
3. Pay...
  - Citations
  - Traffic school admin fee
  - What the Court ordered

*\*You must have your citation number to pay for your ticket.*

You can pay by MasterCard, Visa, Discover or American Express credit card. A service fee of 3.50% will be added and charged to your credit card in addition to your payment.

#### If you are unable to pay your fine:

**If you are unable to pay your fine:** because you are unemployed only work part-time, or receive GA, SSI or SSA, you may choose to take care of it by doing community service through Project 20. With this option, you work your fine off at the rate of **\$29 per hour**. You may not do community service if you wish to attend traffic school and you may not do community service if you are employed full-time.

#### If you do not pay your fine:

**If you do not pay your fine:** a Civil Assessment fee of **\$100** will be added to any traffic fine if you fail to post bail on time or to appear for your scheduled court date. All delinquent citations will be referred to Alliance One for collection

#### Paying after trial:

**If you plead guilty or are found guilty by the judge:** You may pay the amount of the fine that same day or ask for time to pay. You must pay by the date the Judge gives you; no further continuances will be granted.

## Can't Afford to Pay?

If you are having difficulty paying your ticket, you may ask the court for one of the following:

- **Fine Reduction**
- **Payment Plan**
- **Plan for delayed payment and/or**
- **Community Service**

Use this link: <http://mycitations.courts.ca.gov/>

*\*Even if your is past-due you can still apply!*

If you are unable to pay your traffic ticket or fine, you have the right to ask the Court to consider your financial circumstances. You could be eligible for an **80% or MORE** discount.

### You can qualify in one of three ways:

1. **Indicate you receive public benefits**, such as Medi-Cal; CalFresh (Food Stamps); CalWORKs or Tribal TANF; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); General Assistance (GA) or County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP); In Home Supportive Services (IHSS); or Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).
2. **Show that your income is less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level:**

Household Size	1	2	3	4
Income Equal to or Less Than	\$33,975	\$45,775	\$57,575	\$69,375

3. **Describe your financial hardship.**

If you have another financial hardship that prevents you from paying for your household's basic needs and the full amount of your traffic ticket, you can describe the hardship as part of the application.

To complete the request, you should have:

1. **Your citation or driver's license number**
2. **Summary of your monthly income and expenses**
3. **Record of any public benefits, if any**

There are 4 places you can apply:

1. **Online**  
At this link:  
<http://mycitations.courts.ca.gov/>
2. **In-Person or By Mail**
3. **Apply for a Leniency Request with or without Traffic School(no financial requirements)**
4. **Connect Program**

For more information on any of these options visit:

<https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/cant-afford-pay>

## Red Light Camera Citations

After a red-light camera photograph is taken, the vehicle's registered owner will receive a citation in the mail. The citation will state when and where the violation occurred. It will include a photo of the vehicle in the intersection, a close-up of the driver, and the vehicle's license plate. It will also include information about where to view the evidence: camera statistics, photos, videos, etc., instructions about what to do next, including what to do if you, the registered owner, are not the person pictured behind the wheel.

**If you are the person in the red-light camera photograph, and you wish to pay the fine, you have four options:**

1. **Online:**  
If you have not been to court on the citation and it is not delinquent, you may pay your citation online by using this link: <https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/traffic-citations>. To pay the citation and the non-refundable administrative fee for Traffic School, use "Traffic School Sign-Up": <https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/sign-up>.
2. **By Mail:**  
Include your citation number on your check or money order and **mail payment to:**  
San Francisco Superior Court  
850 Bryant St., Room 145  
San Francisco, CA 94103-4610
3. **In-Person:**  
San Francisco Superior Court  
850 Bryant St., Room 145  
San Francisco, CA 94103-4610  
Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, excluding Court holidays
4. **By Phone: 415-551-8550.**

Acceptable forms of payment are **cash, check, money order, debit card or credit card (Visa/ Master card/ Discover only)**

### **\*Do Not Send Cash Through the Mail**

If your payment is late, the initial bail (fine) will incur additional penalties. Late payments cannot be made using the Automated Phone System. Contact the San Francisco Superior Court in person or by telephone at (415) 551-8550 for additional information.



### Not the Driver?

***\*DO NOT PAY THE CITATION IF YOU PLAN TO HAVE IT TAKEN OUT OF YOUR NAME***

If you are the owner and someone else is driving, do the following by the due date on the citation:

- Complete the portion on the back of the citation that identifies the driver.
- Attach a copy of your driver's license;
- Attach a recent photograph of yourself; and
- Return all documentation by mail to:

**SF Municipal Transportation Agency**  
**Attn: Automated Enforcement Program**  
**11 S. Van Ness Ave.**  
**San Francisco, CA 94103**

It is recommended that the requested documentation be sent certified mail with a return receipt.

Upon receipt of the documentation, the agency will review it and issue a citation to the person that has been identified as the driver. The citation in your name will not be dismissed until the agency has received the completed identification form and the required additional documentation. This process may take eight to 12 weeks. It is important to note that once the dismissal process has started, no additional penalties will incur unless you fail to respond to additional communications by the date indicated.

**\*Driving a company car?** Refer to the San Francisco Traffic Court website: <http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/red-light>

## Correctable Violations – “Fix-It” Tickets

If you received a citation for a **correctable violation:**

You must submit – by the date at the bottom of your citation or the due date on your Reminder Notice – the proof of correction to the Court by mail or in person, along with a \$25 fee per correctable violation. (See Vehicle Code Section 40611) The citation must be marked correctable.

The proof of correction needed depends on the kind of violation:

If you were cited for a **mechanical violation:** (E.g., broken tail light)

You must correct the violation and then contact any law enforcement agency to arrange for an officer to verify and sign off on the correction. You must then mail, or bring to the Court, the signed citation, along with the \$25 fee.

If you were cited for an **expired registration violation:**

Mail, or bring to the Court, a copy of your current registration, along with the \$25 fee.

If you were cited for a **driver's license violation:**

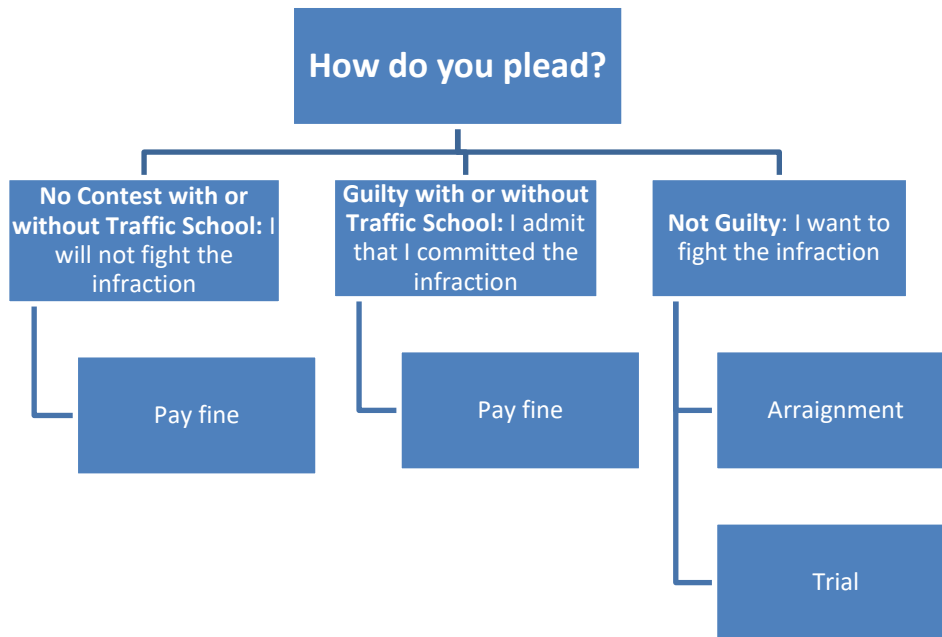
Mail, or bring to the Court, a copy of your driver's license, the citation signed off by the DMV, and the \$25 fee.

If you were cited for **no proof of insurance:**

Mail, or bring to the Court, proof of insurance that you were insured on the date of the violation, along with the \$25 fee. Valid proof of insurance must show the driver's name, vehicle information and the insurance effective and expiration dates.

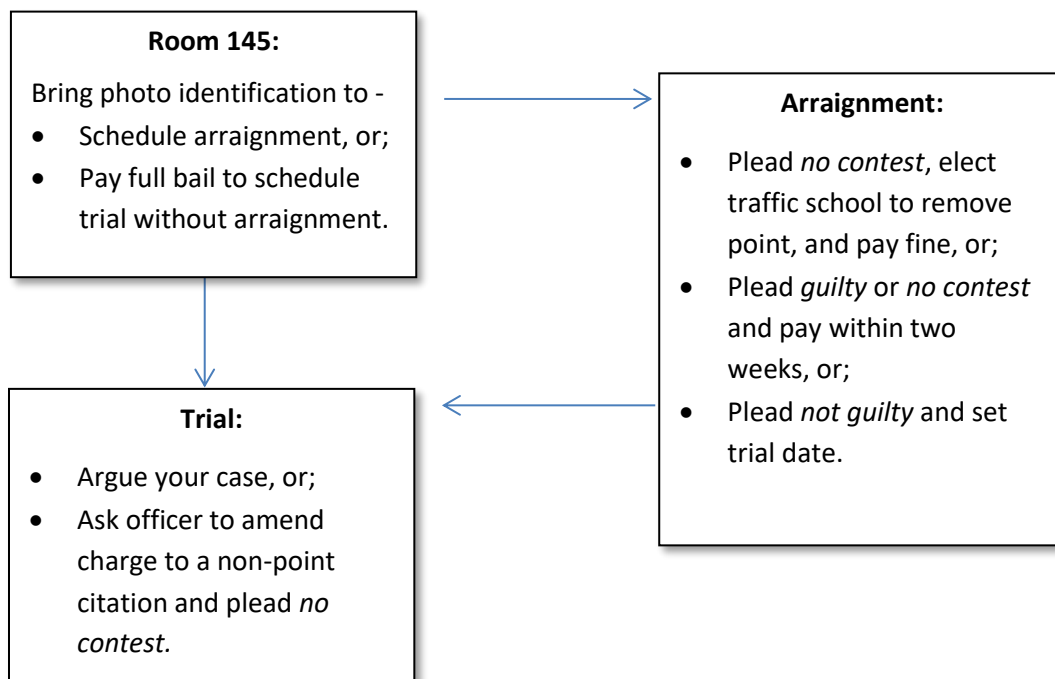
## What is the difference between *no contest* and *guilty*?

**No contest** has the same result as a **guilty** plea in terms of paying your fine and your driving record points; however, **pleading no contest cannot be used against you in a civil action.**



## Contesting a Citation

You must take action on the ticket *before* the due date.





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## Arraignment

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Make sure you are in the correct department listed on your notice (A or B)

### *Arraignment is not your trial*

An arraignment is a hearing where an individual is advised by the Court of his/her rights and the charges he or she faces. The individual will be asked to **enter a plea of guilty, not guilty, or no contest**. Please note that the citing officer will not be present in Court. The date of your trial, if pleading not guilty, will be set at the arraignment. An arraignment can be scheduled in person in Room 145, Hall of Justice.

### *At the arraignment, you can:*

1. Elect traffic school: plead *no contest* or *guilty*. **The point will not show on your driving record if you complete the program and pay the fees within 90 days.** The Judge may reduce your citation fine if you choose this option, but there will be a \$52.00 traffic school fee applied to your fine. You may only attend traffic school once every 18 months from the date of the violation. (Non-moving violations are not eligible for traffic school).
2. Plead *guilty* or *no contest* and pay fine within two weeks. If you are not eligible for traffic school and have decided to forfeit your right to trial, the Judge may reduce your fine if you plead guilty or no contest at your arraignment.
3. Plead *not guilty* and set trial date. If you fail to appear on the date of your trial, the trial will move forward without you. If you choose to go to trial, there is no guarantee of a reduced fine or traffic school. Let the Judge know if you would like your trial in less than 45 days from the date of the arraignment.

### *How to move to trial without an arraignment:*

Pay the full bail at room 145 and request a trial date. If you are found not guilty, the Court will return your bail.

# Trial

## How to Get Ready for Your Trial or Hearing:

- Know what you are cited for - check your ticket or get a copy in Room 145 before you go to the courtroom.
- If you are charged with expired registration, bring your current registration to the Court. The same applies with charges regarding insurance, change of address, or driver's license. If you have a "fix-it" ticket, and you have fixed the problem - headlight or taillight out, for example - have it signed off by any police officer and bring it to the Court.
- Photographs and/or diagrams of the area where your ticket was issued are often helpful in showing the Judge the points you want to make.

## Discovery

Discovery is how you request evidence related to your case from the citing officer. You can request discovery of evidence from the legal department of the issuing police department. Refer to the local rules online about discovery.

## Motion to Amend

You can ask the officer to file a motion to amend the violation to a non-point citation.

## Presenting Your Case in Court

### *Evidence*

- Your evidence must be brought to court on the day of your trial in a **printed or downloaded version**.
- Evidence must be able to be submitted to the Court—which means evidence cannot be on a cellphone.
- Bring three sets of anything you want the judge to review. One for you, one for the judge, and one for the other side.

### *Do:*

- Tell the Judge what street or highway you were on, what intersection (if any) was involved, and the direction you were traveling.
- Describe what happened in the order it happened. Present your best reasons first for why you think your ticket should be dismissed.
- Simple and to the point is best. If the Judge asks you any questions, try to answer them directly.
- Dress as if you are coming to a business appointment.

### *Don't:*

- Interrupt or argue with the Judge or the police officer.
- Repeat yourself unnecessarily.
- Come into Court unprepared, without the documents you need for your case.
- Bring a cell phone in to Court.

## Trial by Written Declaration

*To contest your ticket through mail without appearing at a trial, you may request a Trial by Written Declaration. You are no longer required to post bail.*

1. **The Request for Trial by Written Declaration Form (TR-205) can be found on the San Francisco Traffic Court website.** Mail this completed and signed form with your written statement explaining and outlining the events and facts of the case to the Court. You may include evidence such as photographs and diagrams. **You must sign and date each written statement.**
2. The Court must receive your request and required bail amount before the due date indicated.  
*\*Due to the pandemic, the court is not requiring a payment of bail when submitting a request for a Trial by Written Declaration.*
3. After the clerk receives the *Request for Trial by Written Declaration*, they will notify the officer who issued you the citation. The officer will be given an opportunity to submit a declaration regarding the citation by a specified due date.
4. The Court will decide the case based on written statements submitted by you and the citing officer. You will be notified by mail of the Court's decision.
5. If you are dissatisfied with the Court's decision, you may ask for a new trial. In order to obtain a new trial, you must file the Request for New Trial (form TR-220) within 20 days after the Court's decision was mailed to you, along with the full bail amount if you have not posted bail yet.

**\*Always include your citation number in any correspondence with the court.**

Link to forms TR-205 and TR-220: <https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/contesting-citation>

## Continuances

If you know that you will not be able to come to your **first appearance arraignment**:

- You must go to Room 145 at the Hall of Justice to request a continuance.
- Make your request as soon as you know you won't be able to appear for your court date, **at least five court days before your hearing**. Up to a 1-month continuance will be granted from the original first appearance arraignment date. No further continuances will be allowed at the windows in Room 145.

If you know that you will not be able to come to your **trial date**:

- You must go to Room 145 at the Hall of Justice to request a continuance.
- Your request must be submitted **at least two weeks prior to the trial date along with supporting documentation explaining why you are unable to attend**.
- Your request to continue a trial is not automatically granted. Unless a Judge has granted your request to continue the trial date, you are required to appear, **or the trial will proceed in your absence**.

## Court Appearance

1. In Person at 850 Bryant, Department A on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
2. For remote appearances visit: <https://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/virtual-courtrooms>

# Traffic School

## What Is Traffic School?

Completion of traffic school will keep the violation point off your driving record. **It is not an alternative to paying your fine.** Traffic school may be chosen at your first court appearance in Room 145 or at your arraignment. If you go to trial and are found guilty, there is no guarantee that you will be offered traffic school.

## Do I Qualify?

- You may choose to attend Traffic Violator School for a vehicle code violation that is assigned **one point only**. You may check online via <https://sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/traffic/bail-schedule> to see the point count of your violation.
- You may not have attended Traffic School for a previous violation committed within the last 18 months. The 18-month eligibility period is determined from violation date to violation date and not from when you attended Traffic School.

*\*See the San Francisco Traffic Court website for a full list of qualifications*

## How Do I Enroll?

After you have verified that you and the violation meet the above requirements, you may sign up and pay by mail, in person, or online (link below). If you sign up online, your traffic school due date and link to the Traffic School agreement will be on your confirmation page once paid. **You are generally given three months from your date of payment to complete Traffic School.** You may attend only the [DMV-Approved Classroom and Online Traffic Schools](#) -

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/portal/olinq2/welcome>

If you choose to take an online traffic school course from an approved traffic school, you must pay the fine and the \$52 administrative fee before the completion of the online school. If payment has not been received, your certificate will be rejected.

**You have 90 days from the date of the order to pay your fine and complete the program.**

## Court Fees Associated with Traffic School

1. The Bail (fine)
2. A state-mandated, non-refundable administrative fee of \$52.
3. A traffic school fee ranging from \$20 - \$45.

### NOTICE:

- **Traffic school is not an alternative to paying your fine.**
- If you are **eligible, and decide not to attend** traffic school, your automobile insurance may be adversely affected.
  - 1-point infractions stay on your driving record for 37 months.
- For drivers with a California noncommercial driver's license, one conviction in any 18-month period will be held confidential and not show on your driving record if you complete a traffic violator school program.

## Appeals

*If you disagree with the Court's ruling after a traffic trial, you have the right to an appeal:*

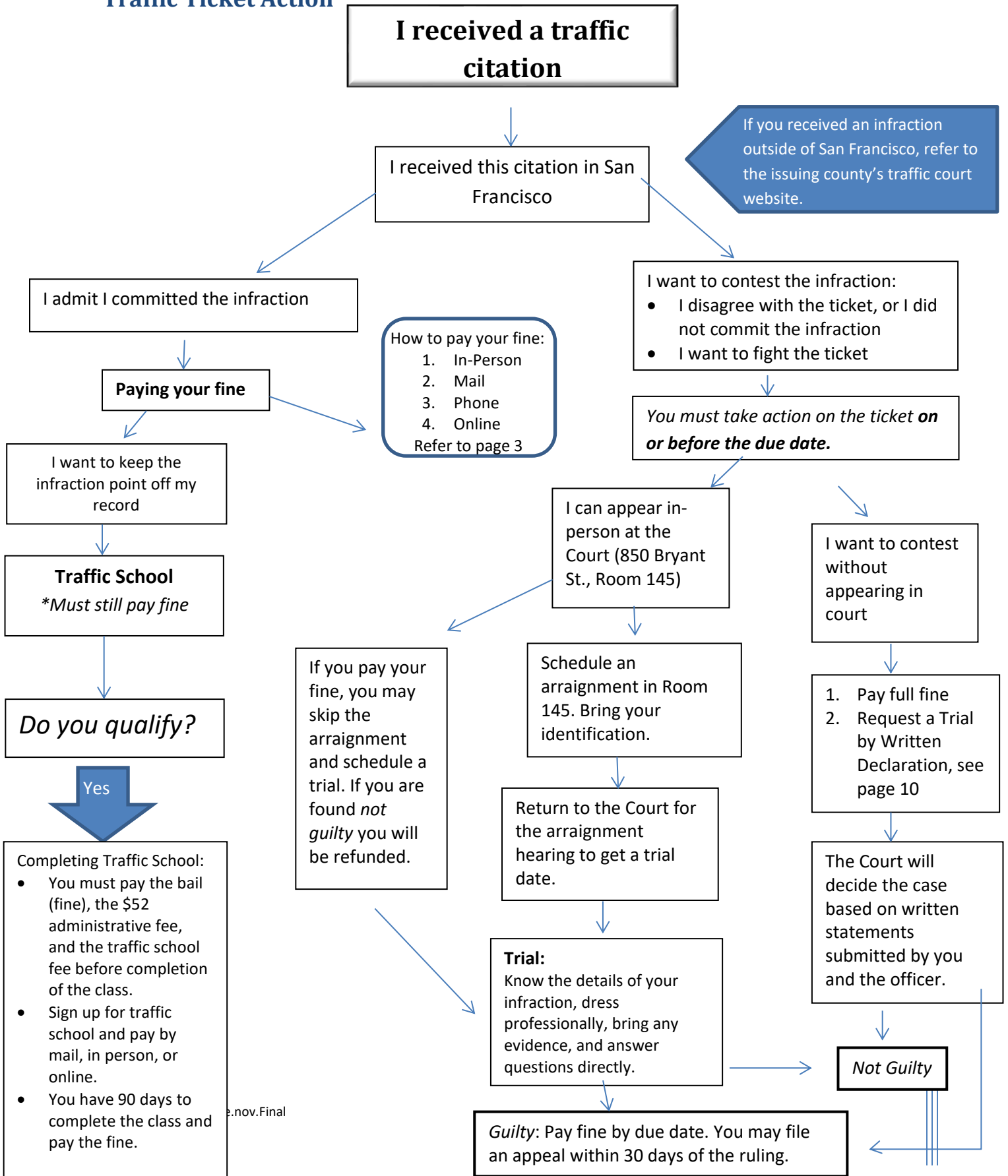
- The appeal must be filed within **30 days of the ruling**.
- Go to Room 145, Hall of Justice and request a copy of the packet titled "Instructions on Appeal Procedures for Infractions." The packet covers non-parking traffic matters and contains the forms you need to file your Appeal.
- Complete these forms and take them to the Appeals clerk in Room 101, window 5 or 6, Hall of Justice.
- After your paperwork is processed, you will be notified by mail of the next step in the appeal process and subsequent hearing date.
- Be aware that the fine ordered by the Court must be paid in Room 145 by the due date.

## Civil Assessment

*If you fail to appear in Court, or if you fail to pay your citation, it could cost you \$100.*

- You will receive a Notice of Civil Assessment to the address listed on the citation.
- A civil assessment of **\$100** will be added to any traffic/infraction fine if you fail to post bail, appear for your scheduled court date, or pay any fine ordered by the Court. All delinquent citations will be referred to Alliance One for collection.
- California law permits the Court to impose a civil assessment of \$100 against any individual who fails, after notice and without good cause, to appear in Court for any proceeding, or who fails to pay all or any portion of a fine ordered by the Court. The civil assessment is imposed in addition to, and separate from, any fine connected with a traffic citation. You may file a petition to vacate the Civil Assessment for good cause.
- Even if you later contest your citation and win, you still will be required to pay the civil assessment.

## Traffic Ticket Action



## I want to contest my infraction

1. I disagree with the ticket or I did not commit the infraction
2. I want to fight the ticket

- How to pay your fine:
1. In-Person
  2. Mail
  3. Phone
  4. Online
- Refer to page 3

*You must take action on the ticket **on or before the due date.***

I can appear in-person at the Court (850 Bryant St., Room 145)

I want to contest without appearing in Court

- In Room 145:**
1. Schedule arraignment, or;
  2. Pay fine to skip arraignment and schedule trial.

Return to the Court for the **arraignment** hearing to get a trial date.

Schedule a trial while depositing bail at the Court. Bring your identification.

- At your arraignment:
1. The Judge may offer you a reduced fine if you plead *no contest*.
  2. If eligible, you may request traffic school. **This may not be an option if you proceed to trial.**

1. Pay full fine
2. Request a Trial by Written Declaration, see page 10.

**Trial:**  
Know the details of your infraction, dress professionally, bring any evidence, and answer questions directly.

- Completing Traffic School:
- You must pay the bail (fine), the \$52 administrative fee, and the traffic school fee before completion of the class Sign up for traffic school and pay by mail, in person, or online.
  - **You have 90 days to complete the class and pay fine.**

The Court will decide the case based on written statements submitted by you and the officer.

The Court will decide guilty or not guilty.

*Not Guilty:* If you paid your fine it will be returned to you.

*Guilty/ No Contest:* Pay fine by due date. You may file an appeal within 30 days of the ruling.