

This guide is for informational purposes and does not replace medical, legal, or emergency services advice. In an emergency, call 9-1-1.



9-1-1 Call Scripts

What You'll Be Asked – and Why

Calling 9-1-1 is often stressful. Knowing what questions you may be asked ahead of time can help the call go more smoothly. Dispatchers follow a specific order because certain information is needed first to send the right help quickly.

Important: If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 right away. If it is **not safe** to speak openly, tell the dispatcher what you can, follow their instructions, and do not take risks to gather information.

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The Key Questions You Will Be Asked

1) What is the address (location) of the emergency?

This is the location where help is needed **right now**. If you are not at that location, the dispatcher will ask where you are later.

If you don't know the exact address, provide:

- The **nearest cross streets**
- The **nearest block number** (example: "near the 300 block of Main Street")
- A nearby **landmark** (store name, intersection, building sign)
- If the emergency is **moving**, share the **direction of travel** and current location

When asked for location, avoid answers like "in town," "at my house," or "on the freeway." The dispatcher needs specifics.

If you are asked for direction, give **compass directions** (north/south/east/west) if possible. Dispatchers use maps, but phrases like "just past the mailbox" may not translate clearly.

Remember: No matter what else you want to report, responders can't be sent without a location.

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2) What phone number are you calling from?

This should be the number of the phone you are using to call 9-1-1. Dispatch may need it to call you back, confirm details, or give instructions.

3) What is your name?

Dispatch may ask you to clarify or spell your name. This helps ensure accurate documentation and follow-up if needed.

4) Tell me exactly what happened.

Be as concise as possible and describe **what is happening now**, not the full backstory.

Examples:

- “My father is having chest pain.”
- “My mother just collapsed.”
- “My neighbor is hitting someone in the front yard.”
- “I just witnessed a car crash.”
- “I see smoke coming from my neighbor’s house.”

Additional details can be shared after the dispatcher has the information needed to send help.

For Medical Calls, You May Be Asked:

- How old is the patient? (An approximate age is okay.)
- Is the patient conscious?
- Is the patient breathing?

Based on what you report, dispatch will ask more specific questions and may give you instructions to follow while help is on the way.

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For Fire Calls, You May Be Asked:

- What exactly is on fire—and how big is it?
 - Do you see **flames, smoke**, or both?
 - What color is the smoke?
 - Is anyone inside the building?
 - Do you know how the fire started?
 - Are there nearby hazards the fire could spread to (other buildings, trees, dry grass, fuel, etc.)?
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For Police or Safety Calls, You May Be Asked:

Vehicle description (if relevant)

- License plate number and state (if safe to observe)
- Make and model (sedan, SUV, 4-door, etc.)
- Color
- Direction of travel

Person description (if relevant)

Dispatch may ask for a description **from head to toe**, such as:

- Name (if known)
- Date of birth or approximate age
- Height and build
- Hair color/length, facial hair
- Distinguishing features (glasses, tattoos, limp, etc.)
- Clothing (hat, jacket, shirt, pants, shoes)
- Are they carrying anything?
- Did you see or hear anything about weapons?

Safety note: Only observe and report details if it is safe to do so. Do not approach someone or put yourself at risk to gather information.

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For Both Medical and Police Calls, You May Be Asked:

- Your relationship to the person(s) involved (example: caregiver, family member, neighbor, friend, passerby, etc.)
- Details to help responders find the correct location:
 - Building type (house, duplex, apartment, manufactured home)
 - Number of stories
 - Color of the building
 - Whether there are multiple buildings at the address and where the incident is occurring
 - Vehicles present (driveway/parking lot)

Will you be standing by when responders arrive?

Dispatch may ask if you will be nearby to:

- Point responders to the correct location,
- Identify who is involved, or
- Provide additional information.

You may also be asked:

- If you will wait in a vehicle (and what kind)
- If you will be returning to the location (and how long it will take)
- If you will be on foot nearby (and what you are wearing)

A Note About Behavioral Health or Mental Health Crises

If the situation involves emotional distress, a mental health crisis, or someone who may communicate differently, it can help to share:

- Any known diagnosis or support needs (only what you know)
 - What helps calm the person (quiet voice, space, familiar support person)
 - What may escalate them (crowding, loud commands, sudden touch, flashing lights)
 - Whether responders can approach calmly and speak slowly
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Final Reminder:

Every emergency is different, and you may not be asked every question listed here. This guide is intended to help you feel more prepared and confident if you ever need to make this important call.

If you can, stay on the line and follow the dispatcher's instructions. Do not hang up unless you are told to do so.