

Questions related to Police and the Constitutional Use of Force

1. Looking at the Fourth Amendment, what is the constitutional standard for a police officer to “seize” someone? Use the three underlined words in a one-sentence response.
2. Name the two landmark decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court that, along with lower federal court decisions applying them, provide clear guidance on the constitutional use of force by police officers.
3. When is it reasonable for a police officer to shoot a fleeing suspect in the back? Explain whether a warning is required before firing.
4. Does a police officer have the authority to detain you as part of an investigatory stop?
5. Discuss the challenging circumstances of police work that must be factored in when evaluating the “reasonableness” of incidents involving the use of force.
6. What is the fundamental question in a use of force inquiry?
7. Should use of force inquiries take into account the “underlying intent or motivation” of the officers involved? Is deadly force justified only if non-deadly alternatives would have been ineffective?
8. In what sense are police officers sworn to cause trouble?