









So You Think You Are a Law Abiding Citizen:

Take This Test to See How True That Is

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Most people I know take pride in their self image as law abiding citizens. Politicians regularly base their campaigns on “law & order” platforms to appeal to this world view. Lately I’ve begun to harbor a few doubts about how easy or even possible it is to match up to this ideal in our modern world. We all know the expression “there is an app for that”. Chances are that with many of our daily activities there is also “a law for that”. This article has been designed as a simple self test evaluation to gauge just how law-abiding you really are. Each time you see the icon of the officer apprehending a culprit “A black silhouette icon on a light blue background. It depicts a police officer on the left wearing a cap and a uniform with a sash, and a smaller figure on the right with their hands behind their back, representing a culprit being apprehended.

When I travel along Burnt Store Road or I-75 I’m always intrigued to monitor the average speed of my fellow drivers. Ten miles per hour over the limit seems to be the current norm  with the occasional outliers such as souped-up Imprezas buzzing along at 20 mph over the limit and Crown Victorias poking along at 10 mph under. Add this to the almost universal rolling stops  within the Marina and we have a veritable host of traffic law offenders. As of January 1, 2020 texting while driving is also now a primary offence in Florida  (you can still text at a stop light). Interestingly, hand held phones are still allowed in Florida except in school or work zones. Driving in the front seat without a seatbelt has been illegal since 2009 . Driving under the influence (.08 or greater blood alcohol concentration)  is a criminal offense and possessing an open container of alcohol, even in a golf cart, is a civil infraction .

The tax departments, federal, state and county, are the next aggrieved lawmakers in this exposé. On any given day I observe a parade of delivery trucks driving up and down our little cul-de-sac. By Florida law an individual must self-report and remit the 6.5% (Lee County rate) sales and use tax due on any delivery which has not had the tax

already collected ☹️. I've yet to find anyone who has actually done this. I'll not venture too far into the murky area of personal tax deductions, income exclusions and state residency requirements as some things are best left unexplored – you know who you are ☹️. Exceeding your customs limit when returning from abroad is another potential exposure ☹️.

Our relationship with the U.S. Postal Service can result in surprising transgressions. I was recently admonished for offering to leave a small package in a colleague's mailbox. Little did I know that this was strictly forbidden ☹️ as no such law exists in my home country. Likewise, I was surprised to learn that it was a crime to open or pitch out bulk mail items addressed to former owners and residents of your home ☹️, even those who may have moved away many years earlier. USPS advises that you should re-label as "Return to Sender" and place it back in the mailbox.

I'm not a gambler as such, but have been known to play the occasional game of chance. Florida statute 849 holds a plethora of rules and regulations relating to gaming and one that caught my attention was a rule that stated that home games were only permitted if they were "penny ante", defined as a game or series of games of poker, pinochle, bridge, rummy, canasta, hearts, dominoes, or mah-jongg in which the winnings of any player in a single round, hand, or game do not exceed \$10 in value ☹️. Card sharks beware.

There are so many more infractions which I could expand upon but I'm running well past my word count limit so will conclude by throwing out a few more teasers for you to contemplate and test your guilty consciences with.

- Inflating insurance claims, however slightly, is now considered by many as a basic entitlement but it is a fraud offence ☹️.
- Copyright infringement, particularly through downloads of music or video content ☹️, has become epidemic in scope, particularly among the young and tech savvy. Internet enabled plagiarism has also become a plague in the school systems and creative communities ☹️. Resumé "enhancement" practices have become the bane of recruiters worldwide ☹️. While perhaps not technically illegal, these activities could result in embarrassment and the loss of a coveted job or school placement.
- Under Florida law, it is illegal to discard nickel-cadmium or small sealed lead acid rechargeable batteries or products containing such rechargeable batteries in the trash ☹️. I was surprised to learn that most other alkaline and non-rechargeable lithium batteries used by consumers such as 9 V, D, C, AA and AAA can be discarded with the regular garbage.

- While more common with the younger generations, littering 🧑🧑, drinking underage 🧑🧑 and marijuana offences 🧑🧑 are in most cases illegal (enter your youthful score, if you can remember).
- I know a family member who is concerned about his online profile and security so has established a social media persona under a different name. This can be considered an offence in some circumstances as is entering a false name in an online commercial transaction 🧑🧑.
- In Florida both dogs and cats over 4 months old must have a pet license 🧑🧑, and all are required to have rabies inoculations or booster shots 🧑🧑.
- I don't own a gun so am on thin ice addressing weapons laws. Florida is considered as being "accommodating" with respect to firearms but the Statute is still long and comprehensive with many rules relating to licensing, storage, ammunition, etc. 🧑🧑. For those who habitually "pack" a weapon, a common reminder on various websites is that concealed weapons are not permitted in bars or the bar areas of restaurants, even if you are primarily eating there, as well as many other public spaces such as airport waiting areas 🧑🧑.

Now add up your marks and score yourself between "0" (exemplary citizen who obviously does not inhabit the same world as me) and "25" (let's just hope you don't get caught anytime soon).

In closing, it may be illegal for a non-lawyer to offer legal opinions in Florida. This was written by a retired Canadian CPA, and is not and should not be interpreted as legal advice. Any reliance upon these comments is strictly forbidden.