When a police officer stops a Black driver, the first 45 words said by that officer hold important clues about how their encounter is likely to go.

Car stops that result in a search, handcuffing, or arrest are nearly three times more likely to begin with the police officer issuing a command, such as “Keep your hands on the wheel” or “Turn the car off.”

That’s according to a new study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* that examined police body-camera footage of 577 routine car stops involving Black drivers.

Eighty-one of these stops ultimately involved searches, handcuffings, or arrests. That kind of outcome was less likely when a police officer’s first words provided a reason for the stop.

“The first 45 words, which is less than 30 seconds on average, spoken by a law enforcement officer during a car stop to a Black driver can be quite telling about how the stop will end,” says Eugenia Rho, a researcher at Virginia Tech.