

Table 11-2 Examples of the Automobile Exception

Case	Facts	Ruling
<i>Carroll v. United States</i> (1925)	Federal agents suspect individuals are transporting illegal liquor. They stop and search the car, finding evidence of the crime.	Automobiles merit low levels of protection. Their mobility often makes obtaining a search warrant impractical.
<i>Chambers v. Maroney</i> (1970)	Robbery suspects are pulled over and arrested. Their impounded automobile is searched and evidence is found in the trunk.	To secure its contents, protect against liability claims, and remove any potential dangers, police may conduct an inventory search of an impounded automobile when its occupants have been arrested.
<i>New York v. Belton</i> (1981)	Police stop a car for speeding. The officer smells marijuana, arrests the suspects, and searches the car, finding cocaine in the zipped pocket of a jacket in the backseat.	After police have made a lawful arrest of an occupant of an automobile, they may search, incident to the arrest, the entire passenger compartment and the contents of any container therein.
<i>United States v. Ross</i> (1982)	Based on a reliable informant's tip that Ross sold drugs out of his car trunk, police stop Ross. They search the car, finding a pistol in the glove compartment and illegal drugs contained in a brown paper bag in the trunk.	With probable cause police may search every part of a vehicle and any contents that may conceal the object of the search.
<i>Michigan State Police v. Sitz</i> (1990)	Police stop all passing cars pursuant to a sobriety checkpoint program.	Brief stops, where police do not use discretion to determine who will be stopped, reasonably advance the state's interest in preventing drunk driving.
<i>California v. Acevedo</i> (1991)	Police observe a suspect leaving a house with a package they have reason to believe contains marijuana. The suspect places the package in the trunk of the car. The police stop the car, open the trunk, and seize the evidence.	Police may search an automobile and the containers within it where they have probable cause to believe contraband or evidence is contained.