

To Reduce Teenage [Driving Accidents](#)

The Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety has reported that traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 20. Nearly one out of every five licensed 16-year-olds is in a vehicle crash, and, per mile driven, their fatality rate is roughly three to five times that of drivers between 30 and 50 years of age. The Division of Traffic Safety has attributed the high teen crash rate to the lack of driving experience, as well as a greater tendency to take risks. While Illinois has been reluctant to raise the minimum licensing age for new drivers, the state's Graduated Licensing Program addresses common teen-driving pitfalls to reduce the opportunity for injury.

To address teens' lack of driving experience, the three-tiered Graduated Licensing Program mandates that each new driver practice under a learner's permit for a minimum of nine months, with at least 50 hours of supervised driving. The teen must also be enrolled in a state-approved driver education course. Teens are restricted from driving between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. on weekdays, as well as between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. on weekends. Local curfews may further limit teens' nighttime driving. [Cell phone](#) use is prohibited except for in cases of emergency, but then only to contact law enforcement, health care providers or emergency services. Both cell phone and night driving restrictions continue until the driver reaches 21 years of age. Any moving violation results in a nine-month waiting period before applying for a driver's license.

The initial licensing phase begins when the new driver successfully completes the permit stage. This phase lasts for the first year of licensing, or until the driver turns 18 – whichever occurs first. To reduce distractions that cause [auto accidents](#), a new driver may have no more than one passenger under 20 years old (other than immediate family) and may be ticketed for violating this law. Furthermore, a new driver must maintain a conviction-free driving record to six months prior to turning 18 before moving on to the full licensing stage. Thus, a conviction during the initial licensing stage may extend restrictions beyond age 18.

Once the initial licensing phase is completed, the final stage of the Graduated Licensing Program commences – the full licensing phase. If the driver receives two moving violation convictions within a 24-month period, he or she is subject to a minimum one-month driver's license suspension. Additionally, another suspension will result for each subsequent moving violation. Once the new driver reaches 21 years of age, he or she should be well prepared to tackle the challenges of the [road safely](#) and responsibly.