

Problem-Solution Essay

Strong Student Model

Writing Workshop

*These writing models are also available in **Assessment Masters**.*

The Case for Graduated Licenses

Statistics about teenage driving are illuminating: automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States. According to a *U.S. News Online* (<http://www.usnews.com>) report, though teens account for only 2% of drivers, they are involved in more than 10% of traffic accidents. Nearly half of those accidents are single-car crashes—a car hitting a tree or sliding off the road—almost always the result of a teen’s showing off for a friend or just not paying attention. Teenagers are the most unsafe drivers on the roads today, and they endanger themselves and others. A concerned public has demanded that something be done to curb the danger of the teen driver.

Some extremists argue that the driving age should be raised to 18 or 21, pointing to statistics that show drivers who begin at 21 are less likely to be involved in crashes (*U.S. News Online*). But stopping teens from getting their licenses for five, or even three, years would cause enormous problems with their lives. Teens wouldn’t be able to drive themselves to school or work and would become more dependent on their already overworked parents. Clearly, raising the driving age is the wrong solution.

Others suggest that the problem could be solved simply by giving students more time behind the wheel in driver’s education classes or through driving schools. But a government study has shown that teens who take driving classes are just as likely to be involved in accidents as teens who never take such classes (*U.S. News Online*).

The problem isn’t one of conventional education so much as it is of teenagers learning the proper degree of caution and attention that driving demands. Many teenagers are foolhardy, have short attention spans, and care more about looking cool than they do about being safe. They think nothing of tailgating, speeding, ignoring seat belts, or driving their cars as though they were playing a video game instead of piloting a two-ton steel box with the power to kill. Yet caution and attention are not skills that can be taught in a schoolbook; they come with wisdom and are the result of experience.

1. Clearly states the problem and uses facts and statistics to explain its significance.

2. Explores and discards one solution to the problem based on personal experience.

3. Considers and dismisses a second solution to the problem based on factual evidence.

4. Supports statement of problem with examples of teenage behavior.

5. Identifies specific skills needed to combat problem.

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Strong Student Model *continued*

It seems like a catch-22: students shouldn't drive until they have logged enough experience to be fully aware of the dangers of the road, but they can't gain that experience unless they are actually driving. How can we limit teens while ensuring that they receive the experience they need to make them safe drivers?

Lately there has been a heated discussion in the media—and at this high school—about a proposal before the state senate. This proposal would institute graduated driver's licenses for drivers ages 16 to 18. Such a program would restrict teens' driving privileges, only granting them new privileges as they become more experienced behind the wheel.

There would be three stages involved in acquiring a license. The first stage would be nearly the same as the current system: for three to six months, a teen would have a learner's permit requiring a licensed adult driver to be present in the car. The second stage would allow the teen to drive alone during the day, but would require an adult present at night—the time when most teenage accidents occur. After driving accident-free for nine months to a year in stage two, the teen would graduate to the third stage: an unrestricted license.

States that have already instituted such programs have had great success: teen accidents have been reduced by 5% to 16% (*U.S. News Online*). Also, fewer accidents have been fatal, perhaps because teens who do break the law and drive alone at night drive more carefully for fear of being caught.

Many of my classmates complain loudly about having their "rights" violated by the graduated license system, but loud as they are, they are quiet compared to the statistics. Graduated licenses save lives, reduce the number of accidents, and make the streets safer for everyone. If teens want unlimited access to the roads of our country, let them earn the privilege—by showing they are mature enough to handle the responsibility.

6. Rhetorical question sets stage for solution and connects paragraphs.

7. Introduces writer's proposed solution to the problem.

8. Explains how solution can be put into effect.

9. Uses statistics to support the proposed solution.

10. Conclusion restates problem and proposed solution, using logical reasoning to persuade audience.

Problem-Solution Essay

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Average Student Model

We Can Limit Teen Accidents

One of the biggest problems facing teenagers today is one kids tend to ignore. I am referring to teenagers and driving. Teens are the most unsafe group of drivers on the road. Car accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States. According to some reports, teens account for only 2% of all drivers, yet they are responsible for more than 10% of all traffic accidents. A lot of those accidents are when one car hits a tree or slides off the road, showing that the cause is reckless driving—someone showing off for his or her friend or just not paying attention. The time has come to do something about this epidemic.

Some people think that the driving age should be raised to 21. They say that people who begin driving at 21 are less likely to be involved in crashes. Probably that's true. But stopping teens from getting their licenses until they are 21 would cause enormous problems with their everyday lives. Teenagers wouldn't be able to go anywhere. They couldn't drive to school or work and would have to rely on their parents or take public transportation, which isn't very safe at night and isn't even available everywhere. This solution to the problem would cause more problems than it would solve.

Some other people suggest that students just need better driver's education classes, or else more classes, or more time behind the wheel. We can all see how our education could be bettered. But studies show that teens who take driving classes are just as likely to be involved in accidents as teens who never take such classes. If education is not the solution either, then maybe it is because of who teenagers are.

Teenagers are foolhardy, have short attention spans, and care more about looking cool than they do about being safe. They don't think anything of tailgating, speeding, ignoring seat belts, or driving their cars as though they are playing video games. This isn't all teens, for sure, but—though I hate to say it—it is definitely most teens. Basically, teenagers are pretty immature and they also seem to have the idea that they will live forever—that none of these accidents could really happen to them. Well, that is pretty much what the teenage driver who died in the last accident probably thought, too.

1. States the problem using facts and statistics, but doesn't provide a source.

2. Discussion of this solution contains vague references, such as "some people" and "they," rather than solid facts.

3. Considers and dismisses a second solution to the problem based on unspecified factual evidence.

4. Reinforces analysis of the problem with examples of teenage behavior, but needs transition to next paragraph.

Problem-Solution Essay

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Average Student Model *continued*

Lately there has been a lot of talk in the news—and at this high school—about a proposal. This proposal would institute graduated driver's licenses for drivers aged 16 to 18. This program would restrict teens' driving privileges, granting them new privileges as they become more experienced behind the wheel. The more experienced a teen driver becomes, the more privileges he or she would get as a driver.

The first stage in acquiring a license would be pretty much the same as it is now: for three to six months, a teen would have a learner's permit requiring a licensed adult driver to be present in the car. The second stage allows the teen to drive alone during the day, but would require an adult present at night—the time when most teenage accidents occur because of illegal drinking and joy riding and drag racing and that sort of risky business. After driving accident-free for nine months to a year in stage two, the teen is graduated to the third stage: an unrestricted license.

Several states have already started programs like this one, and they have been successful. Teen accidents are down, and most teens are complying with the rules. Those who don't suffer the consequences: having to stay longer in whatever stage they are in when they break the rule.

Many teenagers complain and whine about having their "rights" violated by the graduated license system, but what right do they have to endanger others? What right do teenagers have to make the streets unsafe for everyone? Why can't they just accept that a graduated license is a small price to pay for peace of mind? Shouldn't they have to show that they are mature enough to handle the responsibility of driving a car?

5. Introduces writer's proposed solution to the problem.

6. Explains how solution could be put into effect.

7. Makes statement about success rates, but without supporting facts.

8. Conclusion restates problem and proposed solution, but with a combative rather than a reasoned argument.

Problem-Solution Essay

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Weak Student Model

Why We Should Limit Teen Drivers

A big problem is facing teenagers today. It is one they try not to think about, never mind do something about. I am discussing here teenagers and driving. The most unsafe group of drivers on the road. Car accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States. Teenagers account for more car accidents than they should, considering they are such a small percentage of all drivers. Most of us know at least one teenager who has been in an automobile accident, and we certainly read about bad accidents involving teenagers. A lot of the accidents involve just one car that slides off the road or hits a tree. Most of those accidents are the result of reckless driving—a guy showing off for his friend or just not paying attention. The time has come to do something about this epidemic.

Some people think that the driving age should be raised. This seems like a punishment without a good reason. Even if people who begin driving at 21 are involved in few crashes, you just have to ask how many drivers there are who start at 21. The number of such drivers is going to be small. Which explains why there are so few accidents with such drivers. And anyone who waits until he or she is 21 before getting behind the wheel of a car is obviously a person who is timid. Such people are unlikely to cause accidents because they are so afraid. This is hardly a reason to punish teens—not to mention their parents, who would have to drive them everywhere.

Other people suggest that students just need better driver's education classes or else more classes or more time behind the wheel. We can all see how our education could be bettered but even this is wrong, statistics show that teens who take driving classes are in as many accidents as teens who never take driving classes oddly enough. So it is not a matter of education, leaving us to ask: What can we do to limit accidents caused by teens in cars?

The problem might just be that teenagers are teenagers. How do you cure that? Teenagers are foolhardy, don't pay good attention, and want to look cool which works against driving safely. They don't think nothing of tailgating, speeding, not wearing seat belts, or

1. Uses sentence fragment rather than complete sentence.

2. States the problem, but providing statistics would give information more impact.

3. Explores possible solution to problem, but reasoning is not convincing.

4. Long run-on sentence makes reasoning difficult to follow.

5. Uses a double negative.

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Weak Student Model *continued*

driving their car as though they are playing video games. How are they going to learn to be cautious and pay attention? Caution and attention are not taught in schoolbooks; they are the result of experience. So how can they get these qualities?

There is a proposal in the news that would address this problem of teenagers being teenagers. I'm sure you've heard about it. This proposal would restrict teens' driving privileges, only giving them new privileges as they become more experienced in driving a car. The more experienced a teen driver becomes, the more privileges he or she would get as a driver.

Acquiring a license would be pretty much the same as it is now: for three to six months, a teen would have a learner's permit that would require a licensed adult driver to be present in the car. After that, a teen could drive alone during the day, but would have to have an adult in the car at night when most teenage accidents occur because of illegal drinking and joy riding and drag racing and that sort of risky business. This goes on for maybe a year before the teen is given an unrestricted license.

Several states have already started programs like this one, and they have been good at saving lives. Teen accidents are down and most teens are complying with the rules. If the program can work in other states, I'm sure it can work well in ours.

A few complainers whine about having their "rights" violated by the graduated license system, but what right do they have to endanger others? I mean, our constitutional rights are protected as long as they don't step on someone else's rights, and driving unsafely really steps on the rights of people who are hit and killed. So let's give up a few rights, I say.

6. Presentation of proposal is repetitious and lacks details.

7. Explanation could be made clearer by describing the steps in the process as "stage one," "stage two," etc.

8. Makes assertion about success of proposal, but without factual support.

9. Conclusion trails off on tangent about rights and will not help to persuade audience.

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Rubric for Evaluation

Ideas and Content	Weak	Average	Strong
1. Clearly states a problem and explains its significance			
2. Explores all aspects of a problem, including its causes and effects			
3. Offers one or more reasonable solutions to the problem			
4. Uses anecdotes, examples, facts, or statistics to support the proposed solutions			
5. Explains how to put the solutions into effect			

Structure and Form			
6. Uses logical reasoning to persuade the audience			
7. Concludes by summing up the proposal			

Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics			
8. Contains no more than two or three minor errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation			
9. Contains no more than two or three minor errors in grammar and usage			

Writing Progress to Date (Writing Portfolio)

The strongest aspect of this writing is _____

The final version shows improvement over the rough draft in this way: _____

A specific improvement over past assignments in your portfolio is _____

A skill to work on in future assignments is _____

Additional comments: _____
