

Problem-Solution Essay

Writing Workshop

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.

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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.