

Grade 9 Writing Prompt

Lawmakers are considering raising the age for legal drivers from sixteen to eighteen. Write an essay for your state legislators arguing whether or not they should change the age guidelines for drivers in Utah. Your essay must be based on ideas, concepts, and information from the “Raise the Driving Age?” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so you can

- plan your essay;
- write your essay; and
- revise and edit your essay.

Be sure to

- include a claim;
- address counterclaims;
- use evidence from multiple sources.

Do not over rely on one source. Type your answer in the space provided.

States Urged to Raise the Driving Age

An influential auto safety group is calling on states to raise the age for getting a driver's license to 17 or 18. Adrian Lund, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, acknowledged the idea is "a tough sell." But, he noted that car crashes are the leading cause of death among teenagers.

More than 5,000 U.S. teens die each year in car crashes. The rate of crashes per mile driven for 16-year-old drivers is almost 10 times the rate for adults, according to the National Highway Safety Administration. Many countries in Europe and elsewhere have a driving age of 17 or 18.

"The bottom line is that when we look at the research, raising the driving age saves lives," Lund said.

Not surprisingly, a lot of teens hate the idea.

"I would really be upset because I've waited so long to drive," said Diamante White, a 16-year-old who got her permit in July. She said learning to drive is a "growing-up experience."

Many parents agree. They also like not having to chauffeur their teens to school, sporting events and any number of other places.

Institute researchers have compiled data from New Jersey, the only state that issues licenses at 17. The rate of teens killed in crashes in New Jersey has been consistently lower than in nearby states.

Crash-related deaths among 16- and 17-year olds were 18 per 100,000 in New Jersey. This is compared with 26 per 100,000 in Connecticut. Those rates have dropped even further since both states started graduated driver's license programs.

Graduated licensing requires teens to spend more time driving with a responsible adult before they go solo. Many states tie these more stringent standards to declining teen crash rates.

Some say we are worrying too much about teen drivers and not enough about others who cause serious problems on the road. "The intense focus on teens diverts our attention from the real threats to public safety: speeding and driving while intoxicated," said Andrea Summers of the teen driving program in Delaware.

"States Urged to Raise the Driving Age." *CBS News*. CBS Interactive Inc., 10 Sept. 2008. Web. 8 October 2015.

Should 16-year-olds drive?

Is 16 the right age to get a driver's license?

Researchers for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety say the answer is no. So does Adrian Lund of the Governors Highway Safety Association in Arizona. They point to statistics to back up the position that raising the driving age makes sense and would save lives.

Linnea Greci sees the issue a little differently. Then again, she's 15. "I don't think it matters what age you are, as long as you have the practice and experience."

The research shows states are making progress in reducing the No. 1 killer of teens—motor vehicle crashes—through graduated driver licensing. The laws ease restrictions on teen drivers as they gain experience and keep a clean driving record.

But "we're still losing a lot of teens on the road each year," Lund said. Motor vehicle crashes kill more than 5,000 teenagers every year.

A combination of factors contributes to make teenagers poor drivers. Much of it centers on the complexity of driving and teens' tendency to speed more and use seat belts less than older drivers.

Also, the teen brain is at a particularly vulnerable point in development. 16-year-olds have the logical reasoning of an adult, experts say. But their social and emotional development remains relatively immature and seeks novelty and risk.

The teenage brain also is particularly vulnerable to distraction and peer pressure. The front portion of the brain—which includes control of impulses, judgment and decision-making, and the coordination of multi-tasking—matures deep into the 20s, research shows.

But veteran driver's education teachers are skeptical about raising the age when a teenager can get a license.

Brent Johnston, a driving teacher at Hinsdale Central, said "Teen driving issues are not about age and maturity as much as they are about making good choices and demonstrating exceptional behavior."

State Rep. John D'Amico, who proposed raising the driving age to 18 in 2006, said teen driving deaths have dropped in Illinois since the graduated driving laws were strengthened. He's satisfied for now that the reforms are working but is open to reviving a push for a higher minimum driving age if deaths rise. Surveys reviewed by the insurance institute show more than 50 percent of adults support higher licensing ages.

Ryan Moore, 16, got his driver's license in June. He said, "I think it would be better to wait," but he needed his license as soon as possible. Both parents work, and he had to get himself from football practice to his job as a lifeguard.

"I've driven with some people who are horrible drivers even though they've been driving for a while," Moore said. "And I've driven with people who haven't been driving very long but are pretty good. Some people are ready, and some people aren't."

Gregory, Ted. "Should 16-Year-Olds Drive?" *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago Tribune, 9 September 2008. Web. 8 October 2015.

Should the Driving Age Be Raised to 18?

On Dec. 29, 2005, four teenage boys from Chicago went out for a late-night drive and had a terrible accident. The car spun out of control and struck several objects, including a giant light pole. Two of the boys—a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old—were killed. The driver of the car was just 16.

After this tragic accident, thousands of people began asking what could be done to prevent this from happening again.

One answer is raising the driving age. All 50 states prohibit 16-year-olds from drinking alcohol, buying cigarettes, and purchasing handguns. Yet somehow most states are willing to put them in charge of a car, which could potentially be a deadly weapon.

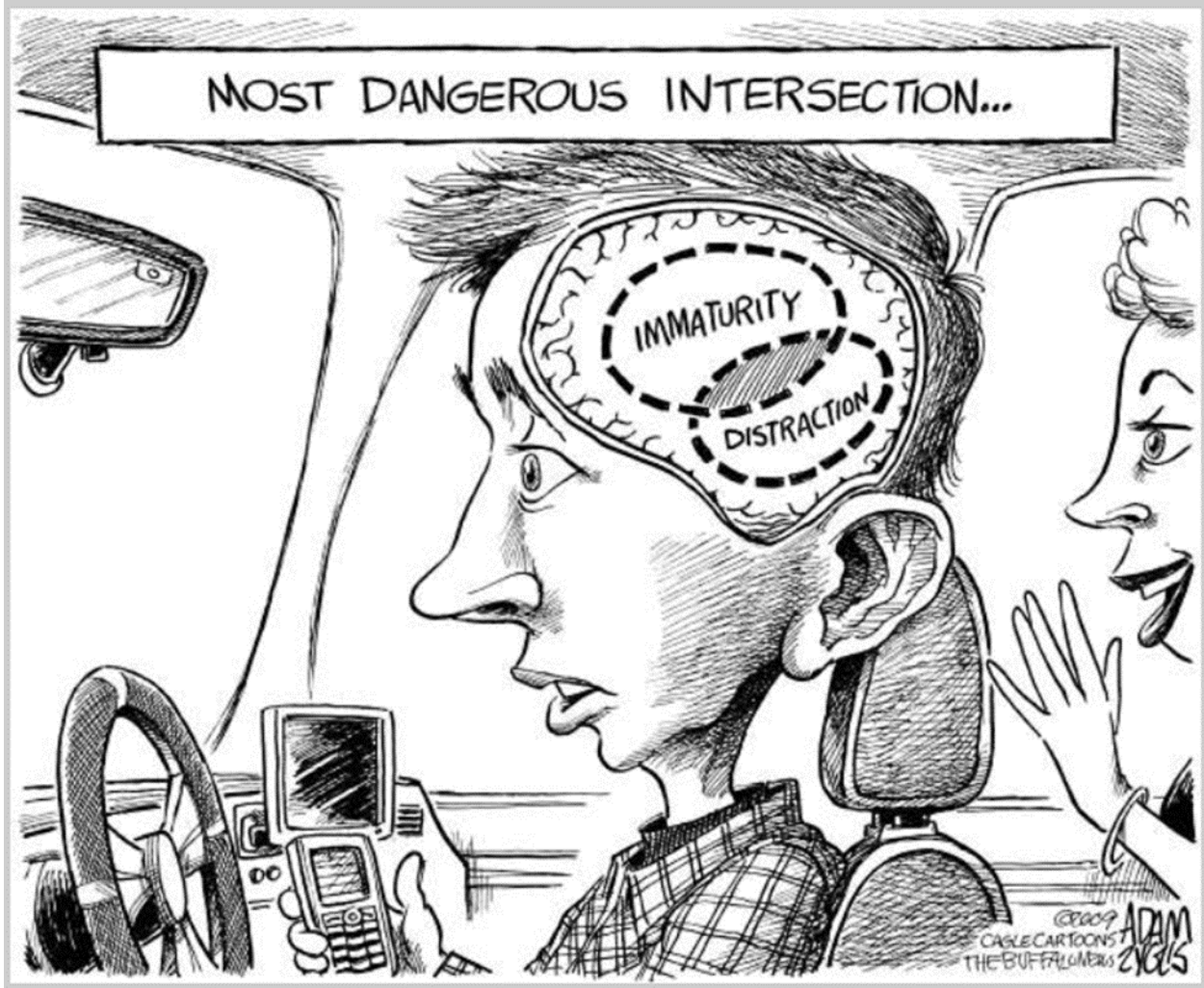
Between 1995 and 2004, there were 30,917 fatalities in accidents that involved 15-to-17-year-old drivers, according to a study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. About a third of those deaths were the teen drivers themselves. The rest were pedestrians, passengers, and people in cars that teenage drivers struck.

Yet, statistics can be deceiving. Statistics also show that men of all ages are 77 percent more likely to kill someone while driving than women. If people want to save lives by raising the driving age, then how about saving lives by allowing only women to drive?

Just because of your birthdate, are you dangerous? Should you have your ability to drive taken from you? Studies show that it is inexperience, not age, that causes accidents. Raising the driving age will just create inexperienced, accident-prone drivers at 18 instead of 16.

Cars are necessary for mobility in this country. Is there another solution?

D'Amico, John and Alex Koroknay-Palicz. "Should the Driving Age Be Raised to 18?" *Upfront*. The New York Times, 2015. Web. 8 October 2015.



Zyglis, Adam. *The Buffalo News*. www.cagle.com. 2009.