



The Definitive Guide to Representing Yourself in Illinois Traffic Court

Prepared by Fiscella Law LLC – Criminal, Traffic & DUI Defense
www.DefendIL.com | 630-708-6690**

Important Disclaimer

This guide is for **educational purposes only** and does **not** create an attorney-client relationship. Traffic law is fact-specific, and outcomes vary by county, judge, and prosecutor. If your license, job, or freedom is at risk, consult a qualified traffic defense attorney.

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1. Introduction: What Traffic Court Really Is

Traffic court is not like TV court. It is fast-paced, crowded, and procedural. Judges expect you to:

- Be prepared
- Be respectful
- Know what you are asking for

Judges do **not** give legal advice. Prosecutors do **not** work for you. What you say — and how you say it — matters.

2. Before You Go to Court (Critical Preparation)

At Least 48 Hours Before Court:

- Read your ticket carefully
- Look up the statute number listed
- Check if court appearance is mandatory
- Verify courtroom location and time
- Arrange childcare and time off work

Strong Recommendation:

👉 **Print EVERYTHING** you might need — even if you already emailed it.

3. What to Bring to Court (Checklist)

Bring **at least 3 paper copies** of each item:

- Ticket(s)
- Proof of insurance



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- Driver's license
- Vehicle registration
- Any repair receipts
- Any photos or diagrams
- Any correspondence from court

Why 3 copies?

- One for you
- One for the prosecutor
- One for the judge

4. What to Wear & How to Act

Dress Code (Conservative Wins):

- Business casual minimum
- No hats, shorts, ripped jeans, or flip-flops

Courtroom Conduct:

- Arrive early
- Stand when your case is called
- Speak clearly
- Never interrupt the judge
- Address the judge as “Your Honor”

5. Understanding the Courtroom Players

- **Judge:** Decides your case
- **Prosecutor:** Represents the city/state
- **Clerk:** Handles paperwork
- **Police Officer:** Witness for the state



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The officer must appear for trial unless legally excused.

6. How a Traffic Court Call Proceeds

1. Judge calls your name
2. You step forward
3. Judge states the charge
4. You respond (guilty / not guilty / request supervision)

⚠ Many outcomes are decided **in under 60 seconds**.

7. What to Say in Court (Scripts That Work)

Requesting Court Supervision

“Good morning, Your Honor. I respectfully request court supervision if the court deems it appropriate. I have a clean driving record and understand the seriousness of the citation.”

Requesting Time to Comply

“Your Honor, I respectfully request a brief continuance to provide proof of compliance.”

Asking Questions

“Your Honor, may I clarify one point before entering a plea?”

Trial Election

“Not guilty, Your Honor. I request a trial.”



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8. What NOT to Say in Court

- ✗ “I didn’t think I was speeding”
- ✗ “Everyone else was doing it”
- ✗ “I was late”
- ✗ “The officer was rude”
- ✗ “I Googled it”

Judges care about **law and facts**, not excuses.

9. What Is Court Supervision?

Definition:

Court supervision is **not a conviction** if successfully completed.

Key Points:

- No conviction reported to Secretary of State
 - Usually 3–12 months
 - Conditions may include:
 - No new violations
 - Fine and court costs
 - Traffic school
-

10. Common Illinois Moving Violations & Penalties

Speeding (625 ILCS 5/11-601)

- 1–20 mph over: Petty offense
- 21–25 mph over: Higher fines
- 26+ mph over: Mandatory court, Class B misdemeanor



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- 35+ mph over: Class A misdemeanor

Improper Lane Usage (625 ILCS 5/11-709)

- Common supervision-eligible offense

Failure to Reduce Speed (625 ILCS 5/11-601(a))

- Often issued with accidents

Failure to Yield / Failure to Stop for a School Bus (625 ILCS 5/11-1414)

Failure to stop for a stopped school bus with its stop arm extended is one of the **most serious traffic offenses in Illinois**.



No Court Supervision Available:

This offense is **NOT eligible for court supervision**.



Automatic License Suspension:

Upon conviction, the Illinois Secretary of State will impose a **mandatory driver's license suspension**:

- **First offense:** 3-month suspension
- **Second offense:** 1-year suspension

These cases are frequently proven using **bus-mounted cameras**, and the judge **cannot stop or modify the suspension** once a conviction is entered.

If you are charged with a school bus violation, pleading guilty without legal advice can result in immediate and unavoidable license consequences.

Speeding in a School Zone (625 ILCS 5/11-605)

- Significantly higher fines than standard speeding
- Mandatory court appearance in most cases
- Prosecuted aggressively by both the court and municipality



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Critical Warning:

Speeding in a school zone is **often NOT eligible for court supervision**, especially where children are present, warning lights are activated, or the speed is well above the limit. Many judges treat these cases as automatic convictions unless there is a clear legal or factual defense.

A conviction can:

- Appear on your driving record
- Increase insurance rates substantially
- Limit your ability to receive supervision on future tickets

Judges have **very limited discretion** in school zone cases. Do not assume supervision will be available.

11. Non-Moving Violations Explained

Examples:

- Expired registration
- No insurance (serious)
- Equipment violations

Many can be dismissed with **proof of compliance**.

12. Options for Resolving a Ticket

1. Pay the ticket (conviction)
2. Request court supervision
3. Attend traffic school
4. Negotiate with prosecutor
5. Proceed to trial



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Each option has **long-term consequences**.

13. Trials: What to Expect If You Fight the Ticket

- Officer testifies first
- You may cross-examine
- You may testify (optional)
- Judge decides guilt

⚠ If found guilty after trial, penalties are often **higher**.

14. Evidence & Documents (Why Copies Matter)

Judges rarely accept:

- Phones
- Emails
- Screenshots

Paper copies win credibility.

15. Cell Phones, Conduct, and Courtroom Rules

- Many courthouses prohibit phones
- Silence devices completely
- Some require phones left in car

Always check courthouse rules.




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16. When You Should Hire a Lawyer

Hire counsel if:

- Speed alleged is 26+ mph
- Accident with injuries
- License suspension risk
- CDL holder
- Prior traffic history

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17. Final Tips for Success

- ✓ Be early
 - ✓ Be respectful
 - ✓ Be prepared
 - ✓ Say less, not more
 - ✓ Know what you are asking for
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Need Help?

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Aggressive. Strategic. Prepared.