



ILLINOIS CONCEALED CARRY STUDENT REFERENCE HANDBOOK

Expanded 2026 Edition

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PURPOSE

A practical after-class reference for Illinois CCL students. Use it to refresh your memory, then verify current law or ISP guidance when a real-world decision matters.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is intentionally more detailed than a pocket guide but easier to use than pages of raw statute. Each topic is organized around the rule, a plain-English explanation, examples, common mistakes, and the law or official source to check.

- **Use the table of contents to find the topic quickly.**
- **Read the plain-English explanation first.**
- **Use examples as learning aids—not as guarantees that a future incident will be legally identical.**
- **Check the cited statute or Illinois State Police guidance when the issue is important.**
- **If a situation could lead to criminal or civil liability, consult a qualified Illinois attorney.**

LEGAL NOTICE

This material is educational and is not individualized legal advice. Laws, court decisions, administrative rules, agency procedures, and federal restrictions can change.

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1. Illinois CCL at a Glance

- **Illinois residents seeking an initial CCL generally complete 16 hours of ISP-approved concealed-carry firearms training.**
- **A CCL does not override prohibited-area laws, federal restrictions, private-property rights, or other firearm laws.**
- **Your license status and FOID eligibility remain important after class.**
- **A CCL is not a license to display, threaten with, or use a firearm except as permitted by law.**

REMEMBER

Think of your CCL as permission to carry concealed subject to many conditions—not a blanket exemption from firearm laws.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66 — Firearm Concealed Carry Act.

2. Application & Eligibility

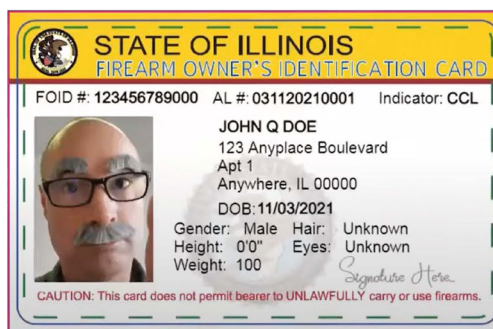
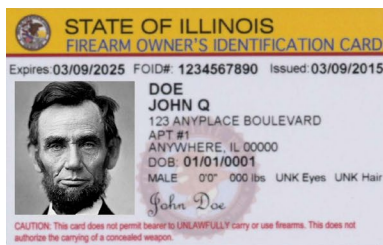
The Illinois State Police currently lists the following core items for an Illinois resident CCL application:

- 16 hours of approved training.
- Electronic copy of the training certificate.
- ISP user ID/password.
- Valid Illinois driver's license or state ID.
- Valid FOID card unless the applicant is in the process of obtaining one.
- Recent head-and-shoulders electronic photograph.
- Ten years of residency information.
- Optional electronic fingerprints can expedite processing.
- Current resident application fee listed by ISP: \$150.

COMMON MISTAKE

Assuming your instructor submits your CCL application for you. Students are responsible for completing the ISP application unless a separate service has been arranged.

3. FOID, CCL, eCard & Renewal



Illinois has changed the appearance and administration of FOID/CCL cards over time. Treat card pictures as examples. The most important issue is whether your status is currently valid in ISP records.

- **Keep access to your ISP account.**
- **Save your training certificate.**
- **Do not rely on an expired screenshot or an old physical card.**
- **ISP has electronic FOID/CCL functionality; follow current ISP instructions for accepted display and verification.**
- **Some FOID renewals may occur automatically under ISP rules when qualifying fingerprints are on file and an FTIP approval occurs.**

REMEMBER

Your status matters more than the design printed on the plastic.

4. Carrying Concealed: Everyday Responsibilities

- **Keep the firearm concealed in accordance with Illinois law.**
- **Use secure equipment that protects the trigger and retains the firearm.**
- **Avoid unnecessary handling in public.**
- **Know where you are going before entering a building or property.**
- **Do not assume another state's carry rules apply in Illinois.**
- **If traveling outside Illinois, research that jurisdiction before carrying.**

EXAMPLE

You are driving to a restaurant you have never visited. Before entering, check for statutory restrictions and posted signage rather than discovering the issue after you are inside.

5. Prohibited Areas – Overview



430 ILCS 66/65 contains the main Illinois list of prohibited areas. The statute currently includes 23 numbered categories, plus rules for private property, parking lots, public rights-of-way, and standardized signs.

- **Some categories prohibit the building only; others include real property and parking areas.**
- **The parking-lot exception applies to many—but not all—prohibited locations.**
- **A location may also be prohibited under federal law.**
- **A private property owner may prohibit concealed firearms as provided by Section 65.**

COMMON MISTAKE

Memorizing a short list and assuming everything not on that list is allowed. Read the exact category and its exceptions.

6. Schools, Child Care & Government Buildings

- Public or private elementary and secondary school property is prohibited under Section 65.

SCHOOL PICKUP / DROP-OFF — VEHICLE VS. SCHOOL PROPERTY:

Illinois law treats the school building, real property, and parking area under the control of a public or private elementary or secondary school as a prohibited area. However, the general parking-lot exception in 430 ILCS 66/65(b) applies to school parking areas. A valid CCL holder may drive into the school parking area with the concealed firearm on or about the person inside the vehicle and may store the firearm or ammunition concealed in a case within a locked vehicle or locked container, out of plain view. This can allow a parent or guardian to remain in the vehicle while picking up or dropping off a child, subject to the statute. It does NOT authorize carrying the firearm into the school building or walking around school property while armed. If the licensee must leave the vehicle to enter the school, attend a meeting, walk to the entrance, or accompany the child inside, the firearm must first be stored in accordance with Section 65(b). The statute permits being in the immediate area surrounding the vehicle only for the limited purpose of storing or retrieving a firearm from the vehicle's trunk.

- Pre-school and child-care facilities are covered, with a specific statutory provision for family-home child care.
- Buildings/parking areas under control of executive or legislative branch officers are covered, subject to the DNR-related language in the statute.
- Court buildings and buildings or portions under control of the Illinois Supreme Court are prohibited.
- Buildings or portions under control of a unit of local government are prohibited.

EXAMPLE

A city hall, courthouse, and public school may each fall under different numbered paragraphs of Section 65 even though all are government-related.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(a)(1)-(5) — Review the exact property covered by each paragraph.

7. Hospitals, Public Transportation & Alcohol Establishments

- Hospitals, hospital affiliates, mental-health facilities, and nursing homes are covered by Section 65(a)(7).
- Publicly funded buses, trains, transportation, facilities, real property, and parking areas are covered by Section 65(a)(8).
- An establishment serving alcohol is prohibited when more than 50% of its gross receipts during the prior 3 months are from alcohol sales.

COMMON MISTAKE

Assuming every restaurant or bar is automatically treated the same. The statute uses a specific receipts threshold for paragraph (9), while other laws and private-property signage may still matter.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(a)(7)-(9) — Health-care, public transportation, and 50%-alcohol-receipts locations.

8. Events, Parks, Playgrounds & Cook County Forest Preserve

- Certain permitted public gatherings and special events are prohibited, with a statutory pass-through exception for accessing a residence, business, or vehicle.
- Special-event alcohol licensing can create a prohibited area during the designated sale period.
- Public playgrounds are prohibited.
- Municipal or park-district public parks, athletic areas, and athletic facilities are prohibited, with a trail/bikeway provision when only part of the route passes through a public park.
- Section 65(a)(14) currently states that real property under the control of the Cook County Forest Preserve District is prohibited.

COOK COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE: For current Illinois CCL purposes, treat real property under the control of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as a prohibited area under 430 ILCS 66/65(a)(14). The general Section 65(b) parking-lot exception still applies, so a licensee may enter the parking area in a vehicle and store the firearm as the statute requires. Do not confuse Cook County Forest Preserve property with the separate rule for a municipal or park-district trail or bikeway that only passes through a public park. Bills have been introduced to change the Cook County rule, but as of this 2026 handbook revision they have not become law.

COMMON MISTAKE

Treating every trail rule as identical. Section 65 contains different language for parks, DNR property, public rights-of-way, and Cook County Forest Preserve property.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(a)(10)-(14) — Events, playgrounds, parks, athletic areas, and Cook County Forest Preserve property.

9. Colleges, Gaming, Stadiums, Libraries & Airports

- Public/private colleges and universities are broadly covered, including specified buildings, real property, parking areas, sidewalks, and common areas.
- Gaming facilities licensed under Illinois gambling or horse-racing law are covered.
- Stadiums, arenas, their real property/parking areas, and collegiate/professional sporting events are covered.
- Public libraries are covered.
- Airports are covered.

AIRPORT PARKING LOTS: Illinois law lists an airport's building, real property, and parking area as a prohibited area. However, the general parking-lot exception in 430 ILCS 66/65(b) applies to airports because airports are not one of the two excluded categories. A valid CCL holder may drive into an airport parking area with the concealed firearm on or about the person inside the vehicle and may store the firearm or ammunition concealed in a case within a locked vehicle or locked container, out of plain view. This does NOT authorize carrying the firearm into the airport terminal. Federal restrictions also apply in the TSA passenger-screening checkpoint and sterile/secured area.

O'HARE AIRLINE-EMPLOYEE PARKING — 5600 BESSIE COLEMAN DR:

YES — if the employee is in an ordinary O'Hare parking area covered by 430 ILCS 66/65(b), a valid Illinois CCL holder may carry the concealed firearm on or about the person while remaining inside the vehicle. Before leaving the vehicle to report for work, the firearm or ammunition must be stored concealed in a case within a locked vehicle or locked container and out of plain view. **NO** — the parking-lot exception does not authorize carrying the firearm after leaving the vehicle to enter the terminal, workplace, employee transportation, TSA passenger-screening checkpoint, sterile/secured area, or any other area where federal law prohibits firearms. Because Bessie Coleman Drive serves multiple O'Hare parking and operational areas, employees should confirm that the specific lot they use is an ordinary airport parking area and not a separately restricted federal/security area. Applicable employer and airport-security rules must also be followed.

REMEMBER

College/university rules include additional authority for institutional policies and designated firearm-storage parking areas. Check the school's current policy.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(a)(15)-(19) — Higher education, gaming, sports, libraries, and airports.

10. Amusement Parks, Zoos, Museums, Nuclear & Federal Areas

- Amusement parks are prohibited.
- Zoos and museums are prohibited.
- Nuclear-regulated streets, driveways, parking areas, property, buildings, and facilities are prohibited, and the statute specifically forbids vehicle storage there.
- Any area where firearms are prohibited under federal law is prohibited.

COMMON MISTAKE

Assuming the ordinary Illinois parking-lot storage exception applies at nuclear-regulated or federally prohibited locations. Section 65 expressly excludes paragraphs (22) and (23) from the general parking-lot exception.

11. Private Property & Prohibited-Firearm Signs

Recognize the Prohibited-Firearm Sign

Illinois uses standardized signage.



Private real-property owners may prohibit concealed firearms on property under their control. Except for a private residence, Section 65(a-10) requires posting a sign in accordance with subsection (d).

- **The sign must be clearly and conspicuously posted at the entrance.**
- **The standardized sign is 4 inches by 6 inches.**
- **Private residences do not require the same posting to prohibit carry.**
- **Do not argue with a property owner or employee. Leave and resolve questions later.**

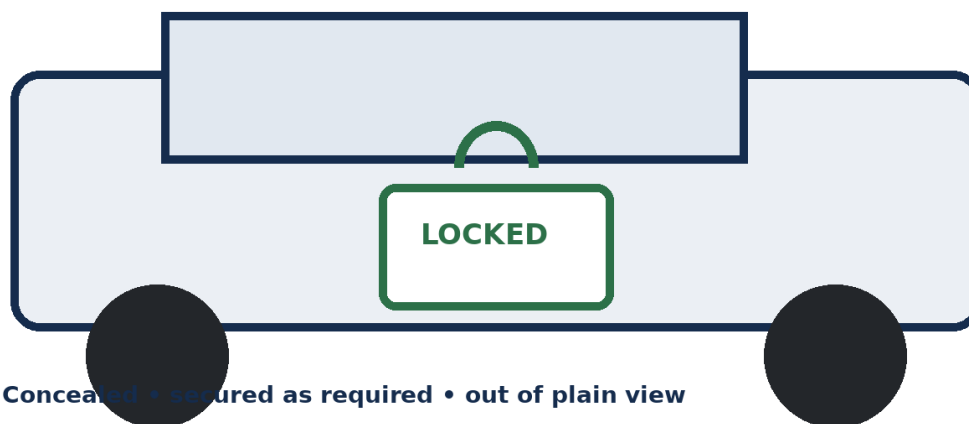
THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(a-10), (d) — Private-property prohibition and standardized signage.

12. Parking-Lot Exception

Vehicle / Parking-Lot Quick Reference

Simplified visual — verify the specific location and current law.



For many prohibited locations, Section 65(b) permits a licensee to enter the parking area in a vehicle and store a firearm or ammunition concealed in a case within a locked vehicle or locked container out of plain view.

- **The firearm/ammunition must be concealed as the statute requires.**
- **The vehicle or container must be locked as applicable.**
- **The item must be out of plain view.**
- **The statute permits limited activity in the immediate area around the vehicle for storing/retrieving a firearm from the trunk.**
- **The exception does not apply to nuclear-regulated locations or areas prohibited under federal law.**

EXAMPLE

You arrive at a prohibited building with an ordinary parking lot. The legal question is not simply 'Is the building prohibited?' You must also determine whether Section 65(b)'s parking-lot exception applies to that specific category.

13. Public Right-of-Way Exception

Section 65(c) states that a licensee is not in violation merely while traveling along a public right-of-way that touches or crosses prohibited premises, if the firearm is carried or transported in accordance with applicable law.

EXAMPLE

A public sidewalk or road may pass along or cross property that is otherwise prohibited. The public-right-of-way provision can matter, but it is not permission to enter the prohibited property itself.

COMMON MISTAKE

Confusing a public right-of-way with the prohibited property's own walkway, parking area, trail, or grounds.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/65(c) — Public right-of-way provision.

14. Vehicle Carry & Storage

- **Keep the firearm concealed and secured consistent with the law and your chosen carry method.**
- **Avoid leaving a firearm visible inside an unattended vehicle.**
- **When using a parking-lot exception, follow the exact locked/out-of-view requirements.**
- **Do not casually handle a firearm inside a parked vehicle where others can observe you.**
- **Before crossing state lines, verify the destination state's carry and vehicle-transport laws.**

REMEMBER

A vehicle is not a legal 'free zone.' Location-specific prohibitions, federal law, and storage requirements still matter.

15. Traffic Stops & Police Encounters

Law-Enforcement Encounter

A calm sequence for an investigative stop.

- 1 Keep hands visible
- 2 Follow lawful instructions
- 3 If asked, disclose CCL/firearm possession
- 4 If asked, identify firearm location
- 5 Do not reach for the firearm

Under 430 ILCS 66/10(h), during an investigative stop, a licensee must disclose possession of a concealed firearm when requested by the officer, present the license upon request, identify the firearm's location upon request, and permit the officer to safely secure it for the duration of the stop when requested.

- **Keep hands visible.**
- **Do not reach toward the firearm, holster, console, or bag without direction.**
- **Communicate calmly.**
- **Follow lawful instructions.**
- **Expect that an officer may temporarily secure the firearm during the stop.**

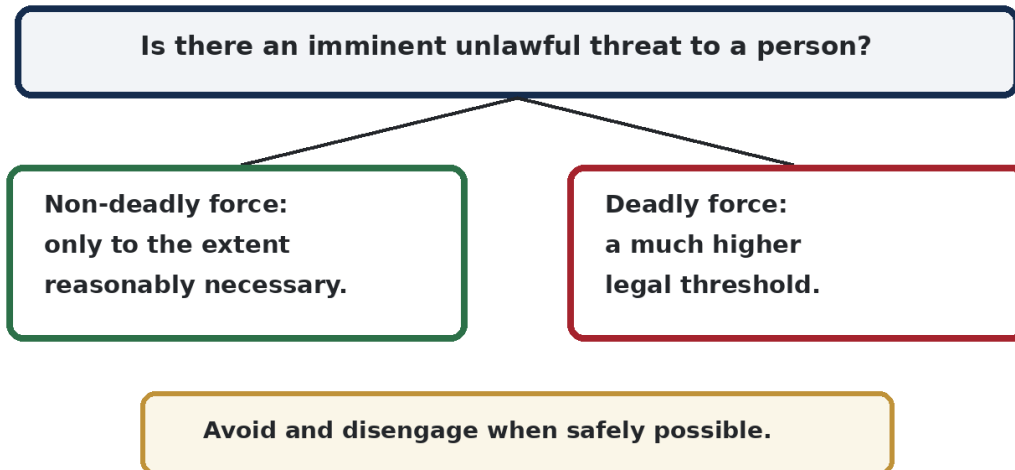
COMMON MISTAKE

Teaching this as an unconditional requirement to immediately announce a firearm before the officer asks. The statute's disclosure language is tied to the officer's request during an investigative stop.

16. Use of Force: Defense of Person

Use of Force: Student Memory Aid

Reasonable belief • necessity • imminence • circumstances



Illinois law separates ordinary force from force intended or likely to cause death or great bodily harm.

- **Force:** justified when and to the extent reasonably believed necessary to defend against another's imminent use of unlawful force.
- **Deadly force:** justified only when reasonably believed necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm to yourself or another, or the commission of a forcible felony.

REMEMBER

Reasonable belief + necessity + imminence. The facts and circumstances matter.

THE LAW

720 ILCS 5/7-1 — Use of force in defense of person.

17. Defense of Dwelling

Section 7-2 addresses force used to prevent or terminate an unlawful entry into or attack upon a dwelling.

- **Ordinary force may be justified when reasonably believed necessary to prevent or terminate the unlawful entry or attack.**
- **Deadly force has additional statutory conditions.**
- **One statutory route involves a violent, riotous, or tumultuous entry/attempt plus a reasonable belief that deadly force is necessary to prevent assault or personal violence.**
- **Another involves a reasonable belief that deadly force is necessary to prevent the commission of a felony in the dwelling.**

COMMON MISTAKE

Reducing Illinois law to a slogan such as 'someone entered my house, so deadly force is automatically lawful.' The statutory conditions still matter.

THE LAW

720 ILCS 5/7-2 — Use of force in defense of dwelling.

18. Defense of Property

Section 7-3 addresses real property other than a dwelling and personal property.

- **Reasonable force may be used to prevent or terminate certain trespass or criminal interference with property.**
- **Deadly force is not justified merely because property is being stolen or damaged.**
- **Under Section 7-3, deadly force is limited to circumstances where the person reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent the commission of a forcible felony.**

EXAMPLE

A property-only theft is not automatically a deadly-force situation. Your response must fit the legal standard actually presented by the circumstances.

THE LAW

720 ILCS 5/7-3 — Use of force in defense of other property.

19. Aggressor Rules & De-escalation

Illinois Article 7 also addresses situations involving an initial aggressor. Students should understand that provoking or initiating a confrontation can seriously affect a later self-defense claim.

- **Avoid unnecessary confrontation.**
- **Create distance when safely possible.**
- **Use verbal de-escalation when appropriate.**
- **Do not pursue someone merely to continue an argument.**
- **Your safest legal and tactical outcome is often avoiding the encounter entirely.**

COMMON MISTAKE

Thinking that being legally armed makes it safer to confront someone. Carrying a firearm increases the consequences of poor judgment.

THE LAW

720 ILCS 5/7-4 — Use of force by an aggressor.

20. Alcohol, Cannabis & Impairment

A responsible carry plan should separate firearms from intoxication or impairment. Illinois law contains CCL violations involving carrying while under the influence, and location rules may separately prohibit carry at certain alcohol-serving establishments.

- **Do not carry while impaired.**
- **Prescription or over-the-counter medication can also affect judgment and coordination.**
- **Cannabis legality does not make impaired firearm handling safe or lawful.**
- **Plan transportation and firearm storage before consuming intoxicants.**

REMEMBER

If your judgment, balance, reaction time, or decision-making is impaired, do not handle or carry a firearm.

21. Safe Gun Storage Act — Effective 2026

Safe Storage at Home

Prevent unauthorized access.



Illinois' Safe Gun Storage Act, 430 ILCS 64, took effect January 1, 2026. It creates statewide storage duties when an owner knows or reasonably should know that a minor without lawful permission, an at-risk person, or a prohibited person is likely to gain access.

- **The Act generally requires the firearm to be secured in a locked container or properly engaged so it is inaccessible or unusable to anyone other than the owner or another lawfully authorized user.**
- **The Act contains exceptions and additional provisions; students should read the current statute rather than rely on a one-sentence summary.**
- **Storage duties can exist even when the firearm is not being carried.**

THE LAW

430 ILCS 64/5 — Safe Gun Storage Act storage requirement.

22. Home & Family Storage Practices

- **Choose a storage method that matches who has access to your home.**
- **Control keys, combinations, biometric enrollment, and backup access.**
- **Do not assume children or visitors will never discover a hiding place.**
- **Separate storage decisions from display or convenience.**
- **Review storage after household changes, visitors, moves, or changes in who can legally possess firearms.**

EXAMPLE

A nightstand drawer may be convenient, but convenience alone does not address unauthorized access. Use a storage method that actually prevents access by people who should not have it.

23. Everyday Carry Equipment & Holsters

- **Use a holster designed for the specific firearm.**
- **The trigger guard should be fully protected.**
- **The firearm should remain securely retained during ordinary movement.**
- **Inspect clips, loops, screws, snaps, and material wear.**
- **Avoid carrying loose firearms in purses, bags, pockets, or consoles where objects can contact the trigger.**
- **Practice safe holstering with an unloaded firearm under appropriate training conditions.**

REMEMBER

A good holster does three jobs: covers the trigger, retains the firearm, and supports consistent safe access.

24. Firearm Safety Refresher

- **Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.**
- **Never allow the muzzle to cover anything you are not willing to destroy.**
- **Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target and you have made the decision to fire.**
- **Be sure of your target, what is around it, and what is beyond it.**
- **Know how to safely load, unload, clear, and verify the condition of your specific firearm.**
- **Use eye and hearing protection at the range.**

COMMON MISTAKE

Relying on a mechanical safety as a substitute for safe muzzle direction and trigger-finger discipline.

25. Malfunctions & Range Safety

- **If something feels or sounds wrong, stop shooting.**
- **Keep the muzzle safely downrange.**
- **Keep your finger outside the trigger guard.**
- **Follow range commands and instructor procedures.**
- **Do not turn around with the firearm in your hand to ask for help.**
- **For suspected squib loads or bore obstructions, stop and obtain qualified assistance before firing again.**

REMEMBER

When uncertain: stop, muzzle safe, finger straight, ask for help.

26. Qualification Refresher

Illinois CCL training includes live-fire qualification. Your instructor will conduct qualification using the course-of-fire and scoring requirements applicable to the ISP-approved curriculum.

- **Follow all commands.**
- **Use the firearm safely at every distance.**
- **Accuracy matters, but safety violations can stop a qualification.**
- **Ask questions before the firing sequence begins.**
- **If you do not meet the standard, follow the instructor's directions regarding any permitted requalification attempt.**

YOUR CLASS RECORD

Keep your signed training certificate with your important firearm records. You may need an electronic copy for the ISP application.

27. After a Defensive Incident

- **Get to safety when possible.**
- **Call 911 and request police/medical assistance as appropriate.**
- **When officers arrive, keep your hands visible and follow commands.**
- **Do not assume responding officers know who the defender is.**
- **Do not unnecessarily handle or display the firearm.**
- **Identify urgent evidence or witnesses when appropriate.**
- **Consider qualified legal counsel before giving a detailed statement beyond immediate safety and evidence needs.**

COMMON MISTAKE

Trying to explain every detail while still under stress, adrenaline, injury, or confusion. A defensive incident can become a criminal and civil investigation.

28. Lost, Stolen, Suspended or Revoked CCL

- Use current ISP procedures for lost, stolen, or destroyed credentials.
- If your license is revoked, ISP states that 430 ILCS 66/70(g) requires surrender to the local law-enforcement agency where you reside within 48 hours of receiving notice.
- Follow current ISP appeal/reinstatement instructions when applicable.
- Do not carry based on assumptions while your status is suspended, revoked, denied, or otherwise invalid.

THE LAW

430 ILCS 66/70 — Violations, suspension/revocation, and related requirements.

29. Common Student Questions

Do I have to immediately tell an officer I am carrying?

During an investigative stop, Section 10(h) requires disclosure when requested by the officer. Keep your hands visible and follow lawful instructions.

If there is no sign, can I carry?

Not necessarily. Some locations are prohibited by statute regardless of whether you personally noticed a sign.

Can I leave my firearm in my car at a prohibited place?

Often Section 65(b) provides a parking-lot storage exception, but not everywhere. Nuclear-regulated and federally prohibited areas are key exceptions.

Can I carry in a public park?

Municipal/park-district parks are addressed in Section 65(a)(13), including specific trail/bikeway language. Do not generalize that rule to every trail or preserve.

Can I carry on Cook County Forest Preserve property?

Section 65(a)(14) currently lists real property under the control of the Cook County Forest Preserve District as prohibited.

Can I use deadly force because someone is stealing my property?

Property loss alone does not automatically justify deadly force. Review 720 ILCS 5/7-3 and the circumstances.

Does a CCL allow open carry?

This handbook is for Illinois concealed carry. Do not treat a CCL as general permission for open carry.

30. Official Resources & Final Checklist

Official source	Use it for
Illinois State Police Firearms Services Bureau	Applications, status, renewals, replacement credentials, instructor/CCL guidance.
430 ILCS 66	Illinois Firearm Concealed Carry Act.
430 ILCS 64	Safe Gun Storage Act.
720 ILCS 5, Article 7	Defense of person, dwelling, property, and aggressor rules.
20 Ill. Admin. Code Part 1231	Administrative rules implementing the CCL Act.

Before you carry

- Is my FOID/CCL status valid?
- Is this location prohibited by Illinois or federal law?
- Is there a posted private-property prohibition?
- Am I sober, unimpaired, and making sound decisions?
- Is my firearm securely holstered and concealed?
- Do I know my vehicle-storage plan if I reach a prohibited location?

KEEP LEARNING

Your 16-hour class is the beginning. Revisit safety, legal updates, judgment, and marksmanship regularly.

TIME FOR A RENEWAL?

KNOW SOMEONE WHO NEEDS THEIR CCL?

We'd be happy to help you train again - or help a friend, family member, or coworker get started.

RENEWING YOUR CCL?

Don't wait until the last minute. When it is time to renew your Illinois Concealed Carry License, USA Veteran Firearms Training can help you complete your renewal training and range qualification.

REFER A FRIEND OR COWORKER

Know someone who wants an Illinois CCL? Share this page or have them scan the QR code below to view class information and register.



SCAN TO REGISTER FOR CCL TRAINING

Initial 16-Hour CCL • 8-Hour Credit / Exemption • CCL Renewal

**USA Veteran Firearms Training, LLC
Veteran Owned & Operated
Joe Portillo, Instructor**

[CCL Registration Page](#)