

GED Language Arts, Writing: The Essay

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Test Design

Language Arts, Writing

Direct Writing Assignment

- Expository Essay
 - Generate, Organize, Connect, and Express Ideas
 - No Required Word Count - Sufficient Development to Communicate the Idea Effectively
 - 37 to 40% of Language Arts, Writing Test Score



Develop The Tests

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Language Arts, Writing

Essay Topic Framework

Part one

- Question or Informative Statement (Non-Controversial/Not an Assertion)

Part two

- Instructions Derived from Part One
- Guiding Toward an Expository Essay
- Opportunity to use Personal Experience, Observations, and Knowledge



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Topic F

If You Could Make One Positive Change in Your Daily Life, What Would That Change Be?

In Your Essay, Identify the One Change You Would Make. Explain the Reasons for Your Choice. Use Your Personal Observations, Experience and Knowledge.



- The essay writer will be given 45 minutes to plan, organize, and write the essay.
- Two trained readers will read the essay holistically, evaluating it on the basis of its overall effectiveness.
- The readers spend 90 seconds to 2 minutes maximum reading the essay.
- An even-numbered four point scale (rubric) will be used to assign a score.

- The two GED readers' scores are averaged. An essay score of 2 or higher is combined with the multiple-choice score to form a composite.
- Essay scores of 1 or 1.5 will not be counted. The candidate must retake both essay and multiple-choice parts.
- Individual essay scores are not reported. The composite score = 65% multiple-choice score and 35% essay score.

- The two GED essay readers may not be more than one point apart in their scoring. If they are, a third reader will be called in to determine the score.
- If a candidate receives a composite score of 200-800, he earned at least an essay score of at least a 2.
- If a candidate receives a double asterisk (**), his essay did not earn at least a 2.
- A single asterisk (*) means the candidate's essay was "off topic."

Why a Rubric?

- We don't get what we don't assess. To be fair and meaningful, an assessment must reflect the knowledge and skills that instructors are teaching as well as those that a student is expected to learn.
- A rubric is simply a definition for the student and teacher of the range of acceptable and unacceptable performance.

Five Standards for the Rubric

- Response to the prompt
- Organization
- Development and Details
- Conventions of EAE
- Word Choice

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Essay Scoring Guide

	4 Effective	3 Adequate	2 Marginal	1 Inadequate
Response To The Prompt	Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.	Reader understands writer's ideas.	Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer's ideas.	Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer's ideas.
Organization	Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt. Establishes a clear and logical organization.	Uses the writing prompt to establish a main idea. Uses an identifiable organizational plan.	Addresses the prompt, though the focus may shift. Shows some evidence of an organizational plan.	Attempts to address prompt but with little or no success in establishing a focus. Fails to organize ideas.
Development And Details	Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.	Has focused but occasionally uneven development; incorporates some specific detail.	Has some development but lacks specific detail; may be limited to a listing, repetitions, or generalizations.	Demonstrates little or no development; usually lacks detail or examples or presents irrelevant information.
Conventions Of EAE	Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English (EAE).	Generally controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.	Demonstrates inconsistent control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.	Exhibits minimal or no control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
Word Choice	Exhibits varied and precise word choice.	Exhibits appropriate word choice.	Exhibits a narrow range of word choice, often including inappropriate selections.	Exhibits weak and/or inappropriate words.

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Score Change

4	Effective
3	Adequate
2	Marginal
X	Inadequate

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What is EAE?

EAE is Edited American English. It is the standard the GED uses to evaluate the accuracy of the students' use of language.

- Sentence Structure, i.e. parallelism, run-on sentences
- Usage, i.e. subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference
- Mechanics, i.e. capitalization, punctuation, spelling

Level 1 Characteristics

	1
	Inadequate
	Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer's ideas.
Response to the Prompt	Attempts to address prompt but with little or no success in establishing a focus.
Organization	Fails to organize ideas.
Development and Details	Demonstrates little or no development; usually lacks details or examples or presents irrelevant information.
Conventions of EAE	Exhibits minimal or no control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
Word Choice	Exhibits weak and/or inappropriate words.

Level 2 Characteristics

	2
	Marginal
	Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer's ideas.
Response to the Prompt	Addresses the prompt, though the focus may shift.
Organization	Shows some evidence of an organizational plan.
Development and Details	Has some development but lacks specific details; may be limited to a listing, repetitions, or generalizations.
Conventions of EAE	Demonstrates inconsistent control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
Word Choice	Exhibits a narrow range of word choice, often including inappropriate selections.

Level 3 Characteristics

	3
	Adequate
	Reader understands writer's ideas.
Response to the Prompt	Uses the writing prompt to establish a main idea.
Organization	Uses an identifiable organizational plan.
Development and Details	Has focused but occasionally uneven development; incorporates some specific detail.
Conventions of EAE	Generally controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE.
Word Choice	Exhibits appropriate word choice.

Level 4 Characteristics

	4
	Effective
	Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.
Response to the Prompt	Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.
Organization	Establishes a clear and logical organization
Development and Details	Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.
Conventions of EAE	Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English (EAE).
Word Choice	Exhibits varied and precise word choice.

Let's look at some student essay samples.

Use your rubric handout and we'll score these together.

Topic C

What is one important goal you would like to achieve in the next few years?

In your essay, identify that one goal and explain how you plan to achieve it. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Essay #1

One important goal I would like to achieve in the next few years, would be to graduate from a business college. I have always wanted to be an accountant. In order to see my dreams come true, I need to go to college and major in mathematics and receive an A average. The rest of my life will begin once I graduate from business school, and college.

Topic C, Essay #1 Score? 1

This four-sentence response is an attempt to address the prompt, but it is inadequate. The writer says that he would like to graduate from a business college and be an accountant. However, there are no details or examples for his statements. There are minor errors in EAE, such as unnecessary commas in the first and last sentences.

Topic C, Essay #2

In the next few years, I plan to go to a Technical Institute, or an Automotive college. I'm always doing car work with friends and now I would like to do this on a full-time Basis. To have the knowledge I want, I'm willing to go to a technical Institute. To make my knowledge a little Better, I Attended some courses in high school Like: Ag Mechanics, Auto care, and Auto Mechanics I. I took the courses to get a Better Idea on how Mechanics work.

Over a span of about five years, I've watched my father work on his cars and even helped him on a few. By doing this, I have learned how I can diagnois an engine problem, for instance, Listen for problems and eye the engine, and also by a code Reader. By going to a technical Institute, I hope to get myself ready for the real world and or to achieve my goal of Becoming a Mechanic.

By only having three weeks of school left, I hope that I will have already decided to go or not. But If I decide not to go, I can always go in a few years or more, depending on If I'm ready to try or not.

Topic C, Essay #2 Score? 2

The writer addresses the prompt by specifying the goal of becoming an auto mechanic. He has some evidence of an organizational plan, but his development lacks specific details in this marginal response. He says he plans to go to school, then he shifts to an explanation of how he's worked with his father. His control of the conventions of EAE is inconsistent.

Topic C, Essay #3

In the next few years, an important goal that I want to achieve is to be the best mother that I can be. Not everyone in this point of their life thinks about this but I have to. For myself and my child, I plan to do everything a mother should do. First things to being the best mother possible is showing her how much I love her by teaching her, disciplining her, and playing with her.

Things I want to teach my daughter are about life, right from wrong, and good morals. I also want her to know that I will always be her shoulder to cry on. I believe by achieving this goal, I need to teach her what my parents taught me, and things that I believe in, too.

Discipline is also a big part in being a good mother. If I teacher her what I believe is right and wrong, then she'll know what is morally acceptable to me.

By playing with my daughter, I can also achieve a special bond with her that some parents never do.

One more thing that I believe will make me a good mother is that I take care of my own child. So many mothers today do not do this and I don't understand why.

I believe that by teaching, disciplining, and playing with my daughter, I will achieve my goal of being the best mother I can be. I just hope that my daughter thinks so, too.

Topic C, Essay #3 Score? 3

The response is adequate and focuses on the main idea of being a good mother. The paragraph divisions suggest clear organization. The development includes specific detail but is uneven. Control of the conventions of EAE is generally consistent, despite some awkwardness.

Topic C, Essay #4

In the next few years, I will be working on a goal that will have an impact on me for the rest of my life. That goal is getting a career. After thinking about what I want to do, I have decided that my goal in life is to become a political analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency. Although this goal is not impossible, it will definitely take some time and perseverance to accomplish. I plan to achieve my goal by becoming educated, and getting the experience needed for such a position in the CIA.

Starting off with my education, I will definitely need to sufficiently round my self out. By this I mean to take a vast array of classes in order to expose myself to the many culture, views, and customs of the world that we live in. More specifically, I will focus on classes such as History, and Foreign Language. I plan to take as many History classes as possible, in addition to multiple Foreign Language classes, such as Spanish, French, and perhaps another Romance language.

Also in preparation for the position of Political Analyst, I will have to take a few classes of Political Science, as well as other classes relating to Foreign Policy and International Relations.

After completing my education by getting my Master's or even doctorate in my chosen field, I will need to gain experience in my chosen field in order to prepare myself for the position. I plan on doing this by either studying abroad during my final years in college, or by joining the Peace Corps after graduating. By doing this I will be able to familiarize myself more with the customs of other countries and utilizing my Foreign Language skills in order to polish of any rough edges that my character might have at that point.

By preparing myself in this summer, I believe that I will be able to achieve my goal by being hired as a Political Analyst for the CIA. In addition to this, I believe that the preparatory work that I will have done will also benefit me in the means that I will be a more cultured and well rounded person, ready for anything that comes my way.

Topic C, Essay #4 Score? 4

This is a clearly focused and effective response on the writer's goal of becoming a political analyst for the CIA. It is a clearly organized and sequenced explanation of the steps the writer plans to take to achieve his goal. Development includes specific and relevant details. Despite a few errors and awkward phrases, the conventions of EAE are consistently under control.

Tips for Holistic Scoring

When scoring an essay holistically, keep the following in mind:

- Spend only 1 or 2 minutes reading and scoring the essay.
- Use the GED Essay Scoring Rubric as your reference.
- Score the essay quickly—assigning it a 1, 2, 3, or 4.
- Don't change the score you've given – don't second-guess your initial score.
- Avoid looking for specific types of errors or error patterns.
- Do not mark errors or corrections on the essay.
- Don't compare one essay to another.
- Don't let your personal expectations or reaction to the content of the essay influence the score.
- Be completely objective. Score the essay as if you've never met the writer and have no knowledge of the writer's personality, background, etc.
- Remember that the writer only had 45 minutes to brainstorm, organize, and write this essay. Don't expect perfection.

Your trainer will now assign five essays from your handout for you to score.

Use the rubric and what you've learned so far to score these.

Discuss your scores with others in your group.

Your trainer will provide you with scores and explanations from actual GED essay readers at the end of the activity.

Return to the video once this activity is completed.

Note to Teachers:

- Although teachers still teach the five paragraph essay, five paragraphs are not needed to pass this essay.
- Students don't have the same learning styles and they won't all approach essay writing in the same ways.
- Teachers should provide learners with opportunities to practice writing in a non-threatening, supportive environment.
- Learners need to understand the concept of organization as it's related to written communication.

Hints for Essay Writers

- Listen to all instructions from the test administrator.
- Take time to brainstorm the topic.
- As you write the essay, ask yourself, "Am I really writing on the topic?"
- Organize your ideas into paragraphs with explanations, examples and details.
- If you can only think of one or two ideas, give specific details, examples, and explanations.
- Imagine that you're actually reading the essay to the person scoring it.
- Use paragraphs to signal that you're moving to another point.
- Use transitional words such as first, next, finally.
- Leave time to go back over your essay.

More Hints for Essay Writers

Don't:

- Use phrases like, "Well, I really don't know much about this topic..." or "I don't really know how to do this but..."
- Stop writing too soon.
- Put your name on the essay.

Helpful Writing Web Resources

- Paradigm Online Writing Assistant – Online writing tutor
www.powa.org
- The Five Paragraph Essay Wizard provides instruction plus practice writing prompts
<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Atrium/1437/index.html>
- English Practice provides a newsletter and simple English activities for students
<http://www.englishpractice.com/>

More Web Resources

- *Understanding the Essay Scoring Process*
<http://www.floridatechnet.org/GED/LessonPlans/LanguageArtsWriting/LanguageArtsLesson18.pdf>
- *Contemporary's GED Essay Scoring Checklist* (McGraw-Hill Online Learning Center)
http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0809222280/student_view0/essay_scoring_checklist.html

More Web Resources

- Florida's *GED Connections* (Vol. 1 Issue 2, 2001)

<http://floridatechnet.org/ged2.pdf>

- www.grammarbook.com
- www.dailygrammar.com
- www.commnet.edu/grammar
- www.chompchomp.com

More Web Resources

- www.edhelper.com
- www.bestessaytips.com
- [www.2.actden.com/writ den/tips/contents.htm](http://www.2.actden.com/writ_den/tips/contents.htm)
- <http://essayinfo.com/>
- www.factmonster.com/homework/writingskills1.html
