

GED Language Arts – Extended Response Tutor Guide

The Extended Response (essay) portion of the GED Language Arts test is worth 12 of 200 points. It is possible to pass the Language Arts test with a weak essay, but a strong essay sure helps!

Essays are scored equally in three areas:

1. Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence: *Answer the question with logic and clarity. Make reference to the source textx.*
2. Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure. *Write well developed paragraphs organized into an introduction, body & conclusion.*
3. Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions: *Use correct grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, etc.*

The GED is a timed test, with only 45 minutes allowed for this task. Perfection is off the table. Preparation and practice will help the test-taker to produce an essay that is “good enough.”

The following lesson plan is intended as a “crash course” to help an already strong Language Arts candidate prepare for the Extended Response portion of the test. (For example, the learner has scored ABE 5 or higher on the CASAS GOALS reading assessment, or scored in the mid-140s or higher on the GED Ready Language Arts practice test.)

The GED Essay Writing Guide at GEDPracticeTest.net/ged-essay-guide is a straightforward, useful preparation resource.

The GED is a computer-based test, so essays must be typed.

SUGGESTED SERIES OF LESSONS

STEP ONE – ANALYZE A SAMPLE PROMPT and SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE

Provide a sample prompt and essay for your learner to review. LFL provides sample prompts/essays on (1) cell phone use among tweens, and (2) police militarization. In your review of the example, discuss the following:

- Describe the structure of the essay (intro / 2 body paragraphs / conclusion).
- What’s the main idea of the essay as a whole? (That ___’s argument is better supported.)
- Look at the body paragraphs. What’s the main idea of paragraph 2? Main idea of paragraph 3?
- Where are examples of the author referring to or quoting from the sources? (Look at the original source, the way the source material is integrated into the sample essay, use of quotation marks as appropriate, etc.)
- What is the author’s *personal* opinion on the topic? (The answer is, we don’t know! That wasn’t the question!)

STEP TWO – PRACTICE THE PROCESS

Using a different GED practice prompt, meet with your learner and go through the process of reading, planning, and crafting a response together. The tutor can do the work while the learner makes suggestions and observes the process. The tutor should think aloud, while also asking questions to engage the learner in the process. For example, the tutor might say the following:

- “OK, I’m going to start by scanning the two articles to get a sense of what they’re about and how they disagree.”
- “I’m going to take some notes on the main idea of each article.”
 - Author #1 believes _____. Supports opinion with _____ and _____.
 - Author #2 believes _____. Supports opinion with _____ and _____.
- “Ok, now we need to decide which article is better supported. What do you think? Why?”
- “Now that we’ve thought things through, I’m ready to write. My essay needs an introduction, two body paragraphs, and a conclusion.” Continue with prompts such as...
 - “What’s a good first sentence for my introduction?”
 - “What do you think I should write next?”
 - “What should be the topic for my first body paragraph?”
 - “I think I should include one quotation from the source to back up what I’m saying. What do you think I should include?”
- Draft an essay while the learner provides active input. Guide the learner toward more effective ideas as needed, so that the essay you produce together (1) answers the question, (2) has an organizational structure, and (3) includes references to the source material.
- Read the essay together and ask the learner if they want to make any changes, have any questions, etc.

Note: It’s always a good idea to suggest a final edit for any mistakes. In this “crash course” context, you won’t have time to dwell too much on grammar, etc. If errors interfere *significantly* with meaning, this “crash course” approach may not be appropriate.

STEP THREE – GUIDED PRACTICE

If the learner is struggling, repeat Step Two, but reverse the roles so that the learner is more in the driver’s seat, and the tutor is present to make suggestions, answer questions, etc. If the learner did pretty well with Steps One and Two, you may skip Step Three.

STEP FOUR – INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Provide the learner with a practice prompt to complete independently. Review it together.

REMINDER: During the actual test, the learner only has 45 minutes to complete the Extended Response. Also, it’s *possible* (though not likely) to pass the test with zero points earned on the Extended Response. So, do not seek perfection. Good enough is good enough.

