

GED Extended Responses Test

What is the GED RLA “Extended Response” Question?

The Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) section of the GED includes an Extended Response essay question. You will only have 45 minutes to complete this essay, so it is important to familiarize yourself with the nature of the prompt. Read through this guide to become more familiar with the prompt and how to write the best response possible.

GED Essay Overview

Since the GED Exam is administered on a computer, you will type your essay into a text box. You will first be presented with two Stimulus Passages and then you will be given an essay prompt. The Stimulus Passages will each have 4–5 short paragraphs that introduce an issue and take a stance on that issue, with one passage opposing the other. You will then be given the following prompt:

In your response, analyze both positions presented in the article to determine which one is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from the article to support your response. Type your response in the box below. You should expect to spend up to 45 minutes in planning, drafting, and editing your response.

GED Essay Strategy

In order to maximize your 45 minutes, it’s important to decide ahead of time how much time you will spend on each step. We recommend following the guide below, but you should write some practice responses with a timer nearby to get a good understanding of how our guide can best serve you. Make sure you do not hand-write your practice essays, as it is always best to recreate test conditions as closely as possible when preparing.

5 Tips from the experts

1. Pick the side with the most factual evidence. When you do your first read of both passages highlight the statistical evidence. Pick the side with the most evidence.
2. Try to find weak points in the opposing side. Things like opinions rather than facts.
3. Don't get too caught up on making one thing work. If you want to say something but are having trouble wording it, scrap it, you can always go back to it later but it is not worth spending 10 minutes on one sentence.
4. Don't worry too much about spelling. From what I've read as long as they can make out what you're trying to say they will count it
5. Leave yourself around 5 minutes at the end to check your essay and polish it up.

GED Essay Scoring

Three separate scorers will grade your response based on each of the three traits of your essay: (1) Analysis of Arguments and Use of Evidence, (2) Development of Ideas and Structure, and (3) Clarity and Command of Standard English. Notice that if you follow the strategy and template provided above, all of these traits will be accounted for, and you won’t have to worry about them on Test Day!

4 Steps to Success

Step 1 ► Read and Analyze the Stimulus Passages (5 Minutes).

Start by reading both of the passages. Make sure you understand the issue and the position that each passage is taking. Ultimately, your job is to explain why one of the sides is better supported; it is fine to completely disagree with the side you defend, so long as you adequately support your stance. You are not writing about who you agree with, you are writing about who supports their argument best.

Step 2 ► Select Your Position and Outline Your Ideas (5 Minutes).

Ask yourself: **which side seems like it has more supporting details and/or examples?** Your task with this essay is similar to that of a teacher grading an essay. It doesn't matter if you agree with the position; it matters that the writer supported their position well.

Remember, "better-supported" does not necessarily mean "right." You are not required to argue in favor of one of the positions; you only need to explain why one position is better-supported than the other position. Which side is "best supported?" Which side should you choose for your essay? If you said, Passage 2, you are correct. Even if you are a vegetarian, you should be able to see that there is more supporting evidence in the passages for the "pro-meat" side. You will not receive a bad score if you choose to support the side that has less evidence, but it makes your task harder.

You should spend approximately 5 minutes deciding your position and outlining your essay. You can simply type your outline at the top of the text box (and delete it after you finish your essay). We will discuss more specifics about how to outline our essay in the "Template" below!

Step 3 ► Write your Essay (30 Minutes).

At this point, approximately 10 minutes will have gone by. You have read the passages and outlined your position. Now, simply start with paragraph 1, and follow the outline you created. Remember to stop periodically and refer back to your outline at the top. Most GED Extended Response essays are between 4–7 paragraphs and each paragraph is composed of 3–7 sentences. We suggest that you aim for 5 paragraphs; doing so ensures that your argument is complete.

Step 4 ► Read Everything Over At Least Once (5 Minutes).

Proofreading can make a good essay great, and a great essay stellar, so don't forget that you will need at least 5 minutes at the end to thoroughly read through what you have written. Go back to the outline and review your notes. Does the essay you wrote follow the outline? Is it well-organized? If you're happy that you didn't stray from your plan, delete your outline notes. This is very important! If you do not delete your notes, scorers will think it is part of your response and take points off.

If you have extra time, look for spelling and grammar errors. Do your verb tenses agree? Did you accidentally leave off the "s" on a plural noun? How are the transitions between paragraphs? Does the essay "flow?" Remember, you can re-type any sentences you dislike, and you can add additional sentences for clarity. This is a timed response, so it does not have to be perfect, but if you have the time to fix mistakes you'll only be helping your chances.

GED Essay Template

★ Paragraph 1 — Introduction

The introduction and conclusion are short paragraphs that “bookend” your essay. Your introduction should:

1. Introduce the topic from the passage
2. Explain both sides of the issue (showing that you understood what you read)
3. Make a claim that one side is better-supported and thus, more convincing (this should be the final sentence of the introduction).

★ Paragraphs 2–4 — Body Paragraphs

The real strength of your essay lies in your body paragraphs. Each body paragraph must introduce and describe one reason why the position you chose is better-supported. There will be 3 reasons in total (if you follow the 5-paragraph format). Look for some of these common ready-made arguments when reviewing the passages:

- Authority figure — Does the passage quote a reputable figure with specialized knowledge?
- History — Does the passage explain a historical event or a precedent to back up its claim?
- Statistics — Does the passage provide any numbers or data? Does the data help the author’s position?
- Logical reasoning — Is there a strong element of logic or “common-sense” to the argument, and is it presented in a clear, cohesive manner?
- Ethics — Is a moral argument made? Does the author insist his or her position is correct because it is the “morally right” thing to do?
- Emotion — Does the author appeal to the reader’s feelings? Does the argument evoke an emotional response?
- Reasonable Assumptions — Does the author rely on assumptions to draw any conclusions? Are the assumptions reasonable?
- Forceful Vocabulary — Does the author’s word choice add weight and importance to the argument?

In each body paragraph, you must defend your assertion that ONE position is better-supported with at least one specific reference showing this support. If you choose, “authority figures” as an example, but there is only 1 authority figure mentioned in the passage, it’s okay to spend the entire body paragraph discussing that one figure. You do not need to make up anything that is not in the passage—in fact, you shouldn’t!

★ Paragraph 5 — Conclusion

In conclusion, due to its emotional appeals, inclusion of an authority’s opinion, and forceful vocabulary, the X position is better-supported and much more convincing than the Y position. Though there is some evidence provided in Passage Y, it is weak and vague. For example, (insert 1 or 2 examples from Passage Y that are weak). As presented, the X position is much stronger than its counterpart because it is much better-supported and significantly more convincing.

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R.A.C.E. STRATEGY CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE WRITING	
R	Restate the Question: Begin your response by paraphrasing the question.
A	Answer the Question: Directly answer or state the main idea.
C	Cite Evidence: Back up your answer with relevant evidence from the text.
E	Explain the Evidence: Elaborate on how this evidence supports your answer.

GED Tutors are available

*Please contact Lori to work with a Tutor

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