Extended Response and Short Answers
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To the Student

Writing for the GED® Test will help you build the language and writing skills you need for the test. This workbook covers skills you will use to write answers to extended-response prompts and short-answer questions.

There will be one 45-minute extended-response or essay prompt on the Reasoning through Language Arts Test. There will be one 25-minute extended-response prompt on the Social Studies Test. The Science Test will include two short-answer questions.

Follow these steps to complete this book and prepare to write for the GED Test.

INTRODUCTION
The book begins with a description of the extended-response items and the scoring rubric used to grade them. Reading this section will help you become familiar with the writing prompts. You will also learn what you need to do in order to get a good score on your essays. Then you will follow this three-step plan to write responses on the test.

STEP 1: READ AND ANALYZE
The first step reviews skills you will need to analyze text passages. You must be able to evaluate authors’ arguments and the evidence used to support them.

WATCH OUT!
Some lessons have tips to help you develop your responses. Look for these tips! Remember to review them when you practice writing your long and short answers.

STEP 2: PLAN AND WRITE
This step helps you to plan and organize your writing. You will have limited time to write your responses, so it’s important to make a plan and stay on track. Lessons in this section will help you to develop your argument and select supporting evidence, create a logical and organized response, and assess your own writing.

STEP 3: CHECK AND REVISE
This final writing step will guide you evaluate your response, correct errors, and make your writing fluent. If you manage your time well, you can use this step to revise your essay and improve your score.

TIMED EXTENDED-RESPONSE PRACTICE
Next you will practice writing extended responses using all the skills you have learned. Time yourself and evaluate your own writing to see if you are ready for the GED Test.

SHORT-ANSWER RESPONSES
This section tells you how to write short answers to questions on the Science Test using the three steps you just learned.

Review the scoring rubrics and evaluate your own writing to see if you are ready for the GED Test.
or both the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) Test and the GED Social Studies Test, you will be asked to read one or more passages and then write about them. These test items are called extended responses because of their scope. Answers are more than a few sentences long, and they take more than a few minutes to write. You will not make up your own writing topics. For each test, you will respond to a prompt, or a writing topic that the test provides.

This section gives you an overview of extended responses. It shows you what they look like, what types of passages you might read, and what kinds of topics you might write about. It also introduces you to the rubrics, or criteria, that will be used to evaluate your RLA and social studies extended responses.

More specifically, in this section you will
- look at the main parts of an extended-response item: the passage, the prompt, and the writing box;
- learn about the types of text you will read for the RLA and social studies extended-response items and the purposes of these types of text;
- “unpack,” or take apart, an RLA prompt and a social studies prompt to understand the directions they provide and topics you might write about;
- read about the three traits, or sets of skills, on which your extended-response items will be evaluated.

After you learn about extended-response items in this section, you will know what to expect from these items on the GED RLA and Social Studies Tests. That knowledge will help you prepare for the tests as you work your way through the rest of this book.
Introduction to Extended Responses

The diagram below gives you a simplified, miniature view of an extended-response item on a computer screen. Look at the diagram and its parts to become more familiar with this kind of question.

Parts of a Response
The three main parts of an extended response are the passage, the prompt, and the writing box. Later, you will learn about the parts in more detail. For now, you’ll need a general understanding of each part.

1. Passage The first part is the reading passage—a nonfiction reading selection. An extended-response item may have one passage or more than one passage.

2. Prompt The prompt is the writing topic, or assignment. It briefly explains what you need to do in your written response and tells you how much time you have to do it.

3. Writing Box You will write your response in the writing box, using the computer keyboard. You will have all the space you need to write.

Editorial: Don’t Label Genetically Modified Foods

1. For more than thirty years, scientists have been using genetic engineering to modify plants that are used for food. The engineering process removes a desirable trait from the DNA of one organism and then transplants the gene for that trait into a second organism so that the second organism will have the trait. Plants have been engineered to have desirable traits such as greater resistance to insects, faster growth, and more nutritional value. Despite these obvious benefits, some backward people are afraid of genetically modified (GM) food because they think it could be harmful to their health. They want GM food to be labeled so that consumers know what they are buying. These labels are completely unnecessary.

The editorial gives reasons for not labeling genetically modified foods; the letter to the editor argues for the importance of such labeling.

In your response, analyze both the editorial and the letter to determine which argument is stronger. Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response.

Type your response in the box. This task may take approximately 45 minutes to complete.
RLA Passages and Prompts

The passage or passages for the RLA extended-response item will be arguments. The purpose of an argument is to persuade, or convince people to agree with a particular point of view. The arguments will be about issues that give rise to different positions. For instance, should the U.S. government continue to spend money on space exploration? Should genetically modified foods be required to have warning labels? You might be asked to read a single passage that presents opposing positions on an issue, or you might read two passages—one in favor of a position and one against. You will then follow the directions in the prompt to write about the issue. Because the prompt explains what to do, it is important to make sure you understand what it says. This process is called “unpacking” the prompt.

RLA extended-response prompts follow a pattern. The prompt begins with a short description of the passage or passages and the issue, or topic, that is discussed. Then, the prompt gives directions that explain what to do in the written response. Finally, the prompt tells how much time you have to write and where to write your response. Look at the parts of the sample RLA prompt below.

**Sample RLA Prompt**

The editorial gives reasons for not labeling genetically modified foods; the letter to the editor presents the other side of the issue and argues for the importance of such labeling.

In your response, analyze both the editorial and the letter to determine which argument is stronger. Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response.

Type your response in the box. This task may take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Notice that the first paragraph states the issue—the labeling of genetically modified foods—and the two positions—yes, genetically modified foods should have special labels; no, labels are unnecessary. Now, unpack the prompt a little further to make sure you understand the directions. Reread them and ask yourself, “What am I supposed to do?” To answer the question, look for verbs, or action words, and the key words that go with them. Ask yourself that question now. Reread the instructions, and underline the action words and the key words that complete them.

You might underline these words: analyze the editorial and letter to determine which argument is stronger. Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response. As a final check, put the key words in your own words: “I’m supposed to evaluate both passages to see which makes the better argument. I’m supposed to back up my position with key details from both passages.”
Social Studies Passages and Prompts
The passages for the Social Studies Test extended-response item will be about issues that are of lasting importance to Americans. For example, an article about a key Supreme Court decision might be paired with a senator’s comments about the decision. Or a speech about civil rights might be paired with a paragraph from the U.S. Constitution. After you read the passages, you will be asked to identify and write about the relationship, or connection, between the ideas expressed in the passages. Like the RLA extended-response item, the social studies extended-response item will include a prompt that explains the writing assignment. However, you will have 25 minutes, not 45 minutes, to read and write. (Social studies passages are shorter and take less time to read.)

The prompt for the Social Studies Test will be a little different from an RLA prompt. Instead of an opening paragraph that describes the passages, the prompt will begin with the directions. Imagine that you are taking the GED Social Studies Test and have just read an excerpt from a civil rights speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a paragraph from the Declaration of Independence. The social studies prompt might look like this:

Sample Social Studies Prompt

In your response, develop an argument about how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s position in his speech reflects the enduring issue in the quotation from the Declaration of Independence. Incorporate relevant and specific information from the speech, the document, and your own knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the Declaration of Independence and the civil rights movement.

Type your response in the box. This task may take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

Unpack the prompt to make sure you understand the directions. As you did for the RLA extended-response prompt, ask yourself, “What am I supposed to do?” Then, answer the question by looking for verbs, or action words, and the key words that go with them. Underline them now.

You might have underlined these words: **develop an argument about how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s position in his speech reflects the enduring issue in the quotation from the Declaration of Independence.**

**Incorporate relevant and specific information from the speech, the document, and your own knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the Declaration of Independence and the civil rights movement.**

Don’t worry if you do not yet understand everything the prompt asks you to do. Later, you will learn more about enduring issues and ways to analyze them.
After you write and submit an extended response, it will be evaluated against a rubric—a set of criteria or guidelines—for scoring. The rubric is divided into three traits, or sets of skills:

- Trait 1: Creation of arguments and use of evidence
- Trait 2: Development of ideas and organizational structure
- Trait 3: Clarity and command of standard English conventions

Although the rubrics for the RLA extended response and the social studies response are not exactly the same, they are similar, and both are based on the same three traits. The explanations below are general descriptions of the rubrics. The actual GED rubrics are reprinted on pages 72–73.

**Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence**

When you write an extended response, you will state your position—your central claim, or main idea—and support it with reasons based on details from the passage. This is the “creation of arguments” because you will try to persuade a reader that your position is valid, or right. “Use of evidence” refers to the details that you use to support your reasons. Your score for Trait 1 will depend on how well you support your position with well-chosen details from the passage or passages.

For the RLA, Trait 1 is worth a total of 2 points. Your writing will be evaluated to see how well you

- address the prompt by doing what it asks you to do;
- evaluate the arguments presented in the passages;
- state which argument you think is better and why;
- choose details from the passages to support your position.

For the social studies extended response, Trait 1 is worth a total of 2 points. You will be assessed on how well you

- address the prompt by doing what it asks you to do;
- understand and explain the relationship between the ideas in the passages;
- understand the circumstances, or historical context, of the passages;
- choose details from the passages to support your position.

**Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure**

For Trait 2, your work will be evaluated to see how clearly you state your ideas, how thoroughly you explain them, and how well you organize them.

Trait 2 is worth a total of 2 points for the RLA. Your score on Trait 2 of the RLA will depend on how well you

- develop, or fully explain, your main points;
- organize your response so that it has a clear beginning, middle, and end;
- create an effective progression, or sequence, of ideas;
- link ideas with appropriate signal words, or transitions;
- select language that furthers your purpose and shows awareness of the audience.
For the social studies extended response, Trait 2 is worth a total of 1 point. You will be assessed on how well you

- develop, or fully explain, your main points;
- create a clear progression, or sequence, of ideas;
- show an awareness of the purpose of your response and your audience.

**Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions**

Trait 3 is about how well you use Standard English, or the English that educated people use in formal situations. For Trait 3, your work will be evaluated to see whether you follow Standard English rules of grammar, mechanics, and usage and how well your sentences are put together, or structured. For the RLA, Trait 3 is worth a total of 2 points. Trait 3 on the social studies extended response is worth a total of 1 point. On this trait, the RLA and social studies extended-response criteria are similar. Both focus on whether you

- use correct verb forms and make subjects and verbs agree;
- use correct pronoun forms;
- use words that sound alike correctly (for instance to, too, and two);
- capitalize words correctly;
- use apostrophes and other punctuation marks correctly;
- write in clear, complete sentences;
- use a variety of sentence types to write fluently.

**Three-Step Approach to Extended-Response Items**

Now that you know how extended responses will be evaluated, what approach will you use to write high-scoring extended responses? The best method is to take it step by step.

This book will teach you a systematic, three-step approach to extended-response items. Each step in the process will help you develop the skills you need to do well on one or more of the three traits. Step 1 mainly focuses on helping you meet Trait 1 criteria. Step 2 mainly focuses on Trait 2. Step 3 focuses on Trait 3. The steps are as follows:

1. **Read and Analyze:** In this step, you will learn how to analyze and evaluate arguments for the RLA extended response and to find relationships between the ideas in paired passages for the social studies extended response.

2. **Plan and Write:** In this step, you will learn how to plan an extended response and then write it following that plan.

3. **Check and Revise:** In this step, you will learn how to check the grammar, mechanics, usage, and sentence structure in your extended response and how to revise to correct errors and improve your writing.
As you have seen, GED extended-response items will ask you to write about a passage or passages. Before writing, you must make sure that you understand the writing assignment and the reading selections it asks about. So the first step in the process of writing an extended response is to read and analyze the prompt and the passages. In the last section, you learned how to analyze prompts. In this section, you will learn how to analyze passages.

For Trait 1 of the extended-response rubric—Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence—you will be evaluated on your ability to evaluate arguments (RLA Test) and find relationships between ideas in passages (Social Studies Test). The lessons in this section will help you read and analyze extended-response passages for both tests.

More specifically, in this section you will learn how to

- identify an argument’s central claim—the writer’s position on an issue;
- distinguish between two main kinds of support: reasons and evidence;
- identify the counterarguments to a writer’s position and explain their purpose;
- differentiate between reasons that are specific and relevant to a claim and those that are not;
- identify fallacies of logic in arguments;
- weigh arguments to decide which are better supported and why.

Learning about arguments will help you write arguments as well as read them. Remember that for the GED Test, you will do both. In your written responses to the RLA prompt and to the social studies prompt, you will try to persuade readers that your position is reasonable and well supported.