

## The GED Language Arts, Writing Test

Passing the GED Language Arts, Writing Test



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## GED

## Video Partner



## Passing the GED Writing Test <br> Do, or do not. There is no 'try'. Yoda ('The Empire Strikes Back')

## TEST OVERVIEW:

> Time: 2 hours total; a maximum of 45 minutes for the essay test
$>$ The test consists of two parts:

## Part 1: Editing Test:

You will need to read passages, find errors or unclear writing, and choose the best way to fix the problems. You will find:
$>$ Types of passages used are: business documents, "how to" pieces, letters, memos, and informational texts.
$>50$ multiple-choice questions about the passages.
> 3 question types:

- 22-23 questions ask you to correct the sentence through sentence structure, organization, usage, or mechanics.
- 17-18 questions ask you to revise an underlined section of the sentence or two sentences. You will be given five choices from which to choose the best way to revise the underlined section. The first choice given will always be the same as the original underlined sentence.
- 10 questions will ask you to do a construction shift. In other words, what is the best way to rewrite a sentence or combine two sentences while retaining the original meaning? You may also have to move, join, or separate paragraphs, or even insert a topic sentence.
$>4$ major content areas tested:
- Organization--how ideas are organized within paragraphs and within an entire passage, removing irrelevant sentences, and correctly placing topic sentences
- Sentence structure--how ideas are expressed within complete sentences, identifying fragments and run-on sentences, and parallel structure
- Usage--the correct choice of words according to standard English including subject-verb agreement and correct pronoun and verb forms
- Mechanics--spelling, punctuation, and capitalization with emphasis on comma usage in sentences, and spelling focusing on homonyms including possessives and contractions.

Part 2: Essay Test:
You will be asked to write an essay on a given topic.
It gives you the following:

- A topic of common, general interest which requires no special knowledge.
- Directions to write a 250 word (approximately) expository essay that analyzes and explains a topic.
- A time limit of 45 minutes to write.
- A score given by two GED readers who score holistically. That means the score is based on the overall impression the essay gives of on-topic response, organization, development and details, control of conventions, and word choice.


## SCORING:

$>$ The score you achieve on the Editing Test will be combined with the score you receive on the Essay Test. The combined score will be reported to you. You cannot pass the GED Writing Test if you get a score lower than a " 2 " on the essay.
$>$ The Essay is read and scored by two different evaluators. Each evaluator will give you a score of 1 to 4 . The two scores will be averaged, and the average will be combined with your score from Part 1. When you are notified, you will receive one combined score for the GED Writing Test.
$>$ The essay will be graded holistically which means that the two readers will each read the essay once, quickly but thoroughly, and give you a score based on an overall impression of effectiveness.
$>$ Your essay score represents $37 \%$ to $40 \%$ of your total score with the rest coming from Part 1 .

## Language Arts, Writing, Part 2 <br> Essay Scoring Guide

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

(GED Essay Scoring Chart reprinted with permission of GEDTS)

Video 2 Focus: on the test itself including format, what's expected of the test-taker, and test-taking strategies

## You Will Learn From Video 2:

$>$ To understand the 3 types of written passages used to test your editing skills.
$>$ To familiarize yourself with the item by reading the entire selection and all alternatives before answering.
$>$ To look for a better, clearer way to deliver the thought.
$>$ To realize that simplicity is not only desirable but a "virtue" in writing.
$>$ To be aware of time and budget it carefully while testing.
$>$ To find out about the testing center (location, parking, etc.) before you go to take the test.


## Words You Need to Know:

While viewing the video, put the letter of the meaning by the correct vocabulary word. Answers are on page 15.
$\qquad$ 1. clarity
$\qquad$ 2. run-on
a. an incomplete thought; only part of a sentence
$\qquad$ 3. fragment
$\qquad$ 4. homonyms
b. "keep it short and simple"
c. two or more independent sentences which are stuck together to make one sentence without conjunctions or punctuation such as commas or semi-colons
$\qquad$ 5. KISS
d. being clear in communication
e. words that sound the same but have different meanings and different spellings

- There is only 1 correct answer to each question on Part 1.
- Wrong answers are not held against you in Part 1, so make the best guess rather than leaving an answer blank.
- Read the entire selection in Part 1 before beginning to answer.
- If you are going to skip an answer and come back to it later, be careful to leave a blank to keep your numbers straight.
- There are no right or wrong answers on the Essay Test.

Writing is absolutely essential in business for memos, reports, sales letters, advertising, and personal use for friendly letters, letters of complaint, invitations, and announcements, for stori family histories, and other uses too numerous to mention. In other words, writing is fundamenta to life.


The purpose of all writing, however, is to communicate information and ideas to others in a clear, concise, and correct manner. In order to do that, you must be skilled in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, sentence and paragraph structure, and organization.

Both Part 1 and Part 2 of the Language Arts, Writing Test will test your skills in these areas: in Part 1, you must identify correct and incorrect applications through multiple-choice, and in Part 2, you must construct an essay using all of the same elements.

## Part 1: Multiple-choice

You will be given 50 multiple-choice questions based on several types of passages. Throughout this entire section, you will be watching for unclear writing, deficient organization, flawed sentence and paragraph construction, poor usage, and faulty mechanics such as punctuation. You will be given choices as to how to correct those errors discovered.

## Organization: 7 or 8 out of 50 questions

Clarity is the objective of any writing, and the organization of any expository writing is extremely important to clarity. When judging the organization of a piece of writing, whether it is a promotional piece or a personal letter, you should look for a clear and logical delivery of ideas. Ask yourself:

- Does each piece of writing contain a topic statement in the first paragraph?
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
- Are related ideas grouped in the same paragraph?
- Do all sentences in the paragraph support the topic sentence?
- Is there a clear progression from one idea to the next, from one paragraph to the next, perhaps, using "first," "next," "then," "finally"?
- Do all the paragraphs support the topic statement?



## Sentence Structure: 15 out of 50 questions

To ensure clarity, all sentences should be complete.

- Many writings include run-on sentences: two or more complete, independent sentences clumped together without punctuation such as commas or semi-colons, or conjunctions such as "and" or "but."
- Example: "Johnny ran to the store he bought bread he took it home to his mother."
- They may also contain fragments: a partial sentence that may contain a subject but no verb but no subject.
- Example: "Johnny ran to the store. Bought bread. Took home to his mother."
- Complete sentences might read: "Johnny ran to the store and bought bread. He took it home to his mother."


## Usage: 15 out of 50 questions:

Usage is sometimes referred to as grammar and means to use the correct word according to standard English.

- Verb tense: The verbs in the sentence as well as the entire piece should agree as to tense. For instance: "Bob went shopping for a new car yesterday, and he buys a red one." The first verb is past tense and the second verb is present tense. It should read: "Bob went shopping for a new car yesterday, and he bought a red one."
- Subject/verb agreement: If the subject is singular then the verb must be singular. Likewise, if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. Many people get confused if there are phrases or clauses in-between the subject and verb. You must always ask yourself, "What is the verb modifying?"
- Wrong: "The people in the park is having a party."
- Right: "The people in the park are having a party." The verb "are" modifies "people" (plural subject) and not "park" (singular noun in phrase). Try taking out the phrase or clause and see how it sounds: "The people is having a party." No!

- Wrong: "There has been many complaints about the noise next door."
- Right: "There have been many complaints about the noise next door." The subject here is "complaints" which is plural so you must use "have." Try changing the sentence around to see how it sounds: "many complaints have been..." Yes!

Don't be fooled by compound subjects. Simple rules apply: if either singular or plural subjects are joined by "and," then use a plural verb. If singular subjects are joined by "or" or "nor," then use a singular verb. Of course, if the subjects are plural, regardless of the "or" or "nor," use a plural verb.

- Example: "The engine and transmission were replaced." (both singular joined by "and")
- Example:"Either the engine or transmission was replaced." (both singular joinea "or")
- Example: "Neither the engines nor transmissions were replaced." (both plural joined by "nor")

Collective nouns present problems for people because they sound like they're plural, but as they are used as a unit, they are considered singular. (Watch out for those pesky phrases and clauses in-between subject and verb.) Here is a list of commonly used collective nouns:

| committee | team | army | flock |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| group | squadron | crowd | swarm |
| class | faculty | herd | audience |
| club | fleet | jury | troop |

- Example: "Our herd of dairy cows is the largest in the state." (singular because "is" modifies the collective "herd" and not "cows" which is in a phrase) They are really saying, "Our herd is the largest in the state."
- Example: "The club meets every Monday in the auditorium."
- Example: "A group of teachers was discussing school policy." ("A group was discussing school policy.")

There are some nouns that may seem plural but are always singular:

| someone | no one | anyone | somebody |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| everyone | nobody | none | anybody |

- Example: "None of the kids is sick today."
- Example:"Does anybody know the location of the nearest ATM?"

While most nouns become plural by adding "s," "es," or "ies," some nouns are irregular and form a plural oddly. When placing them with a verb, however, they are still considered plural. Here are some oddly formed plurals:


Some particular usage problems include:

- good and well: Good is ALWAYS an adjective and must modify a noun. You can say, "He played good," because it would be modifying the verb "played." You can s "He's a good player," because it would be correctly modifying the noun "player."
- Well is primarily used as an adverb modifying a verb: "He played well."
- Well is used as an adjective only in special circumstances and in referring to health: . "He was sick, but now he is well." Or: "She is well dressed."
- bring and take: These words convey a direction. Bring means toward the speaker, and take means away from the speaker. Bring=come and take=go.
- "When you come to see me, bring your children."
" "When you go to the grocery store, take the coupons with you."
- Lie and lay present problems for people. To use them correctly, you need to understand the difference between them and memorize the principle parts.
- Lie means to recline, to rest, to be in place.
- Lay means to put or place something.

Present Present Continuous Past Past Participle
lie (to recline or rest)
lay (to put something)
(is) lying
lay
(have) lain
(is) laying
laid
(have) laid

Examples: "The duck lies down for a nap every afternoon."
"Mom lays the baby down in the crib."
"She lay down yesterday for an hour."
"Bob has laid the bag of cement in his driveway."

- Who and whom are especially difficult to remember. Who is the subject of a sentence or clause and does the action. Whom is the object of a sentence or clause and receives the action.

Examples: " Who (subject) broke the window?"
"To whom (object) do I owe this honor?"
> HINT: if you can replace the "whom" with the word "him" then it is used correctly. Example: "Do I owe this honor to him?"


Mechanics: 12 or 13 out of 50 questions:
"Mechanics" defines the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in a written piece. Mechanics could be a whole course in itself, but we will just touch on some of its most important features.

- Spelling: (There will probably be no more than 3-4 spelling questions.) Although there are many spelling rules, the one most important for the GED Test has to do with the use of homonyms. Homonyms are words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings. Here are some of the most common trouble-makers:

| its possessive pronoun | it's contraction for "it is" (apostrophe stands for missing " i ") |
| :---: | :---: |
| your possessive pronoun | you're contraction for "you are" (apostrophe stands for missing "a") |
| here place | hear what you do with your "ear" |
| there place (has "here" in it) | their possessive, belonging to them |
| (here and there) | they're contraction for "they are" (apostrophe stands for missing "a") |
| $\frac{\text { I'll }}{(\text { apostrophe stands for missing "wi") }}$ contraction of "I will" walkway $\underline{\text { isle }}$ island |  |
|  |  |
| sent to dispatch | scent smell cent money |
| he'll contraction for "he will" | heal cure disease heel back of foot |
| principle rule or standard | principal head of school (think "pal") |
| $\underline{\text { right }}$ correct | write to inscribe rite a ritual |
| seen past participle of see | scene view or landscape |
| sea ocean (both have "ea") | see observe |
| stationery writing paper | stationary not moving |
| to toward | too also two number, a couple |
| wait remain in readiness | weight amount of heaviness |
| week 7 days | weak not strong |
| who's contraction of "who is"weather meteorological condition | whose belonging to whom? |
|  | whether if it be the case |

- Punctuation: There are several kinds of punctuation, but ending punctuation--periods, question marks, exclamation point--and commas are the most frequently used.
- The problem with ending punctuation is that people sometimes get confused as to which ones to use. However, the rules are simple:
- The period is used simply for declarative sentences, to make a statement. It is used to separate complete thoughts also known as independent sentences.

- The question mark is used at the end only if a question is asked.
- The exclamation point (!) is used sparingly and only when much emotion is involved.
- The comma is used often to:
- separate words in a series: "He bought apples, oranges, and bananas."
- set off expressions that interrupt the sentence: "Elvis Presley, a famous singer from the 60 s and 70 s , appeared on television many times."
- set off a direct address or introductory words: "Mrs. Brown, I'm here to fix your refrigerator." "No, you may not have more dessert." "Oh, that was funny!"
- separate dates or address: "He was born on March 25, 1947." "He lives at 333 Elm Street, Sacramento, California."
- separate two independent clauses when placed before the "and," "but," "or," or "nor." "Barbara always does the cooking, and her husband cleans the kitchen." "He needs to get a new job, but the job market is bad right now."
- Other punctuation includes:
- Semi-colons: used to join independent clauses without using a conjunction like "and" or "but." "Barbara always does the cooking; her husband cleans the kitchen." "Barbara always does the cooking; however, her husband cleans the kitchen."
- Quotation marks: used to designate the actual words spoken by someone. Mr. Clark said, "I'm going to open a new savings account tomorrow."



## Try This!

In the following sentences, write in the word that best completes the sentence. Answers are on page 15.

1. When he's not sick, he has (good, well) $\qquad$ basketball skills.
2. When you think of your grandparents, (who, whom) $\qquad$ lived the longest?
3. Where have I (laid, lain) $\qquad$ my glasses?
4. The jury (was, were) $\qquad$ deliberating for ten days.
5. Don't forget to (bring, take) $\qquad$ your umbrella to the park.
6. Either the principal or a teacher (give, gives) $\qquad$ the graduation speech.
7. The babies in the playpen (play, plays) $\qquad$ happily by themselves.
8. (Its, It's) $\qquad$ perfectly understandable if not forgivable.
9. Wow, I can't believe I won (period, question mark, exclamation point)
10. It doesn't matter (weather, whether) $\qquad$ you're right or wrong, it just matters that you tell the truth.

## Practice

There is only one correct answer, and there are no "trick" questions on Part 1 of the Writing Skills Test. Try this short informational text. Answers and explanations are on page 15.

## Cars in the City

(1) Most people trouble with their cars in New York City. (2) It's hard to park cars there because of a lack of parking spaces. (3) They're so congested and dangerous. (4) A lot of cars, buses, and taxis they are on the streets. (5) It's difficult to drive on city streets.
(6) Most offices department stores, and public buildings offer little or no parking for their clients and customers (7) Many cars have scratches on them. (8) People have to seek out the few high-priced parking garage

1. Sentence 1: Most people trouble with their cars in New York City.
(1) put a comma after trouble
(2) sentence is correct as it stands
(3) insert have after people
(4) move sentence after sentence (5)
(5) change cars to car
2. Sentence 2: It's hard to park cars there because of a lack of parking spaces.
(1) make this sentence the topic sentence of the second paragraph, ahead of \#6
(2) there should be spelled their
(3) put a comma before because
(4) use an exclamation point at end
(5) It's should be spelled Its
3. Sentence 3: They're so congested and dangerous.
(1) use a question mark at end
(2) They're should be There
(3) combine (3) with (5) after adding a comma and because after streets
(4) move to beginning of paragraph as topic sentence
(5) move after sentence (8)
4. Sentence 4: A lot of cars, buses, and taxis they are on the streets.
(1) remove they
(2) sentence is correct as it stands
(3) remove the comma after cars
(4) move sentence before (7)
(5) use as topic sentence

## 5. Sentence 6: Most offices department stores, and public buildings offer little or no parking for their clients and customers.

(1) sentence is correct as it stands
(2) move sentence ahead of \#5
(3) their should be spelled they're
(4) put a comma after offices
(5) use exclamation point instead of period
6. Sentence 7: Many cars have scratches on them.
(1) put a comma after cars
(2) put a question mark at the end of the sentence instead of period
(3) put sentence after \#1
(4) sentence is correct as it stands
(5) delete sentence as it does not relate to topic statement
7. Sentence 8: People have to seek out the few high-priced parking garages.
(1) change have to has
(2) put comma after out
(3) move sentence ahead of \#1
(4) use quotation marks around sentence
(5) sentence is correct as it stands

## GED EXERCISE

Read this article and answer the questions following it. Choose the one best answer to correct the sentence if necessary. Answers are on page 16.


## Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil

## A

(1) This famous japanese carving "The Monkeys of Nikko" was found in an ancient japanese shrine from the 1600s. (2) Many believe it is appropriate for life-lessons even today. (3) It is commonly referred to as "here no evil, sea no evil, speak no evil," and it has been around for centuries symbolizing words to the wise.

B
(4) My sisters-in-law think "hear no evil" means not to listen to gossip. (5) They believe all gossip is hurtful and serves no well purpose. (6) Do you think, however, that you can stop listening to what people say, or that you just have to be more careful in not passing on gossip.

## C

(7) When it comes to "see no evil," one has to think of children and their television watching. (8) Many believe there is plenty of "evil" on t.v., we have to protect our children from being exposed to images and ideas they cant understand. (9) The best way to do that is to monitor the programs and channels being watched, and to talk to the children about what they are seeing.

D
(10) What better representation of "speak no evil" could there be than political campaigns. (11) It seems theirs more "evil" spoken on all sides during the few months leading up to an election than during the rest of the year. (12) Therefore, it is the responsibility of each voter to try to sort out the truth and vote accordingly.

E
(13) The message of "The Monkeys of Nikko" is timeless. (14) Whether it is modern television viewing or age-old gossip and politics, the moral of the carving still applies. (15) After nearly 400 years, some problems that affects our personal lives, our children, and our political process could all be resolved by the simple suggestion of "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil."

1. In paragraph A , there
1) are misspelled words in sentences 1 and 2
2) are misspelled words in sentence 3 only
3) are misspelled words in all sentences
4) are no misspelled words
5) are misspelled words in sentence 1 only
2. In paragraph A ,
1) remove commas from sentence 3
2) replace the period with an exclamation point in sentence 2
3) there are no punctuation problems
4) place commas before and after "The Monkeys of Nikko"
5) in sentence 3 , put a comma after centuries
3. In paragraph A ,
1) move sentence 2 after sentence 3
2) put sentence 3 as the first sentence in paragraph B
3) put sentence 3 as the introductory sentence
4) join sentence 1 and 2 with a comma
5) there are no sentence problems
4. In paragraph A ,
1) remove capitals from the title of the carving, "The Monkeys of Nikko"
2) capitalize japanese in sentence 1
3) capitalize centuries in sentence 3
4) there are no capitalization problems
5) capitalize life lessons
5. In paragraph B,
1) put comma after think in sentence 4
2) remove comma before however in sentence 6
3) put comma after hurtful in sentence 5
4) there are no punctuation problems
5) replace period with question mark in sentence 6
6. In paragraph B,
1) put "s" on think in sentence 4
2) put "s" on hear in sentence 4
3) change well to good in sentence 5
4) change ...you can stop... to ... one can stop... in sentence 6
5) there are no usage problems
7. In paragraph C ,
1) put apostrophe in cant in sentence 8
2) change they are to there in sentence 9
3) change period to exclamation point after sentence 7
4) there are no punctuation or spelling problems
5) remove comma after "evil" in sentence 7
8. In paragraph C,
1) there are no sentence structure problems
2) sentence 9 is a run-on sentence
3) sentence 7 is a fragment
4) in sentence 9 , replace the comma with a semi-colon
5) sentence 8 is a run-on sentence
9. In paragraph D,
1) change it is to its in sentence 12
2) change theirs to there's in sentence 11
3) put comma after evil in sentence 11
4) remove comma after therefore in sentence 12
5) there are no punctuation or spelling problems
10. In paragraph D,
1) sentence 10 is a fragment
2) put sentence 11 after sentence 12
3) there are no structure or sentence problems
4) sentence 11 is a run-on
5) sentence 12 is the topic sentence and should be he first sentence
11. In paragraph E ,
1) change affects to affect in sentence 14
2) change is to are in sentence 13
3) remove comma after years in sentence 15
4) remove quotation marks from "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil."
5) remove comma after lives in sentence 15
12. In paragraph E ,
1) put sentence 13 as the last sentence in the paragraph
2) combine sentence 13 with 14 by putting a comma after timeless
3) put sentence 13 after sentence 12 in paragraph B
4) sentence 15 is a run-on sentence
5) there are no sentence or structure problems

## Page 4: Words You Need to Know

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. e
5. b

Page 10: Try This

1. good
2. who
3. laid
4. was
5. take
6. gives
7. play
8. It's
9. exclamation point
10. whether

Page 10-11: Practice

1. (3) This sentence is a fragment that contains a subject but no verb. Since people is plural, use have to make this a complete sentence.
2. (1) This works best as the topic sentence for paragraph two because most of the other sentences in paragraph two talk about parking, whereas, the other sentences in paragraph one just talk about the general difficulties of driving a car in New York City.
3. (3) Even though this is an independent, complete sentence, it is hard to know to what they're is referring. By connecting this sentence to sentence 5 , we see that they're refers to city streets.
4. (1) This sentence is unclear. Because the subject is already stated, there is no need for they. By removing they, you have a complete sentence of:

A lot of cars, buses, and taxis are on the streets.
5. (4) We use commas in a series, and this sentence has a series that lacks a comma after offices.
6. (5) This sentence should be deleted because it does not support the topic sentence that relates to parking cars.
7. (5) This sentence is complete, has no mechanical errors, and serves as support for the topic sentence.

## Page 12-14: GED EXERCISE

1. (2) The correct spelling is: "hear...see..."
2. (4) We need the commas because "The Monkeys of Nikko" is an expression that interrupts the sentence.
3. (1) Sentence 2 is the topic sentence and should be after sentence 3 .
4. (2) Japanese is a proper noun and must be capitalized.
5. (4) There are no punctuation problems.
6. (3) Well is an adverb and cannot be used to modify the noun purpose.
7. (1) Can't is a contraction for can not, so it needs the apostrophe to show the missing letters.
8. (1) There are no sentence or structure problems.
9. (2) Theirs is a possessive pronoun. Here we need there is or the contraction there's.
10.(3) There are no sentence or structure problems.
11.(1) Because problems is plural, you need to use the plural form, affect.
12.(5) There are no sentence or structure problems.
