



# The GED Language Arts, Writing Test

## *The Writing Process*



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# GED

## Video Partner



### Passing the GED Writing Test

Whether you think that you can, or that you can't, you are usually right.  
Henry Ford, Car Manufacturer

Video 4 Focus: how to shape ideas into a finished piece of writing

#### You Will Learn From Video 4:

- That writing is a process.
- That writing is a creative art that is messy in the beginning.
- That writing consists of a series of activities rather than one.
- That we must get rid of the inner censor when first starting a piece of writing.
- That revision is the “evolution of writing.”



#### 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.

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. cognitive research | a. first writing with no checks on mechanical accuracy        |
| _____ 2. recursive process  | b. opinion you're going to support; main idea of your writing |
| _____ 3. thesis statement   | c. going back and forth from one step in writing to another   |
| _____ 4. rough draft        | d. where you evaluate and improve what you've written         |
| _____ 5. revise             | e. research on problem solving                                |



#### Points to Remember:

- You must keep in mind your purpose for writing and audience, those who will be reading your writing.
- Your thesis statement is usually in the first paragraph, a means of keeping you headed in the right direction.
- Writing is a flexible process: you will be constantly going back and forth from brainstorming to revising as you go along.

## WRITING AS A PROCESS



Many people are led to believe that to write something, you either have to sweat boulders to come up with ideas and then spend hours struggling to organize the ideas into a coherent piece of writing, or, on the contrary, you just have to put something down on paper and then you are finished. Neither idea is correct.



Writing is neither as simple nor as complex as many people, especially some teachers, have tried to impress on you.

Actually, writing is just like the same process we use in our everyday lives: think, try, evaluate. When we have a problem, we try to try those solutions out to see if they them does. If none does, we go called “recursive,” going back and the desired result.



think of the best possible solutions. We then work. Afterward, we evaluate to see if any of back through the same process again. This is forth from one step to another until we have

In writing, we call this process:

brainstorm, write, and revise. See how similar the writing process is to the problem-solving process from everyday life:

<u>Everyday Life</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>Process</u>
think	brainstorm	idea stage
try	write (draft)	see what works
evaluate	revise	check over and change until you reach desired result

Like much of our everyday problem-solving, writing is a creative act that is often a messy and cumbersome process. That is why it is important to follow the process step by step to produce our best writing.

Before following the three-step writing process, there are a couple of preliminary points to be looked at:

- ❖ “Who is my audience?” Are you writing for a general audience, for customers, for clients, for children, for men, or women only? Will this audience understand your writing, or will you have to use different vocabulary or a different structure (memo versus letter, for instance) to make yourself clear? Try to put yourself in your reader’s place and see what you would find the best way to get the message across.

- ❖ “What is the purpose of this piece, its main point, or the opinion I’m going to support?” In order to begin brainstorming, you must have an idea of which direction to go. Is the purpose to persuade or inform? Are you going to compare or contrast different products or ideas? Once you’ve decided on a purpose, topic, main point, or opinion, then you’re ready for the first step in the writing process.

## BRAINSTORMING

This is the thinking part of the process, and it is a time for flexibility. In the brainstorming process, no idea should be thrown out ahead of time; exclude nothing. Your whole purpose here is to gather as many of the ideas and details for writing as possible, so just think and write down everything. You won’t be able to put everything you come up with in your writing, but you need to have a large bulk of ideas to choose from.



The most efficient way to brainstorm is to start listing each idea that comes into your head, while temporarily suspending your inner censor, until you can think of nothing else to write down. Here’s a possible brainstorming list for the topic, “how I can lose weight.”

### HOW I CAN LOSE WEIGHT

*run a marathon  
eat grapefruit only  
join Weight Watchers  
jog sometimes  
just bread and water  
start lifting weights  
join a gym  
eat a balanced diet  
hypnosis  
learn to ride a bike  
prescription diet drug*

*walk five days a week  
join a support group  
ask my doctor for a diet  
increase veggies  
exercise with a friend  
learn low-fat cooking  
exercise with a video  
cut down on fats  
have stomach stapled  
count calories*

After making up your list, you will need to go back and strike out any items that are not suitable or would not work for you for various reasons: too expensive, too difficult to follow, physically unable to do, dangerous, takes too long, etc.

## HOW I CAN LOSE WEIGHT

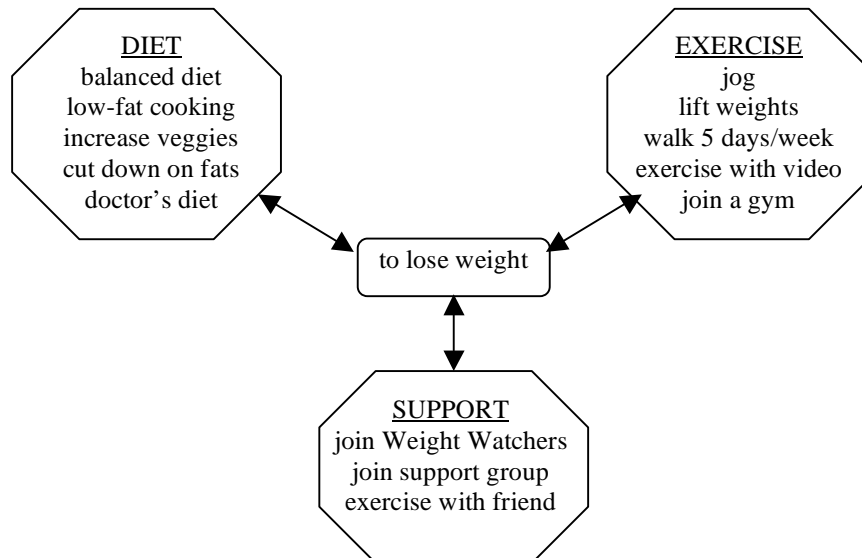
~~run a marathon~~  
~~eat grapefruit only~~  
 join Weight Watchers  
 jog sometimes  
~~just eat bread and water~~  
 start lifting weights  
 join a gym  
 eat a balanced diet  
~~hypnosis~~  
~~learn to ride a bike~~  
~~prescription diet drug~~

walk five days a week  
 join a support group  
 ask my doctor for a diet  
 increase veggies  
 exercise with a friend  
 learn low-fat cooking  
 exercise with a video  
 cut down on fats  
~~have stomach stapled~~  
~~count calories~~

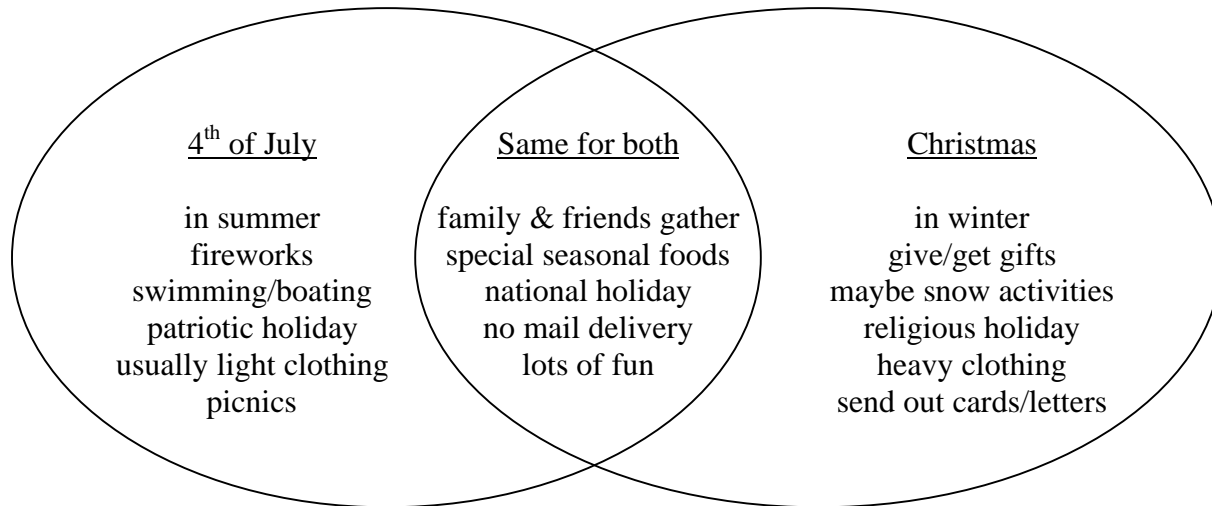
You now have a list of ideas and details that you can use to write your essay. With just a little more organization, your essay will fall into place. The trick now is to find similarities that will allow you to support and explain your thesis statement, “how I can lose weight.”

To organize your thoughts, the best way is to use a “graphic organizer.” This could be called mind-mapping, concept-web, or any number of other names, but the idea is the same: group similar points in the same category and each category will then be given a name and be used in a separate paragraph. The name or identification given each category will serve as the topic sentence for each paragraph.

Here’s a graphic organizer for the information above:



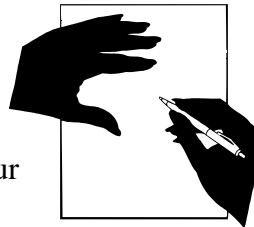
Another form of graphic organizer particularly useful for comparing and contrasting people, places, events, things, or ideas is called a Venn Diagram. Made up of two (sometimes more) overlapping circles, characteristics of one item are put on one side, characteristics of another item are put on the other side, and the intersecting part holds characteristics that are the same for both items. Look at the following Venn Diagram that compares two American holidays:



Each of these activities, brainstorming and graphic organizers, constitutes a form of **PRE-WRITING**. It serves as the thinking and planning stage for the next step in the process, the writing of the draft.

## WRITE (THE DRAFT)

One might say that the next step in “freebee,” because you can be very about changes until the revision



the process, writing the draft, is a creative here and not have to worry step.

In this step, you need to focus on your and details. Are you writing an compare/contrast piece for children? By have already organized the main ideas and details, so now you just need to shape the resulting information into sentences and paragraphs.

purpose, your audience, main points, informational piece for adults, or a looking back to the brainstorming, you

The topic of the brainstorming will, no doubt, serve as the foundation for the thesis statement, the main idea of the essay. This is your compass, what you’ll prove in the entire essay, or the opinion you are going to support. It will serve to keep your writing on track.

In the first brainstorming exercise, the topic was “how I can lose weight.” After an introductory sentence or two in the first paragraph of your essay, your thesis statement might be: “There are several things I can do that will help me lose weight.”

Then each paragraph in the body of the essay will have a topic sentence that “proves” or supports the thesis statement.

Since our graphic organizer has grouped the details into three groupings, then you can have three supporting paragraphs with these possible topic sentences:

- “The proper diet is one way to lose weight.”
- “Exercise is fundamental to any weight-loss program.”
- “Weight-loss is always easier if we have a supportive environment.”

The other points from our graphic organizer are used within the paragraphs to support the topic sentence for that paragraph.



You could do something similar with the compare/contrast exercise, but here you may choose to use two or three paragraphs. For instance: your thesis statement may be: “My two favorite holidays are Christmas and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.” Then you would probably have two supporting paragraphs that may be:

- “Christmas is one of my favorite holidays for several reasons.” Then you would use the details from the Venn Diagram to complete the paragraph.
- “The 4<sup>th</sup> of July, however, is another favorite holiday of mine.” You would use the details to complete this paragraph.

The intersecting points could be included in each of the two paragraphs.

You could also decide to make the body of this essay three paragraphs by using the intersecting points this way:

- “While each holiday has its own distinctive characteristics, they are both alike in some ways.”

Whatever you use to organize and write your draft, don’t lose sight of the fact that you will most often on the GED Essay, as in real life problem-solving, be asked to use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge. You will have to inform or persuade, show cause and effect, or reveal contrasts or comparisons, and you must give specific examples to support your main ideas.



## REVISE

Now here is the part where you evaluate and improve what you've written. Whereas the draft was the "freebee," now it's time to pay the Piper. Here you're going to look at your writing, add, take out, rewrite, rephrase, and rearrange in order to clarify your meaning and be sure that you have accomplished your purpose and reached your audience.

By reading your writing out loud (except on the GED Test, of course), you can often pick up errors in usage, sentence construction, vocabulary, and placement.

Revision is where you correct your grammar and spelling. During the draft, it was most important to just get the words down on paper. Now you must go back and clean it up. Pay special attention to those areas you have had problems with such as spelling, and seek help with a dictionary.

Everyone should have, at the least, a pocket dictionary that is very inexpensive. It can be bought at bookstores, variety stores, even thrift shops and garage sales. Another must-have for the writer is a thesaurus that will give you substitute words (synonyms and antonyms) to liven up your writing. Some good dictionaries and the best thesaurus are:

*The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*  
*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*  
*Roget's Thesaurus.*

If you're using a computer, there are many places on-line where you can check out spelling and grammar. Some places are particularly useful because they provide links to help with spelling, grammar, thesaurus, style, quotations, etc. Check these out:

<http://www.m-w.com/home.htm>  
<http://www.bartleby.com/>  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/>



*Don't forget, writing is an on-going and "recursive" process; you'll be constantly switching back and forth from one stage to another. However, when you are finished, you'll find the effort worth it and be very pleased with the result.*



# Practice 1

Using the information from the brainstorming, graphic organizer, suggested thesis statement, and topic sentences for “how I can lose weight,” write an essay below. (Don’t write a conclusion.) Look on page 15 to see one possibility.

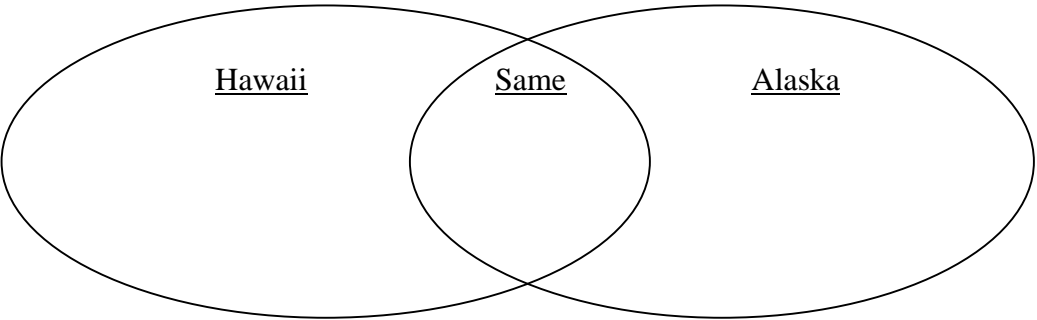
## How I Can Lose Weight

(Conclusion)

Practice 2

Use the following Venn Diagram to compare/contrast two vacations, one in Alaska and one in Hawaii. Think of all the ways the two vacations would be similar as well as different. Put the differences in the labeled circles, and then in the intersecting circle, write down as many similarities as possible. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to address all topics including clothing, transportation, food, native peoples, etc.

Look on page 16 to see one possibility.



Using the information from the diagram, write a thesis statement and three possible topic sentences: (Note: if you like, you could use just two supporting sentences and include the information from the intersection in each.)



Thesis statement:

Topic sentences:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)



## GED EXERCISE 1

Read this informational text and answer the questions that follow. Answers and Explanations are on page 16.

### LITTLE KNOWN “HOLIDAYS”

#### A

Everyone is familiar with the partying, gift giving, and joyous happenings of Holidays such as Independence Day, New Year’s Day, and Christmas. We all look forward to the day off from work, the special foods, the family gatherings, and the fond memories. Few, however, realize that there are other “holidays” throughout the year that are remembrances of little-known animals or events.

#### B

One interesting “holiday” is on February 2<sup>nd</sup> when we celebrate the whether-predicting skills of the groundhog. Tradition says that if the groundhog comes out of its hole and sees its shadow, then it predicts a long, hard winter and returns to its hole for another six weeks. If it doesn’t see its shadow, it stays out and enjoys what is sure to be an early spring. Some debate just how accurate it is, but many feel its just as accurate as the well-trained meteorologists.

#### C

The last Friday in April been proclaimed a national holiday by several presidents to celebrate the practice of planting trees. Begun in Nebraska Territory in 1854 by settlers who didn’t like the treeless plains, the first Arbor Day was celebrated in 1872 when over one million trees were planted on the first day. Now the practice and the holiday has spread across the nation.

#### D

June 14<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes, so in 1885, a Wisconsin schoolteacher declared that day the “Flags Birthday” or Flag Day. Through magazines and newspapers, the idea caught on and was adopted by other states. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson made it official with a proclamation in 1949, President Truman signed an Act of Congress that established June 14<sup>th</sup> of every year as National Flag Day.

#### E

While it’s nice to give gifts, watch fireworks, and have picnics, it is also nice to celebrate other holidays that recognize weather-predicting animals, early environmentalists, and the great symbol of our country.

1. In paragraph A: **Everyone is familiar with the partying, gift giving, and joyous happenings Holidays such as Independence Day, New Year's Day, and Christmas.**
  - 1) is the thesis statement and should be at the end of the paragraph
  - 2) remove the capital H on Holidays
  - 3) is correct as it stands
  - 4) replace the period with an exclamation point
  - 5) remove the comma after Independence Day
2. In paragraph A: **We all look forward to the day off from work, the special foods, the family gatherings, and the fond memories.**
  - 1) should be the first sentence in the paragraph
  - 2) is the thesis statement and should be at the end of the paragraph
  - 3) is a run-on
  - 4) is correct as it stands
  - 5) put a comma after forward
3. In paragraph B: **One interesting "holiday" is on February 2<sup>nd</sup> when we celebrate the whether-predicting skills of the groundhog.**
  - 1) replace whether- with weather-
  - 2) put a comma after "holiday"
  - 3) put a comma after groundhog and combine with the next sentence
  - 4) is a fragment
  - 5) sentence is correct as it stands
4. In paragraph B: **Some debate just how accurate it is, but many feel its just as accurate as the well-trained meteorologists.**
  - 1) put a comma after debate
  - 2) this is the topic sentence and should be first in the paragraph
  - 3) sentence is correct as it stands
  - 4) is a run-on
  - 5) change its to it's
5. In paragraph C: **The last Friday in April been proclaimed a national holiday by several presidents to celebrate the practice of planting trees.**
  - 1) fragment
  - 2) insert has before been
  - 3) sentence is correct as it stands
  - 4) put comma after proclaimed
  - 5) capitalize presidents

6. In paragraph C: **Now the practice and the holiday has spread across the nation.**
  - 1) put a comma after spread
  - 2) is a fragment
  - 3) capitalize nation
  - 4) change has to have
  - 5) sentence is correct as it stands
  
7. In paragraph D: **June 14<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes, so in 1885, a Wisconsin schoolteacher declared that day the “Flags Birthday” or Flag Day.**
  - 1) change declared to declares
  - 2) run-on sentence
  - 3) remove capitals from Flag Day
  - 4) insert apostrophe to make Flag’s
  - 5) sentence is correct as it stands
  
8. In paragraph D: **In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson made it official with a proclamation in 1949, President Truman signed an Act of Congress that established June 14<sup>th</sup> of every year as National Flag Day.**
  - 1) capitalize proclamation
  - 2) run-on sentence
  - 3) remove capital P from President
  - 4) put comma after official
  - 5) sentence is correct as it stands
  
9. In paragraph E: **While it’s nice to give gifts, watch fireworks, and have picnics, it is also nice to celebrate other holidays that recognize weather-predicting animals, early environmentalists, and the great symbol of our country.**
  - 1) change it’s to its
  - 2) remove comma after gifts
  - 3) sentence is correct as it stands
  - 4) capitalize country
  - 5) change weather- to whether-

## GED EXERCISE 2

Read the following and answer the questions. Answers and Explanations are on page 17.

There’s a modest food out there--often enjoyed today in the ball park and at parties--that were invented by monks and became a symbol of good fortune in medieval times. Believe it or not, sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries, monks used leftover dough to form the pretzel shape because it looked like the traditional form of a person in prayer with arms crossed. Pretzels were given as rewards to children and soon they spread throughout Europe. Ultimately, they became a part of the wedding ceremony signifying the “oneness” of the couple. Today, we just enjoy eating them.

1. **There's a modest food out there--often enjoyed today in the ball park and at parties--that invented by monks and became a symbol of good fortune in medieval times.**

- 1) capitalize monks
- 2) change There's to Theirs
- 3) change the period to a question mark
- 4) change were to was
- 5) sentence is correct as it stands

2. **Pretzels were given as rewards to children and soon they spread throughout Europe.**

- 1) capitalize children
- 2) put comma after children
- 3) sentence is correct as it stands
- 4) change were to was
- 5) remove capital from Europe

3. **Ultimately, they became a part of the wedding ceremony signifying the "oneness" of the couple. Today, we just enjoy eating them.**

- 1) sentences are correct as they stand
- 2) capitalize couple
- 3) capitalize oneness
- 4) join both sentences with a comma after couple and remove the capital on Today
- 5) remove comma after Ultimately

My grandfather has retired from a job he held for many years, but he don't like staying home and doing nothing. He'd like to go out to work again, but no one wants to hire him because of his age. I think age discrimination it's bad for society as well as for the individual.

It is a loss for society because he'd be a real help in a lot of businesses with all of his skills. He has did many types of work over the years, and the businesses could use that.

4. **My grandfather has retired from a job he held for many years, but he don't like staying home and doing nothing.**

- 1) capitalize grandfather
- 2) remove comma after years
- 3) change don't to doesn't
- 4) sentence is correct as it stands
- 5) run-on sentence

5. **I think age discrimination it's bad for society as well as for the individual.**

- 1) capitalize individual
- 2) capitalize discrimination
- 3) capitalize society
- 4) remove it's and replace with is
- 5) sentence is correct as it stands

6. **He has did many types of work over the years, and the businesses could use that.**

- 1) capitalize businesses
- 2) change use to used
- 3) change period to semi-colon
- 4) remove comma after years
- 5) change did to done

You can only make a first impression once, so when you're going for a job interview, you have to look your best. Clothes should be clean and pressed shoes need to be shined. Be sure the interviewer can see your resumé is clear and neat.

7. **You can only make a first impression once, so when you're going for a job interview, you have to look your best.**

- 1) sentence is correct as it stands
- 2) put a comma after going
- 3) change you're to your
- 4) change your (best) to you're (best)
- 5) capitalize impression

8. **Clothes should be clean and pressed shoes need to be shined.**

- 1) change period to exclamation point
- 2) put a comma after clean
- 3) sentence is correct as it stands
- 4) run-on sentence
- 5) fragment

9. **Be sure the interviewer can see your resumé is clear and neat.**

- 1) capitalize resume
- 2) put a comma after see
- 3) capitalize interviewer
- 4) change sea to see
- 5) sentence is correct as it stands



## ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

Page 1: Words You Need To Know

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

Page 8: Practice 1

One possible essay on the topic “how I can lose weight” follows. Note the underlined sentences are the suggested thesis statement and topic sentences.

### How I Can Lose Weight

Over the years, I've tried the grapefruit diet, the beer diet, the high fiber diet, and many more I can't remember. They all worked for awhile. Now I realize, though, that there are several things I can do that will help me lose weight permanently.

I know now that the proper diet is one good way to lose weight. A balanced diet with protein, some carbohydrates, and good fats like olive oil is very important. This should include low-fat meats and dairy. When I eat out, I need to watch my fats, and I should increase the fruits and veggies in my diet. My doctor could give me a good diet to go by.

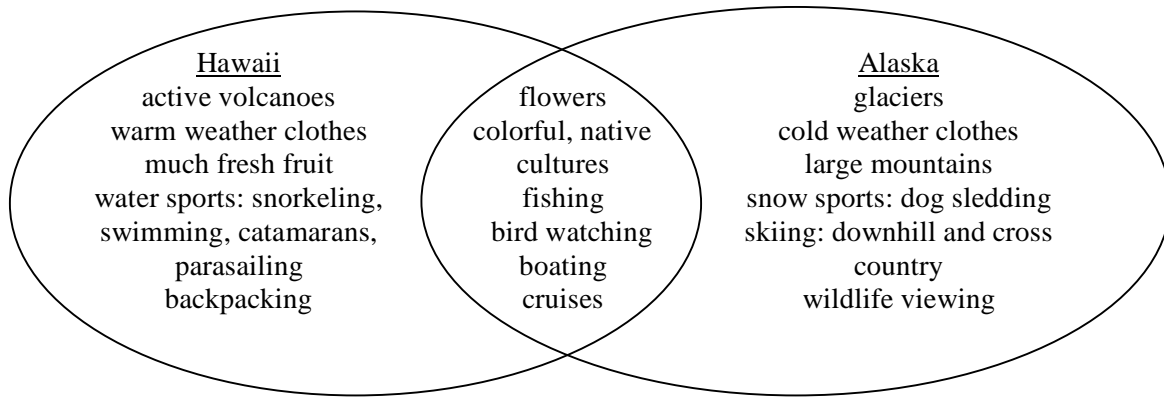
Exercise is fundamental to any good weight-loss program. I could jog sometimes and start walking to work every day, and these are pretty inexpensive things to do. I just need a good pair of shoes. I could lift weights—even if it's a couple of soup cans—and it isn't too expensive to buy an exercise video these days. Of course, I could join a gym where I could run, walk, bike, lift weights, and do some other exercises as well.

But, you know, the one thing I've learned is that it's always easier to lose weight if I have a supportive environment. I could join Weight Watchers or one of the other support groups that are out there. It's always good to be with other people who understand what you are going through, because then they are always eager to help and give you tips and encouragement. Even exercising with a good friend would help me stick to my program.

(Conclusion)

Page 9: Practice 2

Here is an example of how a Venn Diagram on choosing between two vacation sites can be used to organize information for an essay.



Example of a thesis statement: “If I had to choose between a vacation in Hawaii and one in Alaska, I would want to see what each location has to offer.”

Examples of topic sentences:

- “A Hawaii vacation comes complete with enough great unique experiences and laid-back pastimes that I could easily spend a month there.”
- “Alaska offers many activities which involve some risk and extreme sports, which I love.”
- “Even though Hawaii and Alaska are very different in what they have to offer with regard to activities, climate, scenery, required clothing, and food, they have many similarities that would make me happy with either vacation.”

Page 10-12: GED EXERCISE 1

1. 2) Holidays is a common noun and not capitalized.
2. 4) This sentence is correct as it stands.
3. 1) Weather referring to rain, cold, etc., is needed here.
4. 5) it's, the contraction for it is, is needed for many feel its just as accurate...
5. 2) This needs the helping verb has.
6. 4) The compound subject needs the plural helping verb have.
7. 4) Flag's needs the apostrophe to show possession.
8. 2) This is a run-on. Break into two sentences with a period after proclamation.
9. 3) This sentence is correct as it stands.

Page 12-14: GED EXERCISE 2

1. 4) This verb form needs to be singular to agree with food, so use was.
2. 2) In order to separate the two independent clauses, put a comma before the conjunction.
3. 1) These sentences are correct as they stand.
4. 3) He is singular so you must use the singular form doesn't.
5. 4) This sentence already has a subject, so do not repeat it with it's. Just use is.
6. 5) The participle form of this irregular verb is needed. Use done.
7. 1) This sentence is correct as it stands.
8. 4) This is a run-on sentence. Put a period after pressed and capitalize shoes.
9. 4) The correct spelling is see.