

Module: Reasoning through Language Arts

Lesson Title: Knowing What’s Expected on the GED® RLA Extended Response

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Understand the expectations for effective extended responses
- Learn strategies that can help them improve their extended responses

Prerequisite Skills Common Core State Standards	Reasoning through Language Arts 2014 GED® Assessment Targets
Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text. (RI.4.2) Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (RI/RL.7.1)	Determine the details of what is explicitly stated and make logical inferences or valid claims that square with textual evidence. W.1

Materials

- **Handout A: Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test**
- **Handout B: Extended Response Quick Tips**
- Students’ personal extended responses

Note to Teachers: This lesson should be completed prior to students taking the GED Ready™ Reasoning through Language Arts test.

Instructional Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will have a chance to learn about the expectations for the extended response on the GED® Reasoning through Language Arts. They will also have an opportunity to explore strategies they can use in order to produce more effective extended responses.

Process

Write the phrase “effective writing” on the board. Have students brainstorm what those words mean to them. Write their responses on the board. Students’ responses may include: *easy to read, easy to understand, is organized, makes you want to learn more, or has few if any errors.*

Write the phrase “effective argument” on the board. Have students brainstorm what those words to them. Write their responses on the board. Students’ responses may include: *convincing, makes you believe what is being said, a disagreement, a claim that makes you believe something, or a claim that is backed by evidence.*

Many students are very concerned about the extended response on the Reasoning through Language Arts test. Spend some time talking with students about their concerns. Explain that the best way to overcome these concerns is to:

- learn as much as possible about what is expected
- learn some quick tips that they can use in the writing process
- practice, practice, practice

Explain that the GED Testing Service® has established extended response guidelines that can help them stay on the right track when writing their responses. Provide students with **Handout A: Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test**. Have students read the guidelines and underline three things that they believe are the most important things they personally need to remember when writing the extended response. Have students share their responses and why they made those specific selections. Discuss the students' responses.

Sample Debriefing Questions

1. Why is it important to remember that they have 45 minutes to complete their responses?
2. What should students do if they have finished their responses and still have time remaining?
3. Do students have to agree with the position that they believe is better supported?
4. How much evidence should students use when writing their responses?
5. What are transitional words and phrases?
6. Why should time be spent revising and editing?

Explain that as students write in class, they should always keep the guidelines in mind. Remind students that the more they practice and address the guidelines the stronger their writing will be.

Distribute **Handout B: Extended Response Quick Tips**. Explain that the GED Testing Service® developed has some quick tips that students can use as they write an extended response. The quick tips expand on the guidelines and provide some very specific strategies that can help them maximize the points that they earn. Take time to talk with students about each of the tips.

The following additional information about each tip should be shared with students.

1. **Write a complete essay.** Please ensure that students know there is no specific word or paragraph count required. A longer response is not necessarily a better response. The most important thing for students to remember is to respond to the prompt that they have been given.
2. **Give commentary on quotations from the source texts.** Explain to students that it is okay to use a quote or two from the source texts. However, it is not okay to use so much of the text that there is very little of a student's own writing. This can result in the student receiving a 0. Also, students need to remember that they can't just list evidence from the source texts, but need to explain why the evidence is important and supports the argument or claim that they have made.
3. **Develop ideas.** Students need to remember to develop their ideas not just list them. Students don't need a lot of ideas, but do need to develop the ideas that they do have.
4. **Save 4 to 5 minutes at the end to quickly proofread.** Remind students that they have to set aside some time to read through the extended response and see if anything should be revised or edited. Careless mistakes, such as missing punctuation, lack of capitalization, or slang and text-type abbreviations have no place in an extended response. Students should not lose points for mistakes that could be easily fixed.

Sample Debriefing Questions

1. What is the main difference between the guidelines provided in **Handout A** and the quick tips provided in **Handout B**?
2. How long should an essay be?
3. Why is it important not to write a very short essay?
4. What do you need to do with the evidence that you include in your extended response?
5. Is it okay to use quotations in your response? How many can you use?
6. What does it mean to develop ideas?
7. Which of the areas in grammar do you feel you need to work on the most?
8. Which of the areas in grammar do you feel you utilize very well?

Assessments/Extensions

Have students use some of the quick tips provided in **Handout B** to review and evaluate their own writing samples. Have students identify areas that they think they could improve. Discuss these areas and use this information for future lessons. Keep in mind that Trait 1 is often the area in which students need the greatest amount of practice and instruction.

Handout A: Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test

The GED Testing Service® has developed the following guidelines for you to use as you answer the Extended Response question on the Reasoning through Language Arts test. Following these guidelines as closely as possible will ensure that you provide the best response.

- 1. Please note that this task must be completed in no more than 45 minutes.** However, don't rush through your response. Be sure to read through the passage(s) and the prompt. Then think about the message you want to convey in your response. **Be sure to plan your response before you begin writing.** Draft your response and revise it as needed.
2. As you read, think carefully about the **argumentation** presented in the passage(s). "Argumentation" refers to the assumptions, claims, support, reasoning, and credibility on which a position is based. Pay close attention to **how the author(s) use these strategies to convey his or her positions.**
3. When you write your essay, be sure to:
 - **determine which position presented** in the passage(s) is **better supported** by evidence from the passage(s)
 - **explain why the position you chose is the better-supported one**
 - **remember, the better-supported position is not necessarily the position you agree with**
 - **defend your assertions with multiple pieces of evidence** from the passage(s)
 - **build your main points thoroughly**
 - **put your main points in logical order** and tie your details to your main points
 - **organize your response carefully** and consider your **audience, message, and purpose**
 - **use transitional words and phrases** to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas
 - **choose words carefully** to express your ideas clearly
 - **vary your sentence structure** to enhance the flow and clarity of your response
 - **reread and revise your response** to correct any errors in grammar, usage, or **punctuation**

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<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/74e3cf83a8cae5b05e5627fd2754e87f.pdf>

Handout B: Extended Response Quick Tips

Simply attempting a written response on the Extended Response items doesn't always mean you will receive points for your work. Your responses are scored against specific criteria shown in the Extended Response Scoring Rubrics. The following are a few tips for helping you earn points for your written responses:

1. **Write a complete essay.** The ER prompts are designed to give you enough information to analyze so that you can make a statement that answers the prompt and then provide evidence from the source texts to develop your ideas in your own words. If you create a very brief essay, your response may not provide enough evidence of your writing skills to receive any points. Also, fully answering an ER prompt often requires 4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each – that can quickly add up to 300 to 500 words of writing! A response that is significantly shorter could put you in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of your writing skills.
2. **Give commentary on quotations from the source texts.** While you are encouraged to cite specific evidence (phrases and even complete sentences) from the passages that accompany the prompts, you are scored on not just how well you can quote from the passages, but also on whether you can express your own thoughts about your chosen evidence. So you should explain *why* the evidence you've chosen helps you make the point you want to make. Also, if too large a portion of your response is material from the source text, you may receive a 0 because that material is someone else's writing, not yours. Copied text contributes to your score only if you fully explain how that text illustrates a point you are making. Simply lifting information from the passages isn't going to be enough to earn you points.
3. **Develop ideas.** One way to earn points on the ER items is for you to pick two or three main ideas and really explain them fully. A full explanation may require several sentences, each containing related thoughts, to fully develop a main idea. Some responses that briefly mention several ideas but do not build upon them may not score very highly.
4. **Save 4 to 5 minutes at the end to quickly proofread.** Written responses are not evaluated for spelling, but a quick check for the following grammar and usage issues can go a long way toward earning points:
 - vary your sentence structures
 - coordinate the parts of your sentences
 - avoid wordiness and awkwardness
 - use transitional words to make your ideas logical and clear
 - avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments
 - use the right homophone to mean what you say (for example, "to," "too" or "two)
 - make your subjects agree with your verbs
 - use the correct form of a pronoun
 - place your words in the correct order
 - capitalize appropriately
 - use apostrophes to make nouns possessive
 - use punctuation correctly