

Module: Reasoning through Language Arts

Lesson Title: Are Cell Phones Safe? Creating a Constructed Response

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Read a nonfiction article that provides a pro and con side to an issue
- Analyze the article and develop an effective extended response using the various steps (e.g., unpacking a prompt, developing a thesis statement, identifying evidence, organizing the response, drafting an answer, editing and revising the draft)

Reasoning through Language Arts 2014 GED® Assessment Targets
Identify the main assumptions and underlying premises in an argument and evaluate the support for that belief. (R.8.6)
Determine the details of what is explicitly stated and make logical inferences or valid claims that square with textual evidence. (W.1)
Produce an extended analytic response introduce the idea(s) or claim(s) clearly; create an organization that logically sequences information; develop the idea(s) or claim(s) thoroughly with well-chosen examples, facts, or details from the text; and maintain a coherent focus. (W.2)
Write clearly and demonstrate sufficient command of standard English conventions. (W.3)

Materials

- Computers for word processing (if possible)
- *Are Cell Phones Safe? Handout*
- *Extended Response Templates*

Instructional Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will read a nonfiction article that presents a pro and con side to an issue. Students will analyze the article, select a position and develop an extended response that supports the position with evidence. This lesson is developed to be used over multiple class periods in order for students to have adequate time to complete each step of the process.

Process

Begin the lesson by asking students how many of them use cell phones on a regular basis. Discuss whether or not they have concerns over the safety of a cell phone. Share with students that over the next few class periods, they will be reading about the safety of cell phones and will use the information read to draft an extended response.

Prior to having students read the article, review the steps to drafting an effective constructed response:

1. Re-read the passage at least once, then re-read the question carefully to determine what is being asked.
2. Rewrite the question in your own words to make sure that you know exactly what is being asked. Then, turn that question into a topic sentence for your answer.
3. Go back to the passage and collect the needed information. Make sure you get the relevant details (if the question asks for 3 details, make sure you find 3 details).
4. Organize the details into a logical order. Use a graphic organizer if that helps.
5. Write (or keyboard) your answer.
6. Re-read your answer to make sure you answered all the parts of the question.

Adapted from WritingFix - <http://writingfix.com>

Share with students that over the next class periods, they will be drafting a constructed response similar to what they will experience on the GED® Reasoning through Language Arts test. For each step of the process, model for students how to use each of the graphic organizers.

Worksheets are provided for each of the initial steps. After unpacking the prompt, crafting a thesis statement, identifying pertinent evidence, and organizing their information, students may wish to word process their draft. Make sure that students edit and revise their final copy before submission.

Have students share their final product with the class. Discuss the effectiveness of each writing sample and how each effectively addresses the prompt.

Sample Debriefing Questions

Have students answer the following questions regarding the revising and editing activity:

- Why did you feel the position you chose was the better-supported one?
- What was your claim or thesis statement?
- How did you defend your position with evidence?
- What strategies did you use when revising and editing your draft?
- Did you use personal pronouns? Why or why not?
- What was the easiest part of the assignment for you? The most difficult?
- How do you use constructed response writing in your daily life? At the workplace?

Assessments/Extensions

1. Have students identify different topics in which they are interested that have a pro and con side. Provide students with time to debate the different sides of the topic. Discuss how this is the type of process that they will be using when creating their extended responses.
2. Access additional reading materials that highlight topics where there are both a pro and con side taken. One source of articles for use in the classroom is the Pro/Con.org website at <http://www.procon.org>. Have students read the articles or provide an annotated version as shown in this lesson. This type of activity can be used for both the writing process, as well as the teaching of nonfiction text. Remember, that using a pro/con article is a first step towards analyzing more complex text found on the GED® test.

3. Teach students to use the Reasoning through Language Arts rubric to score their writing samples so that they understand what traits are viewed as effective writing.
4. Brainstorm examples of constructed response from real-life situations so that students better understand the purpose of constructed response as a life-long communication skill.

Are Cell Phones Safe?

The radiation emitted by cell phones, known as radiofrequency (RF) radiation, is regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Hundreds of millions of Americans use cell phones and many of them wonder if there are any health risks.

In 1993, concern over a possible link between brain tumors and cell phone use became a major public issue when CNN's *Larry King Live* show reported on David Reynard, a husband who had sued a cell phone manufacturer in a Florida US District Court for causing his wife's brain tumor. The case, *Reynard v. NEC*, was later rejected in 1995 by the court.

People who say cell phones are safe reference statements by the FCC and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and point to peer-reviewed studies which conclude that cell phone use is not associated with an increased risk of brain tumors or other health problems. They contend there has been no increase in brain tumor rates despite hundreds of millions of people now using cell phones.

Numerous studies have found that cell phone use is not associated with an increased risk of tumors. An October 2011 study of 358,403 Danish citizens, - the largest study of its kind to date – concluded that “there was no association between tumors and the long -term use (10 years +) of mobile phones. Numerous other studies published from 2001 – 2013 have similarly concluded that there is no association between cell phone use and the development of brain tumors. A 2006 study even showed a decrease risk of certain brain tumors among cell phone users.

People who say cell phones are not safe also cite peer-reviewed studies showing an association between cell phone use and tumor growth, DNA damage, and decreased fertility. They say cancers take 20-30 years to develop and cell phone studies have only monitored periods of 10 years or less.

In 2011, the International Agency for Research on Cancer added cell phone radiation to its list of risks that are “possibly carcinogenic to humans.” Other items on the list include coffee, pickled vegetables, and lead. A 2013 study in Sweden showed an association between cell phone use and a benign tumor near the ear.

In 2001, Senators Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) commissioned the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) to compile a report on the safety of cell phones. This 2001 report concluded that there was no scientific evidence proving that cell phone radiation had any "adverse health effects" but that more research on the topic was needed.

On May 17, 2010, the largest study to date on cell phone radiation and brain tumor formation was released. The Interphone study, a 13 country, 10 year, \$25 million endeavor, found that there was no overall increase in the risk of the brain tumors among cell phone users. However, the study did find that if there are high levels of RF exposure, then there is an increase in different types of tumors.

Those individuals concerned about cell usage support using a wired earpiece or speaker phone in order to lower the amount of radiation absorbed. Another recommendation is the increase of text messaging, rather than talking, in order to further reduce the amount of radiation absorbed by cell phone users.

It's important to remember that cell phone radiation levels are tested and certified to remain within levels deemed safe by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). However, although the radiofrequency radiation from cell phones is determined to not be powerful enough to cause cancer, a new study by the FCC is being conducted to formally reassess the effect of cell phone radiation on human health.

Adapted from the article "Are Cell Phones Safe?" from ProCon.org at <http://cellphones.procon.org/#background>

Prompt

The article presents arguments from both supporters and critics of cell phone usage who disagree about possible safety issues with regards to an increase in brain tumors and cancer.

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.

Unpack the Prompt

What is the prompt asking you to do? Unpack the prompt completely by completing the following form.

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Do	What

Create a Thesis Statement

Craft your thesis statement. You may use one of the following templates or create your own.

The general argument made by _____ is that _____.

Although _____ (believes, demonstrates, argues) that _____, _____ supports/provides the clearest evidence _____.

A key factor in both _____ can be attributed to _____.

When comparing the two positions in this article, _____ provides the clearest evidence that _____.

Looking at the arguments regarding _____, it is clear that _____.

In discussion of _____, one controversial issue has been _____.
_____ believes that _____. On the other hand,
_____ asserts that _____.
_____ is clearly the best supported argument on the issue of _____.

Create Your Own!

Support Your Claim with Evidence

Identify evidence from the article that you wish to use. Provide a direct quote and then paraphrase the information in your own words. Finally, explain how the evidence supports your claim/thesis.

Claim	Using a Direct Quote (What direct quote supports the claim?)	Paraphrasing (How can you rewrite the direct quote in your own words?)	Explanation (How does the evidence support the claim?)

Putting It All Together - Constructed Response Organizer

Before you begin to draft your response, you may wish to organize your ideas by completing the following graphic organizer. Then, you'll be ready to draft your answer.

Prompt/Questions:	
Restatement of question in your own words	
Thesis statement/claim	
Detailed body of evidence that supports answer. Be sure to include enough details to answer the question. Make sure that all details address the questions and are not off-topic.	
Restated question Concluding thoughts	