

# Preparing for the Essay Test

Bonus  
Chapter

Remember, the Essay Test is only one section of the entire GED Test. Do not let it grow larger in your mind than it really is.

In this chapter we talk about how the essay is scored and give you some sample writing prompts so that you can practice ahead of time and get an idea of what to expect.

## How Your Essay Is Evaluated

Two different readers will peruse your GED Essay separately. These readers use a scoring guide similar to the one shown in the following section. Each reader evaluates your essay with a score of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). The scores of the two readers are then averaged together. If your score is a 2 or higher, the GED Testing folks will take your essay score and combine it with the multiple-choice score to establish your composite score. Remember, the multiple-choice section of the Language Arts: Writing Part I includes questions on sentence structure, grammar and usage, mechanics, and organization.

## The Essay Evaluation Guide

The four-point evaluation-scoring guide determines whether an essay is Effective, Adequate, Marginal, or Inadequate. The readers determine these scores by considering the following questions:

- **Does the essay respond to the question?** Considers how well the writer has responded to the question or prompt that was given as the topic of the essay.
- **Do the essay's ideas demonstrate the logical thinking of the writer?** Refers to how well the essay writer shows his or her ideas clearly and logically. (This is where transition words help the writer, as well as the reader.)
- **Are the ideas adequately developed?** Looks for how well the writer has supplied appropriate ideas to develop and demonstrate his or her ideas and logical thinking patterns.
- **Are the rules and expectations of Appropriate American English followed?** Means that the writer has composed his or her essay using the conventions of good American English. This includes such things as following the rules of proper sentence structure, grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- **Does the essay demonstrate suitable and varied vocabulary in answering the essay question?** Considers how successful the essay writer is in using appropriate words in his or her essay.



**HEADS UP!**

If you do not earn a score of 2 or better on the essay, that will constitute a failure for the Language Arts: Writing portion of the GED Exam and you will need to retake this entire section again.

## Holistic Scoring

The readers of your essay do not deduct points for every little error you might make on your essay. They look at all the parts of the essay as a whole. That is called *holistic* scoring. It is an overall judgment they make after all the criteria of the scoring guide have been considered.



**HEADS UP!**

Holistic scoring does not mean that you can be slack in any area of your writing. Study all the lessons that have lead up to this practice test. If your score is hovering between a 2 or 1, you don't want to lose the point because you thought you didn't have to pay attention to all the instructions and tips available in this study guide to help you.

## Review Once Again

Before you start trying to write a practice essay, it's a good idea to go back and review those things that will affect your essay writing. Perhaps just a general review will be enough. Maybe, however, you need to go back and review sentence structure, punctuation, or planning and developing the essay.

## Sample Essay Prompts

On the actual test you will get just one essay prompt; you must write about the topic given to you. But to help you practice, we're giving you several examples here. Choose one and write an essay that meets the criteria.

### Essay Prompt 1: Friendship

J. K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* books, says, "The most important things in friendship are tolerance and loyalty."

In your essay, explain why you think tolerance and loyalty are or are not the most important things in a friendship. Explain your opinion relying on your own knowledge, observations, or experiences.

### Essay Prompt 2: Success

Businessman, inventor, and co-founder of Apple, Inc., Steve Jobs believed that his success was a result of having a faith not in technology but in people.

In your essay, explain whether you think having success has more to do with people or more to do with technology. Explain your opinion based on your own knowledge, observations, or experiences.

### **Essay Prompt 3: Failure**

Steve Jobs strongly believed that it was fine to celebrate success, but it was more important to understand the lessons of failure.

In your essay, explain why it is important for us to understand the lessons of failure. How can we learn from our mistakes or our failures? Use your own knowledge, observations, or experiences to develop your response.

### **Essay Prompt 4: The Allure of the Forbidden**

Author and humorist Mark Twain said, “The more things are forbidden, the more popular they become.”

In your essay, explain why you agree or disagree with Twain’s statement. Explain your opinion based on your own knowledge, observations, or experiences.

### **Essay Prompt 5: Media Accuracy**

Author and journalist George Orwell observed that “in life I had noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper.”

In your essay, explain whether you agree or disagree with this observation. Explain your opinion based on your own knowledge, observations, or experiences.

## **Guided Essay**

This short exercise will guide you through the actual essay-writing process. Remember that this is a hypothetical essay by someone who has a couple of interesting family stories to tell. Your ideas for this essay could be entirely different. This is a guideline only.

Look at Essay Prompt 3. The instructions are to explain why it is important for us to understand the lessons of failure. It asks you to explain how we can learn from our mistakes or our failures.

### **Sample Essay Guideline**

Sample thesis statement placed at the end of your Introduction: I know for sure that many of my failures have taught me far more than any of my successes.

First body paragraph, topic sentence: When I was only 6 years old I learned that it wasn’t a smart idea to follow my 12-year-old brother around.

Second body paragraph, topic sentence: In middle school I learned another lesson from failure. I really wanted to be accepted by a certain group of kids, so I went along with their shoplifting behavior.

Third body paragraph, topic sentence: Finally, my worst failure was in thinking that I knew more than my teachers and my school. I dropped out to get a job halfway through my senior year.

Conclusion: Anyone can see how and why I have learned from my failures. I plan, however, to turn that around. In fact, taking this GED Test and earning my high school diploma should show the world that I can turn my failures into successes.

## **Your Turn**

Using one of the other suggested GED Essay topics, try writing your own essay. If you can get someone else to evaluate what you have done, based on the criteria of the scoring guide, that would be even better.

Just remember: You *can* do this successfully.