Helping Students Overcome Challenges with Reasoning Through Language Arts,

Part 2: Language & Writing

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Welcome

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Today's Focus

➢RLA Background Information

➢Skills Gaps Introduction

➢Sample Language Indicators & Items Walk Through

➢Strategies for Improving Performance

➢The GED Extended Response

➢Strategies for Improving Performance

➢Q&A

Targets and Indicators

- GED® Assessment Guide for Educators
  - https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/assessment_guide_for_educators_all_subjects.pdf
  - RLA begins on page 73; Targets and Indicators begin page 78.

- Free Practice Test online
  - https://ged.com/practice-test/en/rla/start.html

- Free Study Guide online
  - https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/GED_Study-Guide_RLA.pdf

Background Information: RLA

- RLA = Reasoning Through Language Arts
  - Reading
  - Language
  - Writing

- All RLA items are text-based:
  - Multiple choice
  - Drag-and-drop items
  - Extended response (ER)
  - Dropdown editng items

- Emphasis on critical thinking, argumentation, evidence, close analysis of details, authentic tasks, real-world skills

Background Information: Language & Writing

- RLA = Reasoning Through Language Arts
  - Reading
  - Language*
  - Writing*

- The Language section of the RLA Test includes informative texts.
  - Emails, memoranda, letters, announcements, real-world documents
  - Each text has a set of dropdown "editing" items.

- The Writing section of the RLA Test includes paired informative texts.
  - Articles, blog posts, newspaper columns, any kind of real-world persuasive text
  - Each pair has a writing prompt.

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What is a skills gap?

A gap is the difference between the ***expected*** performance and the ***actual*** performance.

- Gaps range from foundational skills to more complex skills.
- Guidance and practice on these skills could help students improve their overall performance.

How the gaps were identified

Develop Items & Pasages

Field Test & Analyze

Build/Publish Tests

Write	**Construct**	**Construct**
Review/Edit	**Review**	**Translate**
Committee Review	**Embed/Test**	**Review**
Review/Edit	→ **Analyze data**	**Publish**
Expert Review	**Add to bank**	**Research**

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Possible reasons for gaps

- The students may need to improve their **critical thinking**, writing, and/or **reading skills**.

- The students may have specific gaps that need more instruction during GED® test preparation.

- Students tend to underperform on certain items simply because the concepts are difficult.

GED® Language: Indicators and Sample Items

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Language Task Example

GED® Language items test Standard Written English (SWE).

From https://ged.com/practice-test/en/rla/start.html

Language Skills: Lessons from Data Review

Examples of Data Review discussions of Language items:

- "Option Y is wrong per Standard Written English. Students just didn't perform well on the skill."
- "Option Z is clearly correct, but students need more instruction in this skill."

Overarching Lesson:

- Some students need more instruction in language conventions.
- Some students need more practice *specifically* with formal conventions, as opposed to personal/informal usage.
- The way we chat with our friends and family is often not reflective of formal or standard English. (Texting doesn't help! **LOL** is *not* SWE!)

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Language Skills Gaps

Code	Indicator
L.1.7	Students will edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).
L.2.3*	Students will edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns.
L.2.2	Students will edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments.
L.1.1	Students will edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's, its).
L.1.8	Students will edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction.

L.1.7 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.7	Students will edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).

What does this indicator measure?
- Students will select the option that uses the correct verb form OR the correct pronoun for the subject.

What has Data Review shown?
- "Hard skill—students are not recognizing the subjects of the verbs."

The Gap
- **Some students are not understanding complex sentence structures (where the subject is separated from the verb).**

Strategies for Improving Performance
- Students need to understand that a subject can be separated from the verb. In these cases, students should identify and then mentally "delete" the interceding text.
- Pronouns can also be separated from their antecedents. Students should reread the text to accurately locate the antecedent of the pronoun.

L.1.7 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.7	Students will edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?
- Having few to zero errors with the use of subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in the written response can help students improve their performance with Trait 3.

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions L

2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: M
	1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
	2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
	3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
	5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	• demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: N
	1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	2) subject-verb agreement
	3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
	5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	• may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. P

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L.2.3 Skills Gap Explained

L.2.3**	Students will edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns.

What does this indicator measure?
- Students will select the option that correctly uses apostrophes to indicate possession.

What has Data Review shown?
- "Students doing well on most language items *except* for L.2.3."
- "The students just do badly with apostrophes... X is wrong; it has no apostrophe but is clearly a possessive."
- "Students must pay attention to singular versus plural."

The Gap
- <u>Many</u> students incorrectly use apostrophes, including students who score high on the test overall. --- So do advertisers, companies, sign-makers . . . The world often models incorrect apostrophe use!
- Many students select options without apostrophes (e.g., "dogs bowl")

Strategies for Improving Performance
- Students need to remember that possessive nouns use apostrophes.
- Students should practice on WHERE to place an apostrophe.

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L.2.3 Skills Gap Explained

L.2.3**	Students will edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?
- Written responses often use multiple possessive nouns; having few to zero errors with the use of possessive nouns in the written response can help students improve their performance with Trait 3.

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions L

2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: M
	1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
	2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
	3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
	5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	• demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: N
	1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	2) subject-verb agreement
	3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
	5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	• may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. P

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L.2.2 Skills Gap Explained

L.2.2	Students will edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments.

What does this indicator measure?
- Students will select the option that correctly creates complete sentences.

What has Data Review shown?
- Most students recognize run-on sentences but might mistake fused sentences (comma splices) or fragments as correct.

The Gap
- **Many students mistake a comma as a way to join two sentences (fused sentence; comma splice)--a very common error.**
- **Some students don't recognize sentence fragments.**

Strategies for Improving Performance
- Students need to recognize a fused sentence (comma splice; use of a comma to join two separate sentences) or a sentence fragment and practice correcting it in their writing.
  - IDENTIFY the error, CORRECT the error, PREVENT the error!

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L.2.2 Skills Gap Explained

L.2.2	Students will edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?
- Mastering complex sentence structure within the written response while avoiding run-on sentences, fused sentences, and sentence fragments helps improve performance on Trait 3.

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions **L**

2
- demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: **M**
  1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
  2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
  3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
  4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
  5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
- demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: **N**
  1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
  2) subject-verb agreement
  3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
  4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
  5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
  6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
  7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
- may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. **P**

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L.1.1 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.1	Students will edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's, its).

What does this indicator measure?
- Students will recognize the correct word or homonym that is frequently confused with another word or words

What has Data Review shown?
- Commonly mistaken words include "there/their/they're," "too/to," and "your/you're."

The Gap
- **Some students simply don't know, or forget, which words should be used and mix them up.**

Strategies for Improving Performance
- Lists of frequently confused words and homonyms can be found online.
- Students should practice writing sentences with homonyms until using the correct words becomes ingrained.

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L.1.1 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.1	Students will edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's, its).

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?
- Written responses are likely to include homonyms or frequently confused words and mastering this skill in the written response can help improve performance with Trait 3.

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions Ⓛ

2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: Ⓜ

    1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
    2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
    3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
    4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
    5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments

• demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: Ⓝ

    1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
    2) subject-verb agreement
    3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
    4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
    5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
    6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
    7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)

• may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. Ⓟ

L.1.8 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.8	Students will edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction.

What does this indicator measure?
- Students will select the option that includes concise language or clear sentence construction.

What has Data Review shown?
- Students who do well on the test overall (high performing) do well on L.1.8. Middle and lower-performing students need more help.

The Gap
- **Some students are drawn to wordy options that are repetitive.**

L.1.8 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.8	Students will edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction.

Strategies for Improving Performance
- Understand what creates wordiness:
  - redundancies--more than one word or phrase that says the same thing with no added effect
  - "zero" words--extra words that add no meaning
  - unnecessary adverbs

- Understand what creates awkward sentence construction:
  - inappropriate word choice
  - illogical word order
  - unclear/incorrect sentence structure

- Look at each word in the option: is it ADDING new meaning?
  - Wordiness errors will be CLEARLY wrong (not style-based).
  - Awkward construction should be easily recognizable.
  - Practice reading options out loud, which may illuminate the error.

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L.1.8 Skills Gap Explained

L.1.8	Students will edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?
- Mastering this skill enables students to write clear and concise sentences that, when included with more complex sentences, will help improve performance on Trait 3.

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions L

2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: M
	1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
	2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
	3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
	5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	• demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: N
	1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	2) subject-verb agreement
	3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
	5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	• may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. P

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The GED® Extended Response

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The GED® Extended Response

Scored on three traits:

- Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence

- Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure

- Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

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Writing Prompt

page 1 | page 2

Instructions

Read
- On the **page 2 tab above**, you will **read two texts** presenting **different views** on the same topic.
- **Both writers argue** that **their position** on the issue is **correct**.

Plan
- **Analyze** the two texts **to determine** which writer presents the **stronger case**.
- **Develop your own argument** in which **you explain** how one position is **better supported** than the other.
- **Include** relevant and specific **evidence** from **both sources** to support your argument.

Write
- **Type** your response in the **box on the right.**
- Your response should be approximately **4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each.**
- **Remember** to allow a few minutes **to review and edit your response.**

You have up to **45 minutes** for reading, planning, writing, and editing your response.

Prompt provides outline for success across all 3 traits

- Analyze the two texts…(Trait 1)

- Include evidence…(Trait 1)

- Include *relevant and specific* evidence…(Traits 1 & 2)

- Develop your own argument…(Traits 1 & 2)

- Your response should be **approximately**…(Trait 2)

- Remember to review and edit your response…(Traits 1, 2, 3)

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Why Students Struggle

- Data shows a strong correlation between student performance on the RLA assessment as a whole and performance on the ER.

- Students who are getting 0s and 1s on the ER are likely struggling with all skills across the RLA assessment.

- It helps to understand how the skills align across all portions of the RLA assessment.
  - Reading items correlate to Traits 1 and 2.
  - Language (Editing) items correlate to Trait 3.
  - ER items require strong written performance of all 3 traits!

Why Students Struggle

Some common reasons for low scores on ER responses

- Students do not build an argument. (Trait 1)
  - Students summarize the texts instead of evaluating the arguments made in the texts.
  - Students merely copy words from the texts (nonscorable = 0 points).
  - Students only analyze or discuss one of the texts rather than both.

- Students provide their own opinion about the topic rather than evaluating the arguments made in the texts. (Trait 1)
  - Students discuss their agreement or disagreement with an author's position rather than discussing the strength or weakness of that author's position.

Why Students Struggle

Some common reasons for low scores on ER responses

- Students do not write a full response. (Traits 1 & 2)
  - They do not analyze, and/or
  - do not reference the evidence in the text, and/or
  - do not elaborate.
  - They do not utilize the 45-minute time allotted to plan and write their responses.

- Students lack a structure and appropriate tone. (Trait 2)
  - Their writing has no clear introduction, body, or conclusion.
  - No transitions are made between ideas.
  - They are not writing for an audience.

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Why Students Struggle

Some common reasons for low scores on ER responses

- Students' English conventions are poor. (Trait 3)

  Their writing lacks:
  - proper grammar (subject/verb agreement, etc.), and/or
  - proper capitalization, and/or
  - proper punctuation, and/or
  - complete sentences (instead using run-ons or fused sentences and fragments), and/or
  - improper vocabulary (incorrect word choice, slang, etc.).

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# Strategies for Improving Performance on the ER

- Students must fully evaluate the arguments made in the texts, using Close Reading as shown in Part 1.

- Once determining which text has the stronger and better-supported argument, students should develop their OWN argument *explaining why* one text is better supported than the other.

- Students' arguments should address BOTH texts and not focus on only one; they should explain why one text's argument is stronger and the other text's argument is weaker.

Strategies for Improving Performance on the ER

- Students' arguments should include multiple well-reasoned statements and include well-selected (*relevant*) evidence from the texts RATHER than merely summarizing what the texts are about or offering their own opinions on the topic.

- Students should structure their response with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion, with transitions between ideas.

- Students should think about an audience when writing their arguments and craft their tone and word choice to reflect a thoughtfulness in their response.
  - ER tasks are where students should *perform* the RLA skills in their written responses, not treat the prompt as a fill-in-the-blank question.

Strategies for Improving Performance on the ER

- Study the proper use of conventions (apostrophes, capitalization, subject/verb agreement, punctuation, homonyms, sentence structure, vocabulary and word choice, etc.) until recognizing proper usage and identifying errors becomes a habit.
  - Read, Read, Read, and do grammar exercises to identify errors!

- Practice the proper use of conventions until it becomes a habit.
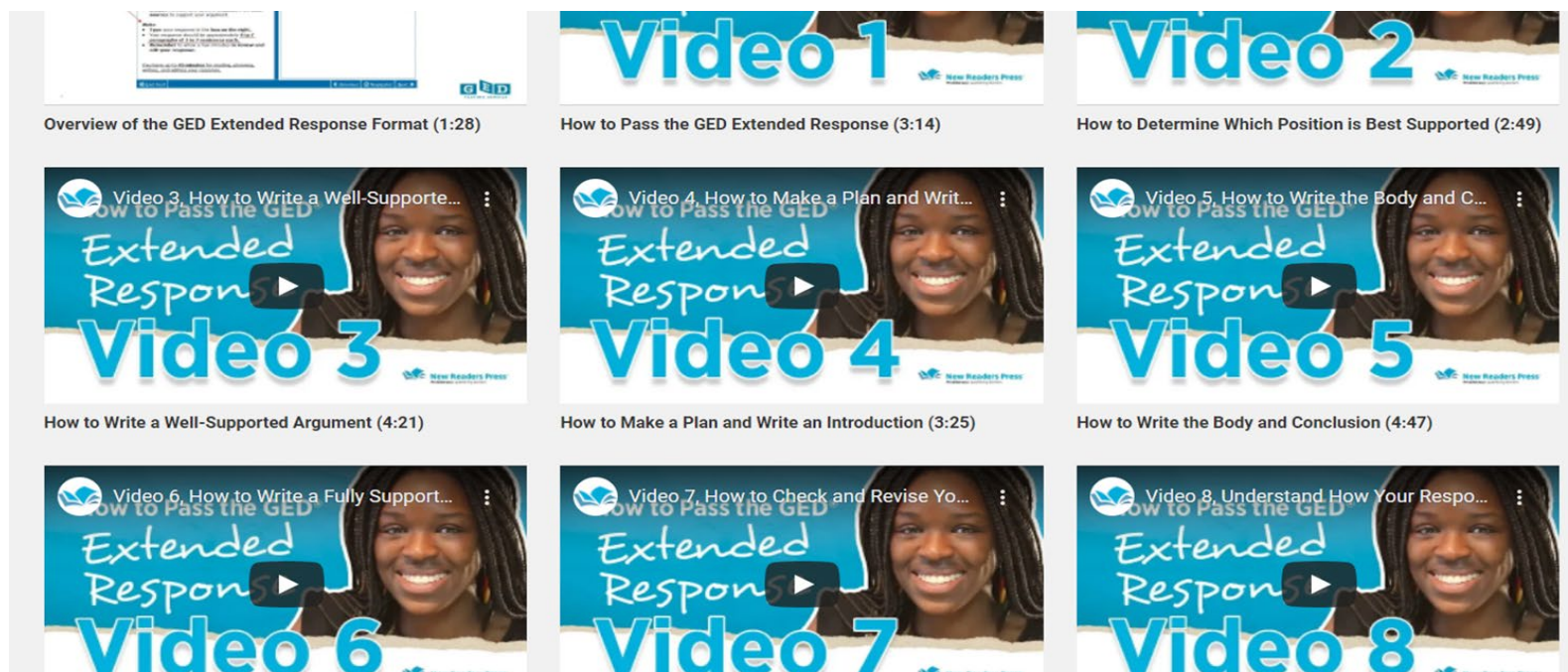 - Write, write, write, and do revisions and editing exercises to correct errors in one's own work!
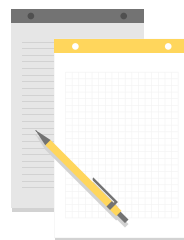
Extended Response Resources on GED.com

- **ER Workbook:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/TfT-What-Students-Need-to-Know-GED-RLA-Extended-Response-Workbook-1.pdf

- **Sample texts from GED Ready® practice test:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/extended_response_ged_ready_source_texts.pdf

- **Sample prompts for practice:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/extended_response_classroom_practice.pdf

- **Sample prompt (Taxation and Revenue) with scoring guide and rubric for each trait:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/extended_response_resource_guide_taxation_revenue.pdf

- **Annotated responses for each score point:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/extended_response_resource_guide.pdf

- **Example of a perfect score:** https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/extended_response_scoring.pdf

Extended Response Resources on GED.com

- **Videos: How to write a great GED® extended response:** https://ged.com/about_test/test_subjects/language_arts/extended_response/

Overview of the GED Extended Response Format (1:28)

How to Pass the GED Extended Response (3:14)

How to Determine Which Position is Best Supported (2:49)

How to Write a Well-Supported Argument (4:21)

How to Make a Plan and Write an Introduction (3:25)

How to Write the Body and Conclusion (4:47)

This 8-video series discusses the logistical aspects of the ER portion of the assessment, in addition to tips for success.

Extended Response Resources on GED.com

- **T4T: Taking the Angst Out of Scoring the GED® RLA Extended Response:**

  https://ged.com/educators_admins/teaching/professional_development/webinars/

  - Review the recording for a demonstration of how to use the online Extended Response Scoring Tool (linked below), along with tips for analyzing and developing strong arguments.
  - The link above ALSO takes you to the Tuesdays for Teachers homepage, where you will find previously-recorded webinars across all 4 GED subjects.

- **Extended Response Scoring Tool (for educators to score student practice responses):**

  https://app.ged.com/preLogin4?&_ga=2.230614492.1128253405.1647985869-1541966278.1614616540#/essayScoring

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Sharing Knowledge

Discussion Questions

- How are your GED students performing on the Extended Response?

- What problems are they encountering with their writing? What advice do you give that seems to help?

- How well are your GED students able to identify arguments, claims, and evidence? How well are they able to develop their own arguments and support those arguments with reasoning and evidence?

- What tips do you have for others in the field for encouraging your students to perform their best with the ER?

Thank you!

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