



Learning Project

GED Language Arts, Writing and You

(Note: Italicized portions should be directed to the students.)

Inquiry Activity #4: Getting Ready to Write Essays

1. Identifying the Problem (Essay Directions and Topic)

In this Inquiry Activity, we will be working with various ways to start writing and organizing essays. We will begin by reviewing the instructions we first saw in GED Writing and You.

Do not write the essay called for in the Topic Box; you will do that in the first Writing Learning Project.

LANGUAGE ARTS, WRITING, PART II

Tests of General Educational Development

Essay Directions and Topic

Look at the box on the next page.

You must write on the assigned topic **ONLY**.

Mark the letter of your assigned topic in the appropriate space on your answer sheet booklet. Be certain that all other requested information is properly recorded in your answer sheet booklet.

Two evaluators will score your essay according to its overall effectiveness. Their evaluation will be based on the following features:

- Well-focused main points
- Clear organization
- Specific development of your ideas
- Control of sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and spelling

REMEMBER, YOU MUST COMPLETE BOTH THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS (PART I) AND THE ESSAY (PART II) TO RECEIVE A SCORE ON THE LANGUAGE ARTS, WRITING TEST. To avoid having to repeat both parts of the test, be sure to do the following:

- Do not leave the pages blank
- Write legibly in ink so that the evaluators will be able to read your writing
- Write on the assigned topic. If you write on a topic other than the one assigned, you will not receive a score for the Language Arts, Writing Test.
- Write your essay on the lined pages of the separate answer sheet booklet. Only the writing on these pages will be scored.

**IMPORTANT:**

You may return to the multiple-choice section after you complete your essay if you have time remaining in this test period. Do not return the Language Arts, Writing booklet until you finish both Parts I and II of the Language Arts, Writing Test.

Topic A

Suppose you had the opportunity to teach something you know to someone else.

In your essay, identify what you would teach and explain how you would teach this. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

Part II is a test to determine how well you can use written language to explain your ideas.

In preparing your essay, you should take the following steps:

- Read the **DIRECTIONS** and the **TOPIC** carefully.
- Plan your essay before you write. Use the scratch paper provided to make any notes. These notes will be collected but not scored.
- Before you turn in your essay, reread what you have written and make any changes that will improve your essay.

Your essay should be long enough to develop the topic adequately.

[End of GED Essay Directions and Topic]

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

1. What do you already know about getting ideas to write essays?
2. What do you already know about organizing those ideas into an essay?
3. What are your thoughts about how you would plan to go about writing an essay on the GED test?

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

Planning and Assigning: Decide whether you would like to work alone, with a partner, or in a group to explore the following topics, and who will do which parts:

- What do you think the directions are telling you to do?
- What are the different ways to think of subjects that will develop the assigned topic?
- What are different ways to get ideas for the subject?

Doing the Work:

Preparing for the Essay: The GED directions list the three steps you should follow in preparing to write your essay. Look at these again:

- “Read the **DIRECTIONS** and the **TOPIC** carefully.”



- “Plan your essay before you write. Use the scratch paper provided to make any notes. These notes will be collected but not scored.”
- “Before you turn in your essay, reread what you have written and make any changes that will improve your essay.”
- Discuss and come to an understanding of what the group thinks that those instructions mean.
- What are some ways to do each of these steps?
- Ask your instructor for resources where other people share ideas on how to develop a topic into an essay.

Generating Essay Subjects: A first step in writing an essay for the GED is to come up with subjects that develop the assigned GED topic. As a group, discuss:

- What do you already know about getting subjects to write about?
- What do you already know about brainstorming, mindmapping, list making, and free writing?
- Ask your instructor for resource material that explains and gives examples of various methods to come up with subjects for GED essay topics. List any information that is new to the group.
- How might you use brainstorming to generate ideas?
- What does mindmapping mean to you? How might you use this technique?
- Look at the questions listed here. What words start questions? Where and how might you use questions to generate ideas?

Depending on how the pairs or groups work through this part of the Activity, you may wish to assist in their discussions or understanding about mindmapping or brainstorming. Visual learners in particular will find mind-mapping helpful. This technique was developed by Tony Buzan of the Learning Methods Group in England; his book *Use Both Sides of Your Brain*, New York, E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1983, or Joyce Wycoff’s *Mind Mapping*, Berkley Publishing Group, 1991, are great resources.

Probably as many ways exist to run a brainstorming session as there are groups to try to come up with ideas. Universal brainstorming rules include: all ideas should be listed, no ideas should be eliminated, no ideas are too silly, because silly ideas lead to a more creative approach or loosen up the thinking for more workable thoughts, and building on, or piggybacking, already listed ideas.

Brainstorming and putting the details or ideas on Post-It notes instead of writing them on a list is a particularly helpful technique for organizing thoughts, because the notes can be moved and rearranged without a lot of effort or making a confusing maze.

4. Sharing with Others

Telling other people what you know helps you to understand the material better. So take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge, but also to learn it more completely.

If you worked alone or in pairs when you were Doing the Work, then do the Small Group work below. If you already worked in a small group, skip directly to the Whole Class part of the activity.

Small Groups: In your small group, report on your answers to each of the four issues explored in *Doing the Work*. Discuss the strategies that the group members have decided to use, giving the reason for the choices made.

Whole Class: Report to the class your answers to each of the four issues explored in *Doing the Work*. Discuss the strategies that the group members have decided to use, giving the reasons for the choices made.

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Reflecting: Think about how well you understood what you have done.

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don’t get much time to think about what you learned.

How good are you at developing strategies for writing essays? Explain.



Did your review of the methods to generate essay subjects give you new information about the GED essay?

Write down some thoughts on how you will plan the essay, use scratch notes, reread, and improve the essay.

Develop a statement of what you feel is important to know about preparing to write an essay for the GED.

Which of the idea-generating techniques you and your group have explored in this Activity do you think you will like to use?

Are you strong in writing, or is writing something that you don't feel confident in doing?

Extending: Extend what you learned to new situations.

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information presented in the Practice Test question to other information or situations.

Give some examples where you had to develop a method to solve a problem at home.

How can you use what you have learned in this Inquiry Activity in writing an essay on a GED topic?

Based on the directions for the GED essay, explain in greater detail the strategies you will use to prepare for the essay portion of the GED Writing test.

Based on the directions for the GED essay, explain in greater detail the strategies you will use to take the essay portion of the GED Writing test.

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods to help you pass the GED test.

How important is following the essay evaluation standards to passing the GED test?

How were mindmapping, brainstorming, list making, and free writing helpful to you?

Which part of the Inquiry Activity was most helpful? Explain.

Which part of the Inquiry Activity was least helpful? Explain.