

Section 1

Introduction: Reading and the GED 2002

Introduction

Reading is presented in *GED as Project* in the Learning Project and Inquiry Activities format established in *Pathways to Passing the GED: Introduction and Math*. There are seven different categories of passages tested on the GED Language Arts Reading Test. They are: Drama; Fiction from three time periods: before 1920, 1920-1960, and 1960 to the present; Business Documents; Critical or Personal Reviews; and Poetry. Each of the Reading Learning Projects focuses on reading strategies most suitable for the individual genres.

The stimulus for the Inquiry Activities found in this guide is primarily from the test questions in the 2002 Reading Practice Test PA (Reading Learning Projects 2, 3, 4 and 7). Since reviews and contemporary fiction pieces were not included in the Reading Practice Test version PA, we contracted those three passages and applicable multiple-choice test questions from John Reier, a specialist with the GED Testing Service and author of *McGraw-Hill's GED Language Arts, Reading* and its companion *Workbook*. The supplemental passages are included here as Reading Learning Projects 5, 6, and 8.

The first Learning Project addresses the types of questions asked in all of the reading passages. Its purpose is to allow learners to familiarize themselves with the kinds of questions that will be presented on the test.

The Reading Inquiry Activities employ the discovery and group learning strategies we have used in previous *GED as Project* volumes. These encourage the development of analytical, creative, and practical thinking, as well as test-taking skills.

The integrated approach to learning, so strongly advocated throughout *GED as Project*, is central to the reading volume. First of all, reading is fundamental to all of the other content areas of the GED, including the word problems of the math portion of the GED test. Second, we feel it is important for learners to have the opportunity to discuss the reading process itself, not just answer the questions about the passages they have read. We have found that the process of reading, developing strategies and methods, is not much dis-

cussed with adult readers. We will give learners the opportunity to think about and practice reading strategies that will not only help them pass the GED, but will be of use to them in their jobs and everyday lives. A third reason for this broad emphasis on reading process is that reading is a thinking skill, and thinking skills are strongly emphasized on the GED 2002.

The concept of reading as a thinking process has been well stated in *Reader's Handbook: A Student Guide for Reading and Learning*:

Every serious reader understands that reading is thinking. To read is to take time to think about something – an idea, an issue, a question – that matters to you. To read is to enter into a conversation with interesting, important people about ideas and issues. (Burke, Klemp, and Schwartz. 2002)

As good readers develop, they improve at this process of making meaning out of the words on the page. While basic reading proficiency requires decoding and encoding skills, readers build the meaning of what they read as they use their prior knowledge and experience to make inferences, fill gaps, and determine the relationships among the various parts of the passage. Many of the skills needed to be a good reader are of a cognitive or metacognitive nature. Metacognition is often defined simply as thinking about thinking. We all do it, every day.

Good readers are often unaware of the particular strategies they use to make sense out of text. It is the purpose of *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* to help learners know these strategies, practice them, use them to pass the GED, and extend their use into their personal lives to achieve greater success.

Tamara L. Jetton, Associate Professor of Reading at James Madison University, sets out the before, during, and after reading strategies as shown below. Her article on the strategies of readers appears in Appendix A of this book.

BEFORE READING STRATEGIES (These are used every time a reader begins to read.)

- Preview the text
- Activate/Build prior knowledge
- Consider/Build interest
- Set a purpose



DURING READING STRATEGIES (Clarify is always used during reading. Other strategies will depend upon the type of reading assignment.)

- Analyze text structure
- Clarify words/sentences/paragraphs
- Actively construct meaning
- Ask questions
- Predict/Verify predictions
- Determine important from unimportant information
- Determine important versus interesting information
- Summarize
- Monitor progress

AFTER READING STRATEGIES (These strategies are demonstrated in Steps 4 and 5 of the GED as Project reading template.)

- Answer questions (the main emphasis of the GED reading test)
- Summarize and integrate key ideas
- Confirm predictions
- Generate new questions
- Extend learning to new situations
- Identify gaps in learning

Introduction to Reading Learning Projects

In *GED as Project* Inquiry Activities, the reading passages and questions provide the context for learning. Further, the Inquiry Activities are project-based, which encourages learners to construct meaning rather than trying to learn a series of abstract and isolated rules.

Adults have considerable experience they can use as prior knowledge to help them construct meaning. GED 2002 test questions are practical, which supports the need for adults to learn to use reading strategies that will help them read for work and personal growth. This guide provides material for learners to identify reading strategies on their own.

The Learning Projects begin with an inquiry into the kinds of questions asked on the GED. The Learning Projects 2 through 8 each focus on a particular genre and introduce a reading comprehension strategy best introduced with that

kind of text. Reading comprehension strategies can be used in combination with one another and with other kinds of texts. We have attempted to select text passages and reading comprehension strategies that best complement each other.

In Learning Projects 2 through 5, the Inquiry Activities separate the questions into IAs by the kind of question asked, so that the learners can further strengthen their understanding of types of questions and their answers. We have changed the sequence of the practice test questions used in these Inquiry Activities from the chronological organization followed by the GED test where questions 1 through 3 are from the first part of the passage, 4 and 5 from the middle of the passage, and 6 and 7 from the end of the passage, to a categorization of: recognizing supporting detail, inference, application, author's purpose, and drawing conclusions. Some Inquiry Activities will have one question; others may have several. In Learning Projects 5, 6, 7, and 8, all of the passage questions are included in one Inquiry Activity. This is a first step in becoming familiar with the problem of trying to determine the kind of question before attempting to do the work of answering the question.

Introduction to Reading Inquiry Activities

The template for Reading Inquiry Activities (Figure A) uses the general five-step inquiry process introduced with *GED as Project*. Steps one (Identify the Problem), two (Become Familiar with the Problem), and three (Planning, Assigning, and Performing) may be small group activities in the beginning but will eventually be done individually to simulate test-taking conditions. Becoming familiar with test conditions helps learners ease the stress of test day. Steps four (Sharing with Others) and five (Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating) help learners focus on the construction of meaning beyond the specific item itself. This emphasis is in keeping with the goal of this guide: building upon the motivation of the learner who wants to pass the GED by teaching through the practice test items to develop good reading skills no matter what the context.

The five-step inquiry process here is customized to support the reading process. A more detailed discussion of this template follows.

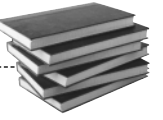


FIGURE A

The Reading Template

1. Identifying the Problem
2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem
 - Preview the Passage or Question
 - Activate/Build Prior Knowledge
 - Consider/Build Interest
 - Set a Purpose
3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks (Individually, pairs, or in small groups)
 - Clarify Words/Sentences/Paragraphs
 - Use a Reading Comprehension Strategy
 - Analyzing
 - Predicting
 - Questioning
 - Monitoring
 - Imaging
 - Determining – Important, unimportant, and/or interesting
 - Determine Kind of Question
 - Answer Questions
 - Find Support for Answer
4. Sharing with Others (With pairs, small groups, and/or the whole class)
5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Introduction to the Reading Inquiry Process Template

The Reading Inquiry Template is a guide for the Inquiry Activities within the Learning Projects. The bulleted subsections are unique to the GED Reading test. These help learners develop appropriate reading strategies for the passages and questions presented. The specific strategies will differ from Learning Project to Learning Project, based on the nature of the material being read.

The prompts in Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

assist in developing appropriate reading strategies for comprehending and answering questions. The questions in steps 4 (Sharing with Others) and 5 (Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating) may also vary according to the nature of the material.

The Learning Projects and the Inquiry Activities in this guide are examples for inquiry-oriented instruction. Use your creativity and sense of your class to develop new questions for the Inquiry Activities, new sequencing of Projects and Activities, and new Learning Projects. The focus of any changes should support and further the learner's goal of passing the GED. Allow learners' individual learning profiles to introduce variety into your design. Indeed, interest may determine which Learning Projects learners pursue and in what order. Be flexible enough to make on-the-spot decisions on the most appropriate way to modify the Inquiry Activities to meet the needs of the group that day.

If you find the GED Reading Passages too advanced for your learners, you can select materials from other sources and use the Inquiry Template to build new Learning Projects and Inquiry Activities for those passages.

Repetition plays an important role in the metacognitive process. Therefore, similar thinking/process questions are asked throughout the Learning Projects. Learners will read the same passage several times as they answer the questions. Emphasis should be placed on understanding the kinds of questions being asked and how passages can be used to answer the questions.

Reading Inquiry Process Template

1. Identifying the Problem

At this first stage of the reading process, learners look over the reading passage to get a general idea of the material presented. They will not read it carefully; rather, they will scan it to get an understanding of what they will be asked to do.

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Becoming familiar introduces four pre-reading strategies that all good readers do every time they read. Readers may do these in different order, but they always do them.

In this step, learners engage more fully with the passage. Discussion in pairs or groups should be encouraged in the beginning, although to simulate test-taking conditions, this should become an individual activity. The following



prompts are presented in the passage-reading Inquiry Activities to keep the learners focused on the before-reading strategies. One way to practice pre-reading strategies is to “Think Aloud.” Thinking aloud is a process of reading a section of text, stopping, and asking questions based on a selected reading strategy.

Scan the passage (or the question) and ask yourself questions like the following as the first step to understanding:

1. Preview the Passage
 - Short? Big words? Small words?
 - What do you notice about how the passage is organized. Does it have headings? Are there lists, subheadings, bold type?
 - How can the organization of the passage help you understand it?
2. Activate/Build Prior Knowledge
 - Do you know anything about this topic from previous experience?
3. Consider/Build Interest
 - Are you interested in the topic of this passage or the answer to the question?
4. Set a Purpose
 - Why are you reading this?
 - What are you looking for when you read this passage?

Pre-reading helps build context and encourages readers to access information that they already know to help make more sense of the material and determine how to approach the text. As learners become better readers, they come to understand that their interest, prior knowledge of the topic, and purpose will require different approaches to reading.

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

Planning

In Inquiry Activities that focus on the passage, emphasis will be given to reading strategies most appropriate for the type of passage being read: predicting, questioning, summarizing, monitoring, or analyzing. Learners will need to plan whether they will work alone, with a partner, or a

small group. They also need to decide if they will read aloud, silently, or a combination of both. We have found that when learners read together in groups, all readers, from the good to the less-than-confident, can explore what is happening during this process. Because reading is such an individual process, few adult learners have had the opportunity to discuss their reading process. Many learners find this group activity very helpful. As the learners progress through the Inquiry Activities, they should be encouraged to use what they have learned in groups to read and understand passages on their own.

Think-Aloud activities are provided in Appendix B for your use when modeling strategies for your learners. We strongly recommend this Think-Aloud process to help your learners see how each reading strategy works in the mind of a reader: yours, when you model the process, and theirs, when they try it after you.

Assigning

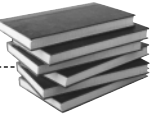
As facilitator, you can start learners planning and assigning in pairs or small groups until your Just-In-Time assessments indicate the learners have internalized the passage reading strategies and are ready to simulate test-taking conditions by reading alone.

Performing Tasks

When working on during reading strategies, the learner’s aim is to use the strategy being discussed. If working on the strategy of summarizing, for instance, the learner would read the passage and then draft a summarizing paragraph or tell a classmate what the passage is about.

During reading strategies introduced through *GED as Project*:

1. Predicting: involves reading a few sentences or a paragraph, stopping and predicting what will happen next. The reader repeats this until the passage is completed. It is important to note that good readers’ predictions are more often inaccurate than accurate. What is important is engaging with the text in an active way.
2. Analyzing: involves looking at the structure of the text or the question to determine what kind of passage or question it is. The reader must also determine what he or she is being asked to do with the text. In this strategy, the reader determines whether question answers are in the text, not in the text, the opposite of



what is in the text, or not accurate.

3. **Questioning:** involves stopping and asking questions of the text while reading.
4. **Imaging:** involves stopping after reading a few sentences or paragraphs to make a mental picture of what is being described in the text. Imaging is similar to predicting; however, instead of anticipating what might happen, readers are thinking about what things look like.
5. **Summarizing:** involves having the reader read the entire passage and then re-title the passage. With the passage re-titled, readers reread the passage to determine what is important according to the new title and what could be left out. The third step is to write a summary of the passage.
6. **Monitoring:** involves reading a portion of the passage, then taking a piece of paper and writing in one column what is remembered well and in another what is unclear. After doing this for the entire passage, it is best to share with another reader or a small group, asking one another questions, such as “Do you remember...?” “Describe...”
7. **Determining Importance:** involves reading the entire passage, putting it away, and trying to recapture what is important and what is unimportant by listing these details in appropriately headed columns. This strategy is best practiced by sharing with another reader or a small group. A variation of this can help the readers to determine the interesting from the important. This strategy involves the same process of using columns; however, it is important to note that items can be both interesting and not important.

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.

Learners see this statement every time they get to step 4, Sharing with Others. It may not at first be clear to your learners that the person who gets the most out of conveying information is the one who is conveying, not the one listening. The more learners communicate in pairs, small groups, or with the whole class, the more they will use

thinking skills to get and convey information. One learns best when one teaches.

Sharing with others is an integral part of the inquiry process. Communicating an understanding reinforces a learner’s ability to make meaning. The groups discuss and then report to the class how they did the work, the support they used for doing the work, the strategies used, and any questions they may have. The groups should be encouraged to lead class discussions, which further helps to build communication skills.

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

These three activities are at the heart of the learning process. This step expands the test-taking process emphasized earlier in the inquiry template by using what was learned and applying it to new situations or test questions. The problems and reading questions on the GED might be significantly different from the Practice Test passages. Exploring enables learners to handle the actual items on the GED itself.

Reflecting: Think about how well you understood the work you did.

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have learned and experienced is part of the learning process.

Reflection questions help the learner consciously examine his or her understanding. Reflecting questions tend to be analytical in Sternberg’s *Successful Intelligence* model (Robert Sternberg, *Teaching for Successful Intelligence*, 2000). Here you can ask learners to reflect on numerous issues:

- Thinking skills learned
- Reading strategies used
- Reading passage and reading question strategies mastered
- Test-taking skills developed

Other reflecting questions include:

- What did I need to know to be successful in getting this answer?
- Is there a different way to learn about the concepts presented here?
- How will this Inquiry Activity help me pass the GED?



Extending: Extend what you have learned to new situations

Extending is introduced in both passage reading and question reading Inquiry Activities with the following comment to reinforce this very important learning skill:

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

The learner now gets a chance to build on the knowledge gained by making connections. Understanding relationships, observing patterns, and recognizing differences are all important in constructing meaning, getting at a deeper understanding of the content learned, and transferring that learning to new situations.

All of these extending activities can be done in groups and reported to larger groups. These questions tend to be creative and practical in Sternberg's *Successful Intelligence* model (2000). Here are some examples of possible extending questions:

- What strategy might a _____ (fill in the blank as appropriate to the class and the material) use to understand this material?
- How might a dog use the material read?
- How might the material read be used in your home life? In your work life?

It is natural to extend an understanding of reading strategies to test questions in the other content areas.

- How might the reading done here relate to other areas on the GED test?
- How can reading poetry be helpful in reading math word problems?
- Are the strategies developed to read workplace materials helpful in reading science or social studies questions?
- How can focusing on details in fiction passages help in reading math questions, or dealing with social studies problems?
- What reading strategies used in math can be applied to reading literature?

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

Evaluation is introduced to reinforce this highest thinking level in Bloom's Cognitive Taxonomy:

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. These questions have no right or wrong answers; they are 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 presented in this IA.

Evaluation questions tend to be analytical and practical in Sternberg's *Successful Intelligence* model (2000). Some of the questions that might be asked:

- What did you learn from this Inquiry Activity?
- What parts of the activity worked best for you? Explain.
- What parts did not work well for you? Explain.
- What parts of this Inquiry Activity will you use when taking the GED test? Why?
- How did reading this way make you feel?

The Inquiry Activity template is dynamic and can be applied to different situations in multiple ways.

Student versions of all of the Inquiry Activities can be downloaded from the *GED as Project* web site:
<http://www.jmu.edu/gedproject>.

