



What Students Need to Know: GED RLA's Extended Response

Information, Resources, and Strategies for the
Classroom

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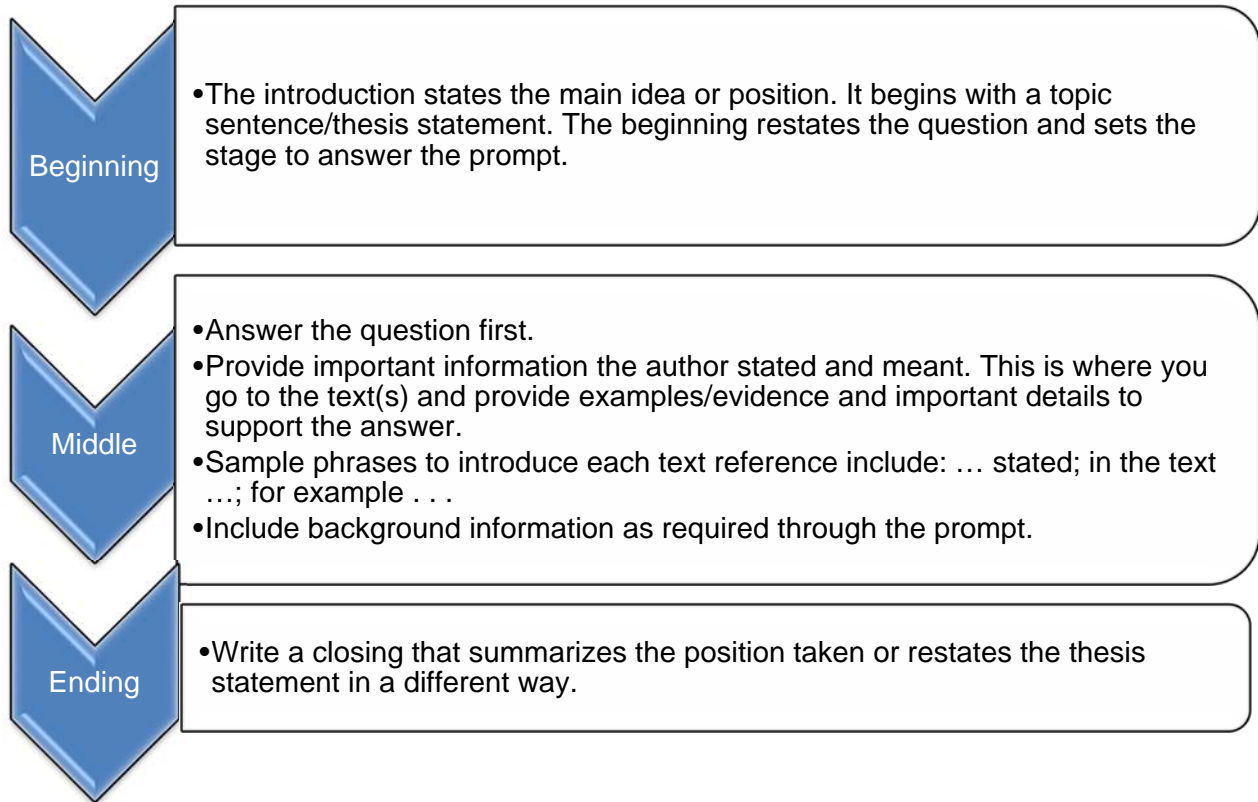
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From Struggling to Successful

	Struggling Writers	Successful Writers
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are unaware of purpose or process of writing • Have little or no knowledge of the text structure of an essay • Have difficulty developing plans and staying focused on the topic • Experience greater writing anxiety and decreased motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the task • Understand and apply all the elements of an essay • Create goals for their writing • Develop plans to achieve their goals • Discuss how and why a plan will work
Organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce fewer ideas • Fail to organize their thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop multiple ideas • Organize their ideas
Draft/Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan what they are going to say as they write • Use imprecise and nonspecific vocabulary • Struggle to convey their thoughts, ideas, and opinions • Write fewer sentences • Focus on mechanics rather than on clarity and organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write using an organized plan, but adjust goals when obstacles arise • Use vocabulary accurately • Experience fewer difficulties with the elements of an essay • Generate sentences that support their ideas
Edit and Revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience problems with grammar, punctuation, and spelling • Place words and letters too close or too far from each other • Do not review and make correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit spelling, capitalization, and punctuation • Make more content revisions • Correct overall appearance

A Simple Structure for CR



Interact with Text – Analyze

Purpose/Context	What is the text about? What type of text is it? What overall purpose does the text serve?
Author	Who is the author of the text? What qualifies him/her to write on this subject?
Audience	Where does the text appear? What does the author expect the reader to do or think based on the argument/information presented?
Proof/Evidence	What type of evidence is provided? Is more than one type of evidence provided? Is evidence provided for both sides of an argument?
Organization/ Structure/Style	What is the organization of the text? What is the tone? What type of sentence structure/complexity, figurative language, rhetorical questions are used?

2014 GED® Test RLA – Sample Stimulus Material

“Taxation and Revenue” – Test Bank Item 18101, Stimulus and Prompt

Press Release from the Office of U.S Representative Melody Walls
United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC

Representative Walls Announces Economic Boost for 12th District
July 17, 2013

Washington, DC – Representative Melody Walls announced that Congress passed the highway and transit bill today.

“This bill funds the expansion of Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. It will positively affect the town of Oak Falls,” Walls said. As part of the expansion, Highway 17 will move two miles east of the town of Oak Falls. The bill will ease traffic congestion and create job opportunities during and after construction.

Last year, Representative Walls held town hall meetings to gather opinions from her constituents about revitalizing the economy in the 12th District. Two years ago, Turnaround Motors and Bell Camera closed their factory doors. The result has been high unemployment with no immediate prospects for new businesses. Representative Walls heard residents’ concerns for jobs in the district.

Improving the highway means jobs for local construction workers. Once completed, the highway will bring more long-distance travelers into the area. Some officials anticipate a 30% increase in highway traffic due to the ease of traveling on the improved Highway 17. An increase in travelers will attract national motel and restaurant chains along the highway route. These national businesses will mean permanent jobs for residents.

In the future, historical features in Oak Falls and Gaston, such as brick streets built by early settlers and the old wheat mill, will likely become popular tourist attractions. More visitors will increase business for local shops and restaurants.

The improved highway will eliminate eighteen-wheeler traffic through towns, a major source of traffic congestion and noise. A 2001 study in Texas showed that bypasses reduce traffic through towns by as much as 75%. Eliminating eighteen-wheeler traffic will also reduce road maintenance costs.

The improvement of Highway 17, funded by federal tax allocations, is an important investment in the area.

Oak Falls Gazette

Letter to the Editor

I am a small-business owner living in Representative Walls's congressional district. A bill has been passed to expand Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. This change includes plans to move Highway 17 two miles to the east, which means it will now bypass our town completely. I find this unacceptable.

The *Gazette* reports that because Highway 17 runs through six states, construction will be paid for with federal road funds. That means some of our federal taxes will pay for a road that I believe will harm our town. I also believe that few residents of Oak Falls will use the road. Our town and district will lose money as a result of this highway bypass paid for by our tax dollars.

The road construction jobs are only a temporary bandage on the wound made by our two manufacturers closing their doors. Once the road construction is finished, only minimum wage jobs will remain.

In fact, the highway will bypass four cities in our district alone. Each of these towns will lose business because fewer travelers will pass through them and eat, stay overnight, or purchase gas. There is no guarantee that tourists will drive an extra two miles into our town if national chain motels and restaurants are built at the highway exits. The 2001 study Representative Walls references does show that bypasses reduce traffic and noise in towns, but the study also shows they have a negative impact on local businesses.

If this project were paid for with state tax money alone, angry voters would have struck it down. Representative Walls held town hall meetings to hear residents' opinions about the local economy, but obviously she did not listen to the concerns they voiced. Please consider local concerns about this federal project.

Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the press release and the letter to the editor.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

RLA Extended Response

Both the press release and the letter to the editor offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion. The press release seeks to exhort the new bill for expansion of Highway 17, while the letter argues that the passing of the bill could prove detrimental to the district. While both sides make an acceptable case, the letter provides a stronger argument.

One example of the letter's stronger argument is the explanation that federal tax dollars pay for the road, as it will incorporate six different states, therefore eliminating this particular state's ability to strike the bill down. This proves, with factual information, that the district did not have a fair say in the bill. The notion that few residents will use the road that their tax dollars are providing is an opinion. However, a resident and small-business owner in the town is more credible in the awareness of the town's concern, as compared to a representative who attended a few meetings in the town hall.

Another example of the better supported argument in the letter is the reference to the construction jobs as temporary. The press release praises the new jobs created by the highway construction, as this is a valid point. However, the author of the letter is correct in the fact that the jobs will not create a boom in the district's economy, or fill in the gap caused by the closures in the manufacturing plants, as the press release leads listeners to believe. The road construction does not solve the long-term issue of unemployment in the town. In addition, the author of the letter counters the argument that new motels, restaurants, and gas stations along the highway will create permanent jobs for the residents of the town. She explains that, "...only minimum wage jobs will remain." This is a valid argument also, as unemployed residents that need enough income to support a household would not be much better off. Providing restaurant or motel jobs is very unlikely to feed or support an entire family. It will not pick up the laid-off employees of the manufacturing plants, who may have worked for many years towards promotions and a pension.

Another example of the letter's stronger argument is the author's explanation of the 2001 study. She concedes that the representative is correct in citing that bypasses are proven to reduce noise and traffic in town, but she argues that the study shows a negative effect on local businesses. This piece of the study was not mentioned by Representative Walls or the press release, and it is a proven fact. This draws more credibility to the argument in the letter. Also, although it is a speculation, it is more reasonable that traveler's will stick to the main highway and not venture miles off their path into small town when chain gas stations, restaurants, and motels are conveniently located directly at the highway exits. It is less likely that old roads in the towns will become historical locations, attracting tourists and boosting small business sales.

Despite the argument and evidence given by the press release, it appears that the letter to the editor offers a stronger case. The author's ideas are backed up by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations. Though the press release offers some fact, it is mainly specked with anticipations and hopes, driven to overshadow any doubts and quell any concerns. The letter is penned by a resident of the town and owner of a business, subject to first-hand opinions of the citizens of the district. The press release is pushed by an elected representative who, upon visiting the town a number of times and consulting a small percentage of the constituents, is convinced she understands the majority. Although both parties may very well have the best interests of the district in mind, and either position could be correct, it is clear that the letter provides a better-supported argument.

Why did this response earn a perfect score?

Trait 1: Score Point 2

The writer developed an argument using evidence from the passages as support.

- The writer generates a text-based argument with strong evidence, stating that *“the letter provides a better-supported argument.”*
- The writer uses specific details from the text to evaluate the credibility of both authors (*a resident...is more credible...as compared to a representative*).
- The writer supports the argument by demonstrating how the letter to the editor has *“factual information”* to strengthen the arguments (*...correct in the fact [and] ...backed by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations*).
- The writer points out how the opposing point of view is not supported and counters weak points of the opposing point of view with facts (*...mainly specked with anticipation and hopes*) and counters weak points with Jenkins’ facts (*...the author of the letter counters the argument*).

Trait 2: Score Point 2

The writer develops his/her ideas in an organized way

- The writer begins with an introduction to the topic that clearly expresses the writer’s argument, the response then develops that argument logically over the following paragraphs.
- Each paragraph begins with a transitional device (*One example..., Another example...*), thereby sustaining a logical progression of ideas.
- Each paragraph contains evaluation and analysis of specific points from the two texts (*She concedes...but she argues*).
- The writer concludes with a restatement of the writer’s argument within an analysis of the credibility of each text.
- The writer maintains a formal style and appropriate tone throughout.

Trait 3: Score Point 2

The writer follows the rules of the English Language

- The writer uses correct sentence structure and a variety of sentence structures.
- The writer’s language makes his/her response clear and easy to understand
- The writer follows the standard rules of the English language.
- The writer avoids wordiness and awkward sentences for the most part.
- The writer uses punctuation appropriately and demonstrates master of mechanics.
- Overall, the response is is an an appropriate level for on-demand draft writing

Extended Response Quick Tips

How can I earn points on my written responses?

Simply attempting a written response on the Extended Response items doesn't always mean you will receive points for your work. Your responses are scored against specific criteria shown in the Extended Response Scoring Rubrics. To see a full breakdown of these criteria for RLA and Social Studies, please see the complete RLA and Social Studies Rubrics. You can also refer to the "Extended Response Answer Guidelines." Here are a few tips for helping you earn points for your written responses:

1. **Write a complete essay.** The ER prompts are designed to give you enough information to analyze so that you can make a statement that answers the prompt and then provide evidence from the source texts to develop your ideas in your own words. If you create a very brief essay, your response may not provide enough evidence of your writing skills to receive any points. Also, fully answering an ER prompt often requires 4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each – that can quickly add up to 300 to 500 words of writing! A response that is significantly shorter could put you in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of your writing skills.
2. **Give commentary on quotations from the source texts.** While you are encouraged to cite specific evidence (phrases and even complete sentences) from the passages that accompany the prompts, you are scored on not just how well you can quote from the passages, but also on whether you can express your own thoughts about your chosen evidence. So you should explain *why* the evidence you've chosen helps you make the point you want to make. Also, if too large a portion of your response is material from the source text, you may receive a 0 because that material is someone else's writing, not yours. Copied text contributes to your score only if you fully explain how that text illustrates a point you are making. Simply lifting information from the passages isn't going to be enough to earn you points.
3. **Develop ideas.** One way to earn points on the ER items is for you to pick two or three main ideas and really explain them fully. A full explanation may require several sentences, each containing related thoughts, to fully develop a main idea. Some responses that briefly mention several ideas but do not build upon them may not score very highly.
4. **Save 4 to 5 minutes at the end to quickly proofread.** Written responses are not evaluated for spelling, but a quick check for the following grammar and usage issues can go a long way toward earning points:
 - a. vary your sentence structures
 - b. coordinate the parts of your sentences
 - c. avoid wordiness and awkwardness
 - d. use transitional words to make your ideas logical and clear
 - e. avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments
 - f. use the right homophone to mean what you say (for example, "to," "too" or "two")
 - g. make your subjects agree with your verbs
 - h. use the correct form of a pronoun
 - i. place your words in the correct order
 - j. capitalize appropriately
 - k. use apostrophes to make nouns possessive
 - l. use punctuation correctly

Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test

Please use the guidelines below as you answer the Extended Response question on the Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Following these guidelines as closely as possible will ensure that you provide the best response.

1. **Please note that this task must be completed in no more than 45 minutes.** However, don't rush through your response. Be sure to read through the passage(s) and the prompt. Then think about the message you want to convey in your response. **Be sure to plan your response before you begin writing.** Draft your response and revise it as needed.
2. As you read, think carefully about the **argumentation** presented in the passage(s). "Argumentation" refers to the assumptions, claims, support, reasoning, and credibility on which a position is based. Pay close attention to **how the author(s) use these strategies to convey his or her positions.**
3. When you write your essay, be sure to:
 - **determine which position presented** in the passage(s) is **better supported** by evidence from the passage(s)
 - **explain why the position you chose is the better-supported one**
 - **remember, the better-supported position is not necessarily the position you agree with**
 - **defend your assertions with multiple pieces of evidence** from the passage(s)
 - **build your main points thoroughly**
 - **put your main points in logical order** and tie your details to your main points
 - **organize your response carefully** and consider your **audience, message, and purpose**
 - **use transitional words and phrases** to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas
 - **choose words carefully** to express your ideas clearly
 - **vary your sentence structure** to enhance the flow and clarity of your response
 - **reread and revise your response** to correct any errors in grammar, usage, or punctuation

Retrieved from the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/74e3cf83a8cae5b05e5627fd2754e87f.pdf>

Both Sides Now

When reading argumentative non-fiction text, materials often present one side or viewpoint on a particular issue. Sometimes, the text may provide evidence to support both sides. Then, it is up to the reader to determine which is best supported. Analyzing and evaluating the evidence for both sides is one way to identify a claim and the reasons for making a specific decision/claim.

Both Sides Now		
Evidence that Supports		Evidence that Opposes
	<p>Question or statement</p> <p>Which position is better supported?</p>	
Decision (Claim)		
Reasons (Analysis/Evaluation)		

RLA Resources from the World Wide Web

National Council for Teachers of English. This site provides lessons and strategies for teaching nonfiction text. <http://www.ncte.org/>

Newsela. A site with nonfiction articles available in 4-5 different Lexile Levels with many of them providing a quiz that is aligned to a specific anchor standard. It is necessary to sign up for the free account to see the different level of articles. <https://newsela.com/>

PBS Teacher Source. Lesson plans and lots of activities are included in the teacher section of PBS. <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/>

ProCon.org. A website that provides both sides of the argument. Useful for use in teaching argumentative writing. <http://www.procon.org/>

Purdue University's OWL. One of the most extensive collections of advice about writing found on the web. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

ReadWorks.org. Written for the K-12 program, many of these nonfiction texts and lessons are usable in the adult basic education program. <http://www.readworks.org/>

ReadWriteThink. From the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, this site has great resources. <http://www.readwritethink.org/>

Teach 4 Results. A list of resources for teaching the writing process. http://iteach4results.wikispaces.com/*Writing

Teaching That Makes Sense. A K-12 site with lots of free resources and graphic organizers from Steve Peha. <http://ttms.org/>

The Writing Studio – Colorado State University. A step-by-step guide for argumentative writing. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=58>

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